Mutual Learning Programme
Database of National Labour Market Practices

Step-by-Step Guide

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European Commission:

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Table of Contents

1. Introduction to the database

This Step-by-Step Guide is designed to assist Member State government representatives[1] in contributing to the Database of National Labour Market Practices of the Mutual Learning Programme (MLP). It provides them with all the essential information in order to determine whether they have a suitable good practice and follow the practical steps to prepare, obtain validation and ultimately publish the effective practice on the database.

The guide is structured as follows:

- Section 1 outlines the main objectives, features and benefits of the database. It is also explains what is meant by the term 'good practice';

- Section 2 sets out the main steps and procedures for:

  o Identifying and selecting the national practice;

  o Preparing, submitting and quality-assuring the national practice fiche;

  o Publishing the national practice fiche.

- Section 3 outlines the assistance that can be provided by the MLP support team in coordination with the European Commission.

1.1 What is the Database of National Labour Market Practice?

The Database is one of several activities under the MLP **aimed at facilitating learning and exchange between Member States** in order to enhance the transferability of the most effective policies within key areas of the European Employment Strategy (EES). The other activities take the form of Peer Reviews, Learning Exchanges, European thematic and dissemination events, as well as various policy-related publications. All of these activities are designed to complement and add value to each other in order to provide a rich learning environment for Member States in the context to the EES.

1.1.1 Definition of 'good practice'

For the purpose of the database, it is important to define what is meant by 'good practice.'

What is meant by 'good practice'?

A specific policy or measure that has proven to be **effective** and **sustainable** in the field of employment, **demonstrated** by evaluation **evidence** and/or monitoring and assessment methods using process data and showing the **potential for replication**. It can cover both the formulation and the implementation of the policy or measure, which has led to **positive labour market outcomes** over an extended **period of time**.

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[1] The Mutual Learning Programme is open to the 28 Member States of the European Union, as well as countries from the European Economic Area (Iceland, Lichtenstein, Norway) and accession, candidate and pre-candidate countries (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey). Representatives from all of these countries are eligible to contribute to the Database of Good Practice.

1.1.2 Objectives of the database

The main objectives of the database are to:

- **Disseminate and show case** Member State examples of effective policies and measures within the context of the EES;
- Encourage the **sharing of information** on effective employment policies and measures and their key conditions for success; and
- **Identify areas of common policy interest** between the Member States, leading to opportunities for networking, mutual learning and policy influence.

The overall benefit of the database is that it provides a **high-profile, central and up-to-date source of effective national good practice examples** in the field of EU employment policy and thereby fills an important 'gap' in the information currently available at the EU level. It will not only enable users to capitalise on the information for their own purposes, but also act as a catalyst for other learning exchange opportunities under the MLP. For instance, if there is keen interest in a particular practice, a Peer Review on the same topic (hosted by the Member State responsible for the practice) could be organised.

1.1.3 Features of the database

The database is accessible to any interested party on MLP area of *europa.eu* website.

It is important to note that when a user searches the database, the search results are not immediately presented in the form of a full practice fiche. A short description of the practice is initially provided, highlighting the most essential information. The user then has the option of downloading a PDF file to view the full fiche. The short description contains the following information:

- Title of the policy or measure (Original language and English);
- Country;
- Name of the responsible body;
- Name(s) of other organisations involved (partners / sub-contractors);
- Start and end year of implementation;
- EU policy relevance;
- National labour market context;
- Policy area;
- Specific policy or labour market problem being addressed;
- Aims and objectives of the policy or measure;
- Main activities/actions underpinning the policy or measure;
- Geographical scope of policy or measure;
- Target groups (if appropriate); and
- Outcomes of the policy or measure.

The practice examples are in English only. They also signpost to further information in the native language, where available.

It is possible to search for effective practices using a number of filters, namely by country and years of implementation. Over time, as the number of cases increases, the search functionality will be reviewed and refined to best meet the needs of users.

