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REPORT

on the Commission's EURES activity report 1998-1999 entitled 'Towards an integrated European labour market: the contribution of EURES'
(COM(2000) 607 – C5-0104/2001 – 2001/2053(COS))

Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

Rapporteur: José Ribeiro e Castro

CONTENTS

	Page
PROCEDURAL PAGE	4
MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION	5
EXPLANATORY STATEMENT	13

PROCEDURAL PAGE

By letter of 2 October 2000, the Commission forwarded to Parliament its EURES activity report 1998-1999 entitled 'Towards an integrated European labour market: the contribution of EURES' (COM(2000) 607 – 2001/2053(COS)).

At the sitting of 15 March 2001 the President of Parliament announced that she had referred the report to the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs as the committee responsible (C5-0104/2001).

The Committee on Employment and Social Affairs had appointed José Ribeiro e Castro rapporteur at its meeting of 16 November 2000.

The committee considered the Commission report and the draft report at its meetings of 21 March and 3 May 2001.

At the last meeting it adopted the motion for a resolution by 20 votes to 1, with no abstentions.

The following were present for the vote: Michel Rocard (chairman), José Ribeiro e Castro (rapporteur), Philip Bushill-Matthews, Alejandro Cercas, Brian Crowley, Proinsias De Rossa, Carlo Fatuzzo, Hélène Flautre, Marie-Hélène Gillig, Richard Howitt (for Jan Andersson), Stephen Hughes, Anne Elisabet Jensen (for Luciano Caveri), Ioannis Koukiadis, Jean Lambert, Toine Manders (for Daniel Ducarme), Claude Moraes, Bartho Pronk, Herman Schmid, Gabriele Stauner (for María Antonia Avilés Perea), Dimitrios Tsatsos (for Elisa Maria Damião) and Ieke van den Burg.

The report was tabled on 8 May 2001.

The deadline for tabling amendments will be indicated in the draft agenda for the relevant part-session.

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

European Parliament resolution on the Commission's EURES activity report 1998-1999 entitled 'Towards an integrated European labour market: the contribution of EURES' (COM(2000) 607 – C5-0104/2001 – 2001/2053(COS))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Commission report (COM(2000) 607 – C5-0104/2001¹),
 - having regard to the Memorandum of Understanding adopted by the directors of the EEA public employment services on the development of EURES services,
 - having regard to the Commission Communication setting out 'An action plan for free movement of workers' (COM(1997) 586²),
 - having regard to the Commission Communication to the Council entitled 'New European Labour Markets, Open to All, with Access for All' (COM(2001) 116³),
 - having regard to Presidency conclusions 12 to 15 which were adopted at the 23-24 March 2001 Stockholm European Council,
 - having regard to Article 39 and Article 40 of the EC Treaty,
 - having regard to Article 251 of the EC Treaty,
 - having regard to Article 299(2) of the EC Treaty,
 - having regard to its resolution of 13 April 2000⁴ on the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council: The Strategy for Europe's Internal Market,
 - having regard to Rule 47(1) of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (A5-0169/2001),
- A. whereas the Commission's report on EURES in 1998 and 1999 amounts more to pure description than critical review in the proper sense and whereas future reports would be greatly improved if:
- they set out an exhaustive factual basis for the conclusions as a whole and the main

¹ Not yet published in the Official Journal.

² Not yet published in the Official Journal.

³ Not yet published in the Official Journal.

⁴ OJ C 40, 7.2.1001, p. 164.

assessments,

- they gave comprehensible reasons for the changes in the priorities that had been or were to be pursued,
 - contained more statistical and other qualitative information of use for the purposes of analysing and identifying the features of both the position regarding EURES as such and the labour mobility situation in the EEA,
 - adopted a standard form of presentation and analysis when discussing the EURES budget, thus making it possible to ascertain whether and how far implementation of the budget had duly accorded with the scale of priorities laid down,
- B. having regard to the role which, in line with the decisions taken at the Lisbon European Council (March 2000) – and underpinned by the plan submitted to and approved by the Stockholm European Council (March 2001) – to remove the obstacles to labour mobility in the EU by 2005, the EURES network must play as part of the European employment strategy and to its potentially great usefulness as a means of promoting mobility on the European labour market, training of workers, and local development,
- C. whereas a high level of mobility on the labour market is not an end in itself and whereas Community policies in this area and also EURES cooperation must be strictly and rigorously based on the principle of voluntary mobility;
- D. renewing its proposal that the EURES network should be expanded to become a Europe-wide employment service,
- E. whereas the smooth functioning of the EURES network depends to a large extent on the operational efficiency and the flexibility of the Member States' public employment services,
- F. whereas EURES activities are proving particularly successful in border regions where EURES-T partners, via their dedicated Euroadvisers, respond directly both to enquiries from cross-border workers regarding living and working conditions and opportunities and to requests from employers;
- G. whereas the EURES-T partners play an active role in devising joint strategies designed to create local jobs and in strengthening the dialogue between employers and their staff by directly involving representatives of the social partners,
- H. whereas, however, despite this success as regards cross-border mobility, there are still border regions in the EU that are not covered by any form of EURES-T partnership arrangement,
- I. having regard to the outcome of EURES placement activity (in 1999 EURES enabled 44 460 job seekers to find work in a partner country other than their own),
- J. whereas the numbers of vacancies in the EURES database, whether broken down by country or sector, do not reflect the size of the corresponding labour markets,

