NÁRODNÁ BANKA SLOVENSKA
EUROSYSTÉM

Structural reforms – past and present
(neverending story...)

Conference on European Economic Integration (CEEI) 2017:
“A modern take on structural reforms – past and future challenges for CESEE countries and Europe at large“,
20–21 November 2017,
Vienna Marriott Hotel, Austria

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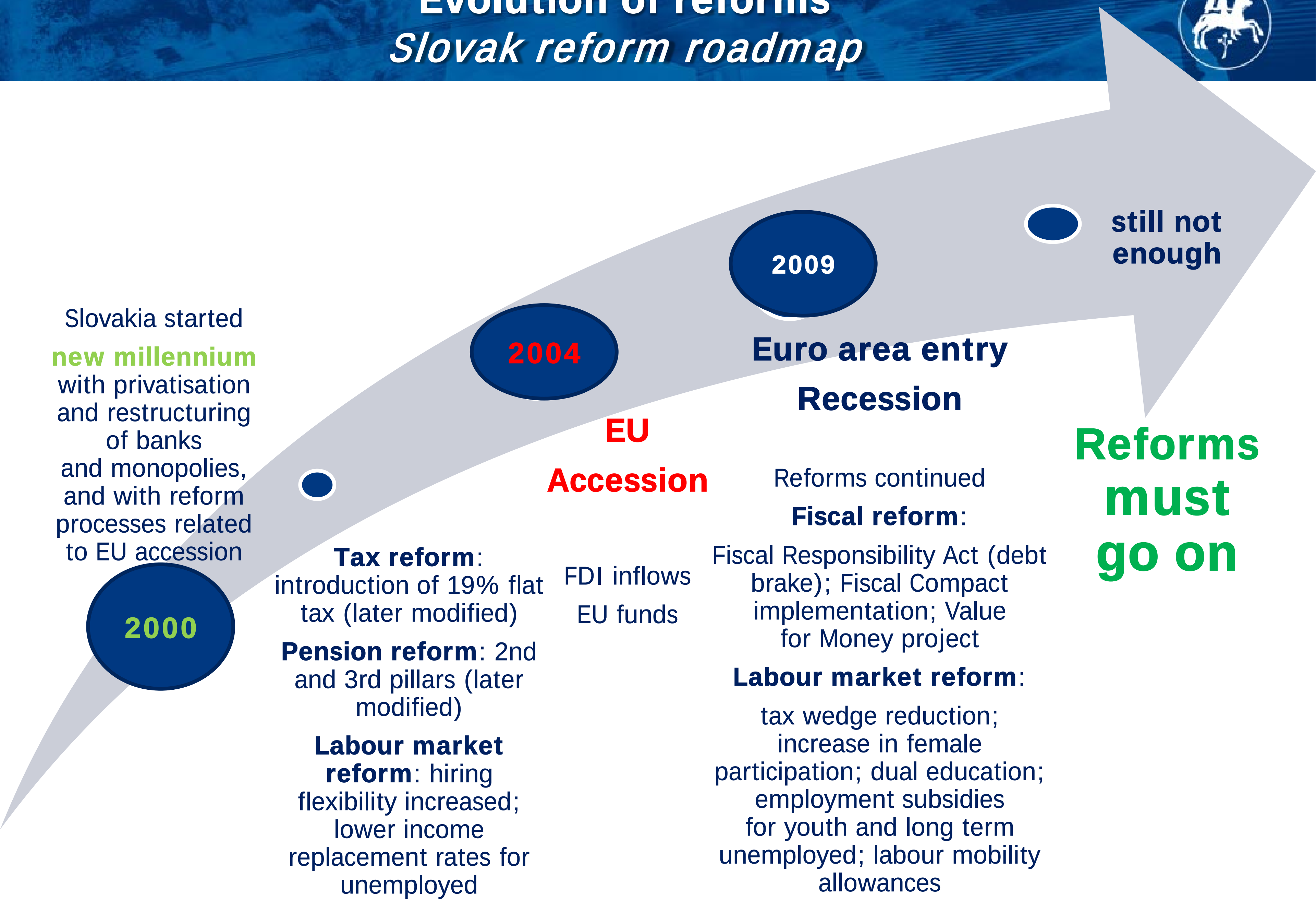
Evolution of reforms
Slovak reform roadmap

