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**REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE
COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE
COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS**

**on the operation and effects of Regulation (EU) 2016/589 on a European network of
employment services (EURES), workers' access to mobility services and the further
integration of labour markets
(submitted pursuant to Article 35 of Regulation (EU) 2016/589)**

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 What is EURES?

The European Commission launched **EURES** in 1994, as a network of employment services and related organizations. Currently EURES is a network of 219 Members and Partners across the EU and EFTA Member States committed to facilitate fair labour mobility. All Public Employment Services are Members of the network.

EURES offers information and provides assistance to jobseekers and employers across Europe every day via its network of more than 1 000 advisers. EURES services are also provided online through the EURES portal. In addition to these general services to any jobseeker and employer, EURES offers targeted support to specific groups (e.g. young jobseekers, long-term unemployed) or areas (cross-border regions).

Currently, EURES is the only international mobility service that covers all kinds of jobseekers and employers, for free, in their own languages, both face-to-face and online, in a large economic region.

EURES overall European coordination was provided by the European Commission (DG EMPL) until the European Labour Authority took over in May 2021 as foreseen in ELA founding Regulation¹. At country level, national coordinators facilitate the work of the Members and Partners. These provide direct services to jobseekers and employers, and share their vacancies and CVs in the EURES portal.

Since 2016, the **EURES Regulation** (EU) 2016/589 is the legal framework for the network. The main changes introduced by the Regulation include: improved transparency of the network and services delivered; better matching between labour demand and supply through an increase of job vacancies and CVs on the EURES portal; the enlargement of the network through the admission of new EURES Members and Partners, in particular the opening towards private employment services; and the development of minimum standards for the provision of support services.

The Regulation requires that *by 13 May 2021, the Commission shall submit to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions an ex post evaluation report of the operation and effects of this Regulation. That report may be accompanied by legislative proposals amending this Regulation.* Therefore this report, which presents the underlying analysis made in the accompanying Staff Working Document, provides the evaluation of the implementation of the EURES reform as introduced in the 2016 Regulation and the lessons learned throughout this exercise

¹ See articles 44 & 47 of Regulation (EU) 2019/1149 of 20 June 2019 establishing a European Labour Authority.

1.2 Implementation / state of play

The implementation of the EURES Regulation is advancing. Organisational, communication and monitoring aspects have been fully implemented throughout the network, but further progress is still needed in the following areas:

- The **broadening of the network** happens at a slow pace. While all EURES countries have established or started preparing an admission system², at the end of 2020, only half of them have reported to have admitted new Members and Partners.
- The transparent **exchange of job vacancies and CVs** between national databases and the EURES portal is still to be completed: All EURES countries have set up a system for transferring job vacancies, but seven Member States are not transferring yet CVs through the single coordinated channel³.
- The EURES portal was updated with new search functionalities and design. The work towards an **automated matching** on the EURES portal is ongoing, but pending on the mapping of national classification systems to the European Skills/Competences, Qualifications and Occupations classification (ESCO) by the deadline (7 August 2021)⁴.
- The **harmonised planning and performance measurement** across the EURES network is in use since 2018 by all EURES countries. The activities are planned and monitored through a common tool that provides a yearly overview of the planned and implemented activities of the network at national level. The overall performance of EURES is measured through a harmonized system introduced in 2018. However, so far, not all EURES countries provide all reporting data with the appropriate quality.

Therefore, implementation efforts are still ongoing. The reasons explaining why the implementation is not completed include:

- To complete the legal framework for EURES, it was necessary to adopt six implementing acts. They were adopted in 2017 and 2018. Furthermore, the provision of CVs and vacancies by EURES Members entered into force on 13 May 2018, and the harmonized classification allowing automated matching (ESCO) will enter into force after the deadline for this evaluation.
- Some of the essential changes of the Regulation, particularly the enlargement of the Network through national admission systems, and the provision of CVs, required additional legislative adaptations in some Member States. These have been the areas where Member States have acted more reluctantly, particularly after the introduction of the GDPR in 2018.
- The implementation at national level was performed without direct additional resources from the EU budget. Member States had to fund EURES actions from their own sources (either national budgets or operational programmes from the European Social Fund).

² The non-EU EURES countries have not yet started the work on admission as the Regulation was taken over in late 2019 by the EEA Joint Committee and the implementation at national level is under way.

³ On 19 November 2019, the Commission sent administrative letters to the Member States that did not yet comply with the provisions of the EURES Regulation, in particular the CV exchange and the admission system. Depending on the planned compliance dates indicated in the replies to these letters, further monitoring and analysis of the implementation, the Commission will consider further actions.

