

Memorandum of Understanding the EEA for the development of the EURES network

In their 1998 Joint Mission Statement, the Heads of Public Employment Services of the EU/EEA agreed to strengthen their cooperation at European level, in particular with regard to developing "the full potential of the EURES network as a joint instrument of the Public Employment Services to support free movement of workers and to make the European labour market a reality".

The present Memorandum of Understanding reflects the above mentioned commitment and translates it into practical directions and steps to be taken in the short and medium terms. It is the result of a year of in-depth analysis and consultations within the EURES network and between the Heads of PES.

1. EURES, a valuable link between national PESs

The essential objective of EURES is to facilitate international labour mobility within the European Economic Area (EEA) by helping people - both employers and jobseekers - to make informed decisions in this respect and to put these decisions into effect.

Several factors clearly point to increased international labour mobility in the years to come.

Enterprises themselves are more mobile in the European space and are looking for a pluri-

national workforce. At the same time, the development of a better educated, multilingual and multi-cultural workforce results in more people being willing and able to work abroad.

With the achievement of the internal market, soon to be completed with a single currency, and the strengthening of European cooperation on employment policy, PES recognise that their playing field should be widened to the whole EEA space. The EURES experience and cooperation enables them to play a significant role on the European labour market scene.

- **Completing PES's service package :** By integrating EURES in their services, PES help to give substance to a fundamental right of European citizens: the right of free movement of workers. At the same time, they respond to a genuine and growing need of jobseekers and employers.

The EURES jobs and information data bases and its human network should be fully utilised to increase the employment options available to jobseekers beyond opportunities existing at local or national level. The EURES network also provides valuable information and guidance to jobseekers on the specific issue of geographical mobility, a service which is unique on this scale.

With respect to enterprises, PESs are committed to offer them "a range of quality services bridging between their needs and labour market conditions" (Joint Mission Statement). The EURES jobs database enables employers to advertise their vacancies outside their national borders in up to 17 countries, greatly increasing the pool of labour to choose from and increasing the chances of the PES to fill the vacancies they receive.

- **Reducing bottlenecks:** The emergence of major skills gaps in some Member States as well as an ageing and, in some regions, declining working population create the risk of serious bottlenecks on the labour market in coming years. Geographical mobility is becoming a more important labour market adjustment factor, when it is clear that national and Community efforts to fill structural skills gap in some Member States can be usefully supported by skill surpluses in other Member States. In such situations, EURES has a potential, as yet not fully exploited, as an instrument to reduce the skills gap in Europe by facilitating links between national employers and non-national jobseekers. It should be developed as an early-warning system, indicating through the data base on regional labour markets and the network in which sectors there are shortages and surpluses of qualifications, and help to solve bottlenecks.
- **Dealing with crossborder labour markets :** In many regions of the EEA, local labour markets extend over the borders of one or two other neighbouring countries. The EURES crossborder partnerships offer a unique opportunity for the regional services of the PES to experiment together the management of a genuinely European labour market, in cooperation with other local partners, including social partners.

- Supporting the European employment strategy: PES have an important role to play in the implementation of the European employment strategy. Through EURES, they increase employment prospects of jobseekers, but they also contribute to raising their employability. Work experience abroad often improves workers employability, through contact with other enterprise cultures and use of languages. This applies particularly to young people.

At the same time as it opens a European dimension for the PES, EURES brings notable support to their internal missions, in terms of services to jobseekers and employers. This is why PES consider EURES as an instrument which is worthwhile investing in.

2. Practical steps towards better integration of EURES in PES services

Heads of PES consider that the best way to improve EURES's impact, both in quantitative and in qualitative terms, is a better integration of EURES in the PES operations:

