



# **Study supporting the evaluation of Decision 573/2014/EU on enhanced cooperation between Public Employment Services (PES)**

Executive summary

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## **LEGAL NOTICE**

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Ecorys was commissioned by the European Commission to undertake an external and independent study to support the evaluation of the extent to which the European Network of Public Employment Services (PES Network) has contributed to the achievement of the objectives set out in Decision 573/2014/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council on enhanced cooperation between Public Employment Services (PES) and whether it has fulfilled its tasks. The objective of the Decision is to encourage cooperation between Member States within the areas of PES responsibility, thereby formalising and strengthening cooperation between the PES and helping to reinforce their capacity, effectiveness and efficiency. The PES Network encompasses the European Commission and the PES of all EU Member States, along with those of Norway and Iceland.

The study, carried out from June 2018 to March 2019, assessed the implementation of Decision 573/2014/EU against five evaluation criteria – relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence and EU added value. The evaluation used a theory-based approach to assessing outcomes, underpinned by an intervention logic. The methodology was fully aligned with the requirements in the Better Regulation Guidelines and Toolbox, including four main tasks: a comprehensive mapping exercise of the changes undertaken in PES as a result of the Decision; case studies to assess impact on PES in five countries (EE, FR, IT, NL, RO); a public consultation; and (4) targeted consultations with key stakeholders.

### **Main findings**

The evaluation concluded overall that the PES Network has contributed to the achievement of the objectives set out in Decision 573/2014/EU and that it has fulfilled its tasks. Although still at a relatively early stage of development, it has delivered a range of outputs and results that have increased knowledge and led to changes in performance and organisation of PES at all levels of maturity, and will be likely to lead to further improvements in the longer term, to the ultimate benefit of PES end-users (jobseekers and employers). The key concrete impacts of the Decision to date include:

- A structured framework, via the benchlearning process, for assessing PES performance and needs across the key areas of implementation, and facilitating comparisons and improvements both at a collective and individual PES level, with the buy-in and active participation of PES;
- The provision of tailored individual support and targeted collective mutual learning for PES based on precise needs identified;
- Increased, better quality, more comprehensive and structured cooperation and peer learning between PES. There is greater ownership, collegiality and buy-in by all national PES in cooperation activities;
- Improvements to PES policies and practices, both in terms of organisational processes and service delivery (e.g. the development of managerial skills, the introduction of performance and quality management systems, the development competence-based recruitment and job placement tools, progress with the implementation of digitalisation, more tailored services for jobseekers, optimising employer services);
- Ensuring a collective voice and formal platform for PES in policymaking at EU and national level in relevant fields;
- A greater understanding among EU policymakers of the needs and challenges of national (and regional) PES, allowing more effective support measures and policy solutions;
- A common strategic framework for PES cooperation for tackling the increasingly common global challenges that PES are facing, which require concerted action;
- The stimulation of internal learning, reflection and policy debate in participating PES;

- Contributions to the EU2020 objectives through providing targeted support to the Member States which have received country specific recommendations related to PES, cooperating with EMCO (and the Labour Ministries) to identify the Member States which require additional support, and contributing to headline targets via the alignment of the annual work programme of the PES Network.

In term of the five evaluation criteria, the evaluation concluded that:

- All the objectives and initiatives set out in the Decision have been and remain **relevant** in relation to the labour market context.
- The PES Network has been **effective** in implementing its initiatives, which have contributed to the achievement of the Decision's objectives. The Network's most effective initiatives have been benchlearning and mutual assistance, due to their tailored nature and the concrete benefits they have brought to the PES. Overall, the initiatives have contributed to the achievement of all the Decision's objectives.
- The Network has had overall a good level of **efficiency** in delivering its initiatives and reaching its objectives. Participants in the PES Network, both from more and less developed PES, perceive that the benefits of the Network are superior to its costs.
- There is a good degree of **coherence** between the Decision and the EU policy framework, and a fairly good level of coherence at national level between the work of the PES Network and relevant policies or initiatives implemented at national level (e.g. the Youth Guarantee).
- There has been **strong EU added value** of the Decision. It is likely that PES cooperation at EU level would have been lesser in both volume and quality in its absence. Although some cooperation would have taken place without the Network, particularly in the case of mature PES, it is unlikely it would have been as structured, evidence-based, dynamic, comprehensive or effective.

### **Key lessons learnt**

- The importance of ensuring that the Network has a primary focus on learning and sharing, underpinned by a structured process of assessments;
- PES ownership of European cooperation is a key success factor, but cooperation must be underpinned by continuous financial, organisational and expert support from the EU level to ensure successful implementation;
- PES have an important voice for the development, implementation and monitoring of both EU and national policies and initiatives in the field of employment;
- The objectives and initiatives for cooperation need to provide a clear framework, but also sufficient flexibility to adapt to new challenges. The work of the Network could be extended to new areas of cooperation that respond to common PES challenges in the future;
- PES at all maturity levels have benefited from participation in Network activities;
- Enhanced cooperation with relevant EU and national level labour market actors and organisations, including ESF actors, is likely to increase the effectiveness of the Network;
- Greater dissemination of learning resources and the other Network outputs to a wider audience could increase the reach and impact of PES Network activity;
- Some gains in efficiency could be made, however not at the risk of endangering effectiveness;
- The work of the Network could be extended to new areas of cooperation that respond to common PES challenges in the future;
- Lessons learnt from the implementation of Decision 573/2014/EU are transferable to other policy areas at the EU level;
- The PES Network has been operating for a relatively short period so is still developing, and will require time and ongoing investment to reach its full potential.

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