

Annex 2: Stakeholder consultation

SWD Ex-post evaluation of the operation and effects of EURES Regulation (EU) 2016/589

1. Consultation strategy

1.1. Objectives

This Synopsis Report outlines the consultation activities organised to evaluate the EURES Regulation and presents the main findings.

To ensure transparency and involve the stakeholders, the process followed the standards and methods set out in the Better Regulation guidelines. The various consultations have followed the roadmap and consultation strategy. The **roadmap**¹ of the evaluation itself was published on the Better Regulation website and open for public feedback between 16 July 2019 and 13 August 2019². The seven contributions received were overall positive towards labour mobility and the need for EURES. They provided suggestions to improve the consultation process, such as topics to evaluate, which were addressed in the consultation tools.

1.2. Consultation stakeholders, methods and tools

The stakeholders targeted by the consultation activities were individuals or organisations that had:

- an interest in or received services provided by EURES;
- expertise in the subject; and
- run or been involved in running EURES actions.

The table shows the stakeholder groups targeted through the consultation activities.

Type of stakeholder	Interest
Private citizens (including Jobseekers/workers); Companies/employers	They can provide feedback on the services received, whether they corresponded to their needs, and how they could be improved.
ECO officials; DG EMPL; Other Commission officials	The European Coordination Office (ECO) provides the background for specific decisions taken during the implementation. DG EMPL can assess whether EURES activities targeted the needs of the labour market. Other DGs and agencies may assess how EURES contributed to areas related to the labour market.
NCOs staff	National Coordination Offices (NCOs) oversee the implementation of EURES at national level.
EURES Members and Partners	EURES Members and Partners provide an insight into EURES activities and their coherence with other national and international policies.
Public and Private Employment Services, Public Authorities, Employers' and trade associations, Academic institutions, Civil Society/NGOs	Other stakeholders provide insight of their experience with EURES. They can compare services provided by EURES with similar services from other Employment Services.

¹ <https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/11866-European-network-of-employment-services-EURES-evaluation-2016-2020>.

² Feedback on the roadmap: https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/11866-European-network-of-employment-services-EURES-evaluation-2016-2020/feedback?p_id=5704929.

The figure illustrates the type of consultation tools used per category of stakeholders.

Overview of consultation tools per stakeholder group

	Consultation tools					
	Ad hoc Interviews	Fieldwork Interviews	Field workshops	Online survey	Open Public consultation	Validation and COVID-19 workshops
Private citizens (including Jobseekers/workers)		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Companies/employers		✓	✓	✓	✓	
ECO officials	✓				✓	✓
DG EMPL	✓				✓	✓
Other Commission officials					✓	✓
NCOs staff	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
EURES Members and Partners	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Public Employment Services		✓	✓		✓	
Private Employment Services		✓	✓		✓	
Public Authorities					✓	
Academic institutions					✓	
Employers' associations					✓	✓
Trade associations/unions					✓	✓
Civil Society/NGOs					✓	✓

1.3. Stakeholder participation

The total reach of the consultation activities is shown below.

Stakeholder participation

Type of stakeholder consultation		Timeframe	Number of responses/ consultation activities carried out
Public consultation		March – June 2020	1 434
Online survey	Jobseekers	May – June 2020	2 055
	Employers		164
	Members and Partners		96
	NCOs	May – September 2020	26
Case studies	Interviews	April – September 2020	76
	Workshops		12
Ad-hoc interviews		March – September 2020	2
Validation workshop		September 2020	1
COVID-19 workshop		October 2020	1
Total individual responses			3 853
Total workshops			14

No ad-hoc contributions outside of the consultation context or campaigns trying to influence the responding participants in their feedback were detected. The public consultation and the online surveys were advertised through the EURES portal and newsletter. This had an impact on the responses to the online surveys for jobseekers and employers as many respondents indicated that they interacted with EURES online via the portal so could provide feedback only on its functionalities and not on other services. To balance this, the case studies focused on gathering feedback from EURES staff, and jobseekers and employers who benefitted from individualised support.

2. Results of the consultation

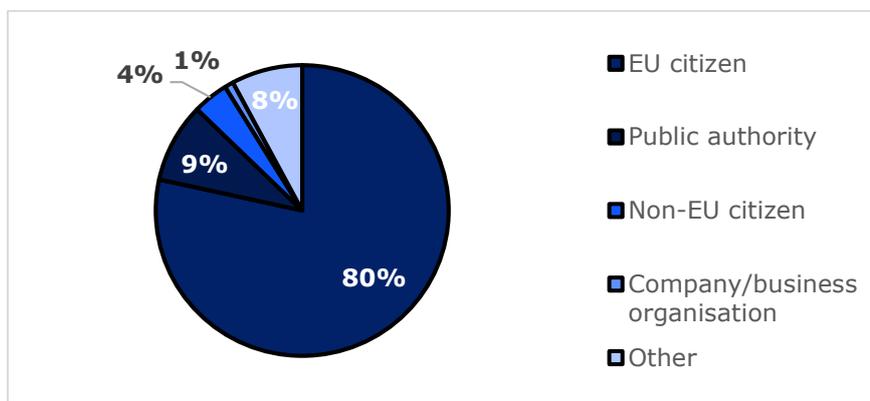
This part presents the results of the completed consultations per consultation activity.

