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SOCIAL AGENDA



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YOUTH GUARANTEE

2 years on



Social Europe

EDITORIAL



When it comes to unemployment, time is not linear: “long-term unemployment” does not simply mean that someone has been unemployed for over a year. It also entails losing confidence, trust and dignity. Like youth unemployment, long-term unemployment can damage the very fabric of individuals, families, the economy and society at large.

Just like youth unemployment, addressing long-term unemployment requires mobilising all the institutions and actors concerned in a common endeavour, both EU wide and adapted to each country, region and locality: a framework which provides common guidance for flexible implementation, with EU structural funds complementing national resources.

This kind of approach is beginning to have an impact on youth unemployment. The European Commission proposes to use it also to tackle unemployment from the other end of the spectrum: the long-term unemployment of older people, who have studied or undertaken professional education and training a while ago, who have worked for quite some time but are now on the verge of social exclusion.

For long-term unemployment comes with the stigma of prejudice. Whatever the efforts, whatever the upskilling, there is a risk that the sheer duration of unemployment puts people at a disadvantage when competing for a job with candidates who have smaller gaps, or no gaps at all, to account for in their CVs.

“Making hands meet”

Mentalities and psychology are in the forefront when it comes to addressing long-term unemployment and the Commission proposal shows the way to making them evolve by restoring channels of communication.

It offers a helping hand: to the long-term unemployed, who will be properly listened to, as persons, in all aspects of their lives; but also to the employers, so that they may perceive the full potential of people who have fought back from the brink of social exclusion and who might have the exact profile they are looking for, especially in small and medium size enterprises!

This approach will require some reshuffling in the public employment services and in the relevant administrations (social services, health services etc.) in a majority of EU member States - but with the support of a common European framework, within which experience and funding can be shared.

Michel Servoz

Director General of the European Commission's Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion department

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NEWS IN BRIEF

16 September: addressing long-term unemployment

The European Commission presented a proposal for an EU Council of ministers Recommendation to provide better support to the long-term unemployed and facilitate their return to work. The recommendation foresees that all jobseekers, who have been out of work for more

than 12 months, receive an individual assessment. Before reaching 18 months of unemployment they should then receive a written job integration agreement, offering them a concrete and personalised plan back to work (see special feature page 14 onwards).

20 August: Social impact in Greece

Late on 19 August, the European Commission signed the Memorandum of Understanding with Greece for a new stability support programme. The European Stability Mechanism, Europe's firewall established in 2012 in response to the global financial crisis, will be able to disburse up to €86 billion in loans over the next three years, provided that Greek authorities implement reforms to address fundamental economic and social challenges. The Commission published an assessment of the programme's social impact and concluded that, if implemented fully and timely, the measures foreseen will help Greece return to stability and growth in a financially and socially sustainable way, and will contribute to meet the most pressing social needs and challenges in Greece.



Social impact: The European Commission published an assessment of the new stability support programme's social impact.

22 July: almost 30 000 workers supported by EU fund

During 2013-14, the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF) helped a total of 27 610 workers who had been dismissed due to the economic crisis and the effects of globalisation, to find new job opportunities. During this period, the EGF provided more than €144.4 million to assist workers in 13 EU countries

in their transition, a funding that was matched by another €94.1 million from national resources. Half of the workers who participated in EGF measures found new jobs or became self-employed. An additional 667 people were at that time in education or training to increase their future employability.

20 July: Over 200 million European Health Insurance Cards



Free of charge: The card confirms that a person is entitled to receive medical treatment during a temporary stay abroad from the host country's public healthcare system.

Almost 206 million Europeans already have the European Health Insurance Card (EHIC). This represents nearly 40% of the total insured population in the reporting EU countries. Available free of charge, the EHIC confirms that a person is entitled to receive medical treatment during a temporary stay abroad from the host country's public healthcare system on the same terms and at the same cost as nationals of that country. An EHIC application gives information about the card, emergency phone numbers, treatments that are covered and costs, how to claim reimbursement and who to contact in case you have lost your card. It covers EU countries plus Iceland, Norway and Switzerland.

NEWS IN BRIEF

17 July: EU social security coordination

Until 7 October, the European Commission consulted citizens on the EU rules governing social security coordination. The outcome will contribute to the wider preparatory work for a possible revision of those rules, which are designed to protect the rights of people moving within the EU. EU law establishes common rules and principles aimed at coordinating social security rights acquired in different countries. The Commission is considering updating them to ensure that these rules respond to social, economic and political developments in the EU countries. This initiative is part of the package of labour mobility measures announced in the Commission's work programme 2015.



Updating: The European Commission is considering updating EU social security coordination rules as part of a package of proposals on labour mobility.

15 July: More than €35 billion for Greece

Two days after an agreement paving the way for a new support programme for Greece, the European Commission revealed plans to help Greece maximise its use of EU funds. This will help mobilise more than €35 billion up to 2020 to support the Greek economy, provided that the conditions agreed upon by the Euro summit will be met. The Jobs and Growth Plan for Greece includes the early release of the

last 5% of remaining EU payments normally retained until the closure of the programmes and applying a 100% co-financing rate for the 2007-13 period. This would translate into immediate additional liquidity of some €500 million and a saving for the Greek budget of around €2 billion. This money will be available to immediately resume financing for investments supporting growth and jobs.

3 July: reaching out to unregistered young unemployed



Aware? Awareness-raising activities for the youth guarantee were piloted in four countries from March 2015.

The number of young people in contact with Youth Guarantee providers has risen in Finland, Latvia, Portugal and Romania, following communication and outreach campaigns over the last four months. Awareness-raising activities for the youth guarantee were piloted in those four countries from March 2015 (see page 10). They included partnerships with festivals in Romania, with the Finnish football Premier League Club HIFK, with Portuguese video bloggers, cooperation with the job search portal bestjobs.ro, an application featured on the social medium Draugiem in Latvia, a radio spot aired in Finland and Latvia and placement of posters in public spaces. An electronic toolkit with visual material and an explanation of the concept is now at the disposal of all EU countries.

INTERNATIONAL

Connecting green growth, inclusion and business

Social protection and private sector development were at the heart of the 2015 European year for Development in June



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Engine of growth: The private sector is the engine of economic growth, trade, investment, innovation and job creation in developing countries.

The achievement of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) adopted in 2000 – such as poverty reduction, gender, education and maternal and reproductive health – has been hindered by disappointment in addressing social exclusion and inequalities in the developing countries. The MDGs will be replaced this year still by a new global framework for poverty eradication and sustainable development.

It is increasingly evident that economic inequality leads to unequal social outcomes, while current redistribution mechanisms are insufficient to counter this trend. Moreover, inequality is structural and strongly associated with the exclusion of clearly defined groups – the poor, women, minorities (ethnic, linguistic, religious, migrant or sexual), indigenous peoples, people in rural or remote areas or with disabilities. Globally, over 900 million people belong to groups that experience discrimination or disadvantages, as a result of their identity.

Social protection

Social protection plays a crucial role in underpinning inclusive and sustainable development. Effective social protection systems are the basis for enabling the poor to participate in economic growth. They also provide coping mechanisms against adverse shocks such as periodic food price rises or recurring natural disasters.

Only about 20% of the world's working-age population has access to comprehensive social protection and, on average, developing countries spend around a quarter of the money devoted to social protection in the advanced economies. The economies of developing countries are often characterised by high levels of informality, a low income tax base, and relatively low budget allocations for social protection as well as highly segmented social insurance systems that generally benefit only a small minority in the formal sector.



