



20th PES Board meeting, 14 – 15 December 2023

Meeting under the Spanish Presidency

Outcomes

The Board is the governing body of the European Network of Public Employment Services (PES Network), established by Decision No 573/2014/EU. It is composed of one member for each Member State, from the senior management of their respective PES, and for the European Commission. The meeting is not open to the public. The adopted outcomes are published on the EMPL Europa website.

Excused: PL, SK, CY

Welcome

The Chair of the Network, Caroline Mancel, and Second Vice-Chair Gerardo Gutiérrez Ardoy, Director General of SEPE (the Spanish Public Employment Service) opened the meeting.

ITEM 1: Adoption of outcomes of last meeting and agenda

The new Chair of PES Network, Caroline Mancel, welcomed new Board members from Czech Republic and Sweden as well as alternate Board members from Austria, Denmark, Iceland, Portugal and the European Commission.

The Board adopted the draft agenda of the 20th Board Meeting. The draft outcomes of the 19th Board Meeting, hosted by Sweden in June 2023, were adopted and will be uploaded on the Europa website <http://ec.europa.eu/social/PESNetwork>.

ITEM 2: European Year of Skills

European Year of Skills

The OECD provided a scene-setting presentation, focused on skills challenges raised by the green, digital and demographic transitions. The potential of 'skills-first' approaches and the need to adapt recruitment and assessment techniques accordingly were underlined.

The Commission provided an overview of initiatives planned as part of the European Year of Skills, in a context where adult learning remains low (only 37% of adults take part in training every year) and 74% of SMEs faced skills shortages in 2023. Over 1700 events are planned so far, spread across 38 countries. Overall, the Year of Skills has already helped to make skills a top priority at EU level and across Europe, mobilise partners and form partnerships at all levels.

Greece presented its upskilling/reskilling 2020-2030 strategy as well as its strong collaboration with some of the largest technology companies to boost digital skills and a digital literacy. Emphasis was also put on the update of Vocational Training curricula and investment in soft skills development.

Board members were invited to keep building on the European Year's momentum and disseminate PES Network deliverables in this context. The PES Network Chair will take part in the final conference on 30 April 2024: PES Network members will be invited to reflect upon the Year's legacy and impact as well as next steps in their country, possibly undertaking communication activities.

Skills and talent mobility

The Commission presented recent EU initiatives adopted as part of a '[Skills and Talent Mobility package](#)', in particular the legislative proposal for the EU Talent Pool that should provide opportunities for third country nationals to work in EU-wide shortage occupations. The Secretariat reported on the November seminar on PES' role in recruitment from third countries. Following a proposal from Germany, it was suggested to organise a series of internal Jour Fixe meetings on third country migration and the EU Talent Pool.

ITEM 3: Recent PES reforms and developments

Following a presentation of the PES Capacity report's main findings, Board members were informed on ongoing PES reforms.

In **Austria**, a new AI-supported customer guidance tool, 'Berufsinformat' will be launched early 2024. **Spain** is implementing major reforms in the context of the Recovery, Transformation and Resiliency Plan, which include: modernising active employment policies, reviewing subsidies and rebates for hiring, simplifying and improving unemployment assistance. **Romania** is planning a large-scale project to increase PES capacity, with support by the European Social Fund+ and the Recovery and Resilience Facility. It complements modernization projects carried out in recent years (focused on employer support, digitalization of services, cooperation with partners).

ITEM 4: Intervention from the Spanish State Secretary for Labour

The Spanish State Secretary for Labour, Mr. Joaquín Pérez Rey, presented (via a video recording) key achievements of the Spanish Presidency and the impacts of the labour reform on the Spanish labour market.

Family picture

ITEM 5: Challenges for PES in the face of demographic changes

The topic was introduced through a scene-setting presentation by José Moisés Martín Carretero (a Spanish economist), who highlighted the impact of the 'triple' - demographic, green and digital - transition. In a context where the EU's working age population will continue to shrink, North-South demographic imbalances and territorial inequalities will be exacerbated.

