

Your First EURES job

**Outcomes expert workshop
on the future of 'Your first
EURES job' and the
development of targeted
mobility schemes**

Brussels, 25 September 2013



This paper presents the outcomes of the Expert Workshop on the future of 'Your first EURES job' and the development of targeted mobility schemes held in Brussels on 25 September 2013.

Context of the workshop

Outline of Your first EURES job

'Your first EURES job' (YfEj) is a pilot and customised targeted job mobility scheme combined with financial support to help young people aged 18 - 30 to find a job in another EU country.

The concept has been inspired by DG Education and Culture programmes on mobility¹: with lump sums to the individuals concerned. It finances language courses or other training needs and travel expenses for young job applicants (for job interviews and job settlement in other Member States) but also makes a contribution to an integration programme in the case of recruitment by an SME. New support measures covering jobs and/or traineeships and/or apprenticeships are planned for the projects to be implemented as from 2014.

The scheme is now run, on the basis of a preparatory action over three years (2011-2013), through annual calls for proposals. The overall budget is around EUR 12 million. The objective for the period is to place 5.000 people.

The nine projects selected so far² are using different methodologies and tools to place people.

Policy framework – introduction by the Commission services

The Commission opened the workshop by reaffirming the strategic importance of YfEj. Despite its pilot and small scale nature, YfEj and the underpinning concept have been put on the employment policy agenda at both EU and national level in view of the high and increasing levels of youth unemployment in the European Union. The Conclusions of the European Council of 27-28 June 2013 set out that *"new efforts will be made to promote the mobility of young jobseekers, including by strengthening the 'Your first EURES job' programme"*.

Given the strategic importance of this job mobility scheme, the Commission has been able to secure future funding for Targeted Mobility Schemes (hereafter TMS) via the EU programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI), probably on the basis of an annual budget between EUR 5 to 9 million over the period 2014- 2020. One of the main objectives of the programme is to *"pay particular attention to vulnerable groups, such as young people"* (Art 4, 2a). The European Parliament and the Council set out as follows in the EaSI regulation³ preamble *"The scope of EURES should be broadened to include developing and supporting TMS (...) at Union level with a view to filling vacancies where labour market shortcomings have been identified. (...)TMS, such as those based on the preparatory action "Your first EURES job", should make it easier for young people to access employment opportunities and to take up a job in another Member State, and should also encourage employers to create job openings for young mobile workers (...)"*.

Under the EURES Axis of the programme, it is further specified that TMS will be developed *"to fill job vacancies where labour market shortcomings have been identified, and/or to help workers with a propensity to be mobile, where a clear*

¹ Erasmus, Youth in Action, etc.

² <http://ec.europa.eu/social/yourfirsteuresjob>

³ OJ L 347, 20.12.2013

economic need has been identified" (Art 21 d). This means that small-scale innovative initiatives will be developed to deal with job vacancies in certain occupations, sectors or Member States through tailor-made recruitment campaigns to facilitate intra-EU job matching. Youth employment will remain a priority.

In terms of the future of this kind of scheme, in the Communication "Working together for Europe's young people"⁴, the Commission calls on Member States to make use of ESF funding opportunities and national funding sources to promote intra-EU labour mobility. YfEj should first and foremost serve as a source of inspiration and testing for Member States to roll out such schemes at national level. Actually, the Commission views YfEj as a potential part of national youth guarantee schemes to which the Member States have committed themselves. The youth guarantee scheme envisages young unemployed receiving either learning and training offer or a job offer within four months of the start of their spell of unemployment. This job, work-based training or education offer may also be in another EU country.

Germany has taken up the idea of this kind of scheme and created a national programme⁵ to attract workers and young professionals (for the apprenticeship system) with the same logic (EUR 140 million over four years, 2013-2016).

Other Member States may follow suit, perhaps using the 2014-2020 funding under the European Social Fund (ESF) and the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI).

Objective of the workshop

YfEj is currently being evaluated by an external consultant (Ecorys).

The workshop was organised in the framework of the YfEj evaluation, helping to answer some of the evaluators' unresolved issues. The aim has been to organise a debate among a group of practitioners on the potential and future of this scheme and other possible TMS in general.

