Integrated support for the long-term unemployed in Europe

A study of national policies

2015

Denis Bouget, Hugh Frazer and Eric Marlier, with Ramón Peña-Casas and Bart Vanhercke

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Contact: Valdis ZAGORSKIS

E-mail: Valdis.ZAGORSKIS@ec.europa.eu

European Commission
B-1049 Brussels

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Preface

In 2008, the European Commission Recommendation[1] on active inclusion set out common principles and practical guidelines for a comprehensive strategy based on three integrated pillars: adequate income support, inclusive labour markets and access to quality services. The 2013 Social Investment Package[2] emphasises the importance of supporting those furthest from the labour market with a combination of income support, tailor-made activation, and access to enabling services; it also promotes the use of one-stop shops and individual contracts. Both these documents stress that effectively addressing long-term unemployment requires an integrated approach of benefits and services, a close policy coordination between all relevant authorities (particularly employment authorities, social assistance authorities and social service agencies) and an approach tailored to the individual's needs. Building on this, the European Commission 2015 Work Programme proposes an initiative for promoting integration and employability in the labour market including a proposal for a Council recommendation on the integration in the labour market of the long-term unemployed. The objective is to reduce long-term unemployment by providing a comprehensive framework for Member States to strengthen support given to those it affects, inter alia by cooperation between organisations providing this support. The initiative aims to provide more concrete policy guidance to Member States and to reinforce the monitoring of national efforts in bringing the long-term unemployed back into the labour market.

As part of developing this initiative and in order to inform its future work in this area, the Commission asked the European Social Policy Network (ESPN; see presentation of the Network in Annex 2) to prepare country reports to examine the availability and effectiveness of integrated support for the long-term unemployed in each European country. In their reports, ESPN experts were asked to answer three key questions:

- To what extent are the benefits and services supporting the long-term unemployed effective, and where are the key gaps in achieving this?
- To what extent is there effective coordination between employment, social assistance and social services authorities ensuring an integrated approach, and where are the key gaps in achieving this?
- To what extent do the long-term unemployed receive individualised support tailored to their needs, and where are the key gaps in achieving this?

It should be noted that, given the focus of these questions, the experts' reports and this Synthesis Report only address one side of the problem of long-term unemployment: the supply side. It is equally if not more important to address the demand side. Indeed, even if the quality of measures supporting the integration of the long-term unemployed into the labour market and into society is high, decreasing long-term unemployment[3] depends to a very large degree on creating more good quality and sustainable jobs that are accessible to the long-term unemployed. Other actions will also be needed such as ensuring a progressive tax system that facilitates movement into employment and well-designed labour market reforms.

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[1] Commission Recommendation of 3 October 2008 on the active inclusion of people excluded from the labour market (notified under document number C(2008) 5737). Available at: http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:32008H0867.

[2] Commission Communication COM2013(83) on "Towards Social Investment for Growth and Cohesion – including implementing the European Social Fund 2014-2020". Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=9761&langId=en.

[3] The expression "long-term unemployment" (LTU) is generally used and understood in line with its statistical definition: a period of unemployment of at least one year. The ESPN national experts' reports highlight one methodological difficulty in interpreting this definition, given the daily reality of the process of impoverishment of the unemployed. In other words, the definition tends to dichotomise a gradual socio-economic process but, until now, as often suggested by the national experts, the statistical definition is not a policy norm. Some unemployed people can become poor before one year of unemployment and others can remain above the poverty line even after one year of unemployment.

This Synthesis Report brings together the findings of the national reports written by each of the 35 ESPN country teams of independent experts (for a presentation of the ESPN Network Core Team and the 35 ESPN country teams, see Annex 2). It was prepared by Denis Bouget, Hugh Frazer and Eric Marlier together with Ramón Peña-Casas and Bart Vanhercke[4].

In producing a Synthesis Report, it is only possible to illustrate points made with a limited number of examples. However, where we find that a similar point is made by other experts and we think this would be useful we indicate this in a bracket listing the relevant countries so that readers can read the individual country reports for more information.[5] In producing their reports, experts cite many different sources in support of their analysis. References to these sources are not included in this Synthesis Report. Readers wishing to follow up the original sources are again invited to consult the individual experts' reports.

[4] Denis Bouget, Ramón Peña-Casas and Bart Vanhercke are from the European Social Observatory (OSE, Belgium). Hugh Frazer is from Maynooth University (Ireland). Eric Marlier is from the Luxembourg Institute of Socio-Economic Research (LISER).

[5] In giving examples of countries, we often have to combine national realities which are extremely diverse. So, a country may provide a service/benefit in a given area but not at sufficient level or in a direct manner, and fall in the same category as another country that provides a service/benefit in the same area sufficiently and directly. Thus, a category can group countries that are not 100% homogeneous. To understand the situation in any country mentioned in more detail, it is therefore important to consult the national report.

SUMMARY, OVERALL CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

One of the key features of the economic crisis has been not only the rise in unemployment in general but also the significant increase in long-term unemployment. Between 2007 and 2015, long-term unemployment in the European Union has risen from 3.1% of the active population to 5.1% and from 42.9% of unemployment to 49.5%. Over the same period, very long-term unemployment (i.e. unemployment during at least two years) has risen from 1.9% to 3.1% of the active population.[6] This trend is particularly worrying because, as periods of unemployment become longer, the negative social and economic impacts cumulate and the costs to the individual, to society and to the economy increase. Poverty and social exclusion intensify, bad health and disability become more common and, over time, human and social capital is eroded. Thus, the obstacles that those affected by long-term unemployment have to overcome in order to access the labour market intensify and the range of supports they require to do so increase.

This Synthesis Report focusses on and assesses the efforts of countries to respond to this growing challenge of long-term unemployment. Three themes predominate. The first theme is the need for a broad range of measures to help people to overcome the obstacles they can face in accessing employment. In line with the 2008 European Commission Recommendation on active inclusion, these measures must encompass three main elements: adequate income benefits, effective and efficient social services and good quality active labour market programmes. The second theme is that effective coordination between employment, social assistance and social services is vital to ensure a holistic and integrated response to the variety and complexity of the needs of many of the long-term unemployed. The third theme is that an individualised and tailored approach is necessary to effectively address the many different combinations of problems and challenges that people experiencing long-term unemployment can face.