2.1. Public consultation

The public consultation focused on audiences with no or minimal knowledge of EURES but there were also questions for those with knowledge of EURES. The questionnaire comprised closed and open questions. It provided information on EURES for those unfamiliar with it.

The graph shows the distribution of the 1 434 respondents into stakeholder categories. The majority of ‘Other’ respondents identified themselves as EURES Advisors, EURES Staff or an employee of their national Public Employment Service.

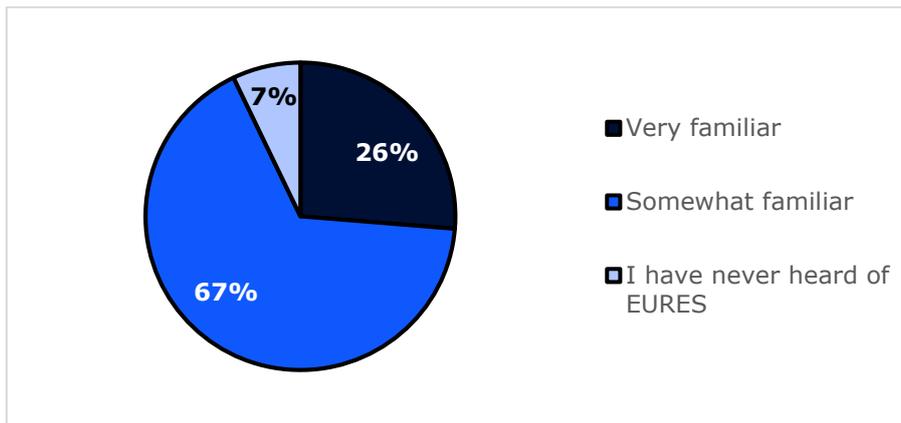
Category of respondents (n=1 434)



From the 1 326 respondents who indicated they originated from one of the 32 EURES countries; most responses came from Italy (29%, 380) and Spain (28%, 373). Given that more than half of the responses came from only two relatively similar countries in socio-economic terms, they have been interpreted with prudence and triangulated with other findings to ensure representativity.

The extent of familiarity with EURES is provided in the graph below.

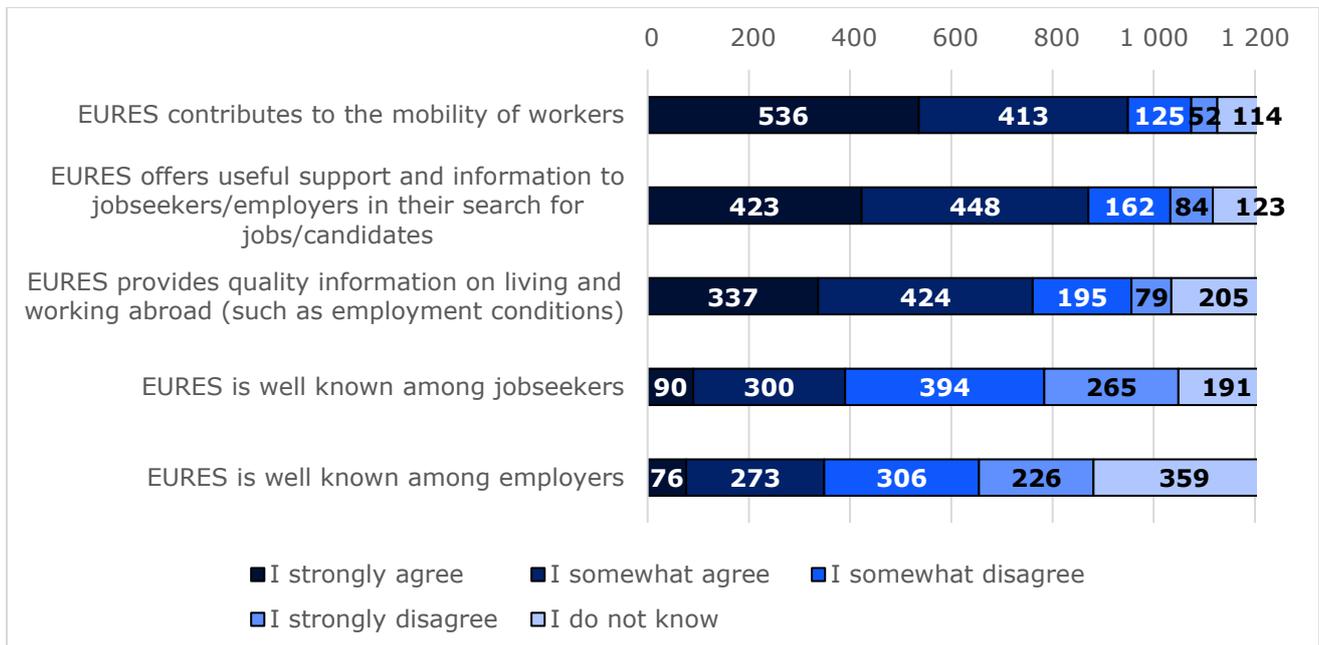
How familiar are you with EURES? (n=1 434)



