PES NETWORK
WORK PROGRAMME
2023-2024

PES NETWORK WORK PROGRAMME 2023-2024

Contents

1. Context

The PES Network Work Programme was adopted by the PES Board on 16 December 2022 and updated on 15 December 2023. It sets out the key activities that will help PES learn from each other and act together in a persisting challenging context[1].

The Work Programme will be implemented in a challenging context, whereby pre-existing labour market trends were sped up as a result of the COVID-19 crisis and external shocks. Public Employment Services and the labour market in the European Union are facing major challenges. Unemployment is still at a historically low level, but regional variations are strong; for vulnerable jobseekers and not professionally active people, barriers to (re)entering the labour market are high and numerous. Companies (and SMEs in particular) are having difficulties in finding workforce with the right skills and labour shortages have become a major concern, also due to poor working conditions and work-life balance. The EU is facing a risk of recession. Finally, the green and digital transformation are speeding up and placing new demands on the workforce. The need to invest in guidance, training and upskilling is thus more visible than ever, as highlighted in the context of the 'European Year of Skills' 2023. In a fast changing international context, Public Employment Services are also playing a central role in attracting workforce from third countries and helping migrants, refugees as well as displaced people integrate the labour market. The question of good working conditions for them and for all workers becomes part of the concern of PES in managing the twin (green and digital) labour market transitions.

The PES Network Work Programme remains a living document, which can be adjusted according to changing priorities of the Board or a rapidly changing situation on the European labour market.

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1 The process for developing the PES Network Work Programme built upon a survey to all members of Network and the work of a dedicated Ad Hoc Working Group. Suggestions and feedback were received from the Advisers for European PES Affairs (AFEPAs) on 14 October 2022. While article 6 of Decision No 573/2014/EU establishing the PES Network mentions an annual work plan, a work programme covering both years 2023 and 2024 is proposed. This aims to ensure better planning, synergies across years and focus on some key priorities, in line with the PES Network Rules of Procedure (which call for a three year multi-annual rolling work plan).

2. Priorities and overview of the Work Programme

The Work Programme is structured along four strands, which reflect Public Employment Services' key functions and the environment within which they operate. Indicative priorities that will guide the PES Network for the coming years are proposed below[2]:

- **Strand 1: Structural and labour market changes**, with a specific focus on how PES can analyse, anticipate, adapt to and address structural developments in the labour market and labour market shocks. This concerns in particular the 'twin' green and digital transition, demographic change, the broader geopolitical context and linked to that the need to attract when necessary and integrate third country citizens (including displaced persons) in the labour market. Skills and labour shortages have become particularly acute in some sectors, and some shortages are becoming structural. This will go in parallel with longer structural changes and labour market trends, such as further digitalisation, more frequent transitions. Activation and prevention of unemployment, as well as supporting occupational and geographical mobility (with a view on existing EU policies and tools) are key in this context.

- **Strand 2: PES Service Delivery,** focused on the interaction between PES and their direct customers. Continuous adaptation and improvement of service design and delivery will be all the more important in a volatile labour market, with frequent transitions and a broadening of jobseekers' profiles (from those further from the labour market to those who are still in employment). Increased PES digitalization, data-driven services as well as new forms of counselling and innovation represent new opportunities for PES. They also raise significant challenges. Jobseekers and employers need the right skills, knowledge and competences and business support services. PES have the potential to help them by identifying future skills needs, delivering suitable training, career guidance and other

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2 In line with the PES Network Rules of Procedure call for a three year multi-annual rolling work plan

support services. Ensuring adequate and effective support to vulnerable jobseekers and to their sustainable labour market integration are more crucial than ever in a fast changing labour market.

- **Strand 3: PES Performance Management**, focused on key elements of PES performance management and how the PES Network supports its improvement. Performance Management is key to PES for making their business case, demonstrate public added value towards policies and customers. Building on lessons from the third cycle of benchlearning, priorities will include efficiency, PES reforms and change management, quality management, as well as human resource development in the 'new normal' and decarbonisation's impact on PES. Digital transformation and the use of Artificial Intelligence has become an even more important part of PES' performance management, with challenges in terms of use of Artificial Intelligence, data protection and security of personal information and impact on the PES' decarbonization and public (meaning: to all) accessibility.

