



Conference

**“Bringing the long-term unemployed
back into work”**

Brussels, 27th June 2019

#LTU19

The Conference Report

ESF *Transnational Platform*

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Summary

The Conference 'Bringing the long-term unemployed back into work' took place in Brussels, Belgium, on 27th June 2019. It gathered 139 participants from the ESF Managing Authorities and Intermediate Bodies, Public Employment Services, national ministries and other governmental bodies, national and European organisations. The Conference had two objectives:

- to address the topic of long-term unemployment and integration of the long-term unemployed into the labour market in the light of the recent [Evaluation of Council Recommendation on long-term unemployment](#); and
- to take stock of the outcomes of a mutual learning project on tackling long-term unemployment (LTU Project) that started in 2017 and was managed by the European Commission in cooperation with ESF Flanders and the ESF Transnational Platform.

The conference was opened by Marianne Thyssen, the European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility. Speakers in the panel discussion (Stefan Olsson, Fons Leroy, Patrizia Bussi, Louis Vervloet, and Laura Rayner) addressed the question 'How can we learn from existing lessons in providing support to the long-term unemployed in the future?'

The conference presented two inspiring practices under the European Social Fund – WEB/I-Diverso (Belgium) and the Lino Spiteri Foundation (Malta). Participants were invited to share ideas on how to tackle challenges to the provision of effective support for the long-term unemployed in Member States by engaging in three parallel workshops. The themes of the workshops were as follows:

- shared case histories;
- placement sustainability; and

targeted support. Max Uebe, Head of Unit Employment Strategy, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, European Commission, gave the concluding remarks to the conference.

Agenda of the meeting:

https://ec.europa.eu/esf/transnationality/filedepot_download/2717/2231 (copy the link to browser)

1. Opening address: Marianne Thyssen, the European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility

The main points of the Commissioner's speech were as follows:

- Five years ago, more than 7 million people were long-term unemployed in the EU. Therefore, the number one priority for the European Commission has been to bring back jobs and inclusive growth to make sure that the dividends of recovery reach everyone in society.
- The EU's focus has been on a virtuous triangle of responsible fiscal policies, structural reform and investment, together with tailored and focused measures that were put forward in the 2016 Recommendation on the integration of the long-term unemployed into the labour market.
- With [the Recommendation](#), Member States committed to address long-term unemployment as a matter of priority and to take concrete steps.
- There are some clear successes. The Commission also has a clear idea of what still needs to be done.
- Today, unemployment in the EU is at 6.4%. This is the lowest figure this century. Long-term unemployment has also dropped dramatically - from 12 million at the peak of the crisis to 6.6 million today.
- This is in part due to economic recovery but also due to the quality of the reforms undertaken. In practice this has led to:
 - More measures to get people, especially the most vulnerable ones, to register with employment services.
 - More Member States (MS) offering tailor-made support to jobseekers. Most Public Employment Services (PES) now provide an Individual Action Plan. There are clear efforts to increase coordination between services and to improve joint service delivery. In all MS there are now coordination mechanisms, between PES and social services. Data sharing is the most common approach. More MS are setting up single points of contact.
 - Many MS are doing their best to get employers involved. In part through incentives to employers to hire people. But also by providing services to employers. For example: screening of candidates and placement support. The vast majority of MS provide workplace mentoring and training to make sure people get a job and keep it.
- Ms Thyssen mentioned three good practices: Croatia, Finland and Malta. In **Malta**, PES targets unemployed groups that are normally difficult to reach (single parents and migrants) and carry out outreach activities to identify and register the unemployed among them. In **Finland**, the PES work with municipalities - which provide social and health care services – and with the Social Insurance Institution - which helps people with disabilities to get a job. Together they provide a seamless range of services to jobseekers in a one-stop shop. There is even a mobile one stop shop: social services on wheels, for those who need it. **Croatia** developed a statistical profiling tool which estimates the probability of employment within 12 months following registration. Jobseekers at high risk of long-term unemployment can then follow additional in-depth counselling.
- Those Member States with less developed systems have been making the most progress. But there is still much to do:
 - Many people still can't find their way to public services. More needs to be done to reach these people.

