



## Meeting of the Advisers for European PES Affairs (AFEPA)

Conference Centre Albert Borschette

13 May 2022

Final outcomes

Participants: AT, BE\_ADG, BE\_Le Forem, BE\_VDAB, BG, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EL, EE, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, IE, IS, IT, LT, LU LV, MT, NL, NO, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK, COM, PES SECRETARIAT

Absent: BE\_Actiris, LI, PL

### ITEM 1: Introduction

The agenda of the meeting was adopted. The minutes from the AFEPA meeting on 7 March 2022 and the extra AFEPA meeting on 30 March were adopted and will be published.

### ITEM 2: Update from the European Commission

COM presented an update on the recent situation and relevant initiatives at EU level. The activation of the Temporary Protection Directive has been supplemented by additional initiatives and complementary guidelines, as for example operational guidelines to support Member States in applying the Temporary Protection Directive, guidelines to facilitate recognition of professional qualifications, amendments to the Cohesion Policy and the CARE initiative, as well as a Solidarity Platform to coordinate cooperation between Member States. Some ongoing work in the Commission was also mentioned. Europass and ESCO will be made available in Ukrainian. A resource hub hosted by the European Training Foundation to help recognition and interpretation of qualifications is being set up. Further guidance on access to labour market, education, training, social welfare, healthcare and accommodation will follow.

The CARE regulation introduces provisions to maximise the use of funds available under the 2014-2020 programming period (ESF, ERDF and FEAD). Programming preparations for ESF+ for 2021-2027 are in full swing. When these programmes are adopted, the ESF+ can also be used to fund measures supporting those fleeing Ukraine. A specific call under the Technical Support Instrument was launched in March. Cohesion policy funds (2014-2020) can be used to fund jobseeker support in the areas of employment, ; set up integrated services/one-stop-shops; adapt PES' offer, guidelines and programmes to accommodate new needs. PES should liaise with regional and/or national managing authorities to find out more about priorities and funding opportunities, in line with the requirements set up at Member State level.

The Commission adopted a new 'Skills and Talent package' on 27 April. A review of the Single permit directive and the long-term residence directive is announced, as well as a proposal of an EU talent pool.

The AFEPA members exchanged on possible reasons why numbers of persons registered with PES are low compared to the number of displaced people from Ukraine and beneficiaries of Temporary Protection. Some PES mentioned that the registrations are increasing and may continue to do so when access to temporary benefits ends. In some countries, many Ukrainians are in transit, and some have started returning to



Ukraine. It was also highlighted that some multinationals have moved staff to countries in the West of Europe. Language is reported as a barrier. Housing is a challenge in some countries, causing mismatch between jobs and accommodation. Collection and sharing of information was highlighted as important.

### **ITEM 3: The situation in Ukraine**

The PES Secretariat thanked PES for their valuable responses to the questionnaire. Information and exchange across the PES seems to be found useful. The questionnaire will therefore be updated as long as it is deemed necessary. The next update will input to the discussions at the Board meeting in June. DK proposed to include more figures and data. DK also highlighted the need to avoid overlaps with the upcoming EMCO work on the issue.

The PES Secretariat presented a new platform (WikiPES) to simplify reporting and sharing of information. The platform will now be piloted, and more detailed information will be sent the Afepas.

The PES Secretariat presented the summary of possible further Network actions discussed at the Jour Fixe 10 May with Board members, which could include support for staff exchange, a working group, studies and papers. Afepas were invited to comment on fine-tuning and implementation of the proposals. RO supported the proposals, and proposed that staff exchange could be organised with participants from several PES. SE appreciated Jour Fixes and webinars on the topic. DE and SE expressed their willingness to share previous experiences and learning to draw on in the present situation. The proposed activities will be presented to the Board in June.

### **ITEM 4: Work Programme 2022**

The PES Secretariat presented an update of the 2022 Work Programme. This included a report on Communication and the Annual Stakeholder Conference that took place in April. EE updated on the activities of the WG Visibility. It was highlighted that the opportunity of this WG for PES support departments to exchange was very appreciated among the participants. While the WG has ended its work, a new WG will start in the 2<sup>nd</sup> semester with focus on internal communication in the Network.

SE updated on the main activities of the WG Taxonomies. The WG are now in the process of drafting a set of guidelines for green taxonomies. WG members have now the opportunity to give written comments, and Afepas were invited to co-operate with their participants on comments. The next meeting in the WG will be dedicated to use of AI in design of taxonomies.

AFEPAs were invited to discuss specifically the preparation of the WG “PES 4.0 Taskforce” on digitalisation, together with the NL (WG leader) and the PES Secretariat. The scoping report was presented. Afepas expressed their views on topics of, participation in and possible output from the WG, which will be fed into the further planning of the WG. The first meeting is planned for beginning of October. The Member states are invited to consider potential participants – one permanent participant as



well as subject area specialists. PES Secretariat and the chair will come back with more precisions on the order of the topics to be discussed.

The PES Secretariat presented an overview of upcoming activities for the second semester, as well as the format of meetings for the rest of 2022. The possibility to extend the Afepa meeting in October to 1 ½ day will be explored (13-14 October).

### **ITEM 5: Future of Benchlearning**

The PES Secretariat updated on the discussions in the Benchlearning Working Group on the Future of Benchlearning. AFEPAs were invited to discuss the upcoming Thematic Learning Dialogues (TLDs) after finalisation of the 3<sup>rd</sup> cycle and a broad concept for the 4<sup>th</sup> cycle, in the form of a draft paper to be tabled for adoption at the PES Board in June.