⁴ According to Article 19(3) of the EURES Regulation and Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2018/1021.

As a consequence, the evaluation comes at a moment when the costs of the reform are evident, but not all the positive effects are observable yet.

2 EVALUATION FINDINGS

This chapter summarises the evaluation findings of the EURES Regulation along the five criteria defined by the Better Regulation Guidelines: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence and EU-added value.

2.1 Relevance

The EURES tools and services are generally considered as relevant to address intra-EU labour mobility needs, although to different extents. The **support to jobseekers and employers** is generally well suited to address obstacles to intra-EU labour mobility such as lack of transparent information and administrative barriers. Tackling language barriers, facilitate the recognition of qualifications or post-recruitment assistance are services not widespread throughout the network, therefore EURES support is considered less relevant in these areas. The **EURES portal** is seen as relevant to address information gaps and to provide access to a large pool of job vacancies and CVs, thus responding to the difficulties that employers are facing in finding profiles with relevant skills.

The Regulation makes EURES a public service available to **all workers and employers** across the Union without exceptions, preventing *creaming* and *parking* effects (i.e. “cherry-picking”), whereas private hiring platforms and matching on social media mainly target qualified customers that pay for their services, are fluent in English and can handle autonomously relocation and administrative procedures without personal counselling.

The actual use of EURES depends on which individuals would like to exercise their right of free movement. The evaluation finds that EURES addresses to a wide extent the needs of employers and jobseekers facing obstacles to labour mobility within the EU, particularly in cross-border regions, as well as younger jobseekers or jobseekers with higher qualifications. Recent developments make returning and seasonal workers increasingly **relevant groups** whose needs should be further looked at by EURES. The wide portfolio of EURES tools and services has proven adequately flexible to cater for the various and fast changing needs of the European labour market. It also corresponds well to the “raison d’etre” of public employment services that at all times are responsible for implementing active labour market policies and providing employment services in the public interest.

Overall, the reformed EURES network has been able to adapt to **changes in the implementation context** (i.e. labour mobility trends, technological advancements, COVID-19 disruption), albeit depending on national strategies and priorities. Three main mechanisms provide a platform for EURES countries to identify changes in the implementation context: exchange of information; participation and discussions in EURES Coordination Group meetings; and the harmonized programming. However, these mechanisms have so far not ensured that the network addresses the identified changes in a coordinated manner. For example, only half of the countries adapt services and activities based on a thorough assessment of the labour market conditions. In another instance,

while recruitment events such as European Online Job Days continued being implemented despite the COVID-19 disruption, EURES support services in some countries had to be interrupted because of reallocation of resources following shifts in national priorities, impacting the availability of the network as a whole.

2.2 Effectiveness

The **EURES services** defined by the Regulation and provided through the portal, advisers and mobility schemes result in intra-EU placements and promote fair working conditions and higher awareness of intra-EU labour mobility opportunities. For instance, the verified placements as result of EURES intervention increased from 28 934 in 2016 to 76 210 in 2019, while the real figure is likely to be higher, with a conservative estimate for 2019 of 83 360 placements. EURES contributes to around 10% of the cross-border placements, a figure in line with the PES share in their national context. However, the fact that the enlargement of the network, the full exchange of CVs and the automated matching are not fully implemented yet reduces its overall effectiveness.

The network seems collectively more effective than the sum of the national contributions because the inter-dependence of **national labour markets** makes EURES national success dependent on the support of EURES in other countries. There is no evidence that EURES is more effective in particular countries over time. The evaluation does not determine either a subset of the services as the most effective ones but suggests keeping the current approach of providing a wide portfolio to cater for the evolving needs of the labour market.

The **support services** provided by EURES advisers are overall assessed as of high-value, good quality, and leading to sustainable results, as they are tailored to individuals' needs. The satisfaction rates of jobseekers (70%) and employers (84%) are comparable to those of PES. However, there are differences in the quality of service provision across the network, which can be explained by differences in resources available at national level. Also, national differences in the legislation leave traineeships and apprenticeships out of the scope of PES in some countries, limiting the ability of EURES to support younger workers with employment opportunities.

EURES mobility schemes and cross-border partnerships complement the EURES support services by supporting selected target groups.

While the **EURES portal** increases the access to job vacancies and CVs, its effectiveness is expected to further increase once a fully automated matching will be in place. In addition, not all national vacancies are available on the portal yet.

