



# **ESPN Thematic Report on integrated support for the long-term unemployed**

## **Slovenia**

### **2015**

Nada Stropnik  
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**EUROPEAN SOCIAL POLICY NETWORK (ESPN)**

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integrated support for the  
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**Slovenia**

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*Nada Stropnik*

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## Summary

Support tailored to the needs of the individual is the doctrine on which the work of the employment and social counsellors is based. The conditions attached to social or activation support take into account the individual's personal situation. The kinds and intensity of activation support depend on the individual's employment constraints (social or health related constraints, lack of motivation, non-readiness to search for job, etc.). The employment counsellor and the unemployed person agree in the Employment Plan on the activities and services that would best address his or her needs, problems and constraints. Some unemployed may be exempted from the active job search commitment that is the condition for entitlement to unemployment benefit and cash social assistance: those who are under medical treatment or are considered to be temporarily unemployable due to problems with addictions, mental health, major social problems or similar problems. There is enough administrative flexibility and discretion to adapt the support pathway to the individual.

The only unemployed persons who receive unemployment benefit for a period longer than twelve months are those who have more than 25 years of insurance period and are either older than 50 years (they receive the unemployment benefit for 19 months altogether) or older than 55 years (they receive it for 25 months altogether) (ESS 2015). Currently, the amount of unemployment benefit received by those who had been employed full-time ranges between €350.00 and €892.50 per month, while the at-risk-of-poverty threshold is just below €600. The majority of the long-term unemployed (who are no longer entitled to unemployment benefit) may apply for cash social assistance that is, for those able to work (just as it is for those receiving unemployment benefit), conditional upon registering at the Employment Office, signing the Employment Plan, actively job searching, being included in the active labour market policy (ALMP) measures and accepting an offered adequate/suitable job.

In Slovenia the unemployed person does not have a single point of contact or one-stop shop to access the necessary benefits, services and activation. The Employment Plan is defined at the Employment Office, while Centres for Social Work are in charge of cash social assistance and the Agreement on the Active Addressing of Social Problems (for the unemployed with specified personal circumstances). Nevertheless, there is a general agreement that this is an appropriate and effective approach and organisation since employment counsellors and social workers stay in their professional environment, which is important for the quality of their work. Given the different contents of their counselling and the need for a gradual addressing of the unemployed person's problems, having both counsellors in the same place and co-counselling would not make much sense. The cooperation of the Employment Service of Slovenia and Centres for Social Work in the provision of labour market services and active labour market policy measures is included in both the Labour Market Regulation Act (2010) and the Social Assistance Benefits Act (2010), and is further elaborated in the Cooperation Protocol. The cooperation is facilitated by an information system and has been very positively evaluated, if informally, by both sides.

The implementation of the Employment Plans are effective in practice, but depend to a great degree on the characteristics, motivation and personal circumstances of individual unemployed persons. The Agreement on the Active Addressing of Social Problems (the integration plan) can only be effective if the temporarily unemployable person is motivated enough to make use of the activities set out in the agreement. The lack of human resources at the Centre for Social Work may also be a constraint to achieving higher effectiveness. The obvious problem for people who are temporarily unemployable by reason of major social or other problems is the absence of programmes for their activation. This is the biggest group of the temporarily unemployable (while good programmes for those who have problems with addictions or mental health are available).

## 1 Benefits and services supporting the long-term unemployed<sup>1</sup>

The only unemployed persons who receive unemployment benefit for a period longer than twelve months are those who have more than 25 years of insurance period and are either older than 50 years (they receive unemployment benefit for 19 months altogether) or older than 55 years (they receive it for 25 months altogether) (ESS 2015). Currently, the amount of unemployment benefit received by those who had been employed full-time ranges between €350.00 and €892.50 per month, while the at-risk-of-poverty threshold is just below €600. While the unemployed person is receiving unemployment benefit, the Employment Service of Slovenia is paying his/her compulsory social insurance contributions (pension and disability, health, parenthood and unemployment insurance) (ESS 2015).

Entitlement to unemployment benefit ceases if the unemployed person refuses to sign the Employment Plan, or does not actively search for a job, or does not accept an offered adequate/suitable job, or rejects inclusion into the active labour market policy programme, etc. In all these cases the person is removed from the Unemployed Persons Register (Labour Market Regulation Act 2010: Article 129). Entitlement to unemployment benefit also ceases if the person begins work that is subject to payment of social security contributions. If other income from work exceeds €200 per month, unemployment benefit is decreased by 50% of the income from work (ESS 2015).