- K. whereas the Commission report reveals very marked and worrying disparities in the contributions of the different Member States to the EURES facility, for some countries are manifestly underrepresented (which makes it obvious that certain Member States have a greater interest in EURES than others), and also shows that employers' organisations are hardly involved at all,
- L. whereas in reality, the public seem to have very little knowledge of the EURES network as such, a point which may apply more to some Member States than to others, or of the services that EURES can provide directly to ordinary citizens,
- M. renewing its call to investigate and remove all obstacles related to social security systems, salary deductions, education, training and the recognition of skills, diplomas and qualifications that have the effect of restricting mobility from one Member State to another,
- N. whereas the special strategic importance of online access to EURES via the Internet is clearly underlined by the fact that this form of contact, which was increasingly used in 1998 and 1999, helps to create a direct service to citizens that should be supported and genuinely opened up to all,
- O. whereas new Member States will soon be joining the EU, posing new challenges to labour mobility within Europe, both at transnational and – especially – at cross-border level; whereas EURES too must be prepared in advance to meet those challenges,
- P. whereas the agreement between the EU and Switzerland concerning the free movement of persons (Article 11 of Annex 1) provides for cooperation within the EURES framework and whereas such cooperation must be implemented,
- Q. whereas the Commission has announced that it will be drawing up a new legal basis for EURES, due to be adopted in 2002,
1. Points to the important role of the EURES network as an instrument within the European employment strategy as a means of implementing that strategy; calls on the Commission to incorporate EURES and the EURES-T partners systematically and in a consistent, coordinated fashion into the European employment strategy and into the various implementation levels thereof (national plans, regional agreements and future local agreements); considers, therefore, that the legal basis should also be extended to the relevant provisions of the Treaty;
 2. Maintains that future reports would be improved if they contained more statistical and other qualitative information needed in order to analyse and diagnose problems on the one hand and provide critical assessment and explanation on the other, for instance, as regards:
 - the labour mobility situation at transnational and cross-border level, under and outside the EURES system;
 - the evenness of the balance of representation among the Member States and the extent to which the EURES facility is geared to production sectors;

- the permanence and the basic characteristics of the contracts for the jobs made accessible by means of the EURES network;
 - assessment of the impact of EURES on the European employment strategy, in particular at local level thanks to the EURES-T partnerships;
3. Recommends to the Commission that future reports include a summary list of the main obstacles to cross-border and transnational mobility to have emerged in the light of experience with EURES, particularly on the basis of the direct experience acquired by Euroadvisers, and assess the trends likely to affect them;
 4. Calls on the Commission to consider whether EURES might be made more widely accessible where both job requests and job offers are concerned;
 5. Calls on European employment services and members of the EURES network to expand their activities with a view to providing their services throughout the EU and calls, therefore, on all the public employment services belonging to the network to arrange for vacancies and, later, the curricula vitae of job seekers to be input directly to the EURES database;
 6. Calls on the Commission to ensure that the jobs database is more commensurate with the size of the labour markets in the respective member countries;
 7. Calls on the Commission to consider whether it might take steps to improve the performance of EURES in general and EURES-T in particular in some areas, for instance as regards links with other Community programmes, correction of national imbalances, and the degree of involvement of employers' organisations, in order to provide the basis for a review at the end of the 2000/01 and 2002/03 periods;
 8. Points out that, given the success achieved at cross-border level, the Commission should endeavour to ensure that all border areas are fully covered by EURES-T partnerships;
 9. Considers that the contribution made by the EURES-T steering committees to the monitoring of the activities undertaken in their area under the INTERREG programme must be increased and that the local authorities in border regions should involve themselves in EURES-T initiatives;
 10. Calls for adequate continuity in the provision of services by the EURES advisers and therefore supports the Commission's ideas that multi-annual funding should be provided for EURES projects;
 11. Intends to organise a hearing with the EURES advisers in order to gain a clearer idea of the bottlenecks in the organisation of the EURES system and the problems in border regions;
 12. Stresses the importance, in the creation of European employment markets, of establishing cross-border platforms for social dialogue in border areas;

13. Welcomes the first moves towards decentralisation in the management of EURES-T as regards the steering committees of the respective partners; considers that decentralisation should be completed in the above area and adopted as a guiding principle for the EURES network as a whole;
14. Urges the Member States to strive for rapid improvements in the relationships between their respective public employment services and with regard to the tasks and objectives of the EURES network, in accordance with the November 1998 protocol agreement between the EEA's of public employment services with a view to development of the EURES network;
15. Urges the Commission and the PES (public employment services) to recognise the importance of the European employment market and of the EURES network and to make a substantial joint effort to publicise the EURES service and to devise and implement permanent information systems aimed at the public relating to the EURES facility; in particular within youth organisations and universities, since mobility amongst young people at the start of their career is desirable and should receive special attention; calls on the Commission and the PES to agree on and develop, in association with the media and other private bodies active in the field of employment supply and demand, permanent arrangements for establishing links and coordination in connection with the EURES network objectives;

(Am 45) Urges the Commission and the PES (public employment services) to make a substantial joint effort to publicise the EURES service and to devise and implement permanent information systems aimed at the public relating to the EURES facility;

(Am. 46) Urges the Commission and the PES (public employment services) to make a substantial joint effort to publicise the EURES service and to devise and implement permanent information systems aimed at the public relating to the EURES facility;

16. Calls on the Member States to set up, within their respective PES, small EURES network operational units to which an appropriate number of Euroadvisers would be permanently and exclusively assigned, thereby ensuring that the EURES network and the relation between the PES achieve professional standards; notes that a similar procedure, suitably adapted, could also bring benefits if employers' and trade-union organisations decided to adopt it as Euro-advisers belonging to the respective framework;
17. Welcomes the advances in the use of the EURES web site and the plans to improve the related database; urges the Commission to coordinate its development with the e-Europe action plan and to treat this new aspect of EURES as a priority, aiming determinedly but pragmatically at:
- multilingual content in all the EU's official languages,
 - easy consultation and searching for any non-expert user (user-friendliness),
 - accurate and prompt updating;