In preparing their reports, ESPN experts assessed these three key aspects of their countries' performances in supporting the long-term unemployed. Each of these aspects is explored in more detail in the body of this report. Their overall assessment is summarised in the following text and in the box below[7]. A more elaborated version of this box, which also identifies the key challenges facing each country under each area, is to be found in Annex 1.

[6] See Eurostat LFS Adjusted Series as of 26th June 2015. Available at: http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/submitViewTableAction.do.

[7] For the list of official countries' abbreviations, see Annex 3.

Policy areas		Very good	Medium	Weak
Effectiveness of benefits and services supporting the long-term unemployed:	*INCOME BENEFITS*	CY LI IS NL	AT CH CZ DK FI FR IE IT LU MT NO RS SI SE	BE BG DE EE EL ES HR HU LT LV MK PL PT RO SK TR UK
	SOCIAL SERVICES	IS LU NO NL SE	AT BE BG CH CY DK FI IE LI LT MT PL PT SI	CZ DE EE EL ES FR HR HU IT LV MK RO RS SK TR UK
	ACTIVATION SERVICES	AT HU[8] IS LU MT NO	BE CH CY CZ FI DE DK EE IE LI LV PL SE UK	BG EL ES FR HR IT LT MK NL PT RO RS SI SK TR
Coordination between employment, social assistance and social services		LI NO SI	AT BE BG CY DE DK EE ES IS FI FR IE LU LV MK MT NL RO SK	CH CZ EL HR HU IT LT PL PT RS SE TR UK
Extent of individualised support		IS LI NL	AT BE BG CH DE DK EE FI FR HU IE LT LU LV MT NO PL PT RS SE SI SK UK	CY CZ EL ES HR IT MK RO TR

Benefits and social services

In many European countries, the long-term unemployed have exhausted their rights to contributory-based unemployment allowances and have to apply for non-contributory-based social assistance benefits. These benefits can be inadequate in terms of levels, and recipients may become poor and socially excluded. The transition from unemployment allowances to social assistance benefits can result in some falling through the gap: not all those who should access them are eligible, while some that are eligible are not aware of the social assistance benefits available ("non-take-up"). At the same time, long-term unemployed usually keep access to some universal benefits in kind (such as healthcare, education, childcare facilities services) and also may apply for some other important help (housing benefit support, indebtedness counselling, etc.).

In four of the 35 countries studied (CY, LI, IS, NL), experts rate the effectiveness of income benefits supporting the long-term unemployed as very good. In 14 countries (AT, CH, CZ, DK, FI, FR, IE, IT, LU, MT, NO, RS, SI, SE), the support is considered to be of medium effectiveness whereas in 17 countries (BE, BG, DE, EE, EL, ES, HR, HU, LT, LV, MK, PL, PT, RO, SK, TR, UK) it is seen as very weak.

[8] According to the Hungarian ESPN expert, participation in public works counts (legally, statistically) as employment in HU, and as a person will be denied all support if he/she does not accept a public work opportunity offered, people generally accept it and become "employed" (at two thirds of the minimum wage). However, studies show that employment in the public works scheme does not effectively increase the chances of finding a job in the primary labour market. So, if public work is very effective in turning long-term unemployed into "employees" on a massive scale, it is however not the kind of employment people really need. For more on this scheme, see "ESPN Flash Report. Social Policies in Brief", June 2015, available at:

http://ec.europa.eu/social/keyDocuments.jsp?advSearchKey=ESPNFlash&mode=advancedSubmit&langId=en&policyArea=&type=0&country=0&year=0.

In considering the key issues that countries need to address to improve the effectiveness of income benefits in supporting the long-term unemployed, experts identify nine key areas for action. By far the biggest of these issues is the need to address the inadequacy of benefits and their failure to prevent poverty (identified by 22 ESPN experts). The next gaps they most frequently mention relate to low benefit coverage (8) and inadequate incentives to take up employment (7). Other issues they highlight include insufficient tailoring of benefits to the needs of the long-term unemployed (5); problems caused by conditionality (4); problems with the interface/links between insurance and assistance benefits (4); data, information and research gaps (3); too short duration of benefits (3); and weak links with other measures (2).

As regards the effectiveness of social services in supporting the long-term unemployed, in five countries (IS, LU, NO, NL, SE) experts consider that it is very good. In a further 14 (AT, BE, BG, CH, CY, DK, FI, IE, LI, LT, MT, PL, PT, SI) the services are considered to be of medium effectiveness while in 16 (CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, FR, HR, HU, IT, LV, MK, RO, RS, SK, TR, UK) they are rated as poor.

The key issues that experts most often highlight as needing to be addressed in relation to the effectiveness of social services for the long-term unemployed are, first, the failure of services to reach the most disadvantaged and to sufficiently target the long-term unemployed (identified by 11 experts) and, secondly, the lack of coordination or weak links between services (8). Another key area identified is the inadequate provision of social services leading to the lack of or very limited provision of services which are understaffed and overcrowded (5) or services whose provision varies greatly on a geographic basis (4). Linked to this is a concern with services being of poor quality, too bureaucratic, covering too narrow a range of issues and depending on inadequately trained and supported staff (5). Data and information limitations are also mentioned as a key issue by a few experts (2).