The **organisational structure** of EURES as defined by the Regulation, enlarging the network and mainstreaming EURES services within Public Employment Services (PES), is largely suitable to support intra-EU labour mobility effectively. The admission of additional Members and Partners enhances knowledge exchange and the provision of services to more customers. However, the level of services delivered by the various Members and Partners depends on their individual interest, which might have a negative impact on the quality of service across the network. Mainstreaming EURES services into the PES increases the quality of EURES services but reduces the visibility of EURES.

EURES is not **visible** enough among labour market participants, which reduces its effectiveness. In this regard, employers appear less aware of EURES compared to jobseekers. Recent communication and promotion activities have raised awareness of EURES but their effects were hampered by funding constraints, limited cooperation across stakeholders and lack of a common approach regarding the promotion of the network.

2.3 Efficiency

The available information suggests that cost-effectiveness of EURES has increased since the introduction of the EURES Regulation, as shown in the following table:

Table 1: Cost-effectiveness analysis (2019 - 2016, in EUR). Source: EURES ex-post evaluation.

EURES outcome indicator	2016	2019	Net saving
Cost per placement achieved	473.53	288.10	185.42
Cost per individual contact	13.60	11.88	1.71
Cost per job vacancy transferred to the portal	2.74	1.24	1.50

Benchmarking of EURES with Public Employment Services' (PES) activities has provided evidence that the cost of EURES can be interpreted as a small top-up to the PES cost, expanding in a cost-effective manner the scope of the activities from national to cross-border placements. EURES efficiency seems more determined by the network effect than by national aspects.

Although the investment in the **single coordinated channel** and the **EURES portal** is considered proportionate by the national coordinators, the benefits are not completely visible yet. This is underlined by the fact that countries currently do not transfer all the available vacancies through the channel. Important efficiency gains are expected from the full implementation of the automated matching between vacancies and jobseekers' profiles, to be completed once Member States integrate the European Skills/Competences, Qualifications and Occupations (ESCO) classification.

The EURES Regulation brought new **administrative requirements**, including: the request to expand the national network by admitting new EURES Members and Partners (and, therefore, the need to develop new admission procedures and in some instances also new legislation); mandatory and more harmonised monitoring and reporting requirements (which meant developing new procedures and tools); and the obligation to establish a connection between the national job vacancies and CV databases with the EURES portal through a single coordinated channel. The Regulation did not provide additional resources to implement these changes. In addition, the need to avoid overlaps with related EU initiatives require increasing coordination efforts. As a result, the administrative workload has increased. While the benefits of a more consistent and better functioning network are expected to outweigh the costs of these changes, the network will commonly explore ways of simplification and administrative workload reduction.

2.4 Coherence

With regard to **external coherence**, the analysis of the objectives and actions of other European initiatives found that the EURES Regulation is complementary and consistent with such initiatives in

supporting labour mobility, full employment and integration of the labour markets. Synergies between EURES activities and other European initiatives are in place, such as Erasmus+ (e.g. promotion of Erasmus opportunities by EURES staff), Interreg (e.g. provision of additional advice in cross-border regions), and ESF (e.g. funding EURES staff that would not be available otherwise). However, for the following two tools, a better and closer cooperation is recommended:

- the Europass portal (which also has a job search function);
- the Your Europe portal (which also provides information relevant to mobile workers).

With regard to **internal coherence**, the EURES services and tools defined by the Regulation have been developed in a consistent manner, with particular synergies emerging between EURES general support services and mobility schemes. The majority of EURES countries coordinate their activities across the network, especially on recruitment projects, although to a lesser extent on promotion and communication activities. While the objectives of all EURES actions are coherent and no overlaps were found in their implementation, EURES Members that are part of a cross-border partnership and the national EURES network face reporting overlaps. Furthermore, differences in financial and human capital resources available to EURES countries can lead to inconsistencies in the quality and type of services delivered. At national level, there is also a potential risk of inconsistencies between Members and Partners, especially between public and private organisations that are characterised by different priorities and ways of working.

2.5 EU added value

Overall, the stakeholders consulted recognised the EU added value of the EURES Regulation, as Member States alone could not have achieved the current level of EURES service provision. This refers especially to the provision of information and post-recruitment assistance, the support services to apprenticeships and traineeships, and the mobility schemes and cross-border partnerships.

The scale of EURES actions is relatively small, covering approximately one tenth of the total intra-EU labour mobility flows. Therefore, it is not possible to conclude that its actions are the only way to support intra-EU labour mobility in general. However, the evaluation findings show that the EURES Regulation resulted in quicker or better outcomes for customers who used EURES services, contributing to labour market integration.