- Almost all MS now provide individual plans for the unemployed. It is necessary to improve the quality of these plans. They tend to still be limited to regular employment services.
- The 'one stop shop' is still far from a reality everywhere. There is a need for post-placement support services, to make sure people keep their jobs and to support social enterprises that offer jobs and training opportunities.
- The Commission can help through monitoring (looking at how successful MS are at targeting individuals and coordinating their services) and promoting mutual learning through the PES Network, the ESF Committee and peer reviews.
- The most direct impact the EC has is through EU funds and technical assistance. Funds are used to address remaining shortcomings. With the ESF and the European Social Structural Reform Support Service the EC can fund measures targeting the LTU and support capacity building (help MS build single points of contact).

2. Panel discussion: Supporting the long-term unemployed: lessons learned and ways forward

Stefan Olsson, Director of Employment, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, European Commission

The Evaluation of the implementation of the Council Recommendation on the integration of the long-term unemployed into the labour market is showing the decrease in numbers of LTU across the EU (2.5 million fewer since 2016). There has been a lot of progress made: support to the LTU is more individualised, services are more tailored to the needs of the LTU, and support services for employers are starting to be put in place and are more frequent.

Fons Leroy, Chair of the European Network of Public Employment Services

For Public Employment Services it is important to have a holistic approach to supporting the LTU. The entire background of a person needs to be taken into account in the process of profiling. Furthermore, an integrated approach with a single contact strategy between services (rather than a single point of contact) is essential. The best way to support labour-market integration of the LTU is through on-the-job training. This training needs to be adapted to the future needs of the labour market in order to ensure sustainability of employment.

Patrizia Bussi, Director, European Network of Social Integration Enterprises

The main role of the social integration enterprises is to support the integration of vulnerable groups through training and pedagogical activities. This has to be done in partnership with other actors (e.g. PES).

Louis Vervloet, General Director, European Social Fund Agency, Belgium

Partnership with different actors is the key to achieving effective support for the LTU.

Laura Rayner, Economic and Social Policy Officer, Eurodiaconia

Civil society organisations should offer targeted support to the LTU by providing three types of activities:

- a person-centered approach; early intervention/access to services; and outreach.

Q&A

To Patrizia Bussi: What is the social impact of social integration enterprises?

Social integration enterprises have a social impact by providing services to vulnerable persons. Unlike standard social integration enterprises, work integration social enterprises (WISEs) focus on the integration of vulnerable employees into work.

To Stefan Olsson: Should we expand the focus from the LTU to inactive people?

Work focusing on inactive persons should be developed in the context of the ESF+ by building on the existing good practices and institutional set-up.

To Stefan Olsson: What can the European Commission do to support the LTU in the future?

The European Commission can help by monitoring (through Geographical Units and the European Semester), supporting and promoting good examples (e.g. integration of services), and by promoting closer collaboration between EU Funds.

Fons Leroy: The Common Strategy for Employment needs to be developed (that would be in line with and complementary to the existing European Pillar of Social Rights).

To Laura Rayner: How can policymakers support civil society in its work with the LTU?

By giving the monitoring role to civil society, with the European Semester, and with funding.

To Louis Vervloet: How can the ESF+ support the LTU in the future?

Social policies need to be reinforced and reinvented within the Funds. Transnational cooperation and mutual learning should remain the key elements.

3. Inspiring practice under the European Social Fund: WEB (Belgium)

The session started with a short video on iDiverso, an initiative started by WEB, which is a Flemish NGO that helps people to get sustainable jobs.

Wim Van Ammel and Bie Bijmens explained the three types of activities that WEB is undertaking:

- being an employer itself;
- offering guidance and training programmes; and
- providing services for employers.