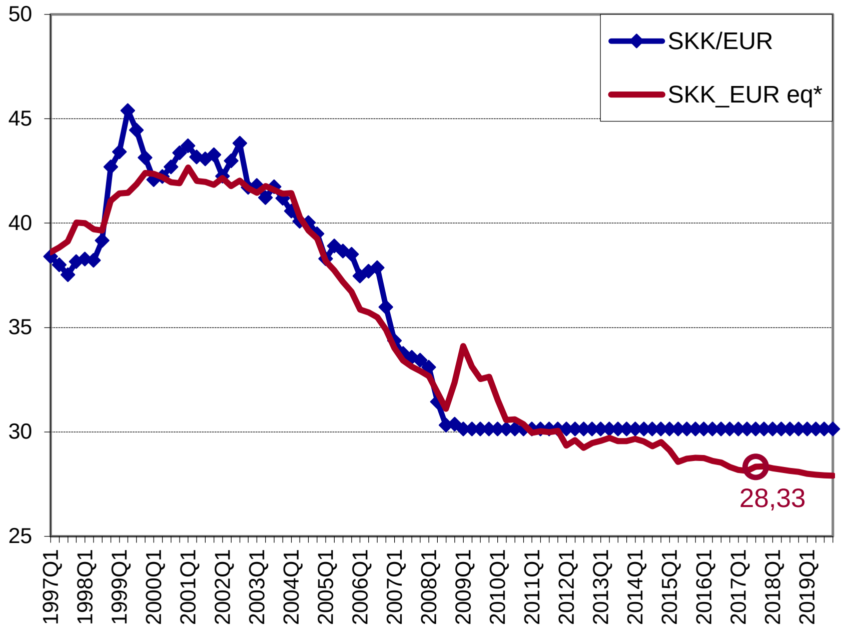


Did our reforms work?
– in nominal and real terms

The Slovak economy coped with exchange rate appreciation of more than 20% during ERM II, as its equilibrium appreciation was supported by productivity, investment and exports development.

Equilibrium appreciation continues, creating a competitiveness buffer.

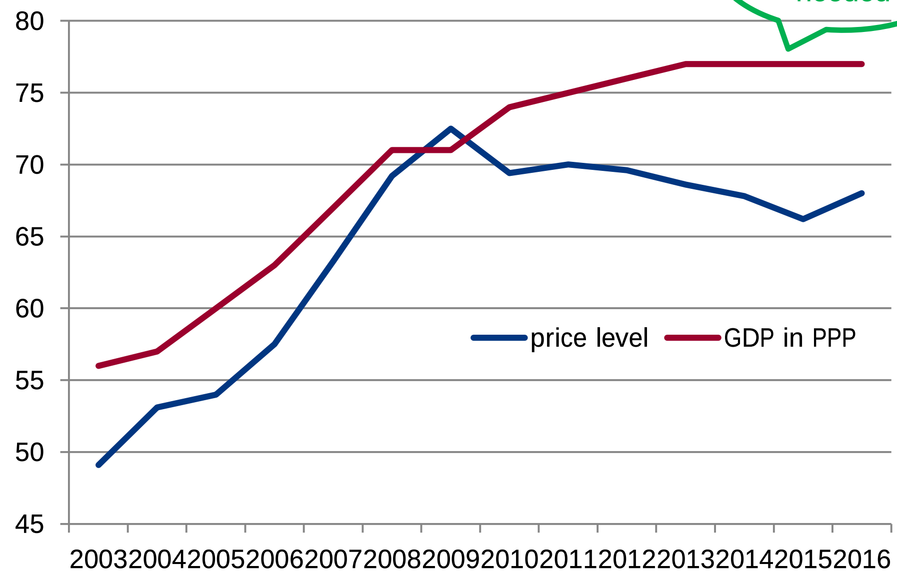
Nominal bilateral equilibrium exchange rate



Convergence towards EU average speeded up significantly (we caught up with neighbours).