18. Calls on the Commission to study the language problems that might hamper job seekers and, should the need arise, to propose measures to remedy that obstacle; believes that the database must be made more widely accessible on the Internet and therefore calls on the Commission to consider whether it might devise standard models for job requests and offers and a basic curriculum vitae, in forms suitable for multilingual machine translation, without restricting a user's option of adding other information in his or her national language; calls on the Commission to ensure that there is effective internal coordination between the DGs involved;
19. Considers that the budget allocation for EURES should be increased, not least in preparation for EU enlargement;
20. Believes that the priorities to be covered in the budget, in addition to strengthening and developing the EURES-T partnerships, are promotion and publication of EURES and expansion of the computer systems (Internet and Intranet); supports the Commission's approach aimed at simplifying the budget procedures employed for the EURES network and placing them on a multi-annual footing;
21. Calls for more attention to be devoted to making EURES known in the Member States;
22. Calls on the Commission to devote particular attention, within EURES, to the problems of the outermost regions and for future reports to set out special measures to be taken to tackle their specific situation;
23. Urges the Commission to focus in the next report on the matter of enlargement by setting out a forecast of its impact on EURES, planning for expansion of the EURES-T partnerships, and a list of measures to be adopted; believes that necessary preparatory measures will need to start in 2002, namely:
 - 23.1 regular dialogue with PES, trade unions, and employers' organisations in the applicant countries to familiarise them with EURES in advance;
 - 23.2 forward feasibility study on new cross-border partnerships and, for the purposes of preliminary training, the promotion of direct exchanges of experience between the future staff of those new partnerships and those of the most successful current EURES-T partnerships;
 - 23.3 training of Euroadvisers in the new Member States and of special 'Eastern Europe' Euroadvisers in all EU countries;
 - 23.4 measures relating to computerised systems, to enable the databases to be linked together quickly;
 - 23.5 drawing up of a training atlas to enable job specifications to be harmonised and to provide information regarding each Member State's rules on the recognition of qualifications;
 - 23.6 promoting exchanges of best practices;

24. Welcomes the 23-24 March 2001 Stockholm European Council conclusions on the mobility of workers, with particular regard to the creation of a single information website on mobility in Europe which will offer employment services a European database containing vacancies, CVs and education and training opportunities; calls on the Commission to coordinate EURES with this website and to ensure that there is effective internal coordination between the DGs involved;
25. Recommends to the Council that one of the specific tasks to be accomplished by the high-level task force on skills and mobility which was approved at the Stockholm European Council in accordance with a Commission proposal should be to submit suggestions and proposals for improving the EURES network by December 2001; notes that this methodology will help to ensure that the expected conclusions of the summit to be held in the spring of 2002 include a consistent reform of EURES and is also essential if this contribution is to be taken into account in the reform of the EURES legal basis which is scheduled for 2002;
26. Considers that the high-level task force on skills and mobility which has been set up within the Commission could gather much information in border regions concerning both obstacles to the emergence of a European employment market and good practical examples, in order to help promote this cross-border employment market; calls for the EURES network to be involved in such activities and for the experience gained therefrom to be incorporated into the new EURES programme;
27. Considers it essential for the European Parliament to be involved in the reform of the EURES legal basis; takes the view that such a reform must follow the co-decision procedure pursuant to Article 40(a) and (d) and Article 251 of the EC Treaty; considers that, without pre-empting the debate which should be held at the appropriate time, modernisation of the EURES legal basis should in particular:
- lead to the incorporation of the EURES network into the European employment strategy;
 - recognise the social partners as full partners in EURES-T;
 - clarify and better define the role of Euroadvisers in public employment services, in trade unions and in employers' organisations;
 - restructure the respective financing bases.
28. Draws the Commission's attention to the forthcoming report on the implementation of the agreement between the EU and Switzerland on the free movement of persons, with particular reference to the implementation of Article 11 of Annex II; considers that preparatory measures should be adopted immediately in order to ensure that EURES-T partnerships are established in good time within the border regions concerned;
29. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and Commission, the parliaments of the Member States, the other EEA countries which are members of the EURES network, the applicant countries and Switzerland.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

'Freedom of movement for workers shall be secured within the Community' (Article 39(1) of the EC Treaty).

'The existence of the legal right [of free movement], and a number of important policy initiatives already taken, have not been sufficient to remove important barriers, and so to meet the aspirations of European citizens' ('New European Labour Markets, Open to All, with Access for All', communication from the Commission to the Council, February 2001).

I. The Commission's EURES activity report 1998-1999

The report describes the features of the service fairly accurately¹ and outlines the developments that affected it and the EURES network² in the two years under review. The service is considered an important tool of the **European employment strategy**, and the report notes that EURES has been doing much to achieve various objectives related to the **European labour market**³.

However, **the report is closer to narrative than to a critique**. It makes no critical assessment whatsoever, either of the operation and the imperfections, if any, of EURES, or of the obstacles that can still be seen to be in the way of greater mobility, or of the proper (or recommended) strategies to tackle and overcome them. Moreover, and without detracting from the various encouraging signs, it appears to take an overoptimistic view of the immense challenges still to be met in order to bring about labour mobility at the practical level in the

¹ The origins of EURES - "*European Employment Services*" – are in **Regulation No. 1612/68**, on the free movement of workers. It must be added that, actually, it was only created in 1993, through the **Decision of the Commission No. 93/569/CEE, October 22, 1993**, which decided to replace previous SEDOC - "*Système européen de diffusion des offres et demandes d'emploi en compensation*". It corresponded to the implementation of current **article 40, d)** of the **EC Treaty**. EURES seeks to promote transparency within the European labour market, with **three different types of specific roles**: (a) **information**; (b) **advice**; (c) **placement assistance**. It covers not only EU countries, but extends to the **EEA** - 17 countries, in total. It seeks to promote the effective exercise of the right to free movement of workers. It developed in the view of providing a **direct service to citizens**, with a **two-target perspective**: workers that seek employment; employers that offer employment. It soon became one of the key players in "Europe Direct", initiative launched by the Commission at the Cardiff European Council (1998). It is more prepared to answer to the practical aspects of the problem, although the information gathered and organised through its permanent activity surely allows EURES to detect remaining legal obstacles and, in that way, to inspire actions to overcome them at the appropriate political level. It has also a specific area addressed to the cross-border cooperation in the field of employment and worker's mobility, which presents an higher degree of activity: **Cross-border EURES (EURES-T)**.

