



Meeting of the Advisers for European PES Affairs (AFEPA)

9-10 March 2023

Outcomes

Participants: AT, BE_Actiris, BE_Le Forem, BE_VDAB, BG, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EL, EE, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, IE, IS, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, NO, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK, COM, PES SECRETARIAT

ITEM 1: Introduction

The agenda of the meeting was adopted. The minutes from the AFEPA meeting on 13-14 October 2022 were adopted and will be published.

ITEM 2: Update from the European Commission

COM presented updates on initiatives at EU level. According to the European Economic Winter Forecast, the EU labour market continues to be strong, with historically high vacancy levels. Information on displaced people from Ukraine's experience published in a recent Fundamental Rights Agency Report was presented. The importance of the PES Network survey on people displaced from Ukraine was emphasized as source of information on the topic: the survey also points to the need to increase registration at the PES.

The European Year of Skills 2023 will start in May, and last until May 2024. Relevant EU initiatives will be promoted and activities organised to increase participation among underrepresented groups. Instruments to increase transparency and easier recognition of qualifications will also be promoted. The focus will primarily be on the implementation of existing instruments. However, a number of new EU proposals will be adopted. These include the Net Zero Industries plan (focusing on a new role of work force management towards industries to support the green and digital transition) and the EU Talent Pool initiative (see also ITEM 8).

The High-Level Group on the future of social protection and of the welfare state in the EU presented its final report in February. One of its key strategic recommendations is ensuring inclusive protection and lifelong learning. The Council adopted the Minimum Income Recommendation on 30 January 2023. It calls on Member States to "strengthen the operational capacity of authorities in charge of income support, employment services and providers of enabling services and enhance their co-operation, including through data sharing and promoting further integrated service models".

Regarding labour mobility, some statistics from the upcoming Labour Mobility report were highlighted. An overview of EURES cross-border partnerships was presented, which aim to support frontier workers and employers in cross-border regions. Proposals to further consolidate the functionalities offered by both EURES and EUROPASS were presented, as well as their potential benefits for users.

In the related discussion, several AFEPA members addressed the risk of exploitation of displaced people and refugees from Ukraine. It was highlighted that it can be difficult to match the formal skills of displaced people with jobs, and that many people end up in jobs under their level of qualification.



ITEM 3: Benchlearning: Thematic Learning Dialogues and the 4th cycle methodology

Follow-up to the 3rd cycle

Regarding the follow-up to the 3rd cycle of Benchlearning, a data collection report was shared with Network for internal use. It will be discussed with the Benchlearning Working Group in April, whereby suggestions for future improvements can be put forward. AFEPAs discussed the main findings of the 3rd cycle, which will be published on the PES Knowledge Centre in the form of a summary report.

Thematic Learning Dialogues

HR, PL, DK, CY, FI, FR, BG, ES, IE and SK reported on benefits and lessons learnt after seven out of nine Thematic Learning Dialogues. The virtual pilot TLD (employer strategy) was assessed as successful by participants. All six participating PES in the experimental TLD for decentralized PES advocated a follow-up TLD, possibly in 2025. It was agreed that the next round to TLDs will be planned in parallel with the 4th cycle to allow continuous learning. Proposals for improvements will be taken into account.

Roadmap and timing for the next cycle

AFEPAs discussed the overall roadmap towards the 4th cycle, which is planned to start in January 2024. The Secretariat will approach individual PES to fix the overall calendar of site visits. Some AFEPAs expressed concerns about the timeline of the Roadmap and emphasized the need of expert support from the contractor. The timeline will be reviewed: if need be, an updated methodology could be adopted by written procedure in the early autumn. PES were invited to nominate new assessors. The next basic training for assessor candidates is planned on 24 October 2023 (tbc), with a deadline for nominations on 27 September.

Proposed structure for assessment within the 4th cycle

The proposed generic structure for assessment was agreed upon by AFEPAs. In this context, it was decided that, while assessment will generally take place in-person, the host PES will have the opportunity to opt for an online assessment duly, provided the same structure and agenda is followed as for in-person assessments.



ITEM 4 : Tour de Table on PES priorities

A new agenda item was introduced, based on short reports from AFEPAs on latest developments in their PES. FI reported on the new legislation on the reorganisation of public employment and business services that was recently adopted in the Finnish parliament (TE Services - Public employment and business services - 2024 reform). FR updated on the 'France Travail' reform. DE reported mainly on Citizen's Income and the Skilled Labour Immigration Act. DK reported on the announcements by the new Danish government on reforming the Danish Employment efforts. ES introduced the new Spanish employment law, aiming at modernisation of ALMPs and the labour services. NL informed about some key priorities, including integrated customers journeys, better co-operation with the municipalities and changes in the domain of health and labour. SE updated on the status in the first year of the new PES structure. SK report on upcoming priorities, including a new focus on job changers and prevention.