Nominal and real convergence (EU28=100)

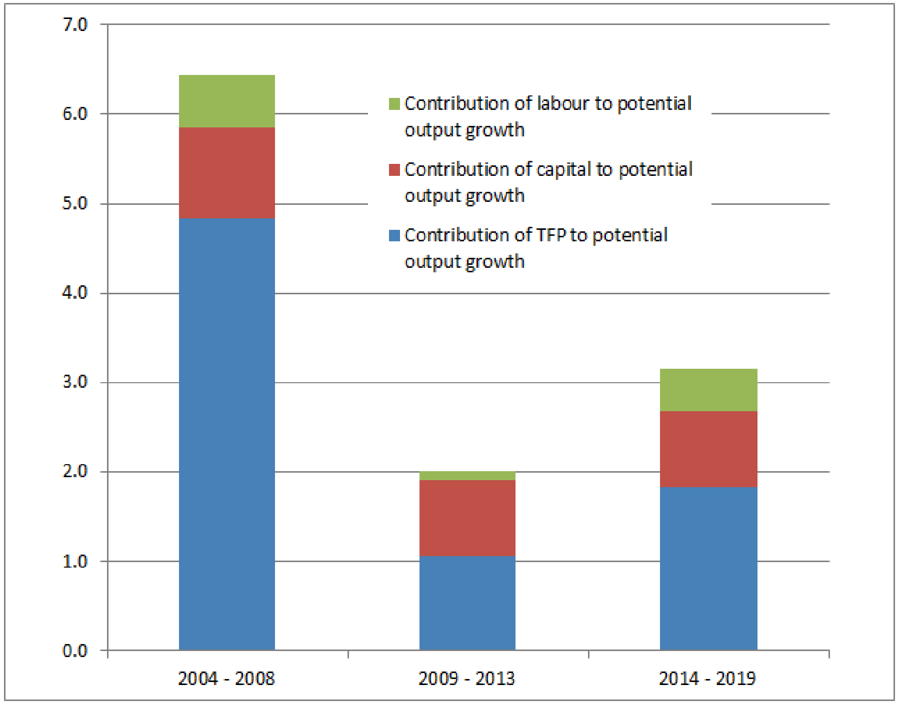
further reforms needed



Did our reforms work?
– in terms of the economy and labour market

Potential output increased significantly (on account of FDI-related productivity acceleration that pushed GDP growth to almost 11% in 2007).

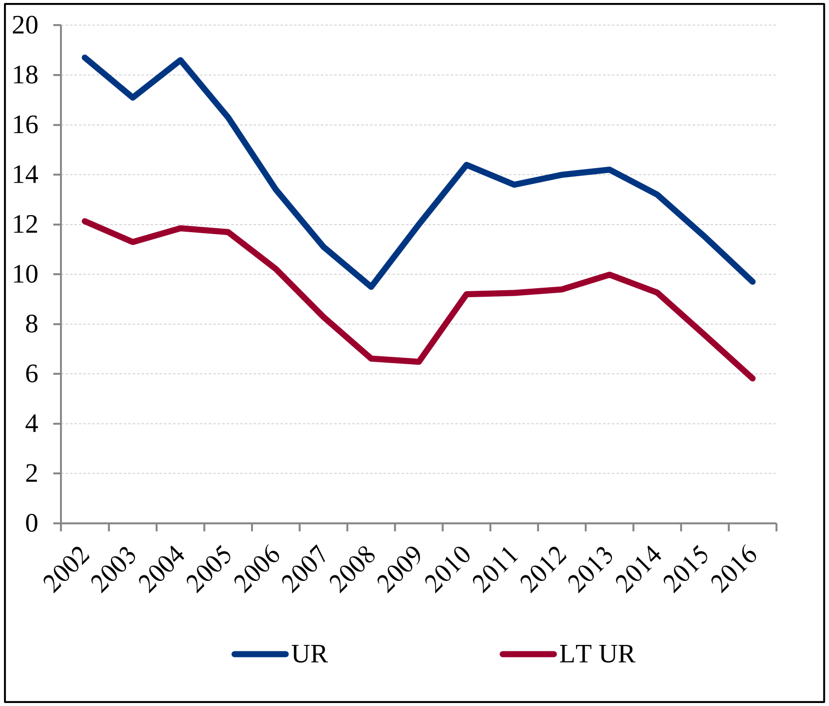
Potential output growth and its structure



Long-term unemployment benefited from both reforms and strong economic growth.

New reforms were needed in order to return to pre-crisis levels.