The majority of the long-term unemployed (who are no longer entitled to unemployment benefit) may apply for cash social assistance.<sup>2</sup> For those able to work, the cash social assistance is conditional on active job search and inclusion in active labour market policy (ALMP) measures, which means that the person has to be included in the Register of Unemployed Persons (Social Assistance Benefits Act 2010: Article 28).

Unemployed persons who, upon expiration of the unemployment benefit require no more than one year to fulfil the minimum conditions for retirement (old-age) are entitled to payments of contributions for pension and disability insurance (Labour Market Regulation Act 2010 with revisions: Article 68). Until 1 March 2018, the entitlement to payments of contributions for pension and disability insurance will also cover those unemployed who are over 55 years of age, have accumulated an insurance period of more than 30 years and require no more than two years to fulfil the minimum conditions for retirement (old-age) (Act on Revisions to the Labour Market Regulation Act 2013: Article 38).

The Employment Plan is drafted with the assistance provided by the personal employment counsellor at any of 59 local Employment Offices in Slovenia. It is an agreement in writing between an unemployed person and Employment Service or another provider of measures, in which they jointly define employment objectives, the steps to be taken by the unemployed person, the programmes he/she will be included in, other agreed activities that are based on the person's particular needs, the time schedule, job-seeking migration area, reporting, frequency of contacts, etc. The details of drawing up and the content of the Employment Plan are prescribed by the ministry responsible for labour. The Employment Plan is amended during each meeting with the employment counsellor and its validity is limited to the period between two

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<sup>1</sup> Apart from the sources quoted in the bibliography, relevant information was gathered through semi-structured interviews with competent experts at the Employment Service of Slovenia, Employment Office Ljubljana (Neda Mohorič-Kešelj and Barbara Eršte Jurkovič), Centre for Social Work Škofja Loka (Ivana Košir Erman), Social Protection Institute of the Republic of Slovenia (Martina Trbanc) and the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities. Their contribution to the accuracy and completeness of the report is gratefully acknowledged. Nevertheless, the full responsibility for the contents of the report remains with its author.

<sup>2</sup> The minimum income currently amounts to €269.20 per month for the first (non-working) adult in the household and to €161.52 per month for each additional (non-working) adult (MLFS/AEO 2015).

meetings with the counsellor. The counsellor and the unemployed person meet about every three months. In-between, according to need, they have contacts by e-mail or telephone. The contact centre and e-Portal are also available to the unemployed person. The implementation of the Employment Plans is effective in practice, but to a great degree depends on the characteristics, motivation and personal circumstances of the individual unemployed persons.

Activation support offered by the Employment Service of Slovenia includes:

1. individual in-depth career counselling,
2. workshops on life-long career orientation – provided by the Employment Service of Slovenia at its Career Centres and 13 concessionaires (there is one workshop programme for the long-term unemployed),
3. ALMP measures and
4. employment rehabilitation services (for the disabled).

There are three-day workshops organised for older unemployed persons. Some local Employment Offices organise personal computer literacy programmes for persons aged 50 years and over. Otherwise, persons aged 50 years and over are one of the focus groups of other measures. Public works are offered to the long-term unemployed exclusively. The long-term unemployed are one of the focus groups for activation support. There are also workshops on life-long career orientation adapted for the long-term unemployed (one lasting eight weeks for instance). Assistance regarding self-employment as well as advice and assistance in job seeking are provided, too.

During inclusion in the active labour market policy (ALMP) measures the unemployed person is entitled to:

1. activity allowance (for part of the expenses related to participation in ALMPs) (Labour Market Regulation Act 2010 with revisions: Article 17),
2. partial or full compensation of travel and postal service expenses related to job search (Labour Market Regulation Act 2010 with revisions: Article 17),
3. educational costs allowance,
4. refund of medical check-up expenses;
5. refund of expenses for insurance against disability and death as a consequence of injury at work, and
6. other eligible expenses (Katalog ukrepov... 2015: 7-8; Pravilnik o izvajanju... 2012: Article 2).

The Employment Service of Slovenia provides no social services to the long-term unemployed (their services are focused on job seeking). Social services provided by/through Centres for Social Work include social and personal assistance. See section 3 for more information.

The effectiveness of activation support is reflected in exits to employment. However, it is hardly possible to measure them since the effects are usually evident only in the long term. There are common standards for individual in-depth career counselling, but its effectiveness depends on the performance of individual concessionaires as well. In the long term there the effects of the workshops on life-long career orientation are positive. The pilot project on the social activation of the long term unemployed with the aim of their re-inclusion into the labour market proved to be rather ineffective,<sup>3</sup> also due to a scarcely developed concept (Lebar et al. 2014).