Programmes are based around the following three clusters:

- activation (social, not work); transition (work experience); and work.

To work with employers WEB created a new brand I-Diverso, It is using the following three tools:

- inclusive job design (creating sustainable jobs);
- workplace learning; and
- job coaching (empowering employers and employees to solve problems between them on their own).

Presentation: https://ec.europa.eu/esf/transnationality/filedepot_download/2815/2507 (copy the link to browser)

Q&A

What is the secret to this project's success?

- A 2-customer approach – treating both unemployed and employer like customers.

- Administrative support for employers (for job coaching etc.).
- Offering a whole package for everyone (also fulfilling employers' needs).

How do you see it developing in the future?

- Inclusive entrepreneurship is now at the top of the agenda; employers are also becoming more conscious. There will be space to develop further.
- Now employers are asking WEB for help in acquiring new talent - new role supporting companies' social responsibility .

Is it transferable (consultancy for employers) to different Member States?

- The context is very important – it takes a lot of experience to set up (WEB has 25 years of experience) and you need to understand well the group you are working for.
- Strong partnership and capable organisations with expertise on LTU need to be in place and be convinced to work with employers.

Are your primary clients registered with PES or not? What kinds of employers do you target?

- The target group depends on the project – most people are sent to WEB by PES.
- No special types of employers. The key is to speak to the right level/people able to decide on work processes. In Flanders these are usually SMEs. The key factors are their approach to Common Social Responsibility (CSR) and willingness to be an inclusive company (no matter of the company's size).

What qualifications do the people working for WEB have? There are many skills needed (incl. psychology, marketing, coaching etc.).

- WEB started with mainly social workers but now has different job profiles: people with analytical, commercial, social background. WEB brings in the necessary expertise while working with employers. The organisational structure and culture is important.

What is the main message you would give to audience members, practitioners, policymakers, and project managers, who want to do something like the WEB project?

- Don't wait until the conditions are perfect to start doing it – just start. Take your time to get things right – there will always be problems, the first step is crucial.
- It's not rocket science, knowledge and tools are out there ready to be used.

4. Parallel workshops

4.1. Workshop 1: Shared case histories: establishing the key elements of a single point of contact

Marianna Georgallis from the European Commission welcomed the participants and established the context of the workshop by highlighting the following points:

- Shared case histories/single point of contact (SPOC) was one of the main areas of work of the LTU project.
- Policy background: the Council Recommendation on the LTU called for the implementation/establishment of a SPOC. The SPOC is the authority responsible for accompanying individuals throughout the range of support needed to bring them back to work.

- SPOC means breaking silos and may, therefore, take several different forms. It does not need to be a physical one-stop shop. It can also be a coordination mechanism, a way of sharing info.
- The Evaluation of the Council Recommendation shows that progress on SPOCs has been made, but Most MS still do not provide an SPOC for the long-term unemployed.

The workshop presented two good practices giving concrete guidance on how this can be done.

4.1.1. Intreo (Ireland)

Intreo is an SPOC for employment and social support created by Ireland's Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection. Siobhan Lawlor from Intreo described how the creation of Intreo was a direct result of the emergency created by the job crisis in the country. Intreo is the result of merging single agency activation services, financial incentives, training & education, etc.

The number of caseworkers dealing with jobseekers was doubled and the institutional reform successfully contributed to a significant reduction in the number of unemployed people.

Some of the main challenges ahead lie in the digital transformation of the agency, the need for capacity building and skilling opportunities for staff and a more effective engagement of employers to achieve work inclusion of vulnerable groups.

Presentation: https://ec.europa.eu/esf/transnationality/filedepot_download/2814/2500 (copy the link to browser)

Q&A

How did you prepare staff to undergo such a change?

It was a challenge but there was a national imperative to change how things were being done. Trade unions were also engaged. Passing on the message at every administrative level was essential.