Long-term and standard unemployment rate (LT UR and UR; percentages)

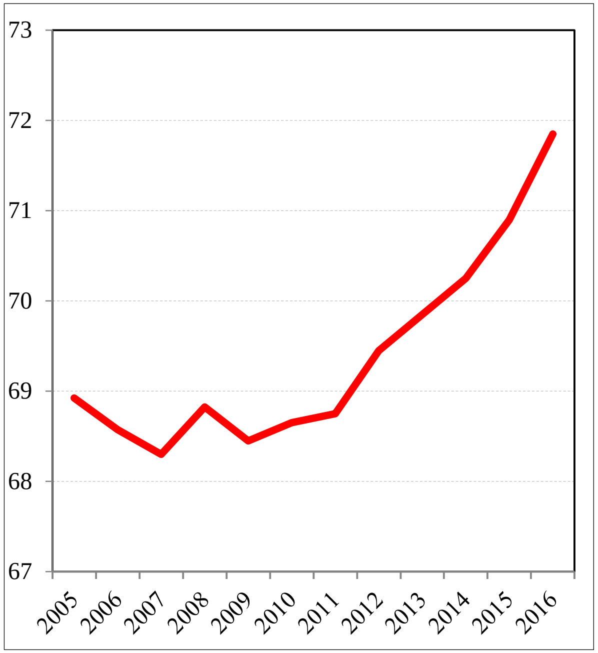


Recent measures' positive impact on the labour market
Recent new challenges: labour shortages

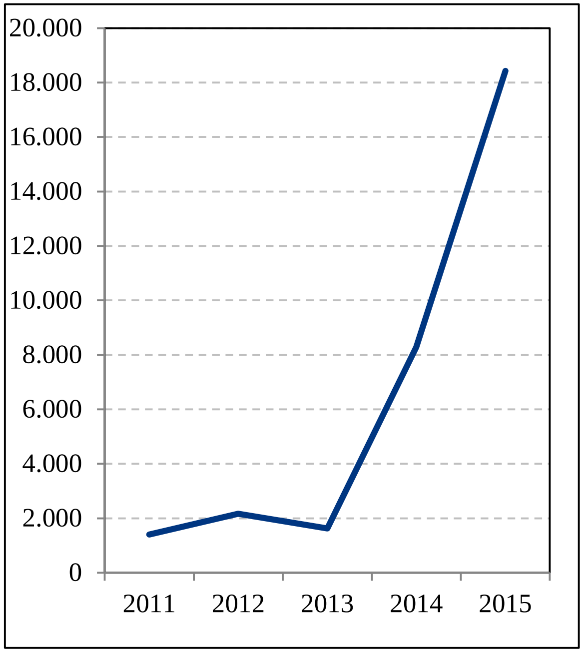
Successes in some areas: increase in participation rate supported by encouraging elderly to work, allowances for childcare costs, expanding kindergarten capacities, job sharing, subsidising employers to create jobs (to employ long-term unemployed and young people), retraining projects, lowering of social contributions for low wage earners, dual education project.

Okun's Law indicates a positive impact of recent reforms *(employment growth in recent years was higher than economic growth suggests)*

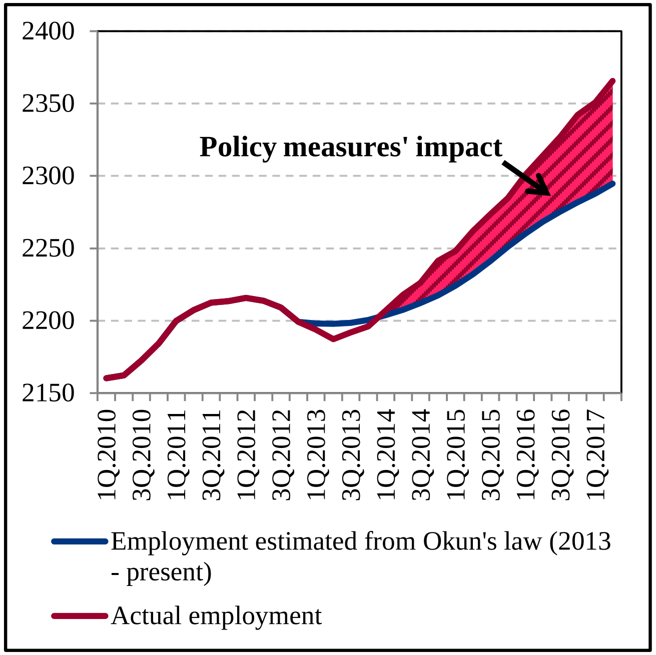
Participation rate (15 – 64 years, %)