Segmentation: Only about 20% of the world's working-age population has access to comprehensive social protection.

In 2012, the European Commission adopted a Communication explaining the role of EU development cooperation in supporting the strengthening of social protection policies and systems in the developing countries.

That same year, a Social Protection Floors initiative was adopted in the framework of the International Labour Organisation (see *Social Agenda* n°30). They comprise a basic set of social guarantees for all and the gradual implementation of higher standards as an integrated set of social policies – designed to guarantee income security and access to essential social services for all, paying particular attention to vulnerable groups and protecting and empowering people across the life cycle.

Private sector

If sustainable green growth and decent jobs are the best way out of poverty, it is the private sector which is the engine of economic growth, trade, investment, innovation and job creation. It provides nine out of ten jobs in developing countries.

The EU works closely with governments and civil society in developing countries to help them define and implement policies in support of private sector development and decent work. Substantial grant funding is provided across a wide range of areas, including regulatory reforms, capacity-building, sustainable consumption and production, eco-entrepreneurship, and the provision of business development services, with a focus on strengthening local micro, small and medium-sized enterprises.

The EU is also increasingly working to leverage additional development finance for sustainable investments (in particular in the areas of energy, agriculture and agri-business and infrastructure) and to facilitate access to finance for companies, primarily for SMEs.

Developing countries' private sectors are also supported through other policy areas, such as trade. The EU is the world's leading provider of "aid for trade", which supports partner countries to develop their capacity to trade and access international markets. It has provided significant unilateral trade preferences through the "Generalised Scheme of preferences". An "Everything but arms" initiative provides duty-free and quota-free access to the EU's market to all products from least developed countries, except arms or ammunition.

More information:

On the June theme:

https://europa.eu/eyd2015/sites/default/files/toolkit/infographic-06-june_en.pdf

On the European year:

<https://europa.eu/eyd2015/en>

Youth attracted by oasis farming

In Algeria, agricultural labour is traditionally highly respected. However, the country's rapid shift to reliance on a hydrocarbon economy – oil and gas extraction and export – has led to a shortage of young people willing to engage in manual, outdoor work. It has become rare for young people to show an interest in farming as a career. Young people tend to look for relatively secure administrative jobs which are considered 'easy' in comparison to the physically demanding nature of farm work.

Farmer and social entrepreneur Mohammed Brik established a farmers' association in El Argoub, at the edge of the Sahara desert. He started with a group of around 40 neighbouring small-holders. His aim was to bring farmers together to build a sense of community, share tips and techniques from their farming experience and develop organic farming practices, particularly in the rehabilitation of palm tree husbandry.

Mohammed now owns an 8-hectare farm. He promotes organic methods with the aim of deriving commercial results from sustainable farming... and his entrepreneurship spirit is attracting young people back into the fields.

More information on this story:

<https://europa.eu/eyd2015/en/european-training-foundation/stories/oasis-farming-traditions-attract-youth-algeria>

EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND

The simplification revolution

EU countries may now opt for a much simpler way of managing ESF projects



No need to keep bus tickets any more: Simplified cost options are a proxy of real costs, which do not require detailed justification.

It did not make the headlines but on 9 July, the European Commission adopted a legal act which could well mark the beginning of a new era for the European Social Fund (ESF): it adopted a “delegated act” on simplified cost options (SCOs), reducing the administrative burden for ESF and Youth Employment Initiative projects (the latter focusing on regions with the highest rate of youth unemployment and are managed via the ESF). This allows for quicker reimbursement. It also makes programmes simpler and safer in terms of management – and, crucially, more oriented towards outputs and results.

No more bus ticket checks

The Common Provisions Regulation (CPR) states that eligible expenditure can be calculated in the form of grants and repayable assistance based on real costs or on simplified cost options (flat rate financing, standard scales of unit costs

and lump sums). It builds on and extends the systems used for the ESF and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) in the previous programming period to all European structural and investment funds.

The real cost system implies that every euro claimed for reimbursement has to be justified and could be checked. In practise, this means beneficiaries and Member States must maintain all records, including, for example, bus tickets, for many years so they may be checked and rechecked. This system is burdensome, prone to errors and solely based on inputs.

Simplified cost options, on the other hand, are a proxy of real costs (e.g. an average cost of an unemployed person getting back to work) which do not require detailed cost justification and are more output/result based.



Under article 14(1), the ESF Regulation allows the Commission to define standard scales of unit costs and lump sums to be used between the European Commission and the Member States. EU countries who would like to be reimbursed on the basis of Article 14(1) ESF may submit data and suggestions to the Commission, which may then define standard scales of unit costs and lump sums on the basis of this data.

In practice, this means that, for a particular country, an annex to the delegated act could indicate lump sums or unit costs such as the average expenditure required for a student to complete a training project. This gives security to the Member State as the unit cost or lump sum cannot be challenged by auditors - and considerably cuts the red tape involved, allowing a shift from, for example, input checks of small invoices or bus tickets, to making surprise visits to the project site and check the actual attendance of students and the quality of the training. Thus the focus shifts from inputs to outputs.

Pioneered by the ESF

Simplified cost options are not new. They were first introduced in the 2007-2013 programming period for the ESF and the ERDF. The ESF pioneered the concept and its application in the Cohesion Funds for two main reasons. Firstly, ESF operations are implemented less often through public procurement contracts than ERDF ones and, secondly, the ESF co-funds "immaterial" projects. For the same reasons, checking the real costs entails checking an enormous amount of complex paper work and invoices collected by a multitude of big or small organisations and associations, which do not always have the administrative capacity to deliver the appropriate documents to comply with EU standards.

The delegated act adopted by the Commission on 9 July applies to the ESF only and differs from the CPR regulation in several ways: it does not establish thresholds for lump sums; reimbursements between the national or regional managing authorities may have a different basis from reimbursements between the Commission and the managing authorities; EU-level control and audit does not cover the accounting practices of the managing authorities (i.e. the financial flows

below national/regional level); and SCOs may be used for projects which are exclusively publicly procured.

For the moment, only France and Sweden have opted for the ESF-specific SCOs but proposals sent by other EU countries are being studied by the Commission. The ball is rolling.

More information:

<http://ec.europa.eu/esf/main.jsp?catId=67&langId=en&newSId=2264>

From process to results

This is what the ESF-specific simplified cost-options could mean in practice. A managing authority in a region hard hit by youth unemployment realises that a big share of its operational programme has to do with NEETs (young people neither in employment, education or training). It can define how much it will cost to help a NEET get (back) into the labour market, e.g. €150/NEET, and send to the European Commission the data it has used to come up with this figure. If the Commission approves the proposal, it will enact it by delegated act under Article 14(1) ESF.

Once 1 000 NEETs have found a job thanks to the projects co-funded by the managing authority and the ESF, the managing authority will multiply €150 by 1 000 and declare the total to the Commission, which will reimburse it accordingly. The European Commission and the audit authority will not audit what went on between the managing authority and the beneficiaries. The auditing circuit is therefore considerably shortened and the managing authorities enjoy much more autonomy. The risk of error is considerably lowered and the administrative burden reduced.

Partnerships: It takes over a year for partnerships between employment, youth, education and social partner organisations to be fully operational.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

EU Guarantee spurs on national reforms

Momentum is picking up to build partnerships and reach out to non-registered people



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Far away: More needs to be done to engage with the young people furthest away from the labour market.