The EURES Regulation provides an overarching framework and common vision for the collaboration and coordination of EURES countries in the field of labour mobility. It also ensures and promotes the protection of fair labour conditions and standards. The exchange of information on labour mobility and markets would have not happened in a structured way and with the same level of coordination without EURES.

During the COVID-19 disruption, the EURES structure facilitated the quick collection of information on challenges in cross-border regions. Also the relative autonomy of the European Online Job Days from national resources allowed this service to continue, with 21 job days organized in 2020 despite the troubling period, against an average of 27 in previous years.

3 CONCLUSIONS AND LESSONS LEARNT

3.1 Conclusions

The evaluation of the Regulation comes at a moment when the costs of the reform have become evident, but not all the positive effects are observable yet.

From the evidence collected, it can be concluded that the EURES tools and services defined in the Regulation are generally **relevant** to address intra-EU labour mobility needs, although to different extents.

EURES leads to intra-EU placements, promotes fair working conditions and higher awareness of labour mobility opportunities. The **effectiveness** of EURES is comparable to Public Employment Services (PES) in the national context. The effectiveness could be improved by a quicker enlargement of the network, the full exchange of CVs and vacancies and the full implementation of automated matching. Such efforts are ongoing, a particular milestone will be the full adoption by the deadline (7 August 2021) of the European Skills/Competences, Qualifications and Occupations (ESCO) classification in all Member States, following Article 19(3) of the EURES Regulation and Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2018/1021.

EURES cannot support all younger workers with employment opportunities because traineeships and apprenticeships are out of the scope of employment services in some countries for legal reasons. Also, EURES visibility among labour market participants is limited, which affects its effectiveness.

The Regulation makes EURES **efficient**. Cost-effectiveness of EURES has increased considering the cost per individual contact, vacancies transferred to the portal and placements achieved. The benefits of a more consistent and better functioning network outweigh the costs of the changes introduced by the Regulation. However, the benefits of the investment in the IT infrastructure are not completely visible yet while the administrative workload has increased.

The EURES Regulation is **coherent** with other European initiatives in supporting labour mobility, full employment and integration of the labour markets. However, a better and closer cooperation with the Europass portal and Your Europe portal would be advisable.

The **EU added value** of the EURES Regulation is confirmed by the stakeholders consulted, as Member States alone could not have achieved a similar level of support to cross-border labour mobility.

3.2 Lessons learnt

The conclusions of this evaluation lead to the following lessons for actions improving the implementation of the Regulation:

Complete the implementation of automated matching. All Members and Partners should ensure the transfer of job vacancies and CVs to the EURES portal, and complete the mapping or adoption of the European Skills/Competences, Qualifications and Occupations (ESCO) classification, to facilitate better matching results.

Align EURES, Europass and Your Europe portals. The European Commission and the European Labour Authority should perform an analysis of potential overlaps of information and services provision on Your Europe portal (implementing the Single Digital Gateway Regulation), the Europass portal and the EURES portal.

Strengthen communication to ensure EURES visibility. The European Coordination Office should develop a new communication strategy achieving unified communication at all levels (regional, national, EU), identifying additional communication channels, defining targeted communication actions, linking communication outputs to EURES outcomes, and raising the visibility of the EURES portal among search engines.

Enhance the quality of service delivery. The European Commission and the European Labour Authority should support the harmonisation of the minimum level of quality of services across the network, particularly post-recruitment assistance.

Improve and simplify monitoring and data collection. The European Commission and the European Labour Authority in cooperation with the National Coordination Offices should further integrate the programming and monitoring processes, improve and simplify data collection, and streamline monitoring deriving from EURES, the Single Digital Gateway, and the Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI).

Strengthen enlargement efforts. The National Coordination Offices should enhance their efforts in identifying, attracting and admitting new Members and Partners. The European Coordination Office should facilitate the process with guidance, support and knowledge exchange.

Work on implementing these lessons is mostly ongoing, however, this evaluation allows to focus the efforts. In basically all areas, action and commitment at both European and national level is required. That is part of the network-character of EURES. Provided that this network character is beyond question, changes to the legal framework will not help to make progress, on the contrary they will distract attention from the necessary next steps. Therefore, the Commission should continue to work on the full implementation of the EURES Regulation and use the opportunity of the regular reporting foreseen in Article 33 of the Regulation to complement the information of this evaluation.