How do you ensure that all the needs of the LTU are covered? How do you ensure that different providers of services are also on board? How do you ensure that support is based on equal treatment (and does not depend on the case handler)?

Intreo does not provide access to health services or other services directly. But in some cases, it provides personal development services, where people can see their progress. Interaction and mutual trust with case handlers are key to ensuring that the needs of users are met.

Data shows a large inactive population in Ireland. How do you deal with that group?

A sizeable part of this figure is made up of youngsters who finished school but are still studying. Also, many people of working age are staying at home due to care obligations. They count as inactive. Returning mothers are a target group for Intreo, as well as people with disabilities.

4.1.2. Case management approach in Trento (Italy)

Manuela Samek Lodovici presented the rationale and outcomes of a pilot project implemented in the Italian region of Trento. Coming from a fragmentation of roles, competences and services, the project aimed at the integration of services around customer needs. This was done through the introduction of the role of case manager. The SPOC was a person in this case, working closely with the LTU as well as with stakeholders to build holistic support schemes.

Presentation: https://ec.europa.eu/esf/transnationality/filedepot_download/2814/2501 (copy the link to browser)

Q&A

The level and diversity of skills needed to be a case manager is impressive. How easy is it to find such people? Also, as regards available funding and sustainability: cost-effectiveness is the key dimension to look when assessing such measures. It is more expensive to keep a very large pool of unemployed persons rather than investing in quality case managers.

It is essential that staff have the skills and competences to deal not only with the LTU but also with employers and other stakeholders. There is a degree course and also e-learning modules (on human rights). It is easier and more effective to upskill staff rather than ask everyone to have the same qualification as a starting level. Induction is also the key (it was not in place before). There is a 3-to-4 week induction prior to starting the job.

4.2. Workshop 2: Placement sustainability – balancing the needs of the long-term unemployed and employers

The workshop was moderated by Caroline Meyers (ESF Agency Flanders) and Iva Zelic (EC). Iva Zelic opened the workshop by stating that since the Council Recommendation on the LTU, the statistics show that the situation of the LTU has improved. This is evidence of a change of policy in some Member States, with greater employer involvement in the process. However, the multi-stakeholder approach is still at an experimental level and there hasn't been much progress.

A video on the Margarita Vocational Training Centre in Greece was shown by way of introduction to the first of the two inspiring project presentations.

4.2.1. Margarita Vocational Training Centre (Greece)

Sophia Karagouni presented the Greek project Margarita, which is the Vocational Training Centre for people with intellectual disabilities. She explained that its objective is social inclusion and that employment is just a means to this end.

Their centre's approach includes the following elements:

- transition to adulthood;
- close collaboration with families;
- less-sheltered workshops;

training in real-working conditions;

- matching employers and employees;
- flexible support; and
- revolving doors (people can come back to Margarita at any time);

Thanks to the project, the participants gain financial independence, self confidence and access to training.

The main challenges in Greece are a lack of legislation for sheltered workshops and on-the-job training, and the concern of the long-term unemployed that they will lose social benefits.

Presentation: https://ec.europa.eu/esf/transnationality/filedepot_download/2814/2502 (copy the link to browser)

Q&A

How is the cooperation with Public Employment Services in Greece?

It is difficult to cooperate with them, they are understaffed and there are so many problems in Greece that people with disabilities are not prioritised.

What tool for skills evaluation do you use?

Specialists assess the level of skills at the beginning and then it is ongoing.

At what moment do you stop assisting your participants?

Sometimes the participants leave of their own accord when they are ready; sometimes the project staff step back gradually until the employer and employee don't need Margarita anymore.

Is there a coach on the job?

Only at the beginning but then the task is transferred to the employer.

Who finances the training?

The Labour Ministry and Health Ministry finances sheltered workshops and training by Margarita.

What is the feedback on the services?

Clients are satisfied and the companies are coming back to Margarita to ask for more workers.