1.1.4 Target audiences of the database

The database has two types of target audience, as described in Table 1.1 below.

Table 1.1: Target audiences for the database

Type of target audience	Description
Contributors	The Member States government representatives who populate the database with practice examples. This typically means national ministries, executive agencies, and regional and local authorities.
Users	All organisational representatives who use the database for information, learning and exchange purposes. This includes, amongst others: ▪ Member States government representatives ▪ Social partners ▪ EU institutions and other international policy organisations ▪ Non-governmental organisations ▪ Academic institutions and think-tanks

2. Criteria and steps for contributing to the database

This section explains the main criteria and steps for identifying and selecting the good practice; preparing, submitting and quality-assuring the practice fiche; and publishing the practice fiche on the database.

2.1 Step 1: Identifying the good practice

The fundamental principle of the database is that it contains good practice that has been identified and *self-endorsed* by the Member States government representatives; the database does not represent an 'EU label' of any kind. There is therefore a range of sources from which the effective practice can initially be identified. These include:

- **MLP activities**: such as Peer Reviews, Learning Exchanges and other types of event;
- **Member State activities**: for example, via peer learning, events, studies and evaluations conducted by the national, regional and local governments;
- **Thematic Reviews of the Employment Committee (EMCO)**;
- **European Employment Policy Observatory (EEPO)**: such as the *EEPO Reviews* and other publications and activities organised as part of the observatory;
- **Reporting and assessment by the European Commission**: particularly improvements linked to Member States' Country-Specific Recommendations (CSRs) and data in the Europe 2020 Employment Performance Monitor;
- **Other possible sources**: academic studies, independent evaluations, other events and activities.

2.2 Step 2: Selecting the good practice

Before formally proposing a good practice, it is important to check that the policy or measure meets the selection criteria. The practice must score at least **2 – Medium** against **all** of the criteria detailed in Table 2.1 below.

Table 2.1: Good practice selection criteria for the database

Selection criteria	1 - Low	2 - Medium	3 – High
Policy relevance	Limited relevance to EU employment policy – employment is not the main policy focus	Clear relevance to the EES – has direct links to the Employment Guidelines and/or EU other employment-related policy initiatives e.g. Employment Package, flagship initiatives such as Youth on the Move and New Skills New Jobs *and/or* part-financed by the European Social Fund	Policy areas highlighted for priority action at Member State level through the Joint Assessment Framework and CSRs
Scope	General policy initiative covering a wide range of strategic objectives	Package of concrete individual policies or measures with specific operational objectives	Concrete individual policy or measure with specific operational objectives
Evidence-base	Limited or no data on outputs and outcomes	Solid quantitative data available on labour market outcomes	Very solid quantitative and qualitative data available on labour market outcomes
Timescale	Policy or measure that was ceased more than five years ago i.e. the results are not sufficiently recent[2]	Policy or measure that is on-going (and has been in place for at least a year) or has been implemented within the last five years	Policy or measure that was launched after the Europe 2020 Strategy (i.e. June 2010) and has been in place at least for a year
Effectiveness	No or limited data available showing the effectiveness in relation to the	Assessment by formal (internal) systems of monitoring and/or	Validation by one or more independent (external) evaluations or

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[2] The purpose of this criterion is to focus on measures which have been active, at least partially, during the last five years, not only those which started within the last five years. The MLP support team and European Commission can apply some flexibility on the timing, if the practice is seen as particularly strong, and meets the other selection criteria.