In April 2013, the EU countries committed themselves by a Council of Ministers Recommendation to ensuring that all young people under 25 receive a good quality offer of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within four months of leaving formal education or becoming unemployed.

Two years later, the European Commission is proposing a new Recommendation, this time on the integration of the long-term unemployed into the labour market (see page 14 onwards). It is all the more interesting, therefore, to check the impact that the Youth Guarantee (YG) one has had so far.

Substantial efforts

The European Commission has been assessing YG implementation via the European Semester of economic policy coordination, which materialises each spring and summer in the form of country reports and a series of recommendations sent to particular EU countries.

Data collected for the 2015 exercise shows that EU countries are making substantial efforts to implement the YG but that progress is uneven from one country to another.

Indeed, the YG has spurred on EU Member States to strengthen the capacity of their public employment services and improve their vocational education and training systems (see *Social Agenda* n°41). However, more needs to be done to engage with the young people furthest away from the labour market. Bulgaria, Spain, Finland, Italy, Portugal and Romania in particular were asked to reach out more to non-registered young people who are not in employment, education or training.

By and large, more precise data is required from the Member States to get a picture of how many young people actually registered, got a quality offer and ended up getting a good job – i.e. an evidence-based approach to youth employment – and help feed the European Commission's assessment of YG implementation.



Regular data collection started in June 2015. An indicator framework for monitoring the Youth Guarantee has been developed within the Employment Committee (EMCO), which advises the EU Employment and Social Affairs Council of Ministers; while action taken by the public employment services will be monitored by the European network, created in 2014 (see article page 26).

Pilot projects

In the meantime, the European Commission has funded a series of pilot projects: 18 altogether in Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Spain and the United Kingdom, to collect experiences that could provide EU countries with practical recommendations for launching national Youth Guarantee schemes; and an awareness-raising programme in Finland, Latvia, Portugal and Romania to experiment reaching out to, and engaging with, young people not yet aware of the YG.

The 18 projects were carried out for one year on a small scale, mostly at municipality level. They focused on creating partnerships between youth, employment and education organisations, employers and social partners, and testing these partnerships with a group of young people on the ground. One of the main lessons learnt is that it takes more than a year to put such partnerships on a sustainable footing, building upon a shared vision, more dialogue and a clear description of each partner's role.

For the awareness-raising pilots, the European Commission worked with the national authorities, mostly the Employment ministries. The pilots revealed gaps such as, in the case of Finland (which served as a model for the YG Recommendation), the difficulty of reaching out to the most vulnerable young people and the need, therefore, to focus more on the social workers.

A common YG visual was developed which has been turned into a tool-kit for all EU countries, with posters, roll-outs, leaflets, radio spots and social media applications. In May 2015, the Commission launched a call for proposal to support awareness-raising throughout the EU and is now evaluating proposals from applicants.

Structural reform

What is clear at this stage is that the Council Recommendation is giving more visibility and means (see box) to the fight against youth unemployment and inactivity. Beyond the countries singled out by the European Semester recommendations, all Member States have engaged into a structural reform process, starting by breaking down walls between ministries, administrations, social partners and non-governmental organisations.

The European Commission will carry on helping the stakeholders talk to each other and enhance their efforts - so that once young people are aware of the Youth Guarantee, they know where to go.

More information directly available in the on-line version of *Social Agenda*:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/socialagenda>

Youth Guarantee:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1079>

At least €12.7 billion

In 2013, the EU Heads of State and government agreed to a Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) which would focus €6 billion of EU co-funding on regions experiencing youth unemployment rates above 25%, and on young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs).

During the 2014-20 EU budgetary period, the European Social Fund (ESF) and the YEI will directly co-fund at least €12.7 billion youth labour market integration measures. In addition, the total ESF allocation by EU country to education measures, including higher education, amounts to over €26 billion.

In 2015, €1 billion of YEI funding was made immediately available by increasing the EU pre-financing rate from 1-1.5% to up to 30%. This makes it possible to reach out to between 350 000 and 650 000 NEETs in 2015, as opposed to between just 14 000 and 22 000 under normal pre-financing rules.

LIVING AND WORKING CONDITIONS

The blight of long-term unemployment

The European Foundation for the improvement of living and working conditions has been working on this issue for forty years



Deeper and deeper: Protracted disengagement from the labour market can deepen social exclusion.

Four decades ago, in 1975, high rates of unemployment, social exclusion and active integration initiatives were much to the fore when the European Community (as it was then) decided to establish one of its first EU Agencies, the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound), in Dublin.

Forty years on, Eurofound has accumulated a wealth of data, survey results, research analyses and findings which address the broad spectrum of social and work-related policies of relevance to the EU citizen.

As the European Commission has put forward a Council Recommendation on the integration in the labour market of the long-term unemployed (see page 14), Eurofound's work on social and economic inclusion is especially pertinent, given its extensive studies on the impact of long-term unemployment – particularly as it affects young people.

Increasingly prevalent

Although the unemployment rate trend has finally been reversed in many Member States, long-term unemployment

– for 12 months or more – is now increasingly prevalent. In 2014, 49% of those unemployed in Europe were long-term, an increase of 16 percentage points against the value recorded in 2009.

On average, across the EU, long-term unemployment accounts for approximately one-third while short-term unemployment makes up approximately two-thirds of total youth unemployment. This situation varies greatly among countries.

Recent Eurofound research has highlighted that protracted disengagement from the labour market can have serious consequences in terms of poor employment outcomes, future salary penalisation and the increased risk that comes from disengagement and an asocial lifestyle, all of which serve to deepen social exclusion (Eurofound, 2014a). This is particularly true for young people.

The increased proportion of long-term unemployment is therefore of serious concern and needs to be addressed rapidly. Long-term unemployment can turn into structural unemployment which in turn translates into lower growth potential in the future.



Prevention model: Sweden, together with Finland and Austria, inspired the Youth Guarantee approach.

Support could take the form of help in the job search process or providing training and wage subsidies to firms and companies that hire people who have been long-term unemployed. Alternatively, holistic measures aimed at facilitating the active inclusion of the long-term unemployed, such as empowerment of the individual and fostering their motivation through community work, can be potentially effective for vulnerable groups – those who are most at risk of permanent disengagement (Eurofound, 2012b; Eurofound, forthcoming).

Prevention

In this regard, Finland, one of the EU Member States with the lowest level of long-term unemployment, has developed a strategy based on its prevention, with measures largely focusing on health and vocational rehabilitation (Eurofound, 2012c). The preventative approach is characterised by early intervention in time of lay-offs and a strong partnership approach among all labour market actors.

In order to prevent the long-term disengagement of young people and inspired by good practices on the ground in Finland, Sweden and Austria, the European Commission launched the Youth Guarantee in 2013. Endorsed by the Council of the EU, the Youth Guarantee aims to provide all young people up to the age of 25 with a good quality offer of employment or training within four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education.

In light of its fast-track approach, the Youth Guarantee can be considered a crucial preventative measure against long-term disengagement, as well as reducing the risk of social exclusion. All Member States are in the process of implementing the Youth Guarantee, each following their own strategy based on the profile and composition of their cohort of young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs) (Eurofound, 2012a).

Given the dire consequences of long-term disengagement, the first objective must be to shorten periods of unemployment. However, tackling long-term unemployment – for the

working population in general and young people in particular – should be a priority for Member States. This involves an individualised and holistic strategy, with effective coordination of support services.