More than two thirds of respondents agreed (68%, 836) that EURES provides **relevant** and modern employment services in line with the needs of European workers and employers. Only 23% (277) disagreed with this statement and 10% (127) had no opinion.

The respondents tended to agree that EURES is **effective** in contributing to the mobility of workers (76% (949) either strongly agree or somewhat agree) and providing useful and quality information (70% (871) either agree or strongly agree). At the same time, a considerable number feels that it is not well known among jobseekers (53%, 659) and employers (43%, 532), as it is not visible enough.

Agreement with statements on the effectiveness of EURES (n=1 240)

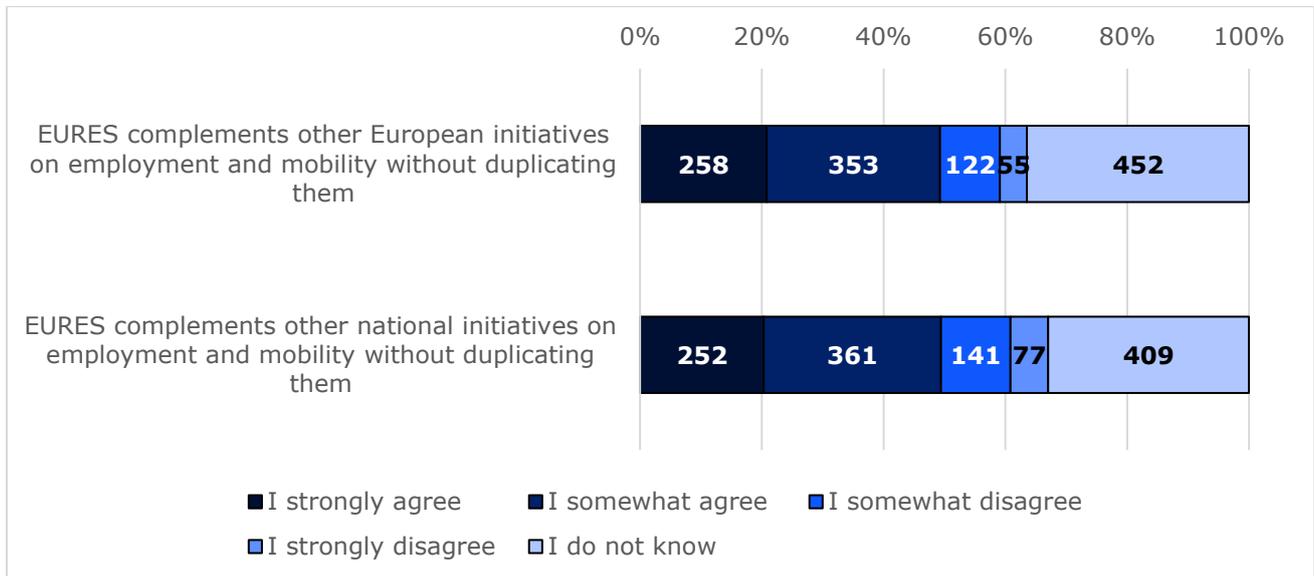


In terms of **efficiency**, 45% (601) of the respondents somewhat or strongly agreed that EURES achieves the best possible results given the resources invested; 18% (241) of respondents disagreed with this statement, 9% (118) strongly disagreed and 28% (378) did not have an opinion.

For **coherence**, about half of the respondents (49%) agreed that EURES complements other European (611) and national (613) initiatives, 14% (177) and 18% (218) of the respondents correspondingly

(strongly) disagree that EURES complements other EU and national initiatives. About one third were unsure about EURES’s complementarity with other EU (36%, 452) and national (33%, 409) initiatives.

Agreement with statements on the coherence of EURES (n=1 240)



When asked about the **EU added value** of EURES, three quarters of respondents agreed (43% (536) strongly, 32% (391) somewhat) that more can be done with EU resources than just national ones to promote mobility and jobs.