The outcome of this workshop will feed into the evaluation study and will help the European Commission to develop future TMS. The workshop was split into four sessions. The main conclusions are summarised below.

Session I: What does YfEj provide that EURES does not today?

1. Background information

YfEj is a preparatory action focused on encouraging young jobseekers to take up work in another Member State and employers to hire young jobseekers from abroad via a range of services, including:

- Matching, placement and recruitment services;
- Financial grants for jobseekers undertaking a job interview abroad, relocating abroad to take up work and participating in preparatory (language) courses and;

⁴ COM(2013)447 final

⁵ "The job of my life", www.thejobofmylife.de

- Financial grants for SMEs to integrate foreign workers.

Whereas YfEJ is an experimental scheme, EURES is a European network of public employment services (PES) which has existed since 1993. EURES consists of two pillars: a portal and a human network. The existence of a human network of trained professionals (EURES advisers) working together on intra-EU labour mobility is considered a key asset of EURES.

To contribute better to the Europe 2020 employment target, the network is currently undergoing a reform aimed at making its business and service provision model more responsive to the needs of modern labour markets.

EURES will evolve from its current information and advisory function accompanying the clearance of vacancies and facilitating the freedom of movement of workers, towards an instrument focusing on bringing about actual intra-EU recruitment.

In practice this shift will require EURES advisers to obtain new skills and reorient their working methods to assist employers with recruitment from other Member States.

Ultimately, the YfEj approach should be part of the service provision model offered by a reformed EURES network.

2. Exchange of views

Participants highlighted as qualities of EURES that it is a large network of professionals trained in intra-EU labour mobility which can make use of existing infrastructure and tools in the public employment services and can ensure quality and reliable information and advice.

Participants highlighted as weaknesses of EURES the poor quality of the CVs on the EURES portal, the limitations of its capacity to reach employers and conduct vacancy driven activities. It is also recognized that intra-EU recruitment is time-consuming and labour intensive and that the divide between the education dimension and the work dimension, with the network focusing solely on the latter, is in practice often artificial.

They also highlighted the limited extent to which the current EURES network is suitable for matching, placement and recruitment activities, despite its historical objectives. Shortcomings identified at the work shop include:

- The EURES CV database today is inadequate for matching purposes as it generates poor search results;
- EURES fails to communicate fully the benefits and challenges for individuals moving abroad and for companies recruiting from abroad;
- EURES is not equipped to solve other issues such as the intra-EU recognition of skills, diplomas and qualifications, potentially leading to underemployment (inflation of qualifications).

To support the reform of the network, the Commission is developing a new EURES catalogue of services ranging from information and advice to one-to-one post-placement support alongside a tailor-made training programme for EURES Advisers.

In line with the European Council Conclusions of June 2012 to explore the possibility of extending EURES to traineeships and apprenticeships, work has started on the inclusion of apprenticeships and traineeships in EURES. This will be a gradual process, starting with a pilot project on a voluntary basis in 2014.

Work shop participants agreed that despite the fact that TMS can be labour intensive, requiring a thorough knowledge of labour market needs and support for the

preparation of job candidates as well as financial management capacities, they may have a positive impact on the service provision model of labour market organisations.

Both jobseekers and employers (SMEs or large-sized companies) may reap the benefits of tailor-made services combined with financial support for the recruitment and placement process. The possibility for TMS to enhance job candidates' language or other occupational skills is deemed an outstanding feature. Support for the process of recognising academic and professional qualifications is another key issue.

For employers the provision of efficient pre- and post-recruitment support services is a must. Both EURES and YfEj should start service delivery with a proper analysis of vacancy and employer and/or sectoral needs. For high skilled positions, employers usually have a very clear idea of the profile of the candidate or even of the actual person, before they start the recruitment process itself. This is less the case with lower skilled positions.

Key messages

YfEj and TMS are flexible and responsive instruments which, in the framework of the EU mobility policy, seek to address specific needs of the European labour market and offer a tailor-made job mobility package with a view to increase employment.

This kind of scheme has the potential to be fully integrated into EURES.