Massimiliano Mascherini, *Research Manager, Eurofound*

More information:

Eurofound, 2012a, NEETs - Young people not in employment, education or training: Characteristics, costs and policy responses in Europe:

http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ef_publication/field_ef_document/ef1254en.pdf

Eurofound, 2012b, Active inclusion of young people with disabilities or health problems:

<http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/report/2013/labour-market-social-policies/active-inclusion-of-young-people-with-disabilities-or-health-problems>

Eurofound, 2012c, Youth Guarantee: Experiences from Finland and Sweden:

http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ef_publication/field_ef_document/ef1242en.pdf

Eurofound, 2014a, Mapping youth transitions in Europe:

<http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/report/2014/labour-market/mapping-youth-transitions-in-europe>

Eurofound, 2014b, Foundation Findings: Social situation of young people in Europe:

http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ef_publication/field_ef_document/ef1404en.pdf

Eurofound, 2015, Upgrading or polarisation? Long-term and global shifts in the employment structure: European Jobs Monitor 2015:

http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ef_publication/field_ef_document/ef1516en.pdf

Eurofound, forthcoming Autumn 2015, Social inclusion of young people.

SPECIAL FEATURE

A pathway back to work

Long-term unemployment needs to be addressed as a matter of priority, alongside youth unemployment

Half of the unemployed population in the EU is long-term unemployed (LTU). Only a quarter finds a job after the first year of unemployment and, each year, one fifth stops looking for a job and becomes inactive. Unless all the actors concerned get together and give a bigger priority to long-term unemployment than is the case at present, poverty will carry on rising and the EU will not sustainably recover from a crisis which has doubled the amount of long-term unemployed people.

New proposal

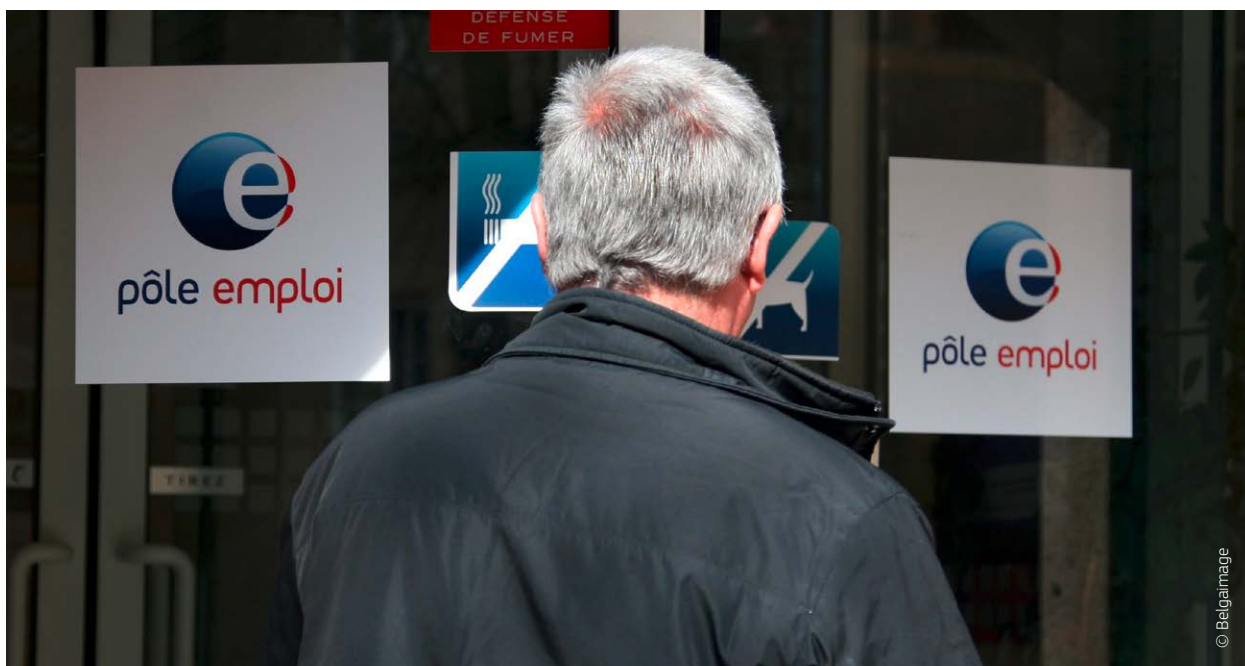
On 17 September, the European Commission put forward a proposal to ensure that, between 12 and 18 months of unemployment, each and every long-term unemployed person in the EU is registered and is offered a customised and contractual pathway right back to the labour market, via a single contact person through which to liaise with all the administrations and services concerned. Each EU country can implement this framework in its own way, knowing that the long-term unemployed population is heterogeneous and that the LTU rate varies considerably from one country to another.

In this special feature, you will find a presentation of what the EU has done so far to address long-term unemployment, as well as information on the Commission proposal and an explanation of it by the head of the service dealing with employment in the European Commission.

Other articles

Beyond the special feature, other articles shed further light on this issue. One article provides concrete examples of long-term unemployed people who have already benefited from certain aspects of the Commission's proposal.

In other articles, the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions presents the work it has been doing since its inception on long-term unemployment, while the President of the new European network of public employment services, Frank Weise, explains how those frontline services are evolving to rise to the challenge.



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Empathy required: The long-term unemployed population is heterogeneous and the rate varies considerably between countries.



Out of proportions: People with disabilities and disadvantaged minorities are disproportionately affected by long-term unemployment.

A step change is required

The crisis has doubled the number of people who have been unemployed for more than a year

Even before the 2008 crisis, the EU was faced with the prospect of an ageing and shrinking labour force due to demographic change – and therefore with the absolute necessity of using its workforce to its full potential.

Today, in addition to a huge legacy of youth unemployment, the crisis leaves the EU with twice as many people who have been unemployed for more than a year – 62 % of whom for more than two consecutive years – compared to 2007.

Given the slow pace of economic recovery in the EU as a whole, many of them risk remaining without a job for a long time. Gradually, they will find it more and more difficult to get back into – or yet alone enter – the labour market. They will risk losing their skills and falling into poverty.

This, the EU can simply not afford, neither humanly, politically nor economically speaking.

Economic governance

A number of initiatives at EU level are already in place to support long-term unemployed people.

Since 2010, the European Semester (ES) process of economic policy coordination addresses structural barriers such as rigidities on the labour market, inadequate skills or insufficient investment in human capital.

Some of the ES country-specific recommendations, which the European Council of heads of State and government addresses every Summer to each Member State, have to do with reducing financial disincentives to work, adjusting wage-setting mechanisms and the benefits, shifting the tax burden away from labour and modernising VET and apprenticeships.

At least 10 % of the people supported by the European Social Fund (ESF) during the 2014-2020 programming period are long-term unemployed. And at least 25 % of the allocations supported by the ESF for unemployed people in general, will be for the long-term unemployed.

Long-term unemployment affects a variety of people, many of whom face multiple disadvantages. Workers with low qualifications and non-EU nationals are twice as likely to experience it. People with disabilities and disadvantaged minorities, such as the Roma, are also disproportionately affected.

SPECIAL FEATURE

European co-funding

Belgium, for example, is using its ESF allocation to support projects to help parents find work and stimulate the social economy. One such project is “La Ferme”, which aims to boost the social reintegration of disadvantaged people.



Step change needed: A much more systematic, holistic, customised, empathetic and contractual approach to long-term unemployed people.