- **Management structures**
PES will review the way in which decisions on EURES are taken and implemented in their organisations. The management structure should be such as to facilitate the integration of EURES in the operational services of the PES and to guarantee full support of the hierarchy, down to the local agencies, and through key line-managers. The role of Euroadvisers, other staff involved in delivering EURES services, EURES managers and involved line-managers and their intertwined relationships should be clarified at national level.
The organisation of EURES in countries in the process of PES regionalisation will be reviewed to ensure that EURES services are uniform and coherent.
- **Planning, setting targets and monitoring**
EURES objectives and priorities must as far as possible be part of the objectives of the national Employment Services and reflected in the PES service offer. PES will examine steps towards a better integration of the European dimension in the definition of their targets and performance indicators.
- **Promotion**
PES will promote the EURES service as part of their normal range of services to employers and jobseekers. Employers should be made aware of the possibility to publish their vacancies abroad and to get assistance in recruitment from the EURES network. Jobseekers should be assisted and advised if they are interested in working in another EEA country.
- **Human resources**
Adequate human resources will be allocated to EURES. In particular, PES partners will guarantee a proper position for Euroadvisers in their organisation and review their selection criteria to comply with the EURES quality standards. All endeavours will be made towards the objective that all Euroadvisers work at least 50% of their time for EURES, and that their turnover be reduced to a minimum.
Information and training on EURES will be organised to cover all staff categories involved in the delivery of EURES services. This covers especially placement officers with access to the EURES data bases.
Crossborder partnerships
PESs involved in crossborder partnerships will endeavour to integrate them better with their other activities so as to exploit all possible synergies.
- **Technical integration**
Public Employment Services will make endeavours to connect the national vacancy database to the EURES database in Brussels in order to facilitate and increase the exchange of European vacancies. This will also allow an intensification of the exchange of crossborder vacancies.

Public Employment Services will equally make endeavours to give Internet access to more Euroadvisers in order to facilitate access to central services and communication within the network.

3. Key objectives to make EURES work better

The above mentioned measures will help PES to offer a full-fledged service on European mobility. In view of the fundamental nature of EURES - a network whose members offer each other reciprocal services - this however can only happen through closer cooperation between PESs and strong mutual commitment on clear common objectives.

Public Employment Services recognise the following as key objectives which should receive priority:

3.1 Improving the treatment of European job vacancies

The exchange of relevant vacancies is an essential part of a European service on mobility. Full transparency of national labour markets should be pursued through adequate linking of national/regional systems. In addition, the EURES jobs database should be reserved for selected vacancies offering a genuine chance for non nationals to be recruited.

- Input of vacancies by each partner should better reflect the needs of employers to recruit workers from other EEA countries, and the potential for non national workers from the EEA to find jobs in the respective countries. Vacancies should cover a wide range of qualifications and levels of education. They have to represent genuine offers for quality jobs.

Each partner will declare annually its quantitative target according to the above criteria and will ensure that it is widely known in the organisation.

In addition, priority will be given to the full exchange of vacancies in EURES crossborder areas.

In that way, the EURES data base will reach a critical mass, both as a whole (total number of vacancies) and on a country basis (vacancies offered by each partner). Efforts will be made for better follow-up of initiatives taken by other partners, notably the vacancies placed in the EURES data base (through wider dissemination within the national/regional network) and the applications sent. Partners should treat vacancies received from other PES with at least the same standards as those applied to national vacancies, and in full compliance with the specific EURES standards.

3.2 Offering wider access to quality services

A second success factor is to provide access to EURES services on the same basis as access to the other PES services to employers and jobseekers. In order to achieve this objective, PES agree that:

- Every local job office should be able to provide basic information and access to EURES services. This can be achieved with different degrees of involvement, including the training of some staff members to deliver basic EURES services, the direct linking of PES staff to EURES data bases and the self-service access of PES clients to these data bases.
- At least one Euroadviser per region should act as a resource person, responsible for the promotion of EURES both internally within the PES and externally towards the users, and dealing with more complex EURES services and projects. As regards regions involved in a cross border partnership, an additional responsibility could be given to the same or to a distinct Euroadviser for the organisation of the EURES-T activities.
- As for any other service of the PES, EURES services need to comply with high quality standards if the demand for them is to be sustained. This concerns in particular the information, counselling and placement services in which the PES is involved.
- The EURES quality standards will be disseminated throughout the PES and implementation procedures put in force. This will ensure the desired level of quality and uniformity, to meet the needs of an increasingly demanding public and to meet the competition from other actors in the market.

4. Support from the Commission

To support the above mentioned endeavours, the PES will expect the Commission to ensure:

- a coordinated approach between the activities of all EURES partners, by defining - in close consultation with them - common operational priorities, and by closely monitoring their implementation
- the general framework and infrastructure for general services to support the network , notably in connection with the EURES databases on jobs and on living and working conditions, and with training and promotion.
- financial support for part of the partners' activities through annual "activity plans"
- an improved system for the monitoring and evaluation of EURES's performances at an overall level
- the identification and the dissemination of good practices within the network
- regular reports to the Heads of PES on EURES developments.

5. Follow-up

The Heads of PES will review the measures needed in their organisation to progress towards the above objectives. These measures will be part of their annual EURES development plan. Progress towards the above mentioned objectives and targets will be reviewed and assessed by the Heads of PES at the end of 2000.

Intermediate review of implementation of the EURES memorandum of understanding of 16.11.1998.