72% (956) see the need to improve EURES, its tools and services, 4% (53) did not see such a need, while 24% (326) did not know. More than 1 200 respondents provided suggestions for improvements. The majority concerned: (1) the EURES website and mobility portal (modernising and improving their user-friendliness); (2) the EURES staff (more upskilling and training for EURES staff); (3) cooperation and visibility (increase the visibility of EURES and expansion of the network).

Overall, the respondents see free movement of workers positively. However, there were some respondents for whom the free movement of workers is not always a positive thing. They believe that free movement of workers leads to decreasing wages for certain jobs in their countries. Similarly, few respondents expressed a concern that the benefits of labour mobility are not straightforward and are not well known to the majority of Europeans. They believe that more should be done to familiarise the EU citizens with the advantages of moving abroad, as well as with employment opportunities in other countries. This is in line with responses of the online surveys and also the case studies where respondents felt that in this area EURES could step up its efforts to ensure that European citizens and businesses are informed about their rights connected to the free movement of workers.

While all contributions were taken into account from statistical point of view, about 1% (15) of contributions to the open questions were not usable as they contained inappropriate language through which the respondents expressed their frustration either with a specific employment or EURES service or individual national labour policies. Four of these inputs were marked as inappropriate for using hate language or specific insults to specific groups or EURES Members.

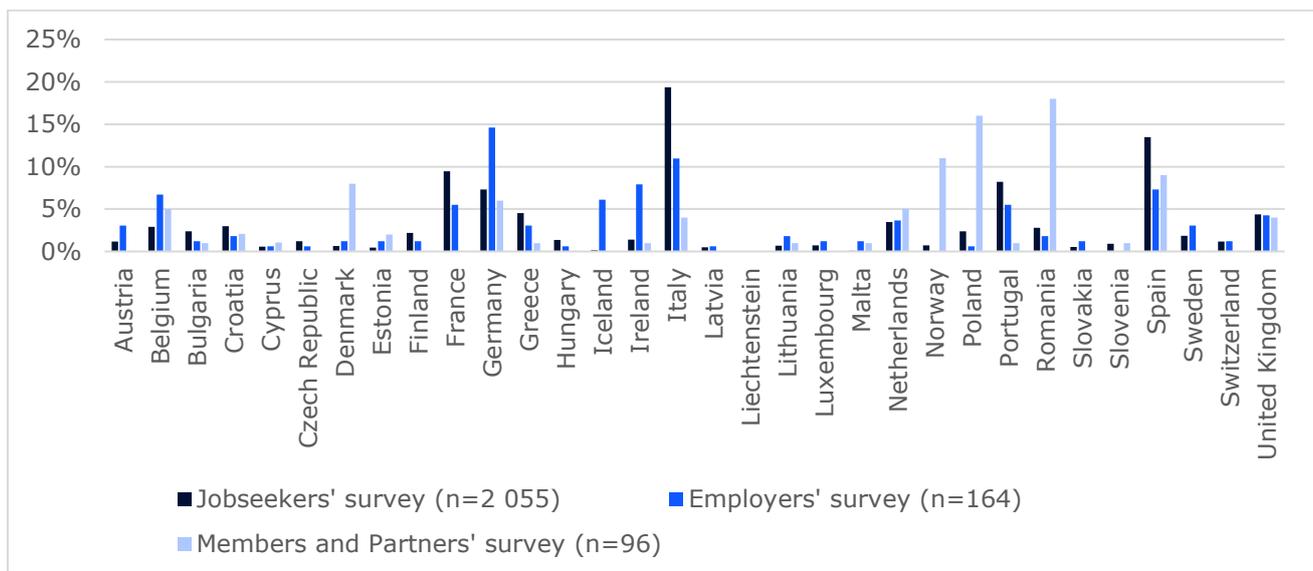
Twenty-eight (2%) respondents submitted additional suggestions, most often unusable for the purposes of the consultation: a proposal on how to turn waste into energy, company promotion material, registration certificate of an EU citizen in another EU Member State, 23 CV, a note discussing limitations of free movement between Italy and Switzerland, a screenshot from the portal in German showing need to improve the portal’s search function.

2.2. Online surveys

Four online surveys were launched for stakeholders particularly involved with EURES, which addressed broad target groups: (1) National Coordination Offices; (2) employers/companies; (3) jobseekers/workers; (4) EURES Members and Partners. The surveys contained closed and open questions. The questionnaires were aligned with the public consultation to ensure coherence and avoid duplication.

The graph provides an overview of the responses to the online surveys per EURES country. The NCO survey is not included to maintain anonymity as one response per country was collected.

Overview of residence per survey



The overview of survey results is provided below.