Building on the brand recognition of EURES, TMS may supplement EURES activity at three levels:

- The subject of the action, with as a starting point a specific market analysis or focused action towards a group of employers or a sector of the economy rather than the facilitation of free movement for workers in general;
- The nature and scope of the services to be provided, by adding to the service catalogue measures such as allowances or pre-departure language training for job seekers, support for the recognition of their qualifications or support for integration in the company;
- The (communication) channels, for instance by exploring existing, targeted social media networks and from there directing young people to opportunities or by connecting with certain intermediaries.

Session II Do we see a role for 'targeted mobility schemes' in the future? Which dimensions are important?

The discussion confirmed the need to have a targeted approach to each of the three levels indicated above.

Targeted mobility schemes can provide adequate responses to the needs of specific groups. Target groups can be defined for example on the basis of a typology of migrants, the various skills levels of workers, and the particular drivers through which workers become mobile (e.g. pushed by economic need or pulled by interest or career motives). Each target group has specific needs to which services can be tailored.

Similarly, companies of different sizes have different approaches to recruitment and different needs for support, which again requires a targeted approach⁶.

The discussion showed the role TMS could play in reaching specific groups through a targeted communication strategy. Social media, as well as computer games can be used to create new, cost-effective channels, using the community-building potential of these media platforms. Similarly, smaller companies may require a far more focused approach than larger companies with dedicated staff for recruitment. The 'modus operandi' of companies depends on size and communication is more effective when it is tailored towards these differences.

Participants underlined the need for clarity about the strategy the EU pursues with TMS: is it to satisfy employment through job placement or better to coordinate free movement of workers and EURES activities in general? Interests at European, national, regional and sectoral level may clash (everyone may be in search of health professionals). What volume of mobility and what objectives are being pursued?

In reply, it was argued that all mobility and in fact all employment services are targeted to a greater or lesser extent. European, national/ regional and sector needs can be contradictory and mutually exclusive. Labour markets moreover, are continually changing and require a continuous provision of services for both incoming and outgoing mobility. The needs of the labour market can change quickly and radically. Examples of such swift changes were Germany (currently an inbound flow country) and Spain (which changed quickly from immigration to emigration country). In turn many employment services strive to provide both general and individually tailored services for job seekers and employers.

The rationale for TMS starts with the analyses conducted and the objectives agreed by Member States in the framework of EU employment objectives, including the various policy packages to combat youth unemployment and the European Employment Strategy.

YFEJ and TMS may be more attractive for the client groups than regular services precisely because of the specific and clear framework (and conditions) established and the degree to which it would offer a fairly comprehensive and modular tool kit, in combination with a (personalized) support function to address the specific needs of client groups directly.

⁶ Which service package best meets the needs of different groups was discussed in a later session.

Key messages:

A justification for European TMS can be found in the fact that:

- Such a European action serves as a catalyst for action, notably at national level (leading by example);
- Geographic labour mobility is now part and parcel of the EU employment strategy. TMS are featured to address obstacles to intra-EU labour mobility;
- A coordinated effort is required, inter alia because quite a few Member States have the same sector shortages (e.g. health) and the same needs, i.e. attract high skilled labour.

In order to be able to react and adapt fast enough to changing needs, TMS should be flexible. This flexibility can be safeguarded through a 'toolkit' or 'menu' approach: A menu of different services could be deployed as soon as a certain need among jobseekers or employers and SMEs arises.

Currently, young jobseekers are in highest need of support. A TMS should therefore be implemented for them. Services for young jobseekers should be complemented by services for SMEs to attract jobseekers and integrate them in such companies in particular.

Session III: What would an ideal mobility service package look like?

Services for jobseekers

Participants identified a variety of services for jobseekers and the channels through which these should be provided.

Participants generally agreed that such services should fit a 'logic of moving abroad': People who move abroad need to overcome the fear of the 'unknown'. Both proper preparation and post-recruitment support are therefore key features of an ideal mobility service package.

Participants also agreed that it is necessary to allocate resources foremost to the most promising candidates. In this respect, reference was made to the possibility of assessing the ability of people to move and live abroad and it was even suggested that a game simulating mobility experiences could be a useful tool.

As regards the business model to follow, a vacancy driven approach would generate the best results. With this approach a vacancy is always matched with a person seeking a job and willing to move abroad.