Activation services

Although some specific programmes aimed at putting the long-term unemployed back to work exist in certain countries, activation and active labour market policies (ALMP) and resources are mainly concentrated on unemployed persons with shorter spells of unemployment. Certain countries have specific activation programmes dedicated to the activation of the long-term unemployed such as individual action plans, (re)training, counselling in specific programmes (such as “Reativar” in Portugal, “Hotels industry” in Cyprus, “Job and Development Guarantee” in Sweden, etc.). Long-term unemployed people are sometimes considered as a specific group, or as a prominent segment of targeted vulnerable groups. The receipt of social assistance benefits is almost always conditional upon job-search and being available to take up work, although implementation of this varies in practice. In several countries, access to social assistance benefits is made conditional on the long-term unemployed undertaking public or community work. In some countries, the older unemployed may be able to receive unemployment benefits for longer periods and be subject to less stringent criteria of eligibility, etc. Besides such traditional bridges between the end of professional activity and the pension eligibility, which offer compensation instead of addressing the particular demand side problems in late-career labour markets, population ageing is motivating a number of countries to develop specific activation measures aimed at encouraging and enabling older workers to remain in or re-enter the labour market.

Overall as regards the effectiveness of activation services supporting the long-term unemployed, experts in six countries (AT, HU, IS, LU, MT, NO) consider that activation services are very good. In a further 14 countries (BE, CH, CY, CZ, FI, DE, DK, EE, IE, LI, LV, PL, SE, UK), they are considered to be of medium effectiveness. However, in another 15 countries (BG, EL, ES, FR, HR, IT, LT, MK, NL, PT, RO, RS, SI, SK, TR) they are rated as weak.

The seven challenges which, according to ESPN experts, countries need to address in order to improve the effectiveness of activation services for the long-term unemployed are: the poor quality and range of services available (identified by 12 experts); the lack of activation services which are sufficiently tailored to the needs of the long-term

unemployed (11); the low coverage of activation services and the low proportions of long-term unemployed benefitting from services (9); the failure to sufficiently target people at highest risk amongst the long-term unemployed (7); the lack of coordination between measures and actors (5); the insufficient focus put on labour market/ employers and/or the too strong focus on public work (4); and problems arising from conditionality (3).

Coordination between services

The fragmentation found in most countries for historical reasons, especially between the institutions and offices which implement and manage the employment measures, the social services and income benefits is quite systematically criticised by ESPN national experts. Simultaneously, new models of organisation are growing, especially through, on the one hand, decentralisation and political and/or administrative decentralisation processes and, on the other hand, varying degrees of privatisation of employment and social services provision. This process is not new and started in the 1980s. In fact, it aims at the modernisation of social protection in general, which targets new categories of the population, especially poor and excluded people, and works towards a more integrated services and benefits methodology.

Within this trend, the one-stop shop approach appears as a new key instrument of this recalibration which, a priori, seems to be largely more efficient than the previous general organisations of social protection. The objective of this approach is to gather a lot of the dispersed activities resulting from various specialised organisations into one coherent and simple decision-making chain with a single point of contact and thus to provide a more consistent set of services and benefits according to the needs of the claimant. However, we also see some limits to its extension and functioning: the multilevel governance and the different levels of decision making, the transfer of fragmentation within the new organisations, the risk of conflict in the merging process, and the risk of new types of inequalities.

Overall, experts in only three countries (LI, NO, SI) consider that the coordination between employment, social assistance and social services is very good. In 19 countries (AT, BE, BG, CY, DE, DK, EE, ES, IS, FI, FR, IE, LU, LV, MK, MT, NL, RO, SK), it is considered to be of medium effectiveness. However, in 13 countries (CH, CZ, EL, HR, HU, IT, LT, PL, PT, RS, SE, TR, UK) it is considered weak.

The two key barriers that experts identify to effective coordination between employment, social assistance and social services are, first, information gaps and lack of common data bases (identified by 10 experts) and, secondly, the need to improve and enhance procedures for cooperation between agencies (9). The next two most frequently identified issues that need to be addressed include administrative fragmentation and legal barriers to cooperation (8) and the lack of or very limited and sporadic attempts at formal coordination (7). Other issues that experts mention include: the ad hoc and discretionary nature of much cooperation and the lack of a clear model or principles to underpin cooperation (5); the lack of time, resources or staff capacity to coordinate (5); and the need for more one-stop shop approaches (5).

Individualised support

There is a fairly widespread recognition that the long-term unemployed need more individualised support tailored to meeting their needs than those who are closer to the labour market. However, the extent to which this is implemented in practice varies considerably across and within Member States. A small group of countries provide very well developed and personalised services and a significant number have some elements of individual support but also significant gaps to address in order to improve the effectiveness of their services. About a quarter of countries are still very weak in this regard. Effective coordination between employment services, social assistance authorities and social services is necessary to ensure measures are tailored to individual needs. One-stop shops or a single point of contact can help in this regard, including through using a “plan” or “contract” to bring together different measures. Overall, countries that utilise both individual action plans focussed on activation measures and integration contracts that address the complex social and health problems that can

affect the long-term unemployed are more likely to develop effective individualised support. However, it is important that such plans are developed in a flexible manner in conjunction with the unemployed person and are not just a standardised set of measures applied across the board and imposing a series of conditions trying to force the unemployed into unsuitable or poorly paid jobs. Developing effective coordination between action plans and integration contracts so they are mutually reinforcing is also important. This will mean, in particular, ensuring that there can be a smooth transition when someone moves from an activation to an integration contract.

In relation to the extent of individualised support only three countries (IS, LI, NL) are considered by the experts to have very good individualised support. In a further 23 countries (AT, BE, BG, CH, DE, DK, EE, FI, FR, HU, IE, LT, LU, LV, MT, NO, PL, PT, RS, SE, SI, SK, UK), it is considered to be of medium effectiveness. However, in nine countries (CY, CZ, EL, ES, HR, IT, MK, RO, TR) this support is rated as weak.

In addition to a weaker priority for fighting long-term unemployment compared to more recent unemployment as overall unemployment increases, the four most common barriers to increasing the extent of individualised support for the long-term unemployed which are identified by experts are: the insufficient emphasis on tailoring support to the needs of the long-term unemployed and the narrow approach to meeting their needs which focus exclusively on employment activation (identified as a priority by 13 experts); the lack of administrative and staffing capacity resulting from low front-line staffing levels and/or little of the training necessary to provide quality support (13); the general lack of or wide variation in the availability of support services, especially for those most at risk (9); the lack of integration contracts (4); and various employment barriers (2).