There are two kinds of constraints to the successful activation of the long-term unemployed: objective and subjective. There are not enough funds for all the ALMP measures that would be needed. Insufficient human resources at the Centres for Social Work are also generally considered an objective constraint to achieving a higher effectiveness of support to the long-term unemployed. A subjective constraint is

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<sup>3</sup> Only 7% of participants progressed from the first to the fourth module (Lebar et al. 2014: 9).



related to the personal characteristics of the long-term unemployed person<sup>4</sup> and as such it is sometimes fully out of reach of those who are trying to address the person's problems. In spite of the professional approach in addressing the problems of the long-term unemployed by experts at both the Employment Service of Slovenia (and its local Employment Offices) and the Centres for Social Work, their work can only be effective up to a point. It is the point where they try to address the problems of persons who themselves have no energy or wish to change their own situation, or who face health constraints that will probably never allow them to perform paid work. These are persons who can only theoretically be pulled out of long-term unemployment. A certain proportion of the long-term unemployed remain permanently unemployable. However, there is no such category in the legislation. The term "permanent incapacity for work" is used instead and is limited to health related reasons. In 2011 the Employment Service of Slovenia proposed the establishment of the category "permanently unemployable person due to social problems", but nothing has happened since.

## **2 Coordination between services towards a one-stop shop approach**

The agencies involved in the delivery of benefits, services and activation measures at the national and local level are:

1. Centres for Social Work,
2. the Employment Service of Slovenia (through its Employment Offices),
3. the Slovenian Human Resources Development and Scholarship Fund<sup>5</sup> and
4. the concessionaires (including non-governmental organisations and other private bodies).<sup>6</sup>

They cooperate at the national and local level.

Centres for Social Work deliver cash social assistance and provide assistance in social activation. The cooperation of the Employment Service of Slovenia and the Centres for Social Work in the provision of labour market services and active labour market policy measures is included in both the Labour Market Regulation Act (2010: Article 74) and the Social Assistance Benefits Act (2010: Article 40). There are 62 Centres for Social Work organised according to the territorial (residence) principle and 59 Employment Offices that are open to all persons in Slovenia. This leads to situations where a single Employment Office cooperates with several Centres for Social Work. For instance, the Ljubljana Employment Office cooperates with five Centres for Social Work in the territory of the Municipality of Ljubljana, which includes participation in 5 inter-institutional Committees. In addition, the Ljubljana Employment Office has to cooperate with other Centres for Social Work if the person residing outside the Municipality of Ljubljana decides to register at the Ljubljana Employment Office.

The Employment Service of Slovenia covers the whole territory of Slovenia and is thus organised accordingly to ensure accessibility to labour market services. The

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<sup>4</sup> A new category of the long-term unemployed in Slovenia are female immigrants without any work record, who are no longer young and do not speak Slovenian, and whose families are not in favour of their employment. These women register at the Employment Office exclusively in order to be eligible for cash social assistance.

<sup>5</sup> The Slovenian Human Resources Development and Scholarship Fund performs activities (life-long career orientation, on-the-job replacement, job sharing as well as education and training) in accordance with the contract concluded with the ministry responsible for labour (Labour Market Regulation Act 2010 : Articles 102 and 139).

<sup>6</sup> These may be domestic or foreign legal entities with a registered office in the Republic of Slovenia, labour unions confederations or unions' representative on the country level, and employers associations' representative at the country level. The concession is awarded by the ministry responsible for labour, which carries out all the rights and obligations of the awarding authority on behalf of the state (Labour Market Regulation Act 2010: Article 86). The concessionaire reports on a quarterly basis on its work and the use of resources to the ministry responsible for labour (Article 96). The ministry responsible for labour keeps a register of awarded concessions (Article 97).