Selection criteria	1 - Low	2 - Medium	3 – High
	relevant labour market context (as evidenced by the responsible government institution) or other positive outcomes for the individual ('distance travelled') /improvement of employability	evaluation; process data available showing the effectiveness in relation to the relevant labour market context (as evidenced by the responsible government institution) or other positive outcomes for the individual ('distance travelled')/ improvement of employability	academic studies; process data available showing high levels of effectiveness and sustainability of the outcomes in relation to the relevant labour market context (as evidenced by the responsible government institution) or other positive outcomes for the individual ('distance travelled')/ improvement of employability
Potential for learning and replication	Does not appear to present evidence of success factors and lessons learned which could be transferred to or taken into account in another country/context	Has potential to provide evidence of success factors and lessons learned which could be transferred to or taken into account in another country/context

Countries with CSRs that have shown improvement in relation to a given CSR | Has clearly identified and well documented evidence of success factors and lessons learned which could be transferred or taken into account in another country/context (e.g. through external evaluation)

Well performing country, as highlighted in the Europe 2020 Employment Performance Monitor

The practice covers a employment topic/issue which has relevance in many other countries |

Whatever the source of the good practice, it is expected that the government institution *responsible* for the specific policy or measure generally proposes the good practice to the MLP support team. The government institution is therefore strongly advised to check the good practice against the above selection criteria prior to a formal proposal. This clearly avoids wasting time in preparing a practice case that is deemed 'unsuitable' further down the line. If the government institution needs any assistance or advice in determining whether their practice meets the selection criteria, they can contact the MLP support team.

In some instances, the practice may initially be identified by the MLP support team (in relation to the MLP activities), the European Commission or other Member States (concerning the EMCO Thematic Reviews and CSR assessments, etc.). In these cases, the MLP team or European Commission will contact the government institution to discuss the suitability of the good practice in relation to the above selection criteria. At the same time, they will check the willingness of the institution to proceed in preparing a case. Both the check against the criteria and agreement in principle of the government institution are required before progressing any further.

If the party identifying the case is not the MLP support team, nor the European Commission - for example, an academic expert – they are expected to contact the MLP support team. The support team will then contact the government institution to discuss the suitability of the good practice against the selection criteria, coordinating with European Commission and identifying party, as needed.

2.3 Step 3: Preparing and quality assuring the practice fiche

If the proposed practice meets the minimum selection criteria, the government institution prepares a fiche and emails it to the MLP support team. The fiche is a very important document because it contains all of the **key information on the practice**, which will eventually be published on the database.

Table 2.2 below presents the fields of the fiche, the information that needs to be provided for each field, as well as any key technical or stylistic requirements.

The fiche has to be completed to the maximum. Only under exceptional reasoned circumstances some fields could be left unfilled.

The actual fiche exists as an electronic template and can be downloaded on the MLP website. A copy can also be requested from the MLP support team.

Table 2.2: Content and requirements of the national practice fiche

Field	Information provided	Key requirements
Source of the national practice		(To be completed by the MLP support team)
Title of the policy or measure (Original language)	Please specify the complete name of the policy/measure in the original language.	Please write the *full* name of the policy, followed by the acronym, where appropriate.
Title of the policy or measure (English)	Please specify the complete name of the policy/measure in English.	Please write the *full* name of the policy, followed by the acronym, where appropriate.
Country	Please specify the country where the policy/measure has been implemented, this includes: 28 Member States, European Economic Area countries, and accession, candidate and pre-candidate countries.	Only one country can be selected
Name of the responsible body	Please specify the name of the body with overall responsibility for the design and implementation of the policy/measure.	Please write the full name of the responsible body, followed by the acronym.
Geographical scope of the responsible body	Please specify whether the responsible body has a remit covering the national, regional or local level.	Only one of the following options can be selected: national, regional, local.
Name(s) of other organisations involved (partners/sub-	Please specify the name of other organisations involved in the design and implementation of the policy/measure. These may include other public administrations at different levels, public/private agencies, Public	Please write the *full* name of the policy, followed by the acronym, where appropriate.