Overall conclusion

Given the high and increasing level of long-term unemployment in the EU, it is clear from the reports of ESPN national independent experts that, in many countries, the current response is not adequate to the scale of the problem and indeed often inappropriate. The range and extent of supply side policies and programmes in place are generally too limited and too narrowly focussed. Also, there is often insufficient focus on the demand side and on creating enough sustainable and good quality jobs which are accessible to the long-term unemployed. Considerable investment is needed in improving income benefits, developing effective and accessible social services and increasing the quality of activation services and programmes. Much more needs to be done to develop coordinated and integrated responses and to ensure personalised support tailored to the needs of the individual. On a more positive note, some countries and some regional/local authorities have developed effective systems of support and there is much good practice that can be drawn on to design and implement better policies and programmes in all countries.

Recommendations

If effective and integrated support for the long-term unemployed is to be ensured and if the long-term unemployed are to be part of a recovering European economy and not be left behind, it will require a significant increase in policy effort and in the amount of resources devoted to this. Increased emphasis on integrated support for the long-term unemployed will not be successful if it is not also matched by greater efforts by employers and governments to create good quality and sustainable jobs and by improved opportunities and support for the long-term unemployed to fill them.

In the light of this and taking into account the findings of the present Synthesis Report, the following recommendations are made to contribute to ensuring a successful process. We want to emphasise that these recommendations only look at the supply side. Within a context of underemployment, our recommendations suggest ways of improving the job prospects of the long-term unemployed and also ensuring that those long-term unemployed who do not succeed in moving into employment or who cannot work can live a decent life together with the other members of his/her household.

EU level recommendations

- The EU's new €315 billion Investment Plan, expected "to get Europe growing again and get more people back to work" (European Commission), should give a high priority to investing in strong social and employment policies to tackle unemployment and these policies should be intensified as the period of unemployment increases. Any investments should be proofed for the contribution they are making to unemployment in general and long-term unemployment in particular.
- At the heart of the EU's future proposals for a Council Recommendation on the integration in the labour market of the long-term unemployed should be an emphasis on the importance of an active inclusion approach which is based on a balanced and integrated combination of its three constituent pillars (adequate income support, inclusive labour markets and access to quality services) in line with the 2008 European Commission Recommendation.
- Given the growing evidence (including in this report) that in many countries income benefits are inadequate to support the long-term unemployed and the other members of his/her household and to keep them out of poverty, the European Commission should intensify its guidance and complementary support to Member States on modernising social protection schemes in ways that will ensure adequate levels of income support. In particular, it should work to get agreement on criteria and methodologies (such as reference budgets) for establishing adequate minimum income schemes in all countries. Options for a European unemployment allowance, a European minimum income and a European minimum wage should be further explored.
- In view of the Europe 2020 strategy's priorities on employment and social inclusion and the 2013 European Commission "Social Investment Package", and in the context of the European Semester, the European Council and the European Commission should prioritise monitoring and commenting on Member States' policies on long-term unemployment. Country Specific Recommendations (CSRs) should be developed for those countries with high levels of long-term unemployment or whose support policies in this area are lagging behind. CSRs should emphasise the importance of an integrated active inclusion approach.
- The European Commission should encourage Member States to make full use of the European Social Fund (ESF) to develop the necessary services and personalised programmes of support for the long-term unemployed, giving particular attention to groups at higher risk such as older workers, persons with disabilities, immigrants and the Roma. It should also encourage Member States to regularly monitor and evaluate the use of ESF resources to support the LTU.
- There should be increased documentation and case-studies highlighting good practice in developing integrated support for the long-term unemployed. This could be an important section of the Knowledge Bank being developed by the European Commission and a key topic for the EU Peer Reviews programme.[9]
- The European Commission should encourage further studies, evaluations and transnational exchanges of learning and good practice on the circumstances that make one-stop shop and/or single-point-of-contact approaches most appropriate and the types of internal organisational arrangements, policy competencies and expertise necessary to make them effective.[10]

[9] The 2015 report for the European Commission by the Budapest Institute, *Literature review and identification of best practices on integrated social service delivery*, is a good example of documenting good practice in the development of integrated services. Available at:

http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=2197&furtherNews=yes.

[10] In this respect, the recent OECD report *Integrating Social Services for Vulnerable Groups: Bridging sectors for better service delivery* (OECD, Paris, 2015) highlights the value of documenting and sharing

- The European Commission should continue to consult regularly with stakeholders involving and working with the long-term unemployed in the development, implementation and monitoring of policies that affect them.

National and sub-national level recommendations

- All countries at both national and sub-national levels should, within their overall policies to support the unemployed, develop a set of specific strategies to prevent and tackle long-term unemployment for the various groups affected.
- All countries should not only develop individual action plans covering activation measures but also personalised integration contracts addressing social and health needs of those facing complex obstacles to accessing the labour market and ensure smooth transitions for those moving between plans; alternatively, they could develop integrated plans that cover both. The combined effect of these plans should be to ensure that good quality activation measures are available for all long-term unemployed and complemented by effective access to high quality services and to adequate income support (i.e. an active inclusion approach).
- In modernising their social protection systems in relation to the long-term unemployed, countries should give a top priority to ensuring their adequacy. They should also focus on tapering the withdrawal of income support and the introduction of payment of taxes progressively, in ways which ease the individual's transition from welfare into work and embeds financial incentives into the system.
- Within the complexity of their national social protection organisation, countries should be encouraged to analyse where and how one-stop shop schemes with single points of contact are most efficient. What territorial level? What types of competencies? What types of services? What type of decision power? What type of control of its quality and efficiency?
- Countries should invest in the employment, training and support of front-line staff to ensure their capacity to work with the long-term unemployed in developing effective and comprehensive action plans and integration contracts.
- Arrangements should be put in place to ensure close coordination between all employment and social services to ensure that long-term unemployed receive the support tailored to their needs, and that no unemployed person falls through the gaps when transitioning between institutional authorities. This should be supported by commonly accessible databases or, failing that, effective information exchanges between all the employment and social services concerned. This should be organised in a way that ensures that the right to privacy of the unemployed is protected.
- Countries should ensure that effective mechanisms are in place for consulting with the unemployed and the organisations that work with them on the development, implementation and monitoring of policies to support the long-term unemployed.
- Countries should put more emphasis on developing support and opportunities that help bring people back to work than on excessive conditionality and penalties. While some conditions are an important complement to activation measures, they must be reasonable and they need to be balanced by flexibility to allow personal circumstances to be taken into account.
- Countries that have not already done so should develop their data collection and databases to ensure that they can better know the number and categories of

experience across countries. Also relevant is the aforementioned 2015 report by the Budapest Institute ("Literature review and identification of best practices on integrated social service delivery").