cooperation between the Employment Service of Slovenia and other agencies is mainly formalised. The organisation of the Employment Service of Slovenia allows close cooperation with other stakeholders at the regional and local level, such as the Centres for Social Work. The cooperation focused on the temporarily unemployable persons was first set in the 2010 regulation and is further elaborated in the Cooperation Protocol (signed by the Association of Centres for Social Work and the Employment Service of Slovenia, with agreement by the Social Affairs and the Labour Market and Employment Directorates of the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities. The Labour Market Regulation Act (2010: Article 117) and the Social Assistance Benefits Act (2010: Article 40) set the procedure for establishing the unemployed person's temporary inability to be employed. An unemployed person who is presumed to have problems with addictions, mental health, major social problems or similar problems that might hinder his/her employment is referred to a special inter-institutional Committee to resolve those circumstances. The proposal for such referral is submitted by an employment counsellor at the local Employment Office. The Committee consists of at least three members: employment counsellor, social worker and rehabilitation counsellor; in cases involving specific problems, experts from other fields of expertise may be involved. The Committee members are appointed jointly by the head of the Employment Office where the person concerned is registered and the director of the relevant Centre for Social Work. The Committee meets twice a year. It assesses the unemployed person's problems, submits its opinion concerning the reasons for the temporary inability to work, and proposes measures and activities aimed at the quickest possible improvement of the unemployed person's employment opportunities. If necessary, the Committee may, prior to preparing its own opinion, obtain an opinion from a medical doctor regarding health-restrictions. The relevant Centre for Social Work and the unemployed person are informed of the Committee's opinion. If the Committee is of the opinion that the unemployed person needs help/support aimed at the elimination of his/her social problems or distress prior to his/her active participation in the labour market, on the basis of the agreement recorded in the Employment Plan the person is referred to the relevant Centre for Social Work. The Employment Plan also contains a deadline for the unemployed person to appear at the Centre for Social Work for further treatment. Once the personal problems are solved, the Centre for Social Work informs the Employment Office and instructs the unemployed person to report to the Employment Office.

There has been no analysis or evaluation of the efficiency of various forms of cooperation between the Employment Service of Slovenia and other agencies. The most important is the cooperation with the Centres for Social Work that has been very positively evaluated, if informally, by both sides. They cooperate according to the rules set out in the Cooperation Protocol, which means that they are working in parallel on the local level, in a comprehensive way and without any overlaps or problems of late decisions. Sometimes a lack of vertical support and coordination for the Centres for Social Work (that are independent institutions) causes some problems. Some stakeholders miss a better coordination at the national level. There are also some gaps related to addressing the problems of those long-term unemployed who are not able to seek a job due to personal circumstances; social assistance programmes for persons with major social problems or similar problems are largely missing.

As evident from the preceding presentation, the unemployed person does not have a single point of contact or one-stop shop to access the necessary benefits, services and activation. The Employment Plan is defined at the Employment Office while Centres for Social Work are in charge of cash social assistance and the Agreement on the Active Addressing of the Social Problems (for the unemployed with at least one of the three specified personal circumstances). Nevertheless, there is a general agreement that this is an appropriate and effective approach and organisation since employment counsellors and social workers stay in their professional environment, which is important for the quality of their work. Given the different contents of their counselling and the need for a gradual addressing of the unemployed person's problems, having both counsellors in the same place and co-counselling would not make much sense.

There is no considerable variation in support by region or municipality because the rules and standards are set in the relevant regulation (see Appendix 1).

The cooperation between the Employment Service of Slovenia (its Employment Offices) and the Centres for Social Work is facilitated by an information system (Labour Market Regulation Act 2010: Article 124; Social Assistance Benefits Act 2010: Article 61). Their registers are linked and allow an effective exchange/examination of two relevant data: whether the person is included in the Register of Unemployed Persons and whether they are a cash social assistance beneficiary. The data are refreshed at the e-Sociala portal every night.

### **3 Individualised approaches**

Support tailored to the needs of the individual is the doctrine on which the work of the employment and social counsellors is based. The conditions attached to social or activation support take into account the individual's personal situation. The kinds and intensity of activation support depend on the individual's employment constraints (social or health related constraints, lack of motivation, non-readiness to search for job, etc.). The employment counsellor and the unemployed person agree in the Employment Plan on the activities and services that would best address the person's needs, problems and constraints. Some unemployed may be exempted from the active job search commitment that is the condition for the entitlement to unemployment benefit and cash social assistance. This is the case for unemployed persons who are presumed to have problems with addictions, mental health, major social problems or similar problems and are thus considered to be temporarily unemployable. Unemployed persons under medical treatment (surgery, intensive curative treatment, etc.) are exempt from the active job search obligation, as are (for a short period of time) those in particular personal circumstances, like death in the family. There is enough administrative flexibility and discretion to adapt the support pathway to the individual.

Conditional requirements (such as, for instance, the obligation to accept the job offered) are linked to lower take-up of benefits or activation. Two basic conditions for receiving unemployment benefit and cash social assistance are: that the person is included in the Register of Unemployed Persons and that he/she fulfils his/her obligations as set out in the Employment Plan.