Field	Information provided	Key requirements
contractors)	Employment Services, educational institutions, social partners, private employers, etc… Against each name, please specify the type of organisation where it is not obvious from the name e.g. national ministry, Public Employment Services; trade union; employers' association; Chamber of Industry and Commerce, etc.	Each organisation should be listed as a bullet point. The type of organisation should be presented in brackets.
Start year of implementation	Please specify the first year in which the policy/measure has been implemented.	Please write here the first year of implementation of the policy/measure in full and numerical, e.g. 2005.
End year of implementation	Please specify the year in which the policy/measure has ended. If the policy/measure is still on-going, please enter 'on-going'.	Please write here the first year of implementation of the policy in full and numerical, e.g. 2007.
EU policy relevance	Please provide a description explaining the relevance of the policy/measure to the EES, including reference to relevant Employment Guidelines.	The maximum length for this field is 250 words. The first 600 characters should provide a stand-alone summary of the field as this will show in the summary page of the database.
National labour market context	Please provide a description of the labour market context in which the policy/measure is being implemented.	The maximum length for this field is 250 words. The first 600 characters should provide a stand-alone summary of the field as this will show in the summary page of the database.
Policy area	Please specify the relevant policy area to which the policy/measure relates from the following list (based on the 12 policy areas of the Joint Assessment Framework): Active labour market policies; Education and training systems; Gender	Several policy areas can be selected.

Field	Information provided	Key requirements
	equality; Job creation; Labour market functioning and segmentation; Labour market participation; Prevention of poverty through inclusive labour markets; Skills supply, productivity and lifelong learning; Social inclusion and anti-discrimination; Social security systems; Wage-setting mechanisms and labour cost developments; Work-life balance.	
Specific policy or labour market problem being addressed	Please provide details of the major problem that the policy/measure is seeking to address. The problem should be presented in *overall* terms, even if there are naturally other related or underlying problems – the idea of the field is to present the 'fundamental difficulty' that the policy/measure is aiming to resolve, which is a difficulty that other users of the database may share and may therefore be interested to hear about potential solutions.	The maximum length for this field is 250 words. The first 600 characters should provide a stand-alone summary of the field as this will show in the summary page of the database.
Aims and objectives of the policy or measure	Please provide a description of the main aim of the policy/measure and any underpinning objectives i.e. what is the policy/measure seeking to achieve?	The maximum length for this field is 250 words. The first 600 characters should provide a stand-alone summary of the field as this will show in the summary page of the database. Each aim/objective should be listed as a bullet point, with a brief and clear description.
Main activities/actions underpinning the policy or measure	Please provide a description of the main activities and actions that comprise the policy/measure i.e. what is actually being implemented? (e.g. training, work experience, financial incentives, guidance/counselling/information provided to unemployed, etc…).	The maximum length for this field is 250 words. The first 600 characters should provide a stand-alone summary of the field as this will show in the summary page of the database. The main activities/actions should be listed in bullet points, with a brief and clear description for each bullet point.

Field	Information provided	Key requirements
Geographical scope of policy or measure	Please specify whether activities/actions have been implemented at national, regional or local level.	Only one of the following options can be selected: national, regional or local. If the policy/measure has been implemented in several regions or localities, then judgement should be used to determine the most appropriate level; for example, if the policy/measure has been implemented in eight out of ten regions, then it could reasonably be classed as national.
Target groups	If the policy/measure supports particular target groups, please specify them by selecting from the following list: Disabled people; Entrepreneurs and start-ups; Large enterprises (250 employees or more); Long-term unemployed (more than 12 months); Low-skilled people; Minority ethnic groups; People not in education, employment or training (NEETs); Older workers and unemployed (aged 50 to 64 years); Small and medium-sized enterprises (1 - 249 employees); Women; Young people (aged 16 to 25 years)	Several target groups can be selected. Choose the groups (preferably no more than three) that are best addressed by the policy or measure
Outputs and outcomes of the policy or measure	Please provide a description of the actual outputs and outcomes of the policy/measure (i.e. what have been the results? If possible, how do these compare with the planned results?). Where possible provide a detailed quantification of the outcomes.	The maximum length for this field is 400 words. The first 600 characters should provide a stand-alone summary of the field as this will show in the summary page of the database. Each main output and outcome should be listed as a bullet point, with a brief and clear description. The key words for each output and outcome should also be highlighted in bold.
Management and implementation	Please provide a brief and clear description of how the implementation of the policy/measure is managed (e.g. coordination arrangements	The maximum length for this field is 250 words.