This was followed by an exchange of views and practices with an employer (Maite Hernando), the Executive Vice-President of the Confederación Canaria de Empresarios (José Cristobal García) and Javier González López from the Fundación Laboral de la Construcción. Norway also presented NAV's 'Horizon Scan 2023-2035', focused on trends towards 2035 and consequences for the PES (nav.no/omverdensanalyse).

Board Members were invited to exchange on measures put in place to address the labour market impact of demographic change in their country. The discussion highlighted that demographic change is a key driver behind labour shortages and requires more attention. Additional focus must be put on increasing employment rates of the domestic workforce. Supporting older workers, persons with caring responsibilities, young people, migrants and persons with disabilities is key.

ITEM 6: PES Board memo 'Labour market challenges for the years ahead'

Ahead of the European elections in June 2024 and the appointment of a new College of Commissioners in the autumn, Board members discussed the key elements of a PES Board memo on 'labour market challenges for the years ahead' in a 'world café' format. The Memo will be finalised in Spring 2024 and consequently be submitted to the members for written approval.

ITEM 7: Setting the scene- The Spanish Labour Market and role of the Spanish PES

SEPE gave an overview of the Spanish labour market. Spain ended 2022 with 20,463,900 people in employment: the highest figure since 2007. Since the pandemic, recovery has been strong in scientific and technical activities. The unemployment rate has dropped by 3.2 points in the last two years to 12.87% - its lowest level in 15 years. The year 2022 ended with 2.9 million people under the age of 30 in employment. This is the highest youth employment figure in the last 11 years. Strong focus was put on improving the quality of employment: there are now almost 15 million people employed with permanent contracts - the highest figure in Spain's history. However, as a large and growing number of people will retire in the coming years: replacing them is one of the great challenges facing Spain's labour market.

ITEM 8: How to make ALMP more effective? Three key elements: sector, priority groups and territory

Following a summary of the PES Network study on 'New forms of active labour market policy programmes and a report on the High-Level Conference ("The Active Labour Market Policies, Pillar of the European Year of Skills") organised by the Presidency on 19-20 October 2023 in Barcelona, a video presentation by DG REFORM highlighted the role of the Technical Support Instrument in supporting ALMP reforms. Good practices were presented, focused on supporting migrants in the agricultural sector (Autonomous Community of the Canary Islands); avoiding depopulation (Autonomous Community of Castilla La Mancha); supporting rural women's digital literacy (Spanish Public Employment Service).

This was followed by workshops with roundtable discussions and practices presented by individual PES on 1) Better targeting groups furthest away from the labour market (the Netherlands) 2) Better responding to sectoral needs (France) 3) Contributing to the development of the territory (Portugal).

ITEM 9: PES Network Work Programme 2023/2024

Work Programme 2023

The 2023 Annual report was approved by the Board. It will be published in early 2024 with graphic layout: Board Members are invited to disseminate it.

Heads of PES Talks with Chair of the PES Network

The Chair reported on the main points raised during her exchange with PES from 17 countries, following her election. The exchanges focused in particular on the added value of the PES Network (e.g. enabling learning from each other, building a community of peers, anticipating and facing new challenges together); challenges (getting all on board and addressing resource limitations, streamlining information exchange and finding synergies with partners) as well as work programme priorities and expectations from the Chair. Follow-up activities are included in the proposed Work Programme 2024.

Work Programme 2024

Amendments to Work Programme 2024 were adopted by the Board. They are linked to topics that emerged during the implementation of the Work Programme 2023 or Heads of PES talks and include: a standing communication working group, a PES Board Memo, follow up on measuring labour shortages. A series of Jour Fixe meetings will also be organised on the Talent Pool.

To enhance the visibility of the PES Network, a set of communication recommendations were presented including the planned refreshment of the PES Network's website, and exploration of social media and collaborative tools.

The Board also approved targeted changes to the 2024 calendar of benchlearning as well as the 2025 site visits calendar.

AOB

Belgium-Le Forem presented an update on the World Association of Public Employment Services' work programme (Wapes).

The Spanish Presidency handed over to the upcoming Belgium Presidency. The next Board meeting will take place in person in Liège, Belgium on 6-7 June 2024.