² EURES is defined as a network. Rigorously, we believe it should be regarded as "**a network of networks**": (1st) the **Euroadvisers**; (2nd) the **partner organisations**; and (3rd) the free-access through **Internet**. **Euroadvisers** are experts directly integrated in EURES who belong to several institutions to which EURES links. To the Report they represent "*the driving force behind the EURES network*". They were 520 by the end of 1998/99 period: the large majority (430) belonged to the public employment services (PES) in member-States, while the remaining 90 from trade unions (77) and employer's associations (13) only existed at cross-border regions level. The **partner organisations** correspond either to public partners - the national public employment services (PES) - and private partners - trade unions and employer's associations. As to **Internet, free access to EURES** through this means has known a remarkable expansion - it's the "open network".

³ The Report points out that the following objectives of the European labour market are served by EURES: in general, transparency, flexibility, adaptability (of companies), employability; and as well, specifically at EURES-T level, local development and social dialogue in the field of employment.

EEA.

A. The list of priorities

The report specifies the priorities pursued in 1998 and 1999 and the new priorities laid down for the period from 2000 to 2002.

On reading and, more to the point, rereading the report, it becomes clear that the Commission is satisfied with developments in areas covered by the four priorities for the preceding period¹. However, because of the way in which the report is structured, it is not always easy to make the same judgment. Above all, it is impossible to see what led to the change from one set of priorities to another completely different set².

Does the Commission consider that the priorities for 1998 and 1999 have been fully met and that another entirely new set of priorities should therefore be laid down? Alternatively, are the old set of priorities and the new set linked by some sort of unifying relationship or logical progression? What exactly is the nature of that relationship or progression? Have the new priorities been determined in the light of the extent to which the old ones have been met, be it in full or not to the degree required? Have they allowed for the principal difficulties encountered and the methods to employ to surmount them? Or have they been adopted to reflect a different and altogether new approach? Do some priorities constitute the means of achieving the ends implied in other priorities? Are different priorities strategically linked? Or is that not the case?

The priorities for the years 2000 to 2002 have apparently already been fully determined by the EURES partners. In future, however, a marked improvement could be achieved if the report were structured differently so as to make it clear, in the light of detailed factual information, how far the priorities had been attained or on what grounds they had been redefined (whether such redefinition signified evolution or abandonment).

B. The successes

The report highlights what the Commission considers to have been the main favourable developments in EURES in the two years under review:

1. The EURES partners, in particular the public employment services (PES), have become much more conscious of the European dimension³.

¹ During **1998/99 biennium**, four priorities were followed: to improve EURES performance with regard to vacancies; to improve access to EURES services; to improve the quality of EURES services; to improve communication within the network.

² For the referred **period 2000/02**, four new priorities have been set: political and operational integration; modernising the means of providing services; improving the range of services; re-examining administration methods. Despite this new priorities' definition for a triennial period (2000/02), clarification was obtained through a direct contact direct with Commission's services, that Commission will keep the practice of biennial Reports - that is, the next Report will cover the period 2000/01.

³ Though, aside the statement that public employment services "*are increasingly considered agents of the European labour market rather than merely of the national or regional market*", associated to EURES self-congratulation as "*an effective agent of Europeanisation of public employment services*", almost nothing is said

2. The number of vacancies made accessible through the EURES facility has risen sharply¹.
3. There has been a very marked increase in the use of the Internet as a vehicle for providing EURES services².
4. It has become increasingly common to access EURES and its database online under the self-service arrangement, resulting in a twofold benefit. On the one hand, the facility is brought closer to citizens, who can access it freely and directly. Secondly, the Euroadvisers are freed from the task of merely providing information and can thus concentrate on their role of giving advice and specialist back-up.
5. Training activities, especially those aimed at Euroadvisers.
6. The EURES partners have remained largely stable³.
7. The Commission considers that EURES-T has been consolidated. In relative terms, it is in this area of cross-border cooperation that EURES activities and the related cooperation have made the greatest advances. In the first place, the number of partnerships has stabilised to the extent that, after the increase from 11 to 18 in the preceding two-year period (1996 and 1997), only one more partnership was established in the two years under review⁴. In addition, the chairmanships of the cross-border partnership steering committees have gradually been transferred since 1999 from the Commission to the direct responsibility of the local partners⁵. No comment needs to be made about this form of decentralisation. Indeed, such an encouraging step can only be welcomed. This judgment, however, does not apply to the report's favourable assessment regarding the '*stabilisation*' seen in the EURES-T partnerships. On the contrary, compared with an increase of seven in 1996 and 1997, an increase of just one in 1998 and 1999 can be considered worrying, especially in view of the fact that, firstly, extensive border areas are still 'bare' (one conspicuous example being the border between Portugal and Spain, where there is only one EURES-T partnership in the area spanning the northern part of Portugal and Galicia⁶) and, secondly, the forthcoming enlargement will create new opportunities and needs, in this as in other spheres, that will demand a swift response.

in the Report as an objective ground for such appreciation and conclusion.

¹ EURES job offers went from 43,000 in the beginning 1998 to 166,000 in the beginning 2000. Despite this evolution being quite impressive in relative terms - a 286% growth in a two years - and not wishing to diminish the real progress registered, the shortage these figures still represent, in absolute terms, when compared with the dimension of European labour market or to unemployment statistics in Europe, give the real idea of the huge challenge still ahead.

² EURES website [<http://europa.eu.int/jobs/eures/>], inaugurated in 1998, soon became one of Commission's most visited sites.