New entrants in training projects



Okun's law

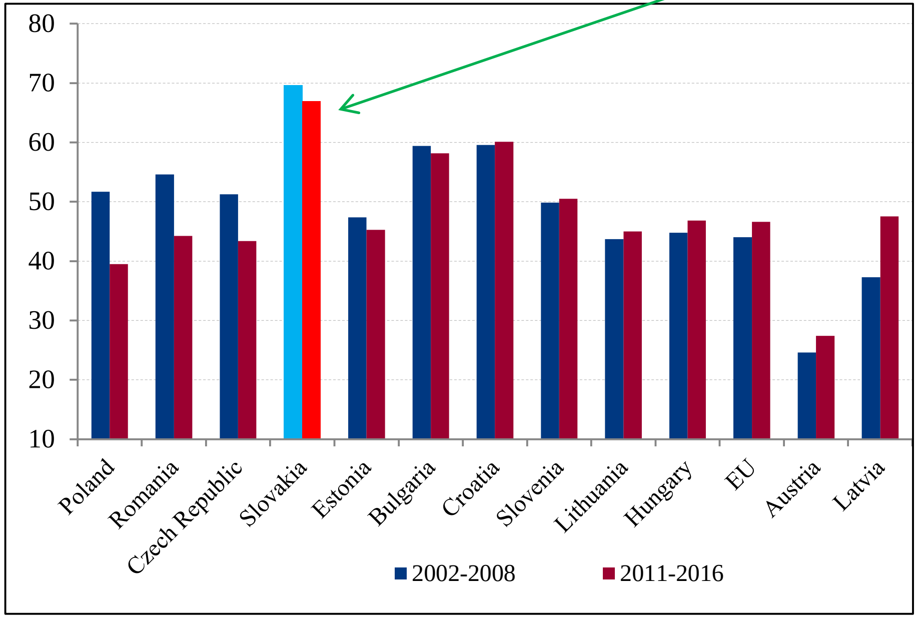


Further reforms are still needed, as…

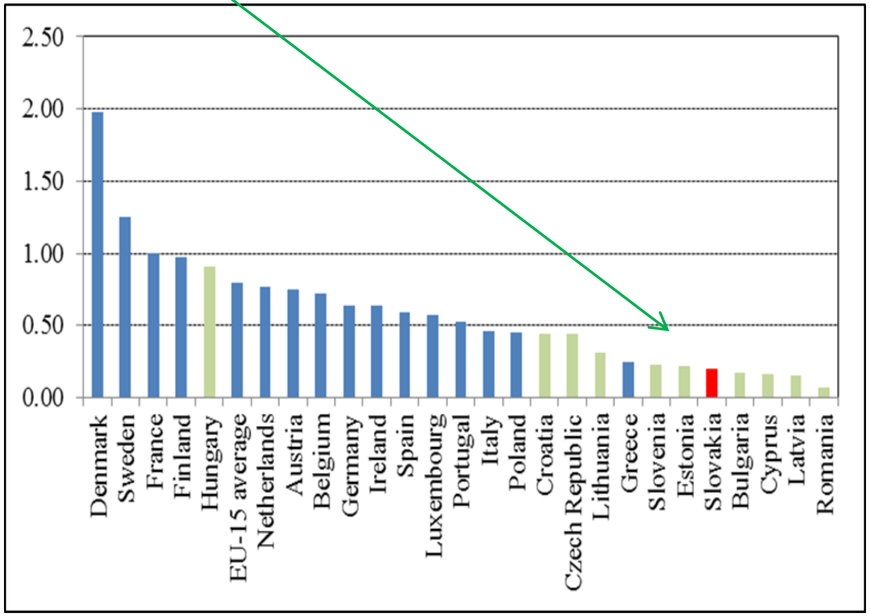
… long-term unemployment is among the **highest** among peers and spending on active labour market policies (ALMP) is among the **lowest.** In addition, hiring foreign workers takes several months and the employment protection indicator has recently increased. The minimum wage is still comparatively low, but rising sharply.

Other important areas related to labour market outcomes include health care and education.

Comparison of long-term unemployment (% of total)



Spending on ALMP (% of GDP)



Other areas requiring structural reforms

Health care: increase its quality; avoid debt accumulation; increase average age with positive consequences for participation rate (which is still below EA average).

Education: address weak and worsening PISA results; ensure education meets business requirements to a much greater extent than is now the case.