2.2.1. Respondent profiles

Most **jobseekers** stated to be either unemployed (39%, 796) or employed but looking for a new job (35%, 712). The majority were male (64%, 1 305) between 30 to 49 years old (32%, 663). A large majority held a university level degree (72%, 1 601). Responses were mostly provided by jobseekers from Italy (19%, 398), Spain (13%, 277), and France (9%, 194). This is similar to the residency profile of the respondents in the public consultation, however, in this survey the respondents were spread a bit more equally among the responding countries, i.e. the top 2 countries make up only 32% as opposed to the 57% in the public consultation. Given that the survey was promoted through the EURES portal, the representativeness of the profiles is also aligned with those who are registered on the portal.

In the **employers'** survey, micro companies formed about one third of the respondents (33%, 54), followed by small companies (24%, 40). The most mentioned NACE sector of activities was 'S. Other service activities' (14%, 23). The country with the most employers responding was Germany (14%, 24), followed by Italy (11%, 18) and Ireland (8%, 13). This is partially aligned with the profiles of those who are registered on the portal as there the most employers come from Germany, Netherlands and France.

Members and Partners from 20 countries answered the survey. Most were from Romania (18%, 17), Poland (16%, 15) and Norway (11%, 11) which are some of the countries with the greatest number of Members and Partners in their network. Majority identified themselves as Members (78%, 75) of the national EURES networks, only 21% (20) were Partners.

Out of the 32 **National Coordination Offices (NCOs)**, 26 answered the survey.

2.2.2. Relevance

From 460 **jobseekers** who used EURES services, 57% (258) indicated the lack of job opportunities in the country of residence as the main reason to use EURES services; 55% (251) of jobseekers use EURES services due to better working and salary conditions in another country; and 43% (194) use EURES services as moving to work abroad would help them improve their foreign language skills.

Among the 128 **employers** who visited the portal or are registered on it, 62% (78) agree it increased employment opportunities, while 18% (23) disagree with this statement. Some employers commented that EURES offered them good matches for their job vacancies and were able to find good new employees or trainees. Others mentioned that the search did not produce good matches due to poor filter options.

Members and Partners believe that EURES helps addressing the current needs of jobseekers (92%, 84) and employers (81%, 75), offers relevant support and guidance to jobseekers (94%, 87) and employers (85%, 78), and increased employment opportunities for jobseekers across Europe (93%, 85).

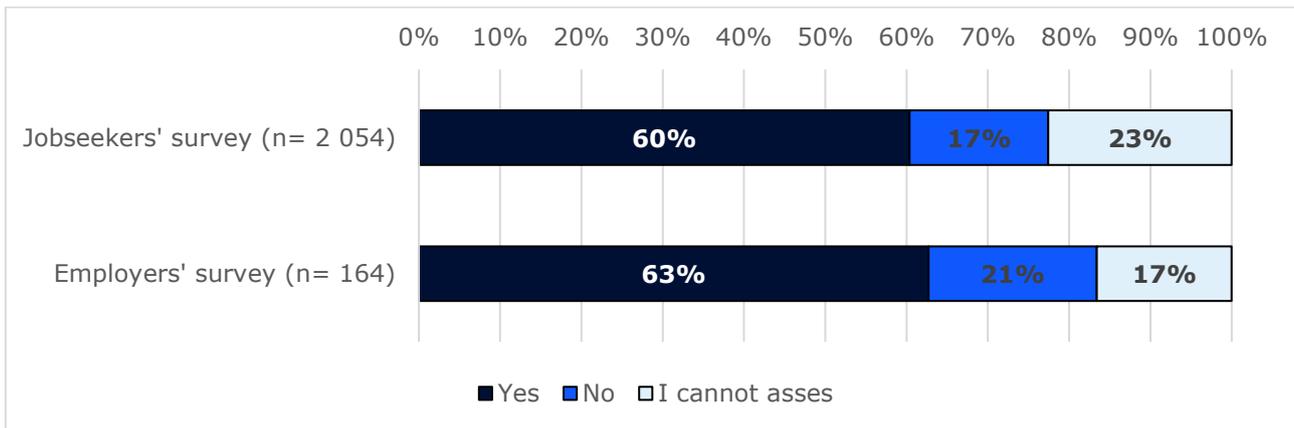
From the 26 **NCOs**, 23 agreed that the objectives of the EURES Regulation are aligned to the needs and problems of the intra-EU labour mobility; 21 agreed that EURES objectives and tools have been responsive to the changes on the labour market. With the exception of three respondents, all agreed that EURES targets the correct audience in order to achieve its objectives.