³ During the biennium no change occurred as to the national public employment services, EURES partners in member-States. This fact, associated with the effort made in training - as referred in a previous footnote, the large majority of Euroadvisers belong to member-States' public employment services -, was beneficial to the consolidation of EURES network. Special mention must also be made to the "**Memorandum of Undertaking on the development of EURES services**" adopted in November 1998 by the directors of public employment services, memorandum whose development the Commission envisages with strong hopes.

⁴ It was the 19th, in the **Oberrhein** region - France/Germany -, created in July 1999.

⁵ By the end of 1999, this decentralisation had already been concluded in 11 of the 19 EURES-T partnerships.

⁶ Through a contact with Commission's services, information was received that another new EURES-T structure (the 20th, **Tornedalen**) is already being established in the **Sweden/Finland border**.

8. EURES activities in general and user demand have expanded. Contacts in the two-year period involved over 1 000 000 job seekers and 100 000 employers¹.
9. The number of placements obtained through EURES increased from 26 449 in 1998 to 44 460 in 1999, i.e. by more than 68% in a year².

C. Shortcomings and weaknesses. Some recommendations

On the other hand, a number of shortcomings and weaknesses have been detected both in the report submitted and as regards the impact of the EURES service.

As regards the shortcomings of the report:

The report manifestly fails to outline the salient features or assess the state of play, whether regarding developments affecting the service or the real labour mobility situation in the EU and the EEA. It would be more helpful and much more complete from a policy perspective if it brought its critical vision to bear on the successes and failures. The information obtained from this way of proceeding should provide an essential reference point to be used when laying down priorities, aims, and future strategies, and when ascertaining the soundness of the reasons underlying them.

1. The report sheds no light on some significant matters and fails to identify the key factors to take into account when making an analysis, namely: such distinct types of obstacles to cross-border mobility as might already have been identified³; the main obstacles found to

¹ In relative terms, the growth in the number of contacts varied from more 25% to more 37% as to contacts from “workers in search of employment”, “employers” and “other”, comparing 1998/99 biennium to the previous one (1996/97).

² These last figures are obviously imprecise and difficult to obtain, since people establish direct contact with each other, once they have got from EURES database the wanted information. The increased direct access through Internet will naturally make these statistics concerning “placements through EURES” more and more difficult as to its preciseness and even to its mere possibility. Commission’s services are quite aware conscious of this fact; they stressed precisely this increasing difficulty.

³ The Report mentions that Cross-border EURES partnerships carried out studies in order to identify “*the five main obstacles to mobility*” in the respective border regions. The information gathered through these studies was then the object of a general inventory in another specific report, indicated to be ready by the Spring 2000 - the “**EURES Report on Obstacles to Cross-border Mobility**”. However, through a direct contact with the Commission’s services, it was clarified that this report was only concluded later and, so, had not yet been made available to external access. Also because of this delay, this 1998/99 biennial Report might well contain already a first brief illustration and synthesis of that inventory, anticipating the deeper development and the final analysis that the matter would deserve in that other specific report. Through the same contacts with Commission’s services, that other report was supplied: it is entitled “**Obstacles to Cross-border Mobility in the European Union – the Role of EURES Network**” and dates from February 2001. It is a valuable and interesting contribution for the understanding of the problematic involved. Besides, it informs that this first approach and study will now be object of regular updates. In brief, it classifies the **obstacles** under **six categories**: (1) Shortcomings of information or “*lack of transparency*” in the market; (2) problems of a cultural nature; (3) problems involved in the recognition of qualifications; (4) problems of an economic nature; (5) problems of a legal nature; (6) geographical obstacles. Regarding **EURES role in overcoming these obstacles**, it also identifies **six types of actions**: [A] Resolution of the problems by administrative, legislative or judicial means (modification of legal texts, regulations or through collective bargaining; and judicial resource); [B] Change of behaviour of the administration or the employer; [C] Training of the officials of the administrations; [D] Modification in the supply of local services (transport, health, etc.); [E] Promotion of *ad hoc* courses; [F] Co-

be impeding transnational mobility in general (and not just where EURES-T is concerned); or the reasons why EURES activities are still spread very unequally among the different Member States.

2. The report says little about the interaction of EURES with other Community programmes, which apparently does not extend very far¹. Regarding the guidelines for the future, interaction is one of the specific matters encompassed within the new priority of '*political and operational integration*', with particular reference to Interreg III and other Community programmes to promote vocational training, education, youth, and local employment initiatives. This is an approach which should be supported because it will help to boost common resources and the coordinated overall effectiveness of Community programmes.
3. The report fails to specify the factual justification for some of the assertions made².
4. Finally, the report could be improved if it were based on additional statistical data and the corresponding critical assessment, including for example:
 - information on the **permanence or otherwise of the jobs obtained through the EURES network** (at cross-border and transnational level), the question being whether the placements concerned are permanent, designed to satisfy various categories of seasonal demand, or involve some other form of temporary or casual employment relationship;
 - more comprehensive statistics on **transnational labour mobility in general outside the EURES framework** and an analysis thereof. Figures on overall mobility would give a more realistic indication of the extent to which EURES was being used and enable targets to be set for the future;
 - **comparative statistics broken down by production sectors** on the European labour market as a whole and national and regional labour markets, and a comparative analysis thereof. One of the striking facts to emerge from the report is that EURES services are spread very unevenly in terms of sectors³. If comparative statistics were compiled on parallel trends in the labour market and EURES services, it would be possible to gauge how fully the latter were geared to the former and identify the sectors in which the mismatch was greatest or EURES had taken root most obviously, thus enabling lessons to be learnt for strategies aimed at the sectors in which the

ordination of information within Cross-border EURES.

¹ The Report contains solely very short references to linkage between EURES and the TESTA programme (and IDA) – telecommunications and interchange of data -, as well as the beginning, still very incipient, of a specific line in INTEREG III within the frame of EURES-T (cross-border).