Field	Information provided	Key requirements
arrangements	between the responsible and implementing bodies, roles and responsibilities, sub-contracting, etc.).	
Key challenges	Please provide a description of the main challenges in formulating and implementing the policy/measure, and how they were overcome.	The maximum length for this field is 400 words. Each main challenge should be listed as a bullet point, with a brief and clear description. The key words for each challenge should also be highlighted in bold.
Key conditions for success	Please provide a description of the key success factors in ensuring the effective formulation and implementation of the policy or measure *(e.g. considering, among others, success factors such as the policy mix; partnerships in place; funding framework and sustainability etc.).* Where possible, please provide a description of key success factors in ensuring the effective formulation and implementation of the policy or measure, *which could help replication in another territory or context* i.e. what essential elements should one bear in mind when thinking about applying the good practice to another country, sector, target group, etc.?	The maximum length for this field is 400 words. Each success factors should be listed as a bullet point, with a brief and clear description. Any success factors specifically relating to replication in another territory or context should be listed separately and highlighted as such. The key words for each success factor should also be highlighted in bold.
Method of assessment	Please specify whether the policy/measure has been assessed through internal/external monitoring/evaluation or other type of academic studies. Please select from the following list: Internal monitoring; Internal evaluation; External academic study; External evaluation	Several options can be selected.
Type of assessment	Please specify the methodology used to assess the policy/measure from	

Field	Information provided	Key requirements
	the following list: Qualitative assessment; Quantitative assessment; Qualitative and quantitative assessment	Only one option can be selected.
Duration and frequency of the assessment	Please provide details of the duration and frequency of the assessment (e.g. annual monitoring/evaluation, 4-years evaluation, etc.).	The maximum length for this field is 50 words.
Further information on the assessment	Please provide further relevant information about assessment, particularly the main results and findings.	The maximum length for this field is 400 words.
Links to the website, background information and assessment material	Please provide hyperlinks to any online information relating to the policy/measure, such as relevant pages of the government website, evaluation/monitoring reports and other relevant background information, where appropriate. Please briefly clarify whether the link relates to the policy/measure website, evaluation, monitoring or other information.	Relevant links should be clearly listed in bullet points with a brief description of the link. If possible, please include links to information in the native language, which will assist database users who are not familiar with English.
Contact details	Please provide the contact details of one or several individuals within the government institution who can respond to queries on the policy/measure. The details should ideally include: title, full name, job title, email address and telephone number, organisation website address.	
Keywords	Please add five or more keywords that describe the main focus of the policy/measure.	

Field	Information provided	Key requirements
	These keywords are important because they will enable the database users to search for the policy/measure quickly and easily.	

More generally, when completing the practice fiche, it is important to present the information clearly by using **bullet points** and **key words in bold** (as requested in the technical requirements of Table 2.2 above). This will improve the readability for the database user.

The practice fiche should be completed in the **past tense** in most instances. Even if the policy or measure is ongoing, it will have been initiated in the past and may well be read several years in the future. However, there are a few fields where it makes sense to use the present tense, such as EU policy relevance, key challenges and success factors.

It is important to **avoid the use of footnotes**. All footnote text should be integrated in the template fields or removed.