ITEM 5: Work Programme 2023

Work Programme overview

The PES Secretariat gave an overview of the Work Programme. Soon upcoming are the PES Network Stakeholder Conference (30 March) and the Webinar on PES outreach to those furthest from the labour market (19 April). PES interested in benefiting from a Mutual Assistance Project, organising a Jour Fixe meeting, hosting the upcoming Thematic Review Workshop and Working Groups were invited to contact the Secretariat.

The Secretariat updated on the discussion of modalities of PES activities. An overview of the format for 2023 activities as well as potential options for a longer-term approach were presented. These options will be discussed in the context of the preparation of the 2024 Work Programme.

Working Groups on Ukraine and Digitalisation

NO presented state of play of the ongoing Working Group on PES support to displaced people and refugees. A set of key considerations will be presented to the Board for endorsement. The Secretariat presented upcoming initiatives to support displaced people and the Ukrainian PES. PES were thanked for their contributions to the updates of the survey. The summary report will be published (with five days for comments) and the next update will be launched in April. Some AFEPAs requested possibilities to improved user-friendliness of the questionnaire results. The PES Secretariat will explore the possibilities. EE informed that they have hosted a study visit from the Ukrainian PES (which also included a visit to the FI PES). The aim is to continue the co-operation.

NL reported from the Working Group on digitalisation. The Secretariat informed about planned new activities on digitalisation. AFEPAs concluded that the Digitalisation Working Group should continue its work. PES Secretariat will launch a new call for expression of interest.

European Year of Skills

The PES Secretariat presented plans for PES Network activities related to the EY2023. The outline of an opinion paper was presented: AFEPAs will receive a draft for comments on 5 April. The process for exploring a labour shortage standard was presented: a mapping of existing approaches and indicators : will be launched in the near future.



PES Network Support Contract

COM updated on the new support contract.

ITEM 6: Preparation of 19th PES Board Meeting, 8-9 June 2023, Sweden

CZ reported back from the 18th PES Board Meeting in December 2022. PES Secretariat informed about the election of new Chair and 1st Vice Chair at the next Board meeting in Stockholm on 8-9 June 2023. An information meeting will be organized on 20 March.

The SE PES and the PES Secretariat presented the draft agenda of the Board meeting in Stockholm. Main themes at the meeting will be attracting skills and talents from third countries, skills for the green transition, sustainability on the labour market and innovation to meet our common challenges. AFEPAs gave input on how the programme could be profiled to meet the needs of the PES and the Board and highlighted the need to put a strong focus on the European Year of Skills.

ITEM 7: Information points

Nicola Duell presented the forthcoming PES Network study on new forms of active labour market programmes. The study shows that PES have reacted quickly to the recent changes in the labour market. Delivery and content of training measures are changed, particularly to support disadvantaged groups and the digital transition. Combining ALMPs with employment services have become more prominent. Recommendations for further achievements include continuing efforts to serve disadvantaged groups, strengthen partnerships, reinforce activities to respond to demographic change and to design and implement evidence-based policies. The study will soon be published in the PES Network Knowledge Centre.

ITEM 8: Consultation on the development of an EU Talent Pool

COM/DG HOME introduced the overall objective of developing an EU-wide tool aimed at facilitating international recruitment and providing opportunities for qualified third-country nationals to work in sectors of EU interest (by facilitating the matching between vacancies in the EU and skilled third-country nationals from outside the EU). The aim is contributing to strategic migration management by strengthening cooperation with partner countries (Talent Partnerships) and promoting complementary pathways for people in need of international protection. A legal proposal is planned by the end of 2023.

Key questions for the consultation were presented and discussed with AFEPAs. Topics such as PES competence and responsibility on matching, recognition of qualifications, definition of shortages and scope of the pool as well as governance were highlighted. Several AFEPAs highlighted the need for PES to play a key role in the Talent Pool and its implementation. Contributions in writing can be forwarded to the COM until 24 March 2023.

ITEM 9: PES Network Communication

PES Secretariat presented the main outcomes and recommendations of the report from the Working Group on Communication, focusing on internal communication in the Network. The role of the AFEPAs



and use of social media were highlighted. AFEPAs discussed in groups the topics of the role of the AFEPAs, support to the AFEPAs and PES Network members and how to step up the use of social media. Among the observations were the big differences between the PES and the AFEPAs' role across countries, with impacts on how relevant communication from the Network can be organised. The task of the AFEPAs can be facilitated by highlighting the topic and target group of Network information. A Network social media strategy could be useful, for example to reach stakeholders. The recommendations from the Working Group will be shared with the Board, and the proposals further discussed at the next AFEPAs meeting.

AOB and closure of the meeting

FR updated on activities for WAPES Europe region and informed about the new WAPES G7 PES initiative.

DE informed about the newly established network of 11 European labour market research institutes - ELMI (<http://www.elmi-network.eu/>).

The next AFEPAs meeting is planned to take place in Brussels on **12 and 13 October 2023**. AFEPAs are encouraged to attend in person.