- **Strand 4: PES Governance and Ecosystem**, with a particular focus on PES' overall organisation and governance, their institutional environment as well as how PES operate in their overall ecosystem. Key elements are partnership and alliance management, supported by strong communication towards a variety of stakeholders.

Several issues are cross-cutting and will be mainstreamed and integrated horizontally throughout the Work Programme, in line with the PES Network Decision and Updated Strategy. These include in particular the twin (green/digital) transition, digitalisation as well as gender equality, support to the most vulnerable and non-discrimination. Particular emphasis will also be placed on young people's situation on the labour market, particularly structural youth unemployment.

PES Network objectives and mission

The PES Network aims to encourage cooperation between Member States within the areas of PES responsibility, in order to contribute to the implementation of the Union's employment policies. This contributes to implementing the principles in the European Pillar of Social Rights, to the European Green Deal objectives and to the achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

In particular, the PES Network Decision sets the objectives to support vulnerable social groups with high unemployment rates; gender equality; decent and sustainable work; the better functioning and inclusiveness of the labour markets; [addressing] skills shortages and skills matching; better integration of labour markets; geographical and occupational mobility; the assessment of active labour market initiatives (Article 3 of PES Network Decision).

Building on these objectives, the PES Network Strategy adopted in June 2021[3] sets out a renewed mission and vision equipping PES to face complex challenges. The Network's vision is to be a vehicle for enhanced European PES cooperation, enabling national PES to play their role as key actors in the employment services ecosystem. The PES Network aims to empower, educate, and improve so that it can achieve its core purpose – to promote modernisation of individual PES, encourage optimum use of technology and data, and facilitate enhanced competencies for staff.

PES Network initiatives

The PES Network Decision   outlines key PES Network initiatives, which include modernising and strengthening PES in key areas; developing and implementing Benchlearning; providing mutual assistance through cooperation between members of the Network; co-operating with labour market stakeholders (including both public and private partners); promoting and sharing best practices; preparing reports at the request of the European Parliament, the Council, the Commission, or on its own initiative and contributing to the implementation of relevant policy initiative (Articles 4 and 5).

The core of PES Network activities is the development and implementation of a European-wide PES Benchlearning system, defined as the 'process of creating a systematic and integrated link between benchmarking and mutual learning activities that consists of identifying good performances through indicator-based benchmarking systems [...] and of using findings for tangible and evidence-informed mutual learning activities, including good or best practice models'.

The funding of the Benchlearning is foreseen under the European Social Fund+ (2021-2027). The Youth Guarantee (YG) Council Recommendation (reinforced in 2020) specifically mentions the PES Network's role in awareness-raising and dissemination of results and good practice examples among Member States. The PES Network also provides support to the implementation of PES-related Country Specific Recommendations issued in the context of the European Semester.

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3 https://op.europa.eu/webpub/empl/pes-network-strategy/en/

PES Network Work Programme 2023

Structural and labour market changes	**Impact of war in Ukraine** Improving support to persons displaced, monitoring PES support and labour market developments Working Group	**Third country migration** PES challenges and latest EU initiatives Seminar	**European Year of Skills** Forecasting, new ways to recruit skilled workers, tackling shortages in the green/digital transition Annual Stakeholder conference, PES opinion paper, Video	**Labour Market Information** Anticipating short term developments EU Labour Market Barometer

PES service delivery	**New forms of training and skills validation (incl. microcredentials)** Impact on PES services and counselling Seminar	**Evidence-based service design: latest trends** – Towards more data and experience-based models, use of behavioural science Working Group	**Adapting PES (digital) tools for better inclusion** – Challenges and opportunities for supporting vulnerable jobseekers Thematic Review	**New ALMP interventions** Mapping measures and their effectiveness Format tbc (Study dissemination)	**Labour market taxonomy in the twin transition** – Exchange and recommendations (skills for green and digital jobs) Working Group (self-driven)