Once the MLP support team receives a completed practice fiche from the government institution, they go through a process of **quality control** by checking that:

- All the fields are completed, or absences are explained;
- Check that each field contains the relevant information and required level of detail;
- Check that each field meets the technical requirements relating to drop-down options, use of bullet points, etc.; and
- Check that each field reads clearly and fluently in English, and edit where necessary.[3]

After the quality control, the MLP support team **feeds back** to the government institution whether any aspects of the fiche need revision or further development. Once the practice fiche is finalised, the MLP support team asks the government institution to **confirm** that they agree with the final version and wish to proceed with the next step of EMCO validation.

If a practice is identified via MLP activities, the MLP support team will already have some information available. In this case, assuming the government institution is willing for the good practice to be put forward (see Step 2 above), the team is able to prepare an initial draft of the practice fiche. They then collaborate with the government institution to update or fill gaps of information, as appropriate; in some cases, the team may revise the fiche based on further information provided, in others, the government institution may be better placed to provide some relevant text to fill in the gaps. Either way, once the fiche is fully completed, the government institution is asked to confirm agreement of the final fiche in order to move to EMCO validation.

2.4 Step 4: Validating by EMCO and publishing the national practice fiche

Once the government institution has given agreement to the final version of the national practice fiche, the MLP support team arranges with the European Commission for the fiche to be **validated by EMCO**. In practice, this means that the fiche will be sent to the members of EMCO prior to a forthcoming meeting. If the members raise any queries on the fiche, the MLP support team and European Commission will seek to address these (in coordination with the government institution concerned), otherwise the fiche will be taken as endorsed.

Once the practice fiche has been validated by EMCO, the MLP support team will **notify** the government institution and **publish** the fiche on the database.
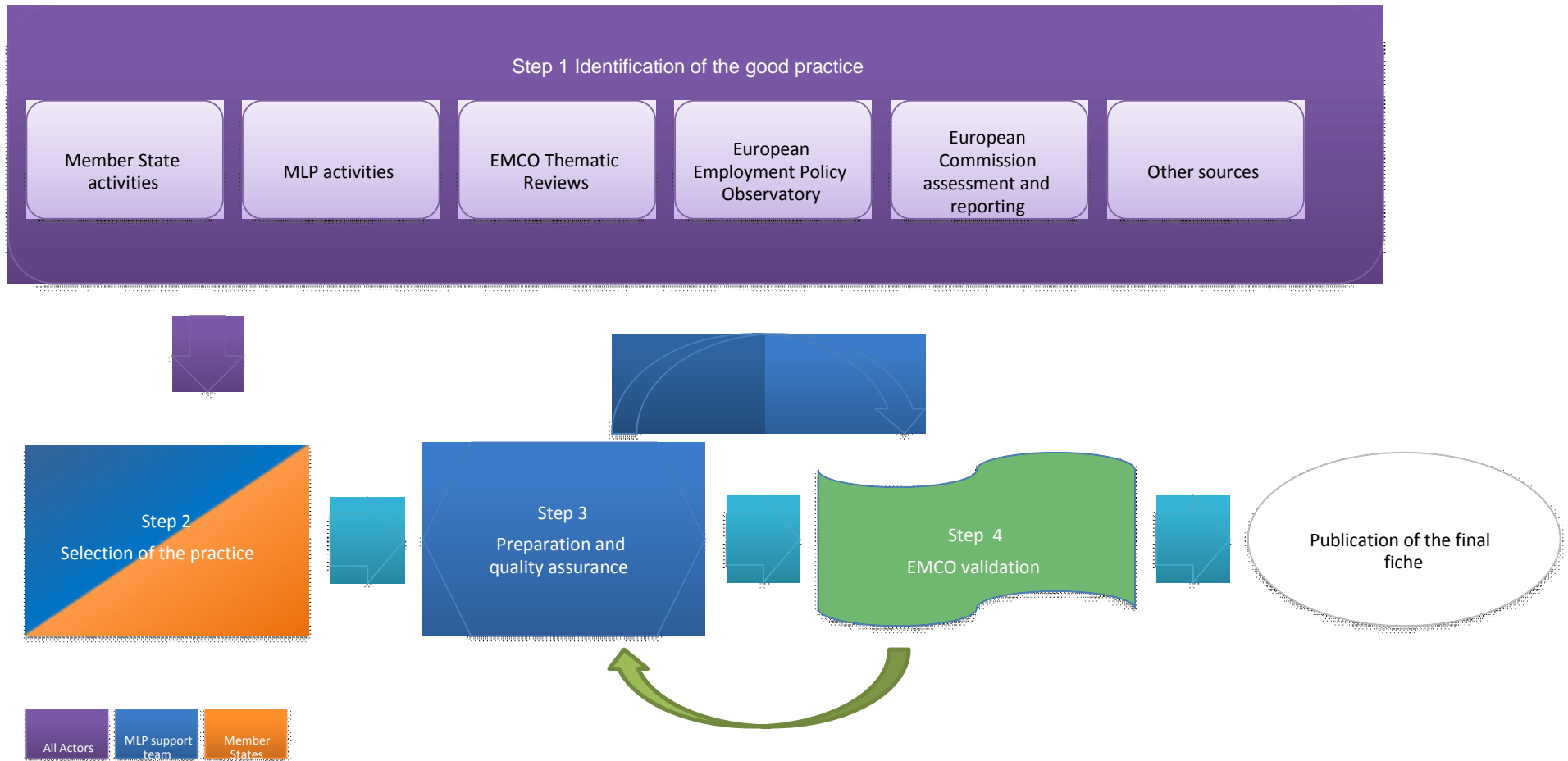
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[3] The MLP support team is not able to translate fiches submitted in another language, but they are able to assist by editing the English.