An Agreement on the Active Addressing of Social Problems (an integration plan) is regulated at the national level (Social Assistance Benefits Act 2010: Article 35) and concluded, on a voluntary basis, between the local Centre for Social Work and the unemployed person who is presumed to have problems with addictions, mental health, major social problems or similar problems that might hinder his/her employment. It reflects the fact that for those very distant from the labour market several steps may be necessary before accessing a job becomes a realistic option. Extra support is provided to those with very specific problems that need to be addressed to ensure their ability to take up work. The fulfilment of obligations and performance of activities set in the agreement are the condition for entitlement to cash social assistance (as is the registration at the Employment Service of Slovenia). Such agreement is concluded for a defined period of time and revised/ updated as the spell of unemployment goes on. See section 2 for more detail. Once the temporarily unemployed person is directed by the inter-institutional Committee to sign the Agreement with the Centre for Social Work, they are moved from the Register of unemployed persons to the Register of Temporarily Unemployable Persons and they no longer appear in the unemployment statistics.

The following income benefits and social services are included in the Agreement on the Active Addressing of Social Problems:

1. cash social assistance
2. extraordinary cash social assistance
3. first social assistance
4. personal assistance
5. programmes for persons who have problems with addictions and
6. programmes for persons who have problems with mental health.

Such agreements do not include any activation measures; these are set in the Employment Plan, which is a separate document. Monitoring is activity-specific. The only foreseen sanction is a withdrawal of cash social assistance.

The Agreement on the Active Addressing of Social Problems can only be effective if the temporary unemployable person is motivated enough to make use of the activities set in the agreement. The lack of human resources at the Centre for Social Work may also be a constraint to achieving higher effectiveness. The obvious problem for people who are temporarily unemployable by reason of major social or other problems is the absence of programmes for their activation. This is the biggest group of the temporarily unemployable (while good programmes for those who have problems with addictions or mental health are available). Such persons lack basic housing conditions (homeless) and social networks, due to a long period of unemployment they lack the ability/habit to work and knowledge and skills, they do not have life/work energy, etc.

#### 4 Overview table

		Please put an X in the column that best represents the situation in your country			Please summarise in a few words and in order of priority the 3 key gaps that need to be addressed to improve effectiveness (if only one gap just complete one column)		
		Very good	Medium	Weak	Gap 1	Gap 2	Gap 3
<b>Effectiveness of benefits &amp; services supporting the long-term unemployed</b>	<b>Income benefits</b>		X		The amount of benefits (particularly cash social assistance) is too low.		
	<b>Social services</b>		X		Insufficient staff at the Centres for Social Work.	Absence of programmes for activation of persons with major social or other problems as reasons for their temporary unemployability.	
	<b>Activation services</b>			X	Low motivation among a certain number of unemployed, primarily due to their personal characteristics.	Lack of funds.	
<b>Effectiveness of coordination between employment, social assistance and social services</b>		X					
<b>Extent of individualised support</b>		X					

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## Annex

Article 194 of the Labour Market Regulation Act (2010) lists the implementing regulations and general acts under that Act, which set minimum standards for employment services. These are, for instance:

1. Regulation on the implementation of active employment policy measures (*Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia*, nos. [106/2010](#) and [20/2012](#)),
2. Regulation on standards and norms for performing labour market services and the methodology for calculating prices of these services ([Pravilnik o standardih in normativih za izvajanje storitev za trg dela in metodologiji za oblikovanje cen teh storitev](#), *Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia*, no. 74/2011),
3. Regulation on concessions for performing labour market services ([Pravilnik o koncesijah za opravljanje storitev za trg dela](#), *Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia*, no. 65/2011),
4. Regulation on registration in and deregistration from evidences, Employment Plan, rights and obligations related to job search and supervision over persons registered in evidences ([Pravilnik o prijavi in odjavi iz evidenc, zaposlitvenem načrtu, pravicah in obveznostih pri iskanju zaposlitve ter nadzoru nad osebami, prijavljenimi v evidencah](#), *Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia*, no. 106/2010),
5. Regulation on conditions for performing activities of employment agencies (*Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia*, no. 139/2006),
6. Rules on the selection and co-financing of public works ([Pravilnik o izboru in sofinanciranju javnih del](#), *Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia*, no. 96/2011),

as well as the

Catalogue of active employment policy measures (the latest one has been in force since 19 January 2015), etc.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Also see: [http://www.mddsz.gov.si/si/zakonodaja\\_in\\_dokumenti/veljavni\\_predpisi/#c7598](http://www.mddsz.gov.si/si/zakonodaja_in_dokumenti/veljavni_predpisi/#c7598).