² It is the case, already mentioned above, of the alleged strong European awareness of public employment services. But it is also the case of adaptability of companies benefiting from a range of human resources with different skills, work culture and language; or the effectiveness of EURES service integration in the organisation of public employment services. We don't dispute the accurateness of such judgements. But the Commission should support them with more objective data, understandable for everyone.

³ The leading sectors are Hotels, catering, tourism and retail (with 25%) and ITC and administration (with 21%). After, follow Manufacturing, just as Agriculture and fishing (13% each), Construction and utilities, alike Education and healthcare (9% each), and Transport and finance, besides Other services (5% each).

degree of EURES cover was lowest¹;

- a basis should be provided on which to **assess the impact of EURES within the European employment strategy**. Measures to combat unemployment undoubtedly encompass a wider range of action than the narrow confines of EURES, but it would none the less be useful if the reductions in unemployment brought about by EURES could be measured and quantified targets, strategies, and measures laid down. It would be interesting to know, for example, whether the users of the EURES service (and, as far as possible, the persons who had found employment through the service) were unemployed or in work and seeking a new job. Another question that might usefully be answered is whether EURES is pursuing specific strategies for given target groups (such as persons seeking their first job, the long-term unemployed, and so forth) and what degree of success has been achieved in each instance.

As regards the weaknesses of EURES:

1. The greatest weakness of EURES apparently lies in the fact that **the public are so ignorant** about the service. This is not a view on the report, but the general assessment of an ordinary citizen in contact with other ordinary citizens. The EURES network is still very largely unknown to the general public (perhaps more so in some Member States than in others). Once the symptoms of the problem have been accurately identified, therefore, the efforts to promote and publicise the service should be substantially intensified and treated as a permanent priority for future years, especially since the intention is to emphasise direct service to citizens and even more so at a time when there is a growing trend towards personal self-service on the Internet². The effectiveness of EURES will depend increasingly on widespread public knowledge and not just on the greater or lesser degree of internal operating efficiency achieved by the network of administrative departments, services, and other bodies³.
2. Within the EURES network, **employers' organisations appear to be involved only on a relatively modest scale**⁴. If they were to play a more extensive role, the quality of

¹ In the contact made with Commission's services, information was given that another strategy and another kind of approach are followed: it tries to accompany variations in jobs demand in different sectors and concentrates in those where the shortage of human resources is bigger and where the demand for workers is more intense. Currently, it is the case mainly in ITC, Healthcare and Tourism. We also consider correct this orientation of EURES favouring European mobility by trying to correspond, in advance or in time, to the largest employment opportunities especially offered in certain sectors, that is, those that in a given period suffer from a more sensitive crisis as to qualified human resources.

² Some lines of such effort in publicity may, in fact, reveal rather simple and consist in **permanent information**, though prolonging and overcoming the merely temporary effect of advertising and promotion campaigns. For example: EURES website already includes links to job classified announcements published on-line by several press media in member-States. Why not to negotiate with these media, in compensation, not only the corresponding cross-links connecting their on-line editions to EURES database, but also the insertion of small ads to EURES network in the correspondent printed editions?

³ It is necessary to bear in mind that the improvement of EURES network performance doesn't just depend on itself, but in a large measure also on the **improved performance of the different national public employment services**, as well as on the degree in which they are able to correspond to common goals and tasks. The Report, in fact, has this aspect quite clear – that's why it emphasises so much the importance of integration of public employment services in EURES network. It is undoubtedly an aspect that we must remember and stress.

⁴ The existence of only 13 Euroadvisers who belong to employer's associations, within a total of 520 (2.5% of

EURES services could certainly be improved (because there would be an opportunity to hear the eminently commonsensical suggestions which employers put forward), and the services themselves could be publicised more widely, geared more closely to requirements, and put to better use.

3. The **very pronounced national inequalities** are undoubtedly one of the most serious shortcomings of EURES as it currently stands¹. The report fails to bring the necessary attention to bear on the problem, and it is consequently impossible to understand why one country is so much further ahead and others so far behind or to determine for certain whether sufficient steps have been taken to correct the current deficiency. The report merely expresses the hope that the situation will be put right '*As countries integrate their national systems with EURES*'. However, there is reason to question the optimism underlying that assumption. Apart from the fact that the symptoms have not been clearly described, the truth is that the systems of some of the comparatively underrepresented countries have already been incorporated into EURES.
4. A number of **shortcomings found in the web site** will be discussed below.
5. Nothing at all is said about the **outermost regions** and their specific problems from the EURES standpoint, giving the impression that these matters are being completely ignored. The subject is one that should be considered separately (see below).

II. Points for particular consideration

A. Specific attention to the outermost regions

Since the Treaty of Amsterdam, what are termed the outermost regions, identified in Article 299(2) of the EC Treaty, have warranted special attention on the highest rung of the EU's legislative hierarchy on account of their particular circumstances and in order to offset the distinctive forms of dependence and constraints to which they are subject. In addition, the economies of these regions are such that there are specific difficulties preventing their inhabitants from entering the labour market and, more often than not, the prevailing unemployment rates are especially slow to change. **In keeping with the call made in the Treaty, EURES ought, therefore, to focus special attention on the outermost regions**, in particular in order to encourage mobility (although, given their economic context, it might be more appropriate to emphasise the demand for jobs rather than the supply) and help to ascertain, in the light of several years' experience and the findings of analyses, whether special EURES measures and strategies might be drawn up for them.

At present, however, it seems that these regions, which are among the more depressed areas,

the total) and, moreover, limited just to EURES-T, seems to indicate lack of interest and of significant involvement on the part of employer's associations.