Nevertheless, in order to stimulate intra-EU labour mobility, communication activities and support services should also serve to convince people to move abroad (and employers to hire from abroad).

Intermediaries offering support services should be aware of the connections with other initiatives at EU level, such as the We mean business campaign, the knowledge alliances and sectoral skills alliances, Erasmus for all and developments in the area of vocational training and cross-border matching for apprenticeships.

Types of services for jobseekers and the channels of delivery:

- The provision of **preparatory information** is crucial for successful mobility since placement is not only about matching jobseekers with job vacancies, but takes place in a wider context.
- Other information should be provided in the **post-recruitment phase**: participants emphasised 'the idea of a **'welcome desk'** for recruited workers in the hosting country. It could take the form of a 'multidisciplinary' one-stop-shop to help jobseekers with information and guidance on housing, banking, social security, etc. Information on costs and how to organise housing is considered as amongst the most important details to be provided for jobseekers from abroad.
- Information to jobseekers should ideally be provided **by human intermediates**, for example by a 'buddy' as with the Erasmus programme. This could also take the form of a community on the internet. Face to face service delivery however may go beyond the scope and resources of employment services and thus require the cooperation of other stakeholders.
- Information services can however be provided via other channels, via postings **on social media platforms** in particular. A Facebook page is therefore considered necessary to reach (young) jobseekers. User-generated information from fellow mobile workers can be a source of information on such a platform.
- It was generally agreed that service providers should use the same platforms that target groups use and not invent new ones.
- The development of **games as training tools** to reach young people was also proposed. Some experts stated in this context that training via 'fun' simulation games is an effective way of preparing young people for real life.
- Other services for jobseekers concern **language training**. Experience shows that the need to provide language training tends to diminish with increasing skill levels. Proper language training may take up to four months full-time. Such training is likely to be provided if medium skilled jobseekers are included in the mobility scheme.
- Services for jobseekers should include **support to facilitate the recognition of skills and qualifications abroad**. This may be achieved through a more extensive profiling of jobseekers' skills and qualifications as well as convincing employers that a candidate's profile really matches their vacancy.

It was recognised that a common understanding of the functioning and modalities of TMS throughout the EU would require some thought on how to integrate TMS within the different models the PES employ to support placement activities for job seekers (either hands on support or mutual responsibility) and the channels they use (e-services becoming increasingly the default support function). Regardless of the choice of model, the information on the EURES portal on living and working conditions should inform job seekers clearly about this dimension of the interaction with the local PES.

Services for employers

Services for employers should meet a variety of criteria:

- Services for employers should be of **high quality**. Quality indicators include the time to hire and the fulfilment rate. The smaller the talent pool however, the more time is available for recruitment.

- If service provision is of high quality, the **costs are less important** for employers. Employers do not want services free of charge if the quality is low.
- The **bureaucracy** involved in completing a recruitment process should be kept to a **minimum**.
- **Social media information for employers** may be crucial e.g. the creation of a community of employers who have successfully recruited internationally may help 'spread the word'.
- Enhanced **financial support for training** may be a lever to boost recruitment from other Member States.
- A comprehensive service package could envisage **different modules** to address the needs of employers, i.e. not only provide support with the filing of job vacancies but also with development of training programmes and the matching of candidates for vocational training.
- **Profiling of employers** is an important feature of a successful mobility support service package; when profiling employers one should also look at the adaptability of the company to integrate foreign workers.

A problem encountered by both public and private employment services is that employers sometimes lack commitment to a recruitment process, despite personalised and tailor-made service provision. In order to create such commitment among employers and to stimulate them to keep their open vacancies available to be filled by a recruiter, one solution identified at the meeting was to charge employers a fee for the recruitment process. Another suggestion was not to sign off on any financial support until after signature of a contract with the job seeker.

Key messages:

The ideal mobility service package should provide adequate responses to specific recruitment needs and job mobility obstacles, including apprenticeships and traineeships. The suggested support services may vary in scope and nature. The service provision channels may also vary. The channel of delivery and the communication with target groups require targeting as well as the services offered.

Session IV: What is the role of financial support in that kind of package?

The role of financial support differs according to the target group. It is more important for jobseekers who are driven by 'push factors' to seek work abroad and for companies more reluctant to hire foreigners. Financial support may help to reduce employers' fears associated with labour mobility. For others, financial support is more likely to just 'tip the scale'.