2.2.3. Effectiveness

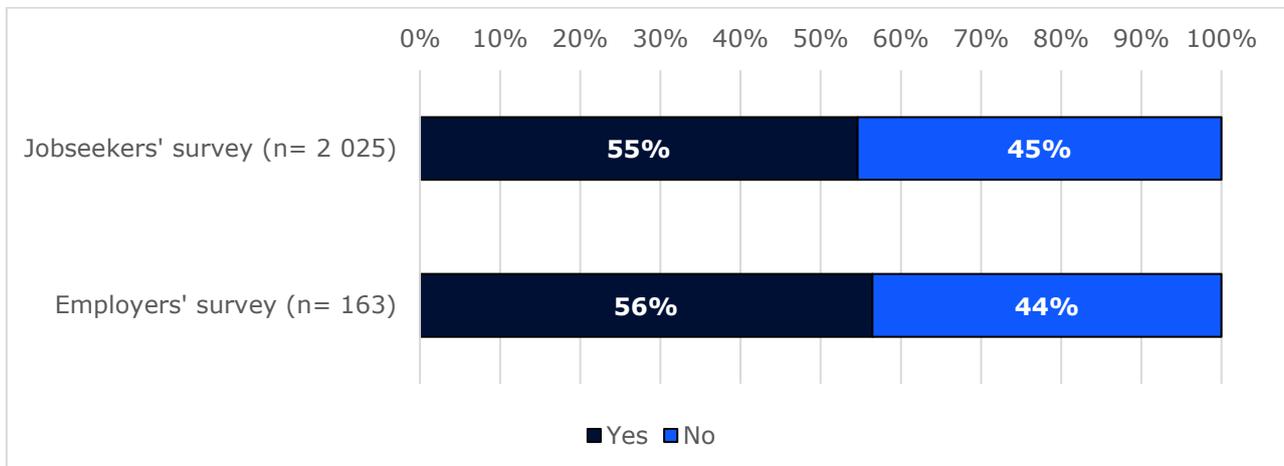
Among the 1 868 **jobseekers** who use the portal, 48% (905) (strongly) agree with the portal contributing to increased employment opportunities, 24% (447) (strongly) disagree and 28% (516) have no opinion. 69% (1 287) of the respondents (strongly) agree that information the portal provides is easy to understand, 25% (476) (strongly) disagree and 9% (105) have no opinion on the question. 55% (1 106) of the respondents think it is easy to find out about EURES and the various services while 45% (919) do not think so. 63% (1 288) of respondents would recommend EURES to other jobseekers but 21% (431) of respondents would not, of these majority assigned it largely to unsuccessful job search on the Portal.

Slightly more than half (56%, 92) of **employers** think it is easy to find out about EURES and the services it provides, while 44% (71) do not think so. The majority of respondents (60%, 99) would recommend EURES to other employers, while 17% (28) would not recommend EURES. Nearly one quarter (23%, 37) was undecided on this. The alignment on this question between the employers' and jobseekers' respondents is visible in the graph below as is the agreement of whether it is easy to find information about EURES.

Would you recommend EURES to other jobseekers/employers?



Do you think it is easy to find information about EURES and the services it provides?



Nearly all **Members and Partners** believe that EURES is effective in informing jobseekers (97%, 91) and employers (88%, 81) about mobility, helping jobseekers find employment (93%, 87) and employers find candidates (85%, 78), and is effective in matching employers with jobseekers (84%, 75).

All **NCOs** agreed that EURES contributes to labour market transparency by ensuring relevant information is available to potential applicants and employers. 18 respondents agreed that the promotion and communication activities of EURES help make it a widely known brand among jobseekers and employers. 15 respondents agreed that labour market participants are aware of EURES services and tools, while 8 respondents (strongly) disagreed with this statement. 19 respondents agreed

with EURES tools being effective in matching labour supply with demand across Europe. 24 respondents agreed that EURES mobility schemes effectively contribute to its objectives.

2.2.4. Efficiency

From the 365 **jobseekers** who indicated receiving guidance on finding a job abroad, 32% (219) responded that they would have found a job without the help of EURES, with 29% (104) indicating that it would have taken more time; 18% (63) of the respondents believe that they would probably not and 7% (25) that they would definitely not find a job without EURES.

From the 62 **employers** who indicated having received guidance in finding employees abroad, 37% (23) responded that they would have been able to find the correct candidates but not as quickly; while 24% (15) said that they would probably not have been able to find the right candidates without support from EURES. Yet, 19% (11) of employers said they would have been able to find employees even without the help of EURES. This is because they see the EURES database as containing very few good candidates with the necessary skills for their job vacancies and the filters on the portal as showing too many irrelevant candidates.

From the 34 **Members and Partners** who indicated that they use the EURES portal for matching, 26 (76%) think that automated matching function will save them time in comparison with manual matching and searching once it is fully implemented, while 8 (24%) are not convinced of that.

22 **NCOs** agreed that costs of EURES services and tools are justified by their results. However, 23 found that the administrative burden has had increased compared to the previous Regulation. Nearly half of the respondents (12) think that there is a scope for more efficient use of the EURES resources, while 10 do not know.

2.2.5. Coherence

Similarly to the public consultation, some **jobseekers** (2%, 41) drew similarities with the Erasmus initiative and its brand, from which they feel EURES can learn.