¹ By the end of 1999, Austria presented 38% of the job offers in EURES, followed by France (10%), Italy (9%), Ireland (8%), Belgium (6%), Germany, Denmark and Netherlands (5% each), United Kingdom and Spain (3% each), Sweden and Greece (2% each) and, representing 1% or under, Portugal, Norway, Luxembourg, Iceland and Finland. It would still be **helpful a compared statistics taking into account the different dimension** of national labour markets - for instance, the same 5% of job offers from Germany and from Denmark don't have the same meaning.

are being left completely out of consideration, perpetuating or exacerbating their isolation and remoteness – contrary to the result hoped for.

B. The key strategic role of Internet applications

The increasing use of the Internet has been doing much to boost EURES activities and change the way in which the services in question tend to be provided. The report devotes particular attention to this subject, as can be seen from the fact that different sections refer repeatedly to the Internet and the EURES web site.

In general, this is also the field which is giving rise to the greatest hopes as regards more intensive popularisation of EURES and widespread use of its database, adding to the substance of '*direct service to citizens*', the direction in which EURES wishes to move. One important innovation to mention in particular is that the database accessible via the Internet may be able in future to include online curricula vitae, which will increase its usefulness and the volume of personalised information available in the market relations established via EURES.

However, consultation of the web site¹ revealed some deficiencies that need to be corrected:

1. The site is available in three languages only (English, French, and German), a fact which greatly limits its practical usefulness to millions of citizens and constitutes an unacceptable source of national and cultural discrimination.
2. In addition, the job offers presented are likewise drafted in a single language (possibly the language of the person who input them to the database), posing another huge limitation for many interested persons. Modern technology should enable **all the relevant information** – not least vacancies aimed at ordinary citizens – **to be presented in a truly multilingual form**, using machine translation and a standard model suitable for the database. A great effort should be made in this area².
3. Furthermore, the web site appears at times to contain too much information and be based on rather complicated content, posing the risk that users might be snowed under and distracted by what could make the site more difficult and confusing to consult for the public at large³, especially as regards the **two simple and direct headings vital for the success of EURES, namely workers seeking work and employers seeking employees**. What matters is not so much the volume of information, but above all practicality from the point of view of the non-expert user (user-friendliness), making for easy searching and quick answers.

¹ <http://europa.eu.int/jobs/eures>

² The care needed in what concerns the effective multilingual nature and content of these instruments must reflect a clear awareness of the multilingual nature of Europe. Moreover, it must be coherent to the recent definition of the year **2001** as the **European Year of Languages** and the various deliberations passed in this context.

³ The need is just for a permanent care in the way the website is organised – mainly in what concerns the presentation of homepage and other access pages -, in order to make immediately apparent for any common user the hyperlink for personal searches – which are crucial - and to separate it clearly from other links to other type of information or documentation.

4. Lastly, in the space specifically given over to EURES-T, no information is available to date on the one partnership to have been set up in the years 1998 and 1999, the 19th, covering the upper Rhine area¹. Given that this new partnership was established in July 1999, the delay (nearly two years!) is excessive. An oversight of this kind has prompted **doubts whether the information contained on the site is up to date**. It is to be hoped that what is involved is purely an isolated case. The increasing use of the Internet should lead to the most exacting standards of quality, accuracy, and topicality as regards the information provided and the shared databases, as this important strategic tool might otherwise be rendered totally useless.

Given the strategic importance of developing and using EURES via the Internet, Internet applications should be a focus of special priority attention in the years ahead, and the related avenue of development properly linked to the **e-Europe action plan**.

C. The EURES budget

The section of the report given over to the EURES budget² states that *'Most of the budget is used to fund activities by national and cross-border partners for the development of the EURES service, in particular information, promotion and support activities or computer equipment'*. Other points specifically mentioned are *'basic and ongoing training for Euroadvisers'* and *'development, administration and updating .. of databases'*. However, the chart reproduced immediately below those words presents a rather different picture³. The apparent discrepancy between the text and the chart suggests that budgetary classification and analysis tend to be based on changing criteria, making it difficult to determine accurately and for certain whether the main priorities are being properly gauged and pursued.

The only comment that will be made here is that **publicisation and promotion** of EURES should account for a very substantial portion of resources in future years, as should improvement and updating of **computer systems** (free public access on the Internet and interaction of the various branches of EURES under a decentralised system).

The report rightly recommends that the **procedures** for obtaining subsidies should be **simplified** and the **subsidies** themselves and the related planning placed on a **multi-annual** footing.

D. The forthcoming enlargement of the Union

Some parts of the report state that the forthcoming enlargement of the EU also poses a challenge for EURES. That is indeed the case because EURES in general is likely to be subjected to new pressure and special new challenges and opportunities are expected to arise for EURES-T.

¹ V. http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/elm/eures/en/about/cross/index.htm. Similarly of course, no information is shown on the last EURES-T partnership (the 20th), which is already in place or being constituted in the northern border of Sweden and Finland (Tornedalen).

² 10 million € yearly in 1998 and 1999.

³ According to the graphic, EURES budget allocation is divided as follows: EURES-T activity plans, 54%; National activity plans, 31%; Training, 8%; Computer systems, 5%; EURES-info, 1%; Other, 1%.

However, the report does mention any specific measures being considered or, where applicable, already being taken.

Given the foreseeable timetable for the accession of the first new Member States, the Commission should already be called upon at this stage to ensure that the next report, covering the current two-year period, includes a list of programmed measures to meet the challenges of enlargement and an initial assessment of the steps already begun in the interim¹, with particular reference to the following three areas:

1. **Forecast of the main impact of enlargement** on EURES in general and the methods to deal with it.
2. Planning for the **expansion of EURES-T cross-border partnerships**, according to a schedule in line with the likely progress of enlargement to include new Member States and providing where necessary for transitional periods as regards free movement, to enable immediate solutions to be found in the new internal border areas.
3. Measures which must start forthwith, or at any rate from the next two-year period (2002 and 2003) in order to make **advance preparations for enlargement**:
 - 3.1. Dialogue with future partners in the new Member States (PES, trade unions, and employers' organisations) to familiarise them with EURES and its network in advance.
 - 3.2. Forward feasibility study on possible EURES-T cross-border partners in the new internal border areas, taking into account any transitional periods.
 - 3.3. Training of future Euroadvisers in the new Member States.
 - 3.4. Specific training and advance preparations in the field of computerised systems and communications to enable databases to be linked up immediately as the enlargement to include new Member States proceeds.