It is important to note that additions and modifications to the database will be managed by the European Commission, together with the MLP support team. Only these two actors are able to modify the database content. However, the **content of the database and the accuracy of practice descriptions** remain under the control and responsibility of the Member State submitting practice. Therefore, if the government institution identifies any errors or wishes to update the information for any particular reason, they should notify the MLP support team as soon as possible.

2.5 Overview of the main steps and responsibilities

Figure 2.1 below gives an overview of the steps outlined above, as well as the different actors involved in each step.

Figure 2.1: Overview of steps and responsibilities

Step 1 Identification of the good practice

| Member State activities | MLP activities | EMCO Thematic Reviews | European Employment Policy Observatory | European Commission assessment and reporting | Other sources |

Step 2
Selection of the practice

Step 3
Preparation and quality assurance

Step 4
EMCO validation

Publication of the final fiche

All Actors | MLP support team | Member States

3. Support provided by the Mutual Learning Programme support team

The European Commission has overall responsibility for the database under the umbrella of the MLP. They have a contracted a support team for the day-to-day management of the MLP, which includes support for the population and maintenance of the database. This ensures that any government institution wishing to submit a good practice will be supported throughout the whole process.

The MLP support team is able to provide assistance, as needed, covering the following:

- During the first stages of identification and assessment, the team can support government institutions to **identify and assesses the potential good practice** against the assessment criteria;
- During this time, the team can also help to establish the **exact focus of the practice fiche**, for instance, if there are various aspects to one single policy or measure;
- It is expected that the government institution drafts the national practice fiche in English. However, to ensure that all fiches are published to a high quality standard, the team can provide some **editing support** in improve the standard of English;
- During the phases of editing, quality control and confirmation of the content of the fiches, the team will work closely with the government institution to ensure that all information provided in the fiche is aligned with the **quality criteria** and the content is **approved by the Member State**;
- The team can coordinate with the European Commission and EMCO to **respond to any queries** about the content or quality of the fiche; and
- The team can also help to **identify further opportunities for learning and exchange** within the context of the MLP that might arise from publication of the good practice case.

The email address of the MLP support team is: mlp@icfi.com. Please do not hesitate to contact us!