long-term unemployed who are benefitting from services and benefits and can more effectively monitor emerging trends and needs.

1 Benefits and services supporting the long-term unemployed

The increasing duration of periods of unemployment has cumulative socio-economic consequences: a growing risk of poverty, social exclusion and deprivation, a higher risk of bad health and disability and declining human and social capital.

For several decades, social and employment services have been transformed and gradually moved from universalistic objectives to more targeting towards socially disadvantaged people; and this trend has been further exacerbated by the long economic recession in Europe. As a result, each country has implemented numerous and diversified policies, in which we can distinguish two main types of benefits: cash benefits and allowances which are directly provided to fight against poverty and social exclusion on the one hand, and a wide range of benefits in kind which focus on enabling support and social re-integration (social services) and professional re-integration (mainly activation services).

1.1 Long-term unemployment and income benefits

Everywhere, income benefits for the unemployed comprise two main types of allowance: unemployment benefits or, more precisely, contributory-based unemployment benefits (for people who were previously employed) and then, once their right to unemployment benefits is exhausted, social assistance cash benefits (if the household of the unemployed is eligible). Unemployment benefits are defined on the basis of individual criteria and rights derived from the worker's status, while social assistance income schemes are defined by the needs and social rights of the household. The long-term unemployed are at the cross-roads of the two types of benefits, which also means a transition from the status of a socially insured individual possessing specific earned rights, to a status of a socially assisted person or household. This transition from unemployment allowances to social assistance benefits can result in some falling through the gap: not all those who should access them are eligible, while some that are eligible are not aware of the social assistance benefits available ("non-take-up").

In a large group of countries, the long-term unemployed are exclusively recipients of social assistance benefits as a replacement for unemployment benefits (e.g. BG, CY, CZ, EE, EL, HU, IE, LT, LU, LV, MT, PL, RO, SK, UK). In the other countries, the duration of receipt of unemployment benefits is longer than 12 months and the group of long-term unemployed therefore includes beneficiaries receiving either unemployment or social assistance benefits. While contributory unemployment benefits can keep workers out of poverty for a short time at the beginning of the unemployment period, as this period increases, the level of these benefits usually decreases and, after one or two years, eligibility is generally exhausted (Belgium is an exception). In more than one third of the 35 countries covered by the ESPN, the long-term unemployed cannot legally receive a contributory-based unemployment benefit: BG, CZ, EE, EL, LT, LU, NO (for low paid workers), PL, RO, TR, UK. Furthermore, the tapered schemes gradually reduce the amount of the allowance in such a manner that it is not sufficient to live on (e.g. BE, IT). So, when the period of unemployment is one year or longer without any other sources of income, the probability of poverty in these countries is very high.

While few countries have conceived of specific unemployment allowances for the long-term unemployed, most long-term unemployed are covered by social assistance schemes due to their high risk of poverty and social exclusion. Within this category, we find for instance the Active Integration Income (RAI), the Professional Requalification Programme (PREPARA) and the Employment Activation Programme (PAE) in Spain, the "Labour Market Subsidy" in Finland (entitlement after another basic unemployment benefit) and the "Job seeker's" allowance in Ireland and the UK. Once rights to contributory-based unemployment benefits are exhausted, the long-term unemployed in poverty can usually access some type of long-term unemployed (LTU) targeted or means-tested schemes. Across Europe there is a wide range of such categorical minimum incomes and unemployment social assistance allowances: for example a special solidarity allowance (ASS) in France; long-term unemployment assistance in Greece (in the absence of a minimum income scheme in the country); an experimental supplementary unemployment assistance in Italy (ASDI, Assegno di disoccupazione;

only for 2015); unemployment assistance benefits in Portugal; a series of benefits in Spain (Unemployment Subsidy, Agrarian Subsidies, as well as RAI, PREPARA and PAE programmes).

When other allowances are very low or non-existent, the most frequent type of cash benefit for the long-term unemployed (and other categories) is the guaranteed minimum income scheme (GMI), which is always a non-contributory means-tested allowance and is the last safety net of social protection in nearly all countries. This social policy to help the poorest has been extended everywhere in Europe, except in a few countries (e.g. Greece, Italy and Turkey). Also, while Hungary has a scheme at national level, it is considered to have very restricted eligibility and low coverage of people in need, due to high conditionality and discretionary decisions on granting the assistance[11].

Almost all minimum income schemes are conditional upon job search and readiness to work. Within this transition from unemployment benefits to minimum income schemes, "work" and "jobs" play a key role: "job first" is a high priority in the delivery of social benefits and leads to opposite usages of minimum allowance at people's entry into and exit from it. At the entrance, job search is a strong eligibility rule for receiving an assistance allowance or for losing it when the recipient does not fulfil the job search requirements. At the moment of exit from unemployment, the issue is how such benefits can help to ease the transition back to the labour market – even more so when the person concerned has been unemployed for a long time. Some countries apply a negative income tax scheme (NIT rate less than 100 percent), which means that the unemployment benefit decreases more slowly than the salary increases and that the total net income then increases. Such a measure smooths the transition from unemployment to employment and reduces the risk of being caught in an unemployment or poverty trap.