4.2.2. Job carving and job coaching (Slovenia)

Klemen Sirok (national expert in the LTU project) and Nina Pozdrec (Slovenian Public Employment Service) presented the Slovenian project, which was inspired by the Belgian model of WEB/I Diverso and the experience of Malta (the Lino Spiteri Foundation). The aim of this project is also to support sustainable employment (i.e. through the introduction of inclusive job design and job coaching) and strengthen cooperation with employers.

Presentation: https://ec.europa.eu/esf/transnationality/filedepot_download/2814/2503 (copy the link to browser)

Q&A**With how many LTU are you dealing with now?**

About 55.

Where does the budget for the pilot come from?

It comes from the PES and the European Social Fund. (The ESF was used for study visits and knowledge transfer). Now there are also talks with the Ministry. Within the PES it is mostly about building on existing services, not creating new posts.

How does the coaching work? Is it on demand?

In the pilot, coaching is provided only to the LTU who will be employed on the designed job. The coach will be selected from PES staff, hence using resources which are in place. For each participant, there will initially be one hour of coaching every two weeks, and then one hour of coaching per month. .

What about job carving? How does it work?

It all depends on the company's needs. It takes around 30 hours to design a job.

How do you work with other problems the LTU may face (e.g. family or social problems)? Do you work in partnerships?

It is a big challenge in Slovenia at the moment to improve cooperation with the social services. We have organised some learning workshops with social economy providers but there is still room for improvement.

4.3. Workshop 3: Targeted support – developing integration pathways to overcome multiple barriers to employability

Anita Vella from the European Commission gave an overview of the key points that were highlighted in the 2016 Council Recommendation for integration of the long-term unemployed: individualised and holistic services; in-depth individual assessments; and job integration agreements. The Evaluation of the Recommendation show that progress has been made, but only about half of the Member States offer a job integration agreement, services are still fragmented in many cases, and people with multiple barriers still face a high risk of becoming long-term unemployed.

Eamonn Davern, the expert for the Project on tackling the long-term unemployment (LTU project), highlighted the three themes that were addressed by the project: single case histories, placement sustainability, and targeted support.

Two projects that are considered as promising examples of targeted support for the LTU were presented in the workshop – the Work Ability Model (Finland) and Launching Pads for Employment (Spain).

4.3.1. Work Ability Model (Finland)

Lari Anttonen from the Finnish Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment presented Finland's Work Ability Model. The model was developed three years ago with the aim of addressing the fragmented social support system in Finland. The main role in coordinating different services was given to work ability coordinators. They direct clients to specific services based on their needs. This model has had the following results:

- a more efficient and client-oriented service system;
- better matching between employers and job-seekers; and around 900 trained work ability coordinators.

Presentation: https://ec.europa.eu/esf/transnationality/filedepot_download/2814/2504 (copy the link to browser)

Q&A

How did you manage to persuade different services to participate?

It was important to explain to each service provider what their role is. Once they understood their role the collaboration was easier.

How do you train work ability coordinators?

The training of coordinators is based on a solution- and customer-oriented approach.

4.3.2. Launching Pads for Employment (Spain)

Natalia Serrano Serrano from the Foundation Santa Maria la Real presented the project Launching Pads for Employment. This project started in 2013 and it is based on a model of group work and self-empowerment – groups of 20 people with different profiles and from different backgrounds are working together for five months to find tools for their employment. Around 60% of participants in Launching Pads for Employment found work.

Presentation: https://ec.europa.eu/esf/transnationality/filedepot_download/2814/2505 (copy the link to browser)

Q&A

How did you decide on the duration of the programme – 5 months?

Five months is the optimal time frame for establishing a team connection and the person's self-development within the team. But the duration can be adapted to specific groups.

How do you ensure the coherency and mutual solidarity among members of a group?

The group coach plays an important role in guiding the group towards a common goal based on values of solidarity. People's motivation and attitude is assessed before they are invited to participate in the programme.