Launched in 1995, the project has now been granted renewed financial support to the tune of €2.1 million by the Walloon government and the Federation Wallonia-Brussels. Its aim is to integrate vulnerable jobseekers in the labour market. On average, “La Ferme” helps 60 people per year. They receive social integration income to update their skills, find jobs, learn how to use computers, etc.

“Drowning in social problems, our beneficiaries have a hard time in the school system and the working world,” says project manager Frédéric Vancoillie. “By removing obstacles to employment, they can bounce back. We offer them a kind of ‘buffer zone’ where they can build themselves back up”. Some 60 % of the beneficiaries go on to work in communes, public centres for social welfare, schools, etc., albeit temporarily, opening new doors to more permanent employment.

The Flanders region is also implementing specific measures for Roma that offer pathways towards work and better social integration. Both the Walloon and Brussels region are focusing on the fight against discrimination in access to jobs and the workplace.

Mutual learning

The European Employment Strategy adopted by the EU back in 1992 contains a programme designed to support, coordinate and encourage mutual learning between EU Member States. It encourages cross-fertilisation opportunities which

12 million long-term unemployed people

Long-term unemployment (lasting more than a year) doubled between 2007 and 2015. It now accounts for half of total unemployment, affecting 12.1 million people, i.e. 5 % of the active EU population. 62 % of them have been out of work for at least two consecutive years.

In some EU countries, more than half of the unemployed are long-term unemployed (67.5 % in Greece, 57.3 % in Bulgaria). 63 % of the long-term unemployed in 2012 were still unemployed in 2013, compared to 50 % between 2007 and 2008. 20 % of the long-term unemployed in 2013 had never worked before.

In 2012, the proportion of long-term unemployed in the labour force ranged between 1.1 % in Austria to 10.3 % in Croatia. The share of “very long-term” unemployed also went up from 1.5 to 2.9 %.

The share of long-term unemployed people among all the unemployed increased from about 22 % in the second half of 2008 to 34 % in the third quarter of 2013.

Each year, one fifth of the long-term unemployed stop looking for a job and becomes inactive.

SPECIAL FEATURE



Challenging legacy: The crisis leaves the EU with twice as many people who have been unemployed for more than a year, compared to 2007.

can have a concrete impact on policy-making at EU and national levels. And it disseminates the results of the programme to wider audiences.

In February 2014, in Sofia, the European network of public employment services (see page 26) organised a peer review to compare different approaches to “activating” in a sustainable way the long-term unemployed.

What is needed now throughout the EU is a step change in order to increase the rate of transition from long-term unemployment to employment: a much more systematic, holistic, customised, empathetic and contractual approach, entirely geared to getting people who have been unemployed for a long time effectively back into the labour market.

More information directly accessible through the on-line version of *Social Agenda*:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/socialagenda>

European Social Fund:

<http://ec.europa.eu/esf/main.jsp?catId=371>

Mutual learning:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=1072&furtherEvents=yes&limit=no>

Loopholes that need to be mended

Only 73% of the long-term unemployed people are registered as such in the EU. In several EU countries, the rate is below 50%. In 2012, only 13.5% of long-term unemployed people aged over 25 years old took part in active labour market programmes (which fund measures that actually help unemployed people find a job, as opposed to “passive” allocations).

Programmes for the long-term unemployed are not always focusing on pathways back to the open labour market. There is a tendency to devote funding to public works schemes (an estimated 31% of current spending on active labour market measures for the long-term unemployed in 2012) which do not always open pathways back to the labour market. Employers are not always closely involved in activities run by employment services.

Re-integration can be disrupted as support for long-term unemployed shifts from unemployment insurance provided by public employment services to social benefits provided by social assistance authorities. Coordination between the two types of services is limited and case histories are not always transferred between officers.

SPECIAL FEATURE

A job placement action framework

On 17 September, the European Commission put forward a Recommendation on the integration of the long-term unemployed in the labour market



Focus and flexibility: The proposed framework leaves plenty of flexibility to EU countries and helps them focus on the long-term unemployed.

Putting itself in the shoes of people who have been unemployed for more than a year, the European Commission put forward on 17 September a proposal for a framework to accompany them step by step in the job placement process.

The first step is to encourage their registration with an employment service, as only 73 % of the long-term unemployed people in the EU are registered – a rate which plummets below 50 % in several countries. First and foremost, the aim is to build up trust: trust that employment services can actually offer a clear perspective of a labour market integration pathway, tailored to individual needs.

And here comes the second step: the Commission proposes that EU countries put in place in-depth individual

assessments for the long-term unemployed between twelve and eighteen months of unemployment. The outcome of these enhanced assessments should lead to counselling and guidance based on the person's job search history and evolving employment barriers. Such an assessment would be a novelty for most EU countries, where individual assessments are only regularly carried out for newly unemployed people.

Back to work agreement

The third step is that the individual assessment should result in a plan aimed at opening up a path back to work: a Job Integration Agreement, which itself would be made up of three components.

SPECIAL FEATURE

First component: an individual service offer, made up of measures available at national level in terms of job search assistance, training, work experience, mentoring, debt counselling, rehabilitation, child care services, housing and transport support.

Second component: a written agreement for the unemployed person. The agreement would detail the offer in terms of the respective rights and responsibilities. This would ensure joint commitment (e.g. participation in training, interviews, counselling...) both from the beneficiary and from the organisations involved.

A single point of contact, as the counterpart of the unemployed persons in implementing the written agreement, is the third component of the Joint Integration Agreement. It will ensure that the support offered by the different agencies involved in the agreement (public employment services, social services, municipalities, health services...) is provided in a continuous and consistent way. The EU countries would put in place the legal and institutional arrangements to deliver a coordinated range of services to the long-term unemployed.

This third component is absolutely crucial, knowing that coordination between employment and social services alone is only in place in one third of EU countries. It also epitomises the underlying philosophy of the European Commission's proposal: providing services from a citizens' perspective, simplifying procedures for long-term unemployed people and reducing transitions to inactivity due to discouragement in the face of bureaucratic hurdles - hence the concept of a pathway, a simpler journey for the beneficiaries.

Employers' involvement

Running right across the Commission proposal is the need to encourage employers to get involved in the proposed integration process. At present, at least one third of active labour market programmes (ALMPs) supporting long-term unemployed people in the EU are disconnected from the labour market. An estimated 31 % of current spending on active labour market measures for the long-term unemployed went to public work schemes in 2012.

In many countries too, employment services have not yet developed comprehensive employer services, such as helping small and medium size entrepreneurs in defining the kind of people they need to recruit, writing a vacancy notice, pre-selecting candidates and providing a training offer.

Social investment

Potentially, between 250 000 and 380 000 additional yearly transitions from long-term unemployment to employment could be expected, throughout the EU, if the European Commission proposal was fully implemented, leading to more convergence across Member States.

The EU countries and the EU as a whole would benefit from this in terms of economic and social dynamism and cohesion, budgetary balance and savings in unemployment benefits, social assistance, social security etc.

True, this proposal would require an initial investment in service and coordination capacity on the part of many EU countries.

However, the implementation of the initiative can be co-funded by the European Structural Investment Funds - including the European Social Fund, for which the operational programmes have recently been approved by the European Commission for the 2014-2020 programming period (see Social Agenda n°39, 40 and 41).

While the whole pathway approach, from long-term unemployment to the labour market, can be experimented with the help of the PROGRESS section of the EU programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) 2014-2020, through calls for proposals (see Social Agenda n°35).