Besides unemployment benefits or minimum income support, the unemployed may receive other social benefits from the national social security systems (healthcare, family allowances) as well as housing benefits (e.g. AT, CY, CZ, DE, FI, IE, IS, IT, LV, MT, NL, NO, RO, RS, UK). In a number of countries, the long-term unemployed may be eligible for assistance (in some cases from national level and in some from regional or local levels) for education costs (e.g. IE [Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance], IT, LT, LV). They may also receive allowances for children's participation in early childhood care and education (ECEC) (e.g. DE, IT, LU, MK [conditional cash transfer], NO [for unemployed single parents]). At the local level, they can receive a wide variety of benefits, such as remission of municipal taxes (e.g. CY, IT, NL) and extra financial support (e.g. LU, TR). (See also Section 1.3.) Belgium is an interesting example of targeted support linked to LTU status. As well as maintaining their rights to health care the long-term unemployed may benefit from cheaper healthcare depending on their household income and they get enhanced family allowances. There is also reimbursement of childcare costs for long-term unemployed engaging in training. However, housing allowances are very scarce in Belgium.

Finally, as regards the effectiveness of income benefits supporting the long-term unemployed in four of the 35 countries studied (CY, LI, IS, NL) experts rate it as very good. In 14 countries (AT, CH, CZ, DK, FI, FR, IE, IT, LU, MT, NO, RS, SI, SE), the support is considered to be of medium effectiveness whereas in 17 countries (BE, BG, DE, EE, EL, ES, HR, HU, LT, LV, MK, PL, PT, RO, SK, TR, UK) it is seen as very weak. In considering the key issues that countries need to address to improve the effectiveness of income benefits in supporting the long-term unemployed, experts identify nine key areas for action which are described in Annex 1. By far the biggest of these issues is the need to address the inadequacy of benefits and their failure to prevent poverty (identified by 22 ESPN experts).

[11] European Minimum Income Network (2013), *Analysis of Minimum Income Schemes in 5 Selected EU Member States - Synthesis Report*.

1.2 Long-term unemployment and activation

The types of benefits that are available to the long-term unemployed (i.e. only social assistance, or also unemployment benefits) have important repercussions for the activation support that is being provided to them. In nearly all countries, most individuals must register with the Public Employment Services (PES) as a condition for receiving social assistance benefits. Long-term unemployed receiving social assistance benefits must comply with job seeking and activation requirements, as well as other requirements regarding social assistance entitlements. Non-compliance results in sanctions ranging from temporary suspension of the social assistance benefit to temporary or permanent exclusion from the scheme. Moreover, access to social assistance benefits in many countries is made conditional on the performance of public or community work (e.g. CZ, EE, HR, HU, LT, LU, LV, MK, NL, RO, RS, SK).

The activation support provided specifically to persons experiencing long-term unemployment appears limited across the 35 countries analysed by ESPN experts. Although some specific programmes aimed at putting the long-term unemployed back to work exist in certain countries, active labour market policies (ALMP) and specifically activation measures and resources are mainly concentrated on unemployed persons of younger working age with shorter spells of unemployment. These persons are usually easier to reintegrate into the labour market, and are often the main target group for activation by the PES. Many experts point out that those who have been unemployed for long periods of time are increasingly difficult to activate in the framework of the standard labour market. They often need more dedicated, and also more expensive, methods of activation (notably access to social services and individualised approaches; see Sections 1.3 and 3) to address complex needs or obstacles to the labour market. Unsurprisingly then, many experts highlight activation services for the long-term unemployed that are considered as very weak (e.g. BG, EL, ES, FR, HR, IT, LT, MK, NL, PT, RO, SK, RS, TR). In a small group of countries by contrast, these activation services are assessed as being more effective in supporting the long-term unemployed back into employment (e.g. AT, FI, HU [but not so much into the primary labour market], IS, MT).

Conditionality requirements can often make unemployment benefits more closely tied to activation. At the same time, it may depend on which authority is delivering the unemployment allowances or social assistance benefits and at which level as to how much activation is offered or how coordinated this is with the benefit receipt.

Public employment services (PES), organised at national or sub-national levels are major actors in the activation policies in all countries. Long-term unemployed have access through them to the general range of activation instruments (individual action plans, (re)training, counselling, etc.) and other ALMP policies such as wage subsidies for employers. The organisation, extent, coverage and quality of the standard activation measures vary a great deal between countries, depending on national arrangements. While in a group of countries the PES remains the main actor in the activation process for the long-term unemployed (e.g. BG, CZ, EL, ES, FR, HU, IE, MT, PL), in many countries both PES and social assistance institutions play a key role in their activation (e.g. AT, BE, CH, CY, DE, DK, FI, HR, IS, LT, LU, LV, NL, PT, RO, RS, SE, SI, SK).

Certain national experts mention the existence of specific activation programmes dedicated to the long-term unemployed. They are sometimes considered as a specific group, or as a prominent segment of targeted vulnerable groups such as low educated/ skilled, women, lone parents, young or old, migrant background and Roma. Examples of activation programmes specifically targeted at the long-term unemployed include “Reativar” in Portugal, “Hotels industry” in Cyprus, “Activa Win-Win” in Belgium, “Support for the Employment of Young People, Women and LTU” in Macedonia, “Job and Development Guarantee” in Sweden, the “Job Protection Action Plan” (Munkahelyvédelmi Akcióterv) in Hungary, the “Contratto di Ricollocazione” in Italy, the RAI, PREPARA or PAE programmes in Spain, the “Qualification Programme” in Norway and the Work Programme in UK.

In various countries, participation in activation measures, and compliance with activation obligations, is encouraged by the possibility of topping up social assistance

benefits with additional income. This income is provided through specific complementary allowances for participation in activation measures (e.g. AT, FI, PT, SE, SK) or through temporary possibilities to combine wages from a new employment with income benefits to increase the financial incentive to enter employment (e.g. FR, LT, LU, MT, NL, SK, UK) or through replacement of means-tested social assistance benefits with non-means-tested social security benefits (NO).