The vast majority of **employers** (81%, 58) who received EURES services believe that EURES services are complementary, while 19% (14) disagree. This is also aligned with the feedback received through the public consultation and the case studies.

99% (90) of **Members and Partners** believe that the consistency of the activities and target groups of the initiatives they participate in is good or very good. Only one respondent said it was poor.

Most of the **NCOs** agree that EURES is complementary to other EU (17) and national (20) initiatives and that the EURES tools are complementary (25). However, 11 NCOs find that the EURES tools are overlapping with other EU/national level policy measures/initiatives, e.g. Single Digital Gateway, European Labour Authority or Europass.

2.2.6. EU added value

The view of **jobseekers** and **employers** is divided on the extent to which they would be able to achieve the same results without EURES as is seen in the efficiency section above.

The **Members and Partners** agreed that EURES complement other European (88%, 81) and national (95%, 87) initiatives on employment and mobility and that more can be done to promote jobs and mobility through EURES than with national resources only (95%, 88). This echoes, albeit slightly less strongly, the feelings of the public consultation respondents.

Among **NCOs**, there is agreement that EURES has produced effects that would have not taken place without EU intervention (22) and that they have more reached groups (23).

2.2.7. Summary

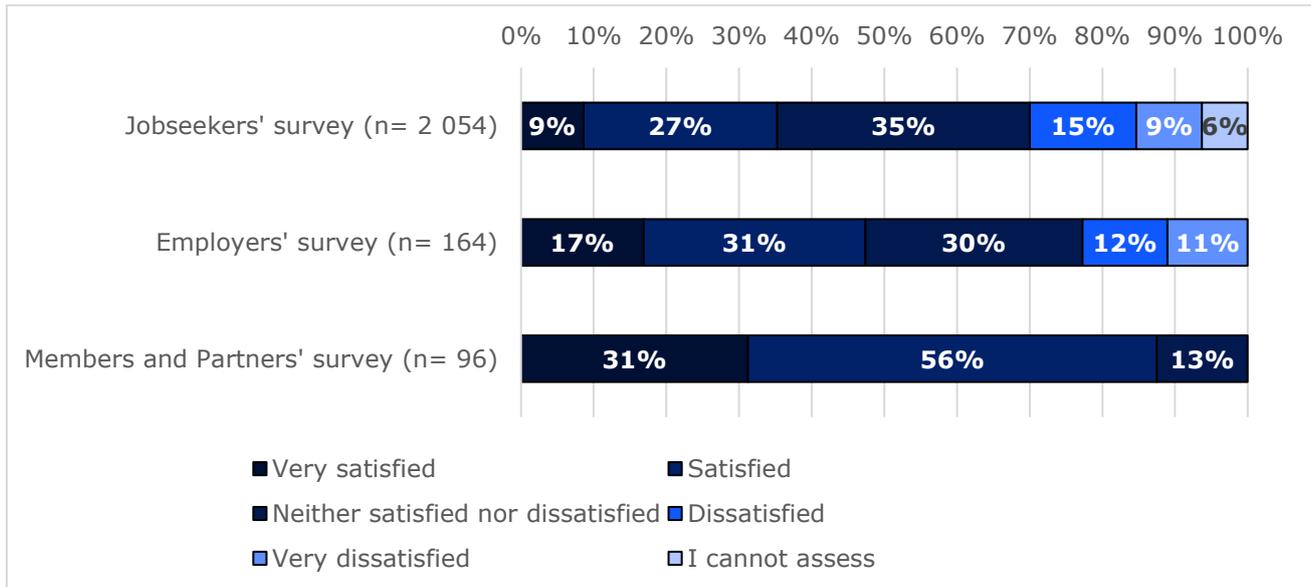
While overall, in the **jobseekers'** survey a considerable number of respondents (35%, 714) is neutral about their experience with EURES, about the same number of respondent are satisfied (9% (177) very satisfied and 27% (547) satisfied) or dissatisfied (9% (186) very dissatisfied and 15% (301) dissatisfied) with it. The dissatisfaction might stem from the respondents not being able to find relevant employment opportunities through EURES or being of an opinion that employers do not use EURES services on a regular basis which results in a poor job vacancy offer. The biggest criticism of the respondents was directed towards the EURES Portal. There the respondents highlighted that it needs further considerable development to be able to keep up with the technical developments. The replies are more positive for specific EURES services. For instance, over two-thirds (70%, 249) of those who received information and guidance in finding a job abroad were satisfied with the service, where 24% (87) were satisfied and 46% (162) very satisfied.