5. Conclusions from the workshops

5.1. Workshops 1: Shared case histories

What are the main challenges in establishing more integrated services and eventually a single point of contact?

- Difficult to establish a digital client centered exchange of information between different authorities and services.
- Difficult to develop strong cooperation among diverse bodies in the absence of a uniform approach.

What key success factors can we identify?

- Political commitment to support institutional, organisational and legislative change.
- A highly skilled, locally connected, empathatic case manager with the knowledge and authority to support the client.
- Measures that are win-win for the employer and the LTU.

What can EU and national policymakers do to support integrated services?

- EU guidelines on the implementation of SPOC used in use of EU Funds and the European Semester process.
- Additional support from the EC to pilot integrated services approach in MS.
- For MS, strengthen commitment and implementation of integrated services.

5.2. Workshop 2: Placement Sustainability

What are the main challenges in ensuring placement sustainability?

- Salary, job quality, access to lifelong learning.
- Prejudices and changing attitudes.
- Lack of recognition in legislation.
- Engagement and commitment of employers.

What key success factors can we identify?

- A holistic, personalised approach.
- Preparation of the LTU and sustainable job design.
- Incentives for employers.
- Long-term partnership.
- Allowing failure and continuous support.

What can EU and national policymakers do to support placement sustainability?

- Support with funding and political commitment.
- Legislative framework for continuous support.

- Long-term vision for employment and skills.
- The European Semester.
- Monitoring and evaluation of practices.
- Transnational cooperation,
- Promote inclusion and diversity.

5.3. Workshop 3: Targeted support

What are the main challenges in ensuring targeted support?

- Multiple obstacles (sometimes involving whole family).
- Negative activations (sanctions) which leads to lack of trust.
- Lack of coordination and accountability between actors.
- Quality and sustainability of job offers (the cost of being at work).
- The ESF has limited impact on labour demand and reform.

What key success factors can we identify?

- More individualised support and outreach.
- Offering sustainable and quality employment.
- Partnership (with civil society, local authorities, trade unions).
- More employment responsibility and awareness. Active Labour Market Programmes (ALMPs): more ENABLING and LESS RESTRICTIVE.
- People becoming more autonomous and empowered.

What can EU and national policymakers do to support targeted support?

- Avoid funding gaps.
- Better implementation monitoring and indicators, especially quality indicators and outcome satisfaction.
- Mutual learning/transnational cooperation.
- Linking employment and social inclusion actors and services / integrated active inclusion approach.
- Pay better attention to disparities (countries/regions/groups, etc.).

6. Inspiring Practice under the European Social Fund: the Lino Spiteri Foundation (Malta)

Esmeralda Micallef Zarafa from the Lino Spiteri Foundation presented its work in the field of employment support for people with disabilities with the use of job carving and job coaching in companies. The Foundation formed a partnership with the Maltese PES (JobsPlus) in order to support companies in respecting the Maltese Government's 2% quota legislation on employment of people with disabilities (in Malta, employers with over 20 employees need to ensure that at least 2% of their employees are persons with disabilities).

The Foundation's Corporate Relations Unit works with companies to create a job suitable for a person with a disability (so called job carving). This activity is run by corporate relations executives who act as brokers in the relationship between the job seeker and the enterprise

to carve a role that is suited to both parties. Job carving in a company is coupled with job coaching. Furthermore, Ms. Micallef Zarafa also mentioned other initiatives that have got employers in Malta more involved in corporate social responsibility:

- The Bridging The Gap Scheme is designed to support the client in the transition period from unemployment to employment. It allows the employer to evaluate the performance of the client in the workplace, prior to proper engagement.
- The EU funded scheme Access to Employment. This provides employment aid to enterprises in the form of a subsidy for a duration of up to three years - the latter determined by the severity of the disadvantage. The subsidy may constitute up to 75% of Malta's minimum wage.
- With the Benefit Tapering Scheme new employees receive 65% of their benefits in their first year on the job, which tapers down gradually over three years.