Involving employers is crucial to overcome the barrier of prejudice and discrimination facing long-term unemployed people, when potential employers have to choose between a host of CVs.

Flexibility

Can EU countries and their public employment services, social services etc. afford to do more for the long-term unemployed than what they are already doing?

The most difficult component of the framework proposed by the European Commission is to set up the single point of contact. It would coordinate organisations in charge of

SPECIAL FEATURE

job search, management of benefits and sanctions, social assistance and supporting services such as health services etc. It would also involve creating mechanisms to pool information and, where possible, share data to allow all appropriate agents access to client case history records.

On the other hand, the Commission proposal is only a framework. It gives plenty of flexibility to the Member States as to how to create this single contact point in practice. For example, they do not have to regroup offices physically together. The main thing is that they coordinate and simplify long-term unemployed people's access to the different services.

A Recommendation

The Commission proposal is for an EU Council Recommendation, the same kind of instrument that was used to launch the Youth Guarantee in 2013, which aims to provide every person up to 25 years old with a quality offer for training, an apprenticeship or a job within four months of leaving education or being unemployed (see page 10).

Evidence shows that the Youth Guarantee Recommendation is helping EU countries reform the way their public employment but also education and other relevant services address youth unemployment, linking them up in the process. It gives more

political focus to youth unemployment and shapes the way the Member States use EU funding and mutual learning facilities.

The Recommendation on the integration of the long-term unemployed into the labour market, which the European Commission is now proposing, surfs on the momentum created by the Youth Guarantee one. This time, the focus is on the long-term unemployed not covered by the Youth Guarantee, knowing that in some countries the Youth guarantee covers people up to 29 years of age. There, the challenge is to connect employment services with social services in particular.

Whereas priority has so far been given to those only recently unemployed, the number of which is fortunately going down, the proposed Recommendation would provide a common framework which would prompt Member States to use EU co-funding and mutual learning to tackle a particularly difficult social and economic issue: long-term unemployment.

More information:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=2319&furtherNews=yes>



Single contact point: For many countries, the most challenging component of the framework proposed by the European Commission to set up.

SPECIAL FEATURE

“The goal is: back to the labour market!”

Jackie Morin is the head of the European Commission service in charge of employment services and mobility



Jackie Morin: We have to make registration pay off so that people trust they will in return get a structured service opening up pathways to the labour market.

Why put the spotlight on long-term unemployment just now?

The long-term unemployment trend is particularly impressive (see previous articles). Beyond the figures, being “long-term unemployed” is not the same thing as being “unemployed”. As time goes on, it becomes more and more difficult to get

back into the labour market, keep up your skills, sustain a family etc. There is a close relation between unemployment and social exclusion.

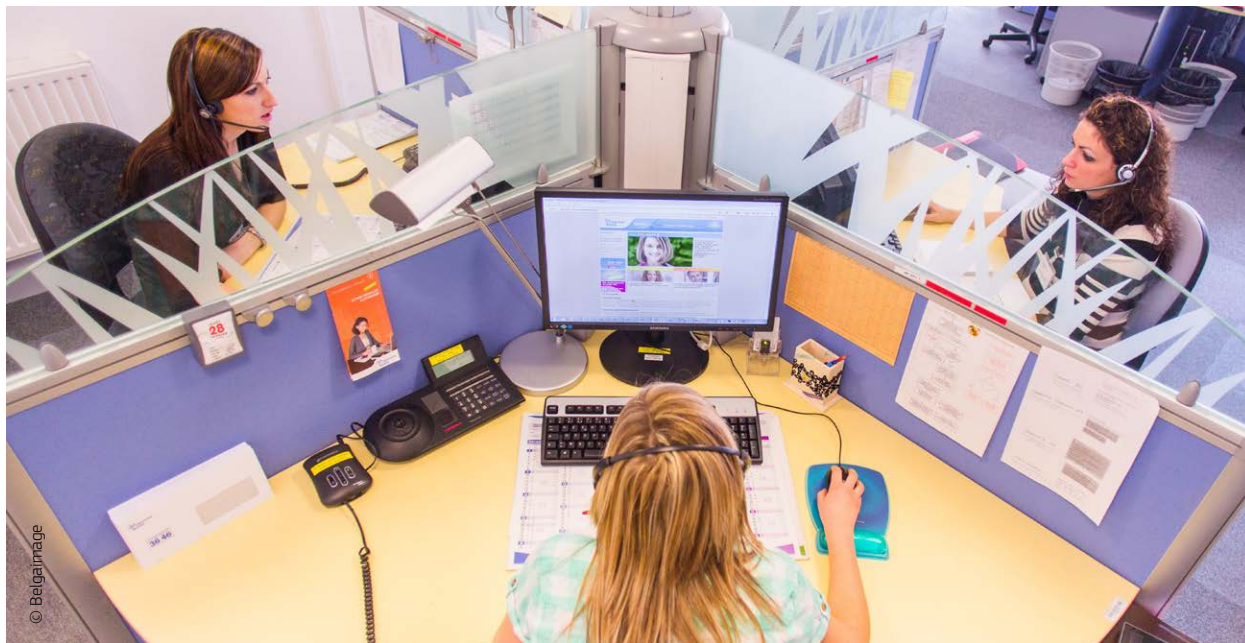
Where does long-term unemployment end?

First we have to acknowledge that at a certain point in time, people may decide to stop working for all sorts of reasons. However, around 20% of the long-term unemployed get discouraged and stop looking for a job at some stage. They fall into “inactivity” and this is probably not purely voluntary on their part. They could have been pushed out of the labour market because they were not offered adequate ways of re-entering it. Part of the out-of-work population would gladly engage in active job search again. This is why registration is so crucial. We have to make it pay off so that people trust that, if they register as long-term unemployed, they will in return get a structured service which will open pathways to the labour market.

How do you suggest restoring trust?

Trust is linked to the quality of the service which will be offered by employment services, social agencies or their partners. Those who become long-term unemployed (after twelve months in unemployment) will be specifically listened to by an official who will be his/her unique interlocutor for all the administrations which need to be mobilised throughout the journey back to the labour market. This will ensure not just quality but continuity of service. On average, in the EU, unemployment benefits are delivered for fourteen months and in many countries for less than one year. Beyond that, unemployed people have to start again from scratch. They are sent to other services (social services, municipalities, health services...) to look for other forms of support, with other conditions attached. The information on the person is lost between the different administrations involved and those who need most help are also lost.

SPECIAL FEATURE



The onus will be on them: In some countries, employment and social services will have to refocus priorities and efforts towards direct contact with the long-term unemployed.

But trust works both ways, doesn't it?

At present, it is not just the long-term unemployed who get discouraged but the employment service officials too! In exchange for the quality and consistency of services that will be proposed, the rights and duties of the long-term unemployed and the single-point of contact person will be clearly stated in a joint agreement between both sides. With the job integration agreements, we aim to ensure continuity between the various administrations involved. Conditionality should not be there to get rid of unemployed people and improve statistics. Rather, it is part of a package which includes an investment, a high degree of consideration thanks to a personalised approach, as well as some obligations.

Having such a personalised approach will cost money, though?