All in all, financial support should always be provided with a minimum of administrative burden, as this will otherwise offset the financial advantages of the conditionality in the support.

When assessing the usefulness of TMS one should take into account that there is "dead weight" in any subsidy programme (i.e. users who would have taken action even in the absence of a subsidy). Funding can help mitigate the degree of dead weight. One can argue that a contribution to travel expenses will in any case help a person to be more employable (by not jeopardizing own savings which could then still be used for other activities, in case the vacancy abroad was not filled by the person concerned). Any contributions to training should be conditional upon the receipt of an offer. One could also get round the dead weight theory by providing support only in cases of new job openings.

It has also been argued that financial support is more appropriate at the early phases of placement, as at that moment financial support may help overcome the insecurity about the outcome of the process.

The issue of the longevity of TMS was also raised. TMS should by nature be limited (sunset clause to avoid dependency paths). Here the evolution on labour markets and the overall relationships between public authorities and companies come into play. When the pressure of unfilled vacancies becomes too high, companies are more likely to roll out the red carpet and gladly pay themselves for intra-EU / international recruitments, training packages, relocation services and integration support. TMS should be designed in such a way that they do not turn into vehicles for up scaling when other ALMPs⁷ and private sources are available.

Services for jobseekers

Financial support for those seeking jobs, including apprenticeships and traineeships, should first and foremost contribute to the employability of these people. It should therefore mainly anticipate jobseekers' financial needs and skills needs. Financial needs evolve from the fact that the longer the duration of a spell of unemployment, the less financial resources are available to jobseekers. The money for job interviews is particularly valuable because of the uncertain outcome of interviews. Financial support for skills development aims to enhance the qualifications of the one looking for a position, e.g. through language courses or other training needs.

For many jobseekers, financial support may not be of decisive importance to move abroad. Some people are mobile, regardless of financial support, for example because they have large international networks. In addition, the willingness of jobseekers to move abroad depends on a variety of parameters of which the financial is just one. Others like family and friends may prevent a jobseeker from moving abroad.

Highly skilled / highly qualified job seekers usually do not need mobility unless the economic situation is difficult and they risk becoming long term unemployed. This category of persons will generally need less financial support than others. Mobility in most cases is not necessarily an objective, just a (second best) solution to a problem someone is facing.

Job seekers may have a particular interest in obtaining financial support for recognition as this often entails fairly high costs.

Services for employers

The role of financial support for employers depends on the situation of the particular employer. On the one hand, the prime interest of employers with bottleneck vacancies

⁷ Active labour market policies

is to fill these vacancies; on the other, many employers operate rather understaffed despite not having vacancies open. In the latter case, financial support could contribute to create job openings.

The market failure, and therefore the case for financial support, is essentially with SMEs. The assistance should focus on giving effective access to candidates (they may not have the number of spontaneous candidates which large companies have), on the recruitment process and on integration requirements. A clear option here, besides financial incentives / lump sums, is to provide support to certain intermediaries to offer such (sector or occupation specific) services.

For SMEs it is also important to get the candidate to come to the town concerned (hence job interview costs are essential).

Key messages:

The importance of financial support for taking up work abroad differs both between categories of jobseekers and between jobseekers and employers.

Even though financial support may not be the most important service for moving abroad, it can be particularly valuable for long-term unemployed or unoccupied jobseekers.

Conclusions Five key recommendations for the future of TMS for young people

Building on the key messages from the different workshop sessions, the following five operational recommendations for the next wave of targeted mobility schemes for young people have been identified:

- Start the scheme from an evidence-based/economic analysis of the needs of the labour market and their likely changes in the near future;
- Develop a business-oriented model for the provision of quality services to employers, focusing the approach on the recruitment needs and possibly the size of the chosen target employer group;
- Always ensure proper preparation of jobseekers before they move abroad. This should include language courses tailored to individual needs;
- Include the provision of practical post-recruitment services in the service catalogue. Such services should deal with housing, social security and similar subjects and ideally have a 'human face' (one-to-one personalised service);
- Examine the possibilities offered by social media and information technologies in general to reach young people and develop tailored services for them.

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