Presentation: https://ec.europa.eu/esf/transnationality/filedepot_download/2815/2506 (copy the link to browser)

Q&A:

What are the key elements of success?

Olivia Farrugia (JobsPlus): Different levels of support according to the types of beneficiaries. This is key to making both the LTU and the employer comfortable. There have been constant efforts to reach out and maintain a relationship with the PES in order to create a supportive environment for the recruitment of people with disabilities and people in vulnerable situations.

Esmeralda Micallef Zarafa: Support provided to the employer and the personalised support to the user go hand in hand.

What is the future for job carving and job crafting projects?

Esmeralda Micallef Zarafa: progress needs to be made in order to increase career progression and pay levels.

Olivia Farrugia: The future is not just about job seekers, but also those who are employed already, because job design is also important to them. The future should also be about reaching out to more people.

What levels of success have you had in terms of numbers? When income drops - financial support - does the engagement of employers continue?

Esmeralda Micallef Zarafa: The employees receive legal salaries, they are involved in a typical work relationship. Success rate is 85% (six months after the subsidy has stopped, 85% of employees remain). For the benefit tapering scheme, the success rate is 75%. However, success should not only be measured in terms of employment rates and job outcomes. Success also has to do with the response given to the many needs faced by the users.

Does working through the Lino Spiteri Foundation make it easier for the PES to engage with employers?

Olivia Farrugia: When the 2% quota was implemented, it was clear that the activity of the PES had to be stepped up. Success cannot be achieved with sticks.

Esmeralda Micallef Zarafa: Foundation status helped but there was a lot of work for the Foundation in terms of building a reputation and delivering on promises.

What would you advise in order to transfer the Maltese success to other countries?

- Use the ESF. One to one interventions are expensive, so the ESF will do the trick.
- Communication is key.

- A close partnership with the PES is key.

7. Closing Remarks: Max Uebe, Head of Unit Employment Strategy, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, European Commission

Mr Uebe commented that the conference opened the European Commission's eyes to a number of new points such as the importance of trust in the relationships between the LTU, NGOs and Public Employment Services and the importance of rural areas. He noted that rural areas have often been forgotten in recent years in policymaking and this can be seen in recent referendum and election results. This was a mistake that should be avoided in future.

What is clear, he said, is that in times of demographic change and tightening labour markets everybody who wants to work, should work. Better policies need to be developed to help the LTU. This applies to all Member States - even those with low unemployment rates. Mr Uebe also pointed out that more can be done in terms of support systems.

A topic that needs specific attention is the future of work and its impact on the labour market and LTU. While some developments will lower the barriers for the LTU to enter the labour market and will allow the inclusion of persons with disabilities through technological means, there is nonetheless the risk of additional exclusion. We therefore need to make sure that even the most vulnerable are not excluded from these new developments.

Mr Uebe highlighted recent positive developments such as:

- the breaking down of silos and new partnerships between different stakeholders;
- human-centered support; and
- individualised reports.

He said more needed to be done to build the capacity of public services, particularly PES, and also in terms of coordination of services and better integration of different services.

Mr Uebe said DG EMPL was focused on supporting the LTU but primarily this remains the responsibility of Member States.

He also announced that LTU was on the agenda at the last Board meeting of the PES Network, and board members agreed to continue working on the issue with a focus on employer engagement, individual support and prevention.

A big PES conference will take place on 15 October 2019 in Brussels, with the theme of prevention. Back to back there will also be a meeting of the LTU contact points.

Meanwhile, the EC will continue monitoring what MS do in terms of the implementation of the Recommendation and especially in terms of the quality of individual support.

A fully fledged review will take place in autumn 2019. In terms of funding, the ESF will continue funding LTU-related measures.

Mr Uebe concluded by stating *“Transnationality is Europe at its best. You share ideas, you share practices, you share challenges and failures, and you instigate change. This is extremely positive.”*