In the **employers'** survey, also about one third (30%, 46) of respondents were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with EURES. However, nearly half (47%, 73) were satisfied (17% (26) very satisfied and 30% (47) satisfied). Here, similarly to the jobseekers' survey, dissatisfaction (23%, 36) with EURES stemmed from the inability to find relevant candidates for their job vacancies. This criticism was again mainly focused towards the portal as the respondents did find little return for their efforts while sifting through the irrelevant results produced by the search function. This is aligned with the sentiments of jobseekers, providing also more positive replies for specific EURES services. For instance, most of those who received information and/or guidance in finding employees from abroad were either satisfied (53%, 33) or very satisfied (34 %, 21) with the service (all respondents except 8).

No **Member or Partner** were dissatisfied or even very dissatisfied with EURES. The majority of the (56%, 54) were satisfied. 5% (5) of the respondents would not recommend to other organisations to join the EURES network with only one respondent providing a reasoning for this which was that due to the withdrawal of the UK from the European Union, the future of EURES within their country is uncertain. Some respondents felt that EURES has undergone many changes in a short period of time which might hamper the objectives of these reforms. Particularly due to the introduction of the European Labour Authority and the establishment of the Single Digital Gateway. Another area where the respondents would welcome more efforts was the development of closer cooperation with the European Coordination Office (ECO) not only for the National Coordination Offices (NCOs) but also for, at least, all EURES Members. This could be done by involving ECO in local meetings of the network to bring in more overarching views and vice versa.

Overall, the direct EURES clients and its service providers seem to be satisfied with EURES or at least neutral about their satisfaction as can be seen in the graph below.

How satisfied are you with EURES and its services?



About one third (8) of responding NCOs while viewing their relationship with ECO as good said that they would welcome more interaction and improvement of the relationship. A barrier to a closer cooperation within the EURES network is the way the national networks are set up as it is not always possible to apply the same principles across the network. The internal political pressures were also mentioned as a challenge because of it some countries are only able to offer limited EURES services in some areas. The fact that there is no common consensus on the purpose of the Regulation and its demands for action is also seen as a barrier to a better functioning cooperation. The fact that many EURES countries are experiencing same shortages and surpluses has been highlighted throughout the survey particularly with regard to a shortcoming of EURES being able to come up with a unified approach towards this issue.

2.3. Case studies

The seven case studies were used to gather more qualitative feedback on EURES. The majority of interviewees were selected among EURES staff as they have experience of the introduction and impact of the EURES Regulation. Overall, no major differences between countries were identified across the case studies.

In terms of **relevance**, the respondents agreed that in recent years the network has adopted digital tools that accompany one-on-one counselling sessions such as webinars and European Online Job Days which help in reaching a wider number of candidates and spreading awareness about EURES. The jobseekers and employers appreciate the extent of information EURES is able to provide about all topics on working in another country.

The stakeholders agreed that focusing on ensuring fair labour mobility across EURES countries led to the development of a broad network of EURES advisers who are experts in intra-EU labour mobility which contributes to **effective** delivery of EURES services. Post-recruitment services are seen as **less effective** since they are not sufficiently developed across the network.

The new monitoring and reporting requirements of the Regulation are seen as necessary to provide a more comprehensive picture of EURES activities than in the past but they lead to more administrative burden. The fact that not all EURES staff work fully only on EURES activities decreases the **efficiency** of the service provision.

EURES countries are increasingly facing the same skills shortages and surpluses, which is seen as an obstacle needing resolving as this leads to conflicting priorities at national level regarding the promotion of labour mobility. This may affect the **coherence** of EURES service provision across the network. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on national labour markets is yet to be seen. Respondents widely recognised that it would affect national priorities which may lead to taking away resources from EURES to other areas. Similar sentiments were expressed also in the online surveys in this regard.

The main **added value** of EURES is in ensuring fair mobility and free provision of services.

In comparison with the online surveys and the public consultation, the stakeholders consulted as part of the case studies focused more on the services tailored to individuals' needs rather than the services offered through the EURES Portal. Nonetheless, respondents also highlighted the same shortcomings in terms of the search and matching functions and overall user-friendliness of the Portal as in the surveys and the public consultation.

2.4. Validation and COVID-19 workshops

The validation and COVID-19 workshops gathered key stakeholders and experts in labour mobility to verify the findings of the ex-post evaluation. The feedback gathered was used to fine-tune the final findings. Overall, the participants confirmed the presented findings and further developed some of them.

The greatest insistence is on highlighting better that the different realities of each of the national networks are taken into account when interpreting the findings as it is an **influential factor** when assessing the implementation of the Regulation, particularly with regard to the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency. Going forward, it is important that the newer EU initiatives (e.g. Europass, Single Digital Gateway) ensure coherence with EURES.

In the COVID-19 workshop, the participants highlighted that EURES managed well the transition to online service provision. As remote working is likely to become more prominent, the European Labour Authority should look into harmonising the national regulations so that EURES can develop this aspect better in the information provision. Nonetheless, the workshop validated the overall results of the consultation showing that despite of the changing context, the results obtained are still relevant.