PES performance management	**Thematic learning dialogues** Peer support in tackling key management challenges identified during benchlearning visits Workshop Q1 and Q2 and dissemination of lessons learnt (Report)	**PES Benchlearning** Qualitative and quantitative assessments of PES performance New Framework (Manual) Start 4th cycle visits	**Data-driven PES and digitalisation strategies** Bring together practitioners and exploring challenges PES 4.0 Task Force (Working Group) Use of AI to support decision in the placement process (Thematic Review) Algorithm use in PES (Study)	**PES staff management** New challenges faced by PES Format tbc: Survey dissemination Webinar or podcast

PES governance and ecosystem	**PES of the Future** Anticipating and reflecting together Jour Fixe meeting – incl. Innovation Lab elements, internal reflection paper	**PES capacity survey** Mapping trends in PES, (focus on governance and decentralisation) Survey (new concept)	**Partnership for better outreach to vulnerable groups** Reviewing existing practices Webinar	**PES Network partnerships** Cooperation with relevant labour market stakeholders (incl. PES from candidate countries)

Others – supporting activities	**Mutual Assistance Projects** Demand-driven, Peer PES support to 2 or 3 PES	**PES Network Communication** Reviewing current strategy and collaborative tools (Working Group Q1), Annual Report, Newsletters, webpages, videos, PESpod, PES practices	**Research** Linked to/supporting the learning activities AD hoc studies and surveys

Governance and other meetings	**PES Board** 8-9 June, SE, Stockholm (in person) 14-15 December, ES (in person)	**AFEPAs** 2 meetings	**Benchlearning Working/Steering Group/Statisticians' meeting** Online/Physical	**Benchlearning Assessments** Online/Physical

PES Network Work Programme 2024

Structural and labour market changes	Addressing EU labour market challenges in the 5 years ahead PES Board Memo Opinion paper	Labour market taxonomy in the green transition Exchange and recommendations Working Group	PES support to Green skills and jobs evolution From commitment to practical steps and new strategies Toolkit	Skills and labour market intelligence Improving data use for better informed services and policies Thematic Review	Measuring labour shortages Discussing a common PES approach Focus group	Labour Market Information Anticipating short term developments Monthly EU Labour Market Barometer
PES service delivery	**Rethinking support to those further from the labour market** (incl. support to persons with disabilities) Stakeholder conference		**Early intervention and job-to-job transitions** - Supporting those in work and preventing unemployment Thematic Review Workshop		**Evidence-based service design:** latest trends - Towards more data and experience-based models, use of behavioural science Working Group (last meeting in Q1)	
PES performance management	**PES Benchlearning** - Qualitative and quantitative assessments of PES performance Start 4th cycle assessments New data collection methodology			**Data-driven PES and digitalization strategies** PES 4.0 Task Force (Working Group) AI and algorithm use in PES (Webinar)		
PES governance and ecosystem	**PES Network partnerships** Cooperation with relevant labour market stakeholders (including PES from candidate countries)		**PES capacity survey** Mapping trends in PES, PES governance and partnerships (New concept: webinar and survey report)		**PES partnership with private employment services** State of play and trends (Survey and webinar)	
Others – supporting activities	**Mutual Assistance Projects** Peer PES support to 2 or 3 PES	**PES current challenges** Self-driven exchanges on addressing PES Network priorities Jours Fixes (upon demand)	**Communication** Standing Working Group, new strategy Annual Report, Newsletters, webpages, videos, PESpod, PES practices	**Planning Work Programme 2025-2026** Working group	**Research** Linked to/supporting the learning activities Ad hoc studies and surveys	
Governance and other meetings	**PES Board** 6-7 June, Liège Belgium (in person) December, Hungary (format tbc)		**AFEPAs** 7-8 March 2024 3-4 October 2024 (tbc)	**Benchlearning Working/Steering Group/Statisticians' meeting** Online/Physical	**Benchlearning Assessments** Online/Physical	