E. Decentralisation

EURES-T is, relatively speaking, an example of success in the EURES initiative. The gradual transfer of the chairmanships of the cross-border partnership steering committees from the Commission to local partners, to enable the latter to exercise greater responsibility the development of cross-border EURES, is undoubtedly the reason why the network has been implemented more effectively in border areas.

This is an indication that should be heeded and applied to the EURES network as a whole. Indeed, the network could be simplified and made more efficient through **general decentralisation of the service** whereby the Commission would become merely the core of the network and have the task of coordinating and activating its different channels, following an integrated approach. Moreover, the increasingly intensive development of Internet

¹ In the direct contact with Commission's services, information was given that, **in some EURES activities, "observers" from candidate countries are already participating.**

connections and the growing use of the Internet to access the network from outside can only encourage such an approach.

III. Conclusion. Fresh impetus at the Stockholm spring summit (March 2001)

The Commission seems well aware both of the challenges still being posed to transnational and cross-border labour mobility within Europe and of the new tasks and roles laid down at the extraordinary Lisbon European Council (March 2000) and confirmed at the Nice European Council (December 2000) and is not just taking account of the general impact on the European employment strategy, but also paying particular attention to the question of mobility and hence the effects on EURES. That inference can be drawn not so much from the EURES activity report 1998-1999 as from other documents, not least the **communication from the Commission to the Council** entitled **‘New European Labour Markets, Open to All, with Access for All’**, which is addressed to the forthcoming spring summit in **Stockholm** at the end of **March 2001**.

Even where they record significant progress, the figures in the activity report suggest that the ‘European labour market’ is still a very long way away and its needs, demands, and opportunities are nowhere near to being met. For example, the 1 000 000 workers who contacted EURES are equivalent to 6% of the unemployed¹; the 166 000 vacancies carried on the system and the 44 460 placements obtained correspond to 0.1% and 0.03% respectively of the number of existing jobs and the total working population. However, leaving aside the possibly arbitrary nature of the figures, the Commission notes that **in the EU, the number of persons living in Member State other than their own is equivalent to less than 2% of the total population and annual mobility of citizens between Member States involves less than 0.4% of the resident population or approximately 1.5 million people**². In the United States, annual domestic mobility between states rose in 1998 to 2.4% of the population, in other words six times higher than the corresponding European figure.

The Commission is addressing the matter at the present time and needs to bring its attention and fresh impetus to bear on it³. Its proposal is aiming at a wide-ranging, ambitious plan in two stages (the first stage is to be implemented during 2001 and will centre on the spring 2002 summit, and the second will run from 2002 to 2005) **seeking to eliminate the obstacles by 2005 to create a genuine European labour market, open and accessible to all**. Essentially, the plan will focus on two key targets, namely the ‘portability’ of qualifications

¹ Even admitting, merely for a reasoning purpose, that every single individual that contacted EURES (and who is aware that it exists) was unemployed - instead of corresponding to employed people looking for another employment - and that all those 1,000,000 contacts were new contacts, instead of repeated contacts by the same people.

² V. mentioned **Communication from the Commission to the Council, “New European Labour Markets, Open to All, with Access for All”** and Commissioners BOLKESTEIN and DIAMANTOPOULOU’s article **“Workers Without Frontiers”**, FINANCIAL TIMES, January 28, 2001.

³ The Communication from the Commission presents the main existing challenges in this field, as well as the special opportunities offered by some sectors in particular. On the other hand, it typifies the **four main forms of European mobility** that appear to be developing more intensely: (1) temporary migration; (2) mobility within multi-national enterprises (or corporate mobility); (3) mobility between industry and academia; (4) cross-border commuting of various kinds.

from one Member State to another and, secondly, a real practical guarantee of free movement for workers.

It is to this latter target that the issues associated with EURES specifically relate both because information shortcomings¹ are still one of the main obstacles to mobility and because development and improvement of the EURES network are also regarded as components of the strategy to pursue and key means of bringing about genuine transnational transparency on the European labour market. The plan refers to a **new legal basis to be drawn up for EURES** and adopted in 2002, given that the frame of reference laid down in 1993 is now considered totally obsolete. The Commission is pinning its greatest hopes on the proposal to set up a 'High-level Skills and Mobility Task Force' and the new momentum which the task force's contributions may eventually generate.

In short, this appears to be a time when a significant new impetus is taking shape. The consequences ensuing from the forthcoming Stockholm European Council will need to be studied with keen attention, as will, later, assuming that the Commission's plan is approved, the work of the task force up to the end of this year². The same interest will likewise have to be brought to bear on the need for Parliament to be involved when the projected new legal basis for EURES is drawn up, as is scheduled to happen in 2002.

¹ Information shortcomings refer not only to the labour market strictly, but also to other crucial areas of economic and social information - it is the case, namely, of information on housing, education or other, particularly important when we think that mobility often involves the displacement of families. As other main obstacles to mobility that subsist, the Commission identifies also the following ones: linguistic, cultural and social barriers; economic barriers, namely related to tax and social security systems, including the need to guarantee acquired rights and to overcome difficulties in benefits' accumulation; the question of skills and professional qualifications and of its common recognition in all member-States; and other kind of barriers, more subtle and indirect, within the Internal Market, namely out of the fact that the market in services is still fragmented.

² The schedule proposed by the Commission implies that the Task Force will be presenting its report to the Commission until the end of December 2001, in order to inform timely the strategies and measures that will be put to the Spring Summit in 2002, where the second stage of the plan should be launched.