Several experts (e.g. AT, BG, BE, DE, EL, ES, FI, HR, LT, PT, RO, MK, RS, TR) are, however, dubious about the actual efficiency of the activation support, notably for long-term unemployed social assistance recipients. They express two main concerns. First, the lack of financial and human resources allocated to the implementation of programmes, staff shortages and work and responsibility overloads. Secondly, the difficulty of the task and low levels of sustainable integration of the long-term unemployed into the labour market on completion of these programmes. (For a more detailed assessment of the effectiveness of activation services supporting the long-term unemployed, see Annex 1).

1.3 Long-term unemployment and social services

As has been underlined in the report on Social Investment in Europe prepared by the ESPN[12], the activation services which are implemented within ALMPs are very often not sufficient to integrate the long-term unemployed into the labour market. They need to be complemented by, associated with or embedded into a broader field of social benefits and social services. For example: free access to healthcare and to services for fighting addictions may help people to regain good health; access to childcare for young adults is important for allowing parents to job search and attend activation courses (aside from child development considerations which are also of major importance); services for older workers who have their older relatives in charge may avoid them being obliged to leave the labour market; etc. All these services contribute to the recovery of capabilities and the autonomy of persons and facilitate their entrance or re-entrance into the labour market; they also contribute to helping to ensure they enjoy a stable living environment.

Many ESPN national experts highlight the lack of specific long-term unemployment social services. People receive social services mainly because they are “socially excluded” (ES) and they may apply for help in meeting current basic needs (IE). Among the social services provided to the long-term unemployed, we may distinguish between “universal” services or benefits in kind and more targeted provisions. Universal services mean that all people have free or very cheap access to them; this is mainly the case for healthcare. When there is a co-payment, public authorities and governments in a number of countries have created mechanisms for exemption or reimbursement for those with low-incomes (e.g. AT, CZ, FR, IE, IS, LU, RS).

Other social services are conceived as supplementary benefits targeted at those with low incomes to ensure such households can access them. Many EU countries provide affordable access to childcare – for example in AT (exemptions from compulsory co-payment); CY, CZ and SK (exemption from enrolment fees for pre-school facilities); DK, IS and NO (highly subsidised); FR, IE, IT, LU and MK (exemptions for paying the costs of public kindergartens).[13] In Italy, all the unemployed (including the long-term unemployed) are eligible for benefits provided to low-income households through means-testing mechanisms (i.e. ISEE, the index of equivalised economic situation). This includes, for example, exemption from costs or reduction in fees on health services, crèches and childcare facilities, textbooks, school and university, home rent, electricity,

[12] Social Investment in Europe – A Study of National Policies’, ESPN report prepared by D. Bouget, H. Frazer, E. Marlier, S. Sabato and B. Vanhercke (April 2015). Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=13805&langId=en.

[13] The provision of good quality, accessible and affordable early childhood education and care (ECEC), as well as being essential for the development and well-being of children, is an important factor in enabling parents, especially those at risk of long-term unemployment, to access employment. More about the provision of ECEC in the 35 countries in this study can be found in the aforementioned ESPN Synthesis Report on social investment.

gas and telephone, public transport and school buses as well as municipal taxation (including urban domestic waste collection).

Access to housing is also an important part of providing a stable living environment for persons experiencing long-term unemployment. Several countries, besides a potential cash benefit (see Section 1.1), provide some further help: homeless services (e.g. AT), housing mediation (e.g. BE), rent guarantee to owners (e.g. FR), support for renting a flat (e.g. HU [but only very few people benefit from this support]).

There are a variety of other benefits and/or services available in EU countries whose aim is to help people's job prospects through the recovery and improvement of their personal capabilities. For instance: indebtedness counselling services (e.g. AT, BE, DE, EE), support with psychological difficulties and addictions (e.g. AT, BE, CY, DE, EE, LV, NL, PL), language courses for those with national language difficulties (AT, LI, LU), rehabilitation for those with disabilities (AT, IS, LV, MK, PL), specialised support for refugees (PL).

Those supplementary social services are provided by regional and local actors, welfare offices or agencies in municipalities (e.g. AT, BE, CZ, DE, DK, EE, HU, IS, NL, PL) as well as by the public employment services (e.g. BE). Sometimes, the services are provided by third sector enterprises and companies.

ESPN national experts underline some concerns about the daily management of those social services. Some point out the lack, the underdevelopment or the limited supply of social services (PL, EL, TR), or their marginal effect (MK).

With respect to demand, the French experts note the well-known difficulty of managing waiting lists (e.g. through positive or negative discrimination towards the long-term unemployed).

Beside constraints on the supply of social services, many experts point to the issue of discretionary power of office staff. This power can be positive, where this leads to the officers helping the claimant more efficiently and with personalised support. It can be negative when it is linked to a shortage or rationing of services (too many cases per counsellor; not enough time to solve the individual problems of beneficiaries) or when collective values in society as to who is "deserving", which can affect everybody and influence decisions (e.g. attitudes towards immigrants, people with an addiction, or Roma, etc.). Examples of where problems with the use of discretion arise which are highlighted by experts include: IE (a strong top-down approach); LT, LU, PT (a lack of overall framework for tailoring the support); RO, SE (too many differences in approach between care-workers and the PES); TR (bias against "able bodied" individuals).

As regards the effectiveness of social services in supporting the long-term unemployed, in only five countries (IS, LU, NO, NL, SE) experts consider that it is very good. In 14 countries (AT, BE, BG, CH, CY, DK, FI, IE, LI, LT, MT, PL, PT, SI), the services are considered to be of medium effectiveness while in 16 (CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, FR, HR, HU, IT, LV, MK, RO, RS, SK, TR, UK) they are rated as poor. The key issues that experts most often highlight as needing to be addressed in this context relation to the effectiveness of social services for the long-term unemployed are, first, the failure of services to reach the most disadvantaged and to sufficiently target the long-term unemployed and, secondly, the lack of coordination or weak links between services (see Annex 1).