For sure, the onus will be on the employment agencies and social services of the EU Member States. In some countries, it will require refocusing priorities and efforts towards direct contact with the long-term unemployed. It is more complicated to make a specific assessment based on the history and on the strengths and weaknesses of the person and try and find, together with him or her, the most adequate scheme, rather than simply saying: "We have a specific programme for the

long-term unemployed" and that's it. However, the challenge is not to offer more schemes but to ensure the resources to administer a client-oriented approach, as well as the competences to carry out a pertinent assessment. In fact, this evolution is already underway in an increasing number of countries. What the European Commission proposes it to push and support this modernisation process by providing a framework and guidance, as well as funding through the European Investment and Structural Funds. The European Social Fund in particular provides support not only for training the unemployed but also to reinforce administrative capacities.

What is the bottom line of the Commission's proposed Recommendation?

Focus on just one goal: "back to the labour market"! We invite all services that deal one way or the other with long-term unemployed people to engage with them in a pathway to employment. No more "parking" schemes, which are both expensive and inefficient! This entails working on both ends: to take as a starting point each person's needs and goals and to involve the employers more closely. Only by looking at both ends can we equip the jobseeker with the skills employers are looking for; and only by helping employers seeing the person for what he/she is and has to offer, rather than as a "long-term unemployed", can we open the door to a job.

SPECIAL FEATURE

But isn't a Recommendation too weak a legal instrument?

It is a process-oriented instrument, just like the one on the Youth Guarantee which the EU adopted in 2013: youth unemployment figures are now going down and we are witnessing a genuine mobilisation of the services concerned in the EU countries (see page 10). Recommendations provide policy focus, guidance and boost, while leaving enough flexibility in terms of implementation. And implementation is the key! There is a huge difference in terms of performance between those countries that have already put in place some kind of individualised service and those who haven't. Differences in success rates are huge, ranging across countries from 10% to more than 40% of the long-term unemployed finding a job after one to two years of unemployment! The countries which have introduced customised services have improved their integration rate and they get a return on investment in one or two years.

Will the customised approach prevent the long-term unemployed from becoming in-work poor?

The goal is to help registered long-term unemployed back to work. A year after finding a job there is 50% chance that you and your family will have escaped from poverty. If the services offered by the employment agencies are sufficiently good and if the labour market is recovering and we see more job creation, more will get adequate jobs in view of their skills and qualifications.

What about vulnerable groups? Isn't the individualised approach detrimental to them?

On the contrary: tailoring support to each person's needs is better than placing people into rigid categories. What we don't want to see anymore is the group approach being applied without a personal assessment, which is too often the case at the moment.

So the individual assessment is the corner-stone of the Recommendation?

Yes, an assessment leading to a job integration agreement which offers a roadmap towards a number of solutions, which can be re-assessed and adapted in due course. In most EU countries, if not all, unemployed people get a first assessment - sometimes even in-depth profiling and a plan - when they first register with an employment service. Time goes by, the plan has been implemented and, by definition, has failed in the case of the long-term unemployed. There is a risk that people are forgotten after the first year. What the European Commission proposes is that a second assessment should take place after one year and before eighteen months of unemployment, assessing what has happened since this person has been unemployed and leading to a new, more elaborate plan: the job integration agreement. In this way we go back to the long-term unemployed people and ensure that nobody is left behind.



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Discouragement: Around 20% of the long-term unemployed get discouraged and stop looking for a job at some stage.

LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYMENT

Customisation at work in Germany

Individual profiling and integration contracts are already a common feature in several EU countries, such as Germany



Prejudice: The biggest problem is the fact that employers have prejudices regarding the long-term unemployed.

"The European Commission's proposal is a very nice description of 90 % of what we are doing", explains Ingo Zielonkowsky, who is in charge of the Düsseldorf Jobcentre. "From the very beginning, when an unemployed person comes to solicit some unemployment benefit, we undertake a special, personalised profiling of that person: we check what qualifications he/she has and work out with him/her

a step-by-step strategy to get back into the labour market. Then we sign an "integration contract", which contains a set of rights and duties. Everything is deduced from this contract, which is checked and, if necessary, adapted every time we see each other: the re-skilling opportunities we arrange, the contacts they have to take with the further support system etc."

"We don't have a one-stop shop, except for the young unemployed. But each of our officers has a very good network in the different administrations, most of which are at the level of the local authorities: debt advice system, drugs counselling service etc. So we establish the first contact and the contract stipulates that our clients have to pursue them and address whatever problem they have".

New qualifications

"In Germany, to get a job, many people do an apprenticeship which provides them with a certificate. For adult people, we have a fast-track approach whereby they can get a certificate within two years. This is very important because 60 % of our long-term unemployed have not been through apprenticeship, and that is a big obstacle on the way to employment. So it's crucial to provide them with new qualifications, so that they can get a certificate and take on a profession. The Jobcentre finances the apprenticeship and, once the unemployed person has a certificate, it helps him/her get in touch with potential employers until he/she has found a job".

"The biggest problem is the fact that employers have prejudices regarding the long-term unemployed. They suppose they are not as good as the other candidates and that they will cost them money, so they don't even want to try hiring them. We keep on saying to the employers: 'Don't look at their school marks and detailed CV, look at the human being, how motivated they are'. There could be more of a sense of social responsibility among employers: they often have a strictly cost-benefits approach".



A must: In Düsseldorf, 60 % of the long-term unemployed have not been through apprenticeship, which is a must in Germany.

"The Jobcentre provides services to employers, helping enterprises finding the people they need, providing their staff with qualifications that will prevent them from becoming unemployed etc. We also care for any shortcomings that our clients might show once they have been hired by a company: we can arrange for our client to be tested by a company for two or three weeks, or have them go through an individual qualification phase for three months. We pay their salary, or part of it, during these trial periods".

Extremely motivated

For example, Anna, 49, was unemployed since 2007. She went to the jobcentre, which studied her case and signed an integration contract with her. From October 2010 to October 2012, she undertook an apprenticeship programme – a mixture of theory at a training centre and practical experience in various companies – and was awarded a certificate. She was extremely motivated.

The jobcentre then talked to some employers, explaining that she had been far away from the labour market but has acquired new qualifications and is very motivated. After eight months, she was hired as an industrial clerk in the mechanical engineering sector, on the condition that the Jobcentre paid 30 % of her salary during the first six months.

Luca, 38, studied electronics for five years at university but he did not complete his studies. In the end, he never worked in this area. With the help of the Jobcentre, he undertook vocational training in a completely different area: retail, acquiring skills in accountancy, communicating with clients and computer software in the process. He found a job in this area but in 2012, he became unemployed. The Jobcentre

helped him get in touch with potential employers and he found a job again, on the condition that the Jobcentre paid 20 % of his wage during the first six months.

In Bulgaria too

Bogdana, 51, had initially trained as an electrician but she never practiced this job. Instead, she worked as a secretary. At one stage, she lost her job and consequently, her house. In 2013, she went back to an employment agency, where counsellors analysed her situation and did two things: they referred her to a social service, which provided her with accommodation for three months; and they appointed a case-manager to assist her. Bogdana signed an action plan with the case-manager and undertook training. She then took part in an employment programme set up by a hospital to become a care-assistant. And with the support of a social worker and of the case-manager, she also found a place to live next to her work. She is now getting on very well.

Aneliya, 31, had been registered with the local employment agency since October 2011. She had three Master's degrees and spoke 6 languages – but no real work experience: she had spent most of her time looking after her sick grandmother and she lived with her retired mother, who earned a small pension. A team of employment agency officers got together to help her. Aneliya attended a job-search workshop and started consulting a psychologist. She is now undergoing training as an administrative assistant.