The Secretariat presented some recommendations regarding the format, key topics, methodology, the excellency model and the need to ensure that concepts meet the demands, ecosystems and diversity of PES. The Secretariat highlighted the need to start planning the calendar of the 4<sup>th</sup> cycle, starting assessments in the autumn 2023. BG, LT, LV were invited to be the first PES in 2023 followed by HR in 2024.

AFEPAs commented on topics related to the organisation of the visits, such as interpretation and the use of online or physical visits of the local offices. How to draw on experience from the previous cycle was highlighted, for example by leaving room for flexibility and to enlighten the assessment, as well as sharing of content with other PES. Methodological questions were also discussed, in particular related to the new EFQM model and the link between the quantitative and qualitative assessments. Support to persons with disabilities was suggested as a possible priority topic (to be further explored when developing the methodology). The possibility to focus on a narrower range of issues and enablers was raised. The target group and scope of the survey was discussed.

The Secretariat recalled that performance enablers entailed in the PES Network Decision are binding. It was clarified that the survey proposed for the autumn will aim to gather feedback on the methodology, based on the overall framework agreed in June by the Board. An evaluation is planned by 2026 (the current PES Network Decision runs until 2027).

### Conclusions and next steps

Regarding Thematic Learning Dialogues, Afepas were invited to send prioritisation for possible topics they are interested in not later than 27 May so that three can be selected as a start, among the following topics (from 1 to 5, with 1= most interested). 1) Channel management strategy 2) Systematic Quality Management 3) Inclusion of staff in digital transformation/automating processes 4) Empowering staff in a process of transformation and innovation 5) How to implement efficiency.

It was concluded that there was an overall consensus on the paper. The draft concept will be updated to: reflect the possibility to hold one out of two local offices' visits in person, clarify that interpretation costs would be covered by the host PES and emphasize the aspects of sharing of content with other PES. The



need to ensure, to the extent possible, a flexible approach will be further emphasized and could be a topic for discussion at the Board.

Afepas were invited to send additional comments to the document by 20 May, in the form of concrete suggestions.

#### **ITEM 6: Preparation of 17<sup>th</sup> PES Board Meeting, 23-24 June, France**

The French PES and the PES Secretariat presented the draft agenda of the PES Board. The meeting will take place in Lille 23-24 June. The situation in Ukraine and impacts for PES, labour market integration of youth and of persons with disabilities, the future of benchlearning, gender equality and use of artificial intelligence will be discussed. AFEPA's were invited to discuss the main topics for preparation.

The PES Secretariat introduced the discussion on gender equality on the Board agenda, and asked for comments to the draft paper before 23 May.

#### **ITEM 7: Information Points**

LT updated on the cooperation between PES from Baltic countries. The co-operation between Estonia, Latvian and Lithuania was formalised in 2015, and the activities organised within an annual work programme. The main added value of the Baltic PES cooperation is that it provides a good platform for practitioners to share knowledge and common challenges in the areas most relevant to their organizations. All three countries are very similar in size, in management style and client's profile is very similar, which is an advantage in discussions of management issues or innovations.

Amira Ramhorst (Team Leader, ESAP 2) updated on a project aiming to improve employment opportunities and working conditions of women and men in the Western Balkans, with a particular emphasis on PES. This project, Employment and Social Affairs Platform (ESAP 2) is a regional 3-year (2019 – 2022) project financed by the European Union and jointly implemented by the Regional Cooperation Council and International Labour Organisation. The 2nd cycle of the PES Bench-learning project in Western Balkans was launched in April 2022 and is planned to last until September 2022, with some possible follow-on activities taking place later. The YG, the digital agenda and crisis response and resilience are included as elements of the approach, as well as standard elements in the PES self-assessment module. The methodology is aligned with the EU PES Network approach. AFEPA's who are interested in taking part in the ESAP 2 project activities are invited to be in touch directly with Ms Ramhorst (email: Amira.Ramhorst@rcc.int).

Michelle Leighton (Chief of International Labour Migration Branch, ILO) gave an update of the ILO Fair Recruitment Initiative. The initiative aims to ensure that recruitment practices nationally and across borders are grounded in labour standards, are developed through social dialogue, and ensure gender equality.



The initiative is based on four pillars of action: knowledge generation (research and data), improvement and enforcement of rules and regulation for fair recruitment; promotion of fair business practices, and empowering and protecting workers. The initiative is now in its second phase, focusing on work to advance the four pillars, including ratification and implementation of relevant international labour standards on recruitment. ILO supports implementation in about 30 countries<sup>1</sup> and collaborates with PES in a number of these (e.g. Tunisia, Colombia and Ecuador). ILO suggested ideas for possible further co-operation with the PES Network, including knowledge sharing, trainings, joint research, and exploring synergies between respective platforms, networks and resources.

### **AOB and closure of the meeting**

- FR updated on the WAPES Congress held in Tallinn last month on the topic “Challenges and innovative actions for Public Employment Services in a rapidly evolving labour market”. FR was re-elected as the WAPES Europe region vice-presidency.
- The next Afepa meeting is planned to take place in Brussels on **13 and 14 October 2022** (timing tbc). Afepas were encouraged to attend in-person.

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<sup>1</sup> Additional Resources were shared by ILO: ILO fair recruitment knowledge hub: <https://www.fairrecruitmenthub.org/>; ILO web portal on fair recruitment Here: [Fair recruitment \(Fair recruitment\) \(ilo.org\)](https://www.ilo.org/fairrecruitment/)