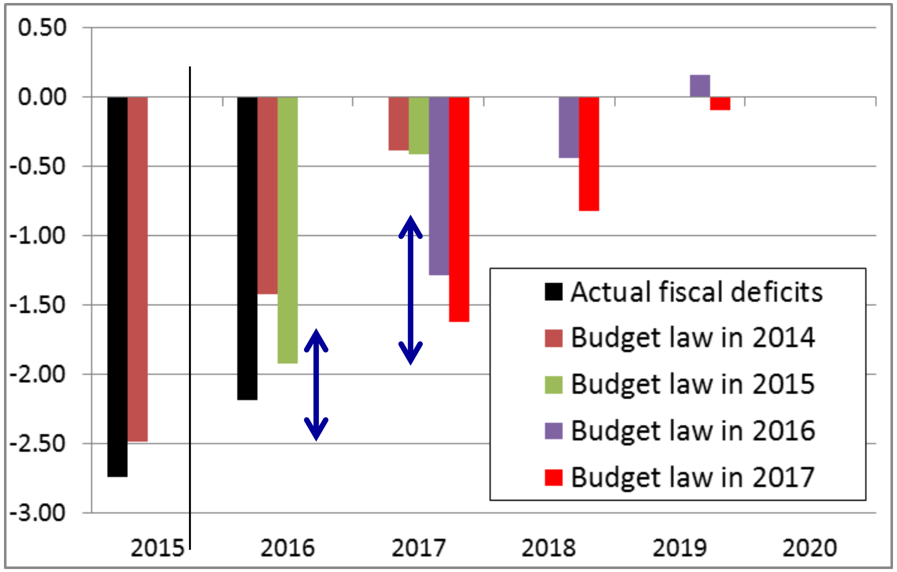
R&D and IT support: more support required since this area brings important innovations (such as “Industry 4.0”) that further accelerate potential output.

What about the fiscal area and resources for reforms

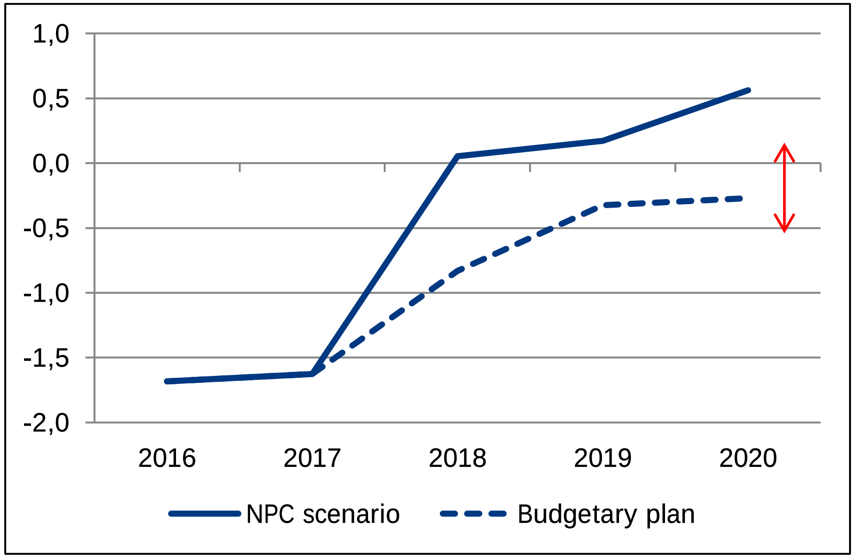
Public finances are on a consolidation path, but the medium-term objective is receding.

According to the no policy change (NPC) scenario, there is some room for extra spending (concentrated in capital spending, compensation, and social transfers).

Evolution of fiscal deficits (% of GDP)



NPC scenario versus planned fiscal deficit (% of GDP)



- The Value for Money initiative has the potential to increase the effectiveness of public finances. It should, however, be incorporated into the State Budget Act.
- Public debt is sustainable and the debt brake works. The question is whether there should be an exemption for infrastructure projects.

In conclusion

Everybody knows that structural reforms are of utmost importance for sustainable growth, for better welfare, and for eliminating macroeconomic imbalances.

The EC has recommended almost 200 of them to European countries.

So why such reluctance to implement them?

- Short-term losses within the political cycle matter the most.

Hence international institutions, especially the IMF, have recommended taking the business cycle into account (good times are better for reforms) and implementing strong and focused demand-supporting policies (having regard to the Gini coefficient).

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Thank you for your attention...

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