OTHER
VOICES

A foe of prosperity and social peace

Long-term unemployment is detrimental both to individuals and to society at large



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Frank-J. Weise: More coherent policies and programmes, improved counselling services, intensified case management and a stronger employer orientation.

Long-term unemployment has a strong negative impact on the social situation of individuals and societies. Individuals who are unemployed for more than one year face particular and complex problems to get a new job, and over time, chances are getting lower and lower. There are several reasons for this. First, the skills and abilities of workers depreciate over time if they are unemployed. Second, long-term unemployment in itself often works as a negative signal to employers. With decreasing chances of getting a new job, hope, dignity and self-confidence are also fading – this in itself further diminishes their labour market prospects. Hence, a fast and successful re-integration of jobseekers into employment is the ideal prevention of long-term unemployment.

Today, more than half of the unemployed individuals in the European Union are unemployed for more than one year. This group is very diverse: for low-skilled workers and for migrants, the risk of long-term unemployment is twice as high as for all workers. The chances to find a new job are low, but they do vary regionally: 50% of the long-term unemployed find a job before the second year of unemployment in Denmark, Estonia and Austria, compared to less than 20% in other countries.

Structural reforms

The long-term unemployed are a particularly challenging group. Interventions to help these individuals are more costly and success rates are lower than treatments for short-term unemployed. But only 10 public employment services have specific targets for combatting long-term unemployment – and only one fifth of the active labour market policy spending in the EU is directed towards this group. Undeniably, economic growth and flourishing businesses are the major cause for increasing employment opportunities. However, for a substantial progress in combatting long-term unemployment, it is clear that structural reforms are indispensable. For these new structures, in terms of quantity and quality more resources need to be invested. In the medium term and in the long-term, an increasing number of labour market integrations and a decreasing number of unemployed will lead to reduced public spending.

Successful, proven and promising approaches for tackling long-term unemployment include more coherence in policies and programmes, improved counselling services and intensified case management. Additionally, a stronger employer orientation is needed in many countries. We as public employment services must put more emphasis on actively searching for vacancies and on particularly advocating the skills, competencies and capabilities of each long-term unemployed individual.

This is of course just the beginning. In the European network of public employment services we are currently introducing Benchlearning – a combination of indicator-based benchmarking and structured mutual learning – to provide guidance for good practice and efficient structures to our members. The objective is to establish a self-sustaining system of continuous measurable performance increase. The conditions are a thorough commitment of the national public employment services to implement reforms – and the provision of sufficient resources for good performance. Considering this, the Network plays an important role in enhancing the focus on long-term unemployed persons and increasing their participation in active labour market policy.

Frank-J. Weise,

President of the European network of public employment services

Jordi Curell: While Europe is slowly recovering from the crisis, employment levels haven't fully caught up and there are concerns about social standards.

INTERVIEW



Jordi Curell is Employment and Social Legislation and Social Dialogue Director at the European Commission, since 1 March 2015.

From student to labour mobility

You took part in the creation of Erasmus+ in your previous position as Director in the Education and Culture Directorate General (DG EAC).

Yes, Erasmus+ reinforces vocational education and training (VET) mobility, fully incorporating enterprises, alongside universities, into the Erasmus+ programme. It covers all areas of education, from school to adult learning. Erasmus+ also represents a major change of approach in international cooperation in the field of higher education: it places EU and non-EU universities on the same level by bringing together a multitude of programmes. It also establishes stronger synergies with the PhD aspects of the Marie Skłodowska Curie actions under Horizon 2020.

You have already worked for a long time in the Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion DG (DG EMPL). Where do employment and social policy stand today?

While Europe is slowly recovering from the crisis, employment levels haven't fully caught up and there are concerns about social standards, e.g. through new forms of labour. The Commission has put these issues very high on its political agenda and DG EMPL participates now on an equal footing with DG ECFIN (Economic and Financial Affairs) in the European Semester process of economic policy coordination. Moreover, President Juncker re-launched the social dialogue at the beginning of his mandate: two thematic groups have been created, on how to step up social partners' involvement in the European Semester and on better law-making at EU level. The "Better Regulation for Better results"

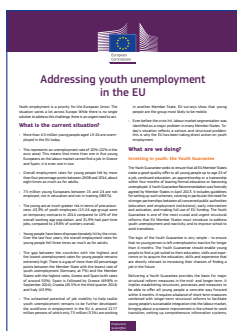
Communication adopted by the European Commission on 19 May 2015 acknowledges the social partners' specific role in this area. This will have a great impact, as we can see already with the on-going revision of EU health and safety legislation.

During your previous stint in DG EMPL, you were involved in launching the social agenda.

It was about giving a social dimension to the EU internal market, providing a global and coherent view of all that could be done using hard law as well as social partners' agreements, the Open Method of Coordination with the Member States (a voluntary process for political cooperation based on agreeing common objectives and measuring progress towards these goals using common indicators), the targeted use of the European Social Fund etc. Employment and social affairs now play a key role in the internal market and in the EU strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth – Europe 2020 – and President Juncker's political guidelines put a strong emphasis on social issues, as shown by the social "Triple A" and the social impact assessment of the Greek aid plan.

The European Commission is due to propose a package of measures concerning the issue of labour mobility...

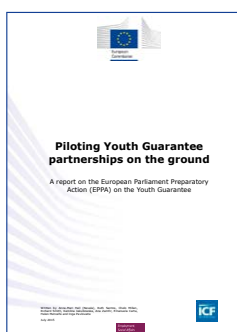
Yes, the package's two main pillars will be a revision of the EU Regulation on social security coordination and a review of the Directive on the posting of workers. We are currently working very actively on both issues.



Addressing youth unemployment

The Youth Guarantee seeks to ensure that all EU Member States make a good-quality offer to all young people up to age 25 of a job, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within four months of leaving formal education or becoming unemployed. A Youth Guarantee Recommendation was formally agreed by EU Member States in April 2013. It is one of the most crucial and urgent structural reforms that EU Member States must introduce to address youth unemployment and inactivity, and to improve school to work transitions. This publication is available only in electronic version in English.

Catalogue n° KE-02-15-605-EN-N



European Parliament Youth Guarantee preparatory action

In 2012 the European Parliament asked the Commission to set up a Preparatory Action to support Member States in building Youth Guarantee partnerships and trialling associated services among young people aged 15-24. 18 pilot projects were launched between August and December 2013, with each delivered over a 12-month period. This report offers a detailed review of the Preparatory Action, individual pilot projects funded by it in particular. It explores the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and added value of the pilot projects and presents conclusions related to the organisation and potential of the pilots. An executive summary (see below) and six individual case studies are also available.

Catalogue n° KE-02-15-599-EN-N



Social impact measurement for social enterprises

This policy brief was produced by the OECD and the European Commission. It presents the issues and ongoing debates surrounding social impact measurement and provides concrete examples of measurement methods. It highlights the concept of proportional measurement, in other words balancing up the costs and benefits of the measuring process. The policy brief also looks at guidance and resources for use by social enterprises and how to create a more widespread culture of measurement among stakeholders despite their often limited human and financial resources. This publication is available in electronic format in English, French and German.

Catalogue n° KE-04-15-192-EN-N

Useful websites

The website of Commissioner Thyssen: http://ec.europa.eu/commission/2014-2019/thyssen_en

The home page of the Commission's Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/>

The website of the European Social Fund: <http://ec.europa.eu/esf>

To download or to order these publications, please go to <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en>

To subscribe to the 'Social Agenda' magazine or to other publications of DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, please fill in the registration form available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=740&langId=en>