1.4 Long-term unemployment and older cohorts

Long-term unemployment is more frequent within the age range of 45+. However, specific employment policies or social policies targeted at older employees are not to be found everywhere in Europe. More than one third of the 35 countries analysed in the present Synthesis Report apply the same policy instruments to fight short- or long-term unemployment whatever the age of the unemployed person: the Nordic countries (DK, IS, NO, SE), as well as CH, CY, EL, IT, LI, LV, MK, SK, UK,TR.

Within the group of countries which have implemented policies targeted at the older unemployed, there are two exclusive policies. Briefly speaking, some countries provide

certain extra income benefits and others have rather developed specific activities to keep older employees at work.

A number of Member States fail to ensure access to an effective combination of activation measures, adequate income support and services for older long-term unemployed (in the spirit of the aforementioned 2008 EU Recommendation on active inclusion). Often the emphasis still tends to be on forms of income support that can bridge the distance to pension eligibility. Many countries provide cash benefit advantages such as a longer allowance period (e.g. AT, CZ, DE, EE, ES, FI, FR, HR, LU, NL, PL, SI, PT, RS) or pre-retirement pensions (LT), but only a few connect these to activation measures. Sometimes the eligibility criteria are relaxed (e.g. DE, EE, IE, PT): for example, the exemption of the mandatory take-up of activation measures in Ireland and in Germany for unemployed aged over 58. The objective of these measures is essentially to provide an allowance until retirement age.

Nonetheless, a rising number of countries are developing activation measures specifically aimed at encouraging older workers to remain in or re-enter the labour market. For example: Austria (specific Active Labour Market Policies [ALMPs] programmes), Bulgaria (a development scheme co-funded by ESF), Germany (the Federal programme “Perspektive50plus” covers the funding of local agreements to provide specific activation and/or integration support for unemployed aged 50+), Luxembourg (Fit4 relancer ma carrière), etc. One common measure is to create incentives (especially subsidised work) for employers to recruit or keep older workers (e.g. AT, BE, EE, EL, FR, HU, IT, LT, LU, MT, NL, RO, RS).

Recently, Poland has developed a range of options which include allowances (longer unemployment benefit, a flat rate pre-retirement benefit for workers laid off due to company reasons, i.e. bankruptcy) and activation services: a wage subsidy paid to the employer, a longer participation in the intervention works (i.e. employment for 6-18 months or longer, subsidised by the employment offices) and a priority in accessing labour activation programmes.

2 Long-term unemployment: coordination between services towards a one-stop shop approach

One legacy of welfare states is a very complex set of institutions, organisations and offices, which mirrors the myriad of social benefits. But since the 1980s, the increase in unemployment, poverty and social exclusion has created new risks and highlighted the limits, drawbacks and inadequacy of this institutional specialisation within social welfare systems. Even today, ESPN national experts generally stress the high number of actors, the dispersion of their competencies which engenders overlapping, the separation between the different institutions responsible for social policies… which lead to inefficiencies as well as gaps in the provision of cash benefits and services, and (directly related to this) non-take-up. The complexity and gaps lead numerous long-term unemployed not to make contact with social assistance once their unemployment benefit ends.

In front of all these well-known drawbacks, some main institutional and organisational reforms have gradually been implemented: the privatisation of the delivery of in-kind benefits for increasing efficiency, the decentralisation of public decisions and benefit provision for improving the quality of the response to needs, and a series of institutional coordination reforms for simplifying the system[14].

Within this process of reforms, the concept of "one-stop shop" and/or single point of contact have recently emerged as a new step and a new instrument of governance in a historical process of institutional reforms in the domain of social policies. Yet, as Minas says (2014) "the relevance of one-stop shops from a labour market perspective has so far been ignored"[15]. So, the national experts describe a very wide range of institutional arrangements, from an absence of coordination (e.g. EL, TR) to the most integrated models now often referred to as "one-stop shops" (e.g. DK, IS, NL, NO, SE). However, beyond this schematic summary, we note that:

- even within highly fragmented systems, some embryonic coordination exists, especially at the local level;
- a process of coordination occurs where reforms gradually focus on one sole objective and political priority: employment of the unemployed;
- outsourcing certain services is increasing; following the principles of a quasi-market, and the principal agent models which are illustrated mainly by the UK, more and more countries are shifting the delivery of services to private organisations (NGOs and sometimes commercial companies).

Effective coordination between employment services, social assistance authorities and social services is highly relevant in easing the transition from unemployment allowances to social assistance benefits (see Section 1.1). It is also important as it increases the possibility to tailor measures and to develop holistic plans which bring together a package of different measures which respond to a person's individual needs (see Section 3 for more on the importance of individualised approaches).The ESPN national reports (following the general literature)[16] consider two types of process: the vertical coordination and the horizontal coordination. The vertical coordination within a public system where decisions are made at several levels (i.e. from the state to the most local level) aims at a better definition of each level of competence and a coherent linkage between them. Simultaneously, different types of horizontal coordination (i.e. between

[14] Room, Graham (1994), "Agencies, Institutions and Programmes: Their Interrelationships and Coordination in Efforts to Combat Social Exclusion", *Observatory on National Policies to Combat Social Exclusion*, European Commission, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Industrial Relations, Brussels.

[15] Minas, Renate (2014), "One-Stop Shops: Increasing Employability and Overcoming Welfare State Fragmentation?", *International Journal of Social Welfare*, 23(1), S40-53.

[16] See for instance, OECD (2015), *Integrating Social Services for Vulnerable Groups; Bridging Sectors for Better Service Delivery*, Paris: OECD, pp. 24-30.

bodies which are more or less at the same level and serve the same geographical area) aspires to improve at least a partnership between them[17].

Besides these two types of coordination within the public sphere, the one-stop shop is also a key management instrument, with growing involvement of the private sector.

2.1 Long-term unemployment, specialised branches, vertical coordination and decentralisation

2.1.1 Long-term unemployment and institutional fragmentation

From the reports of the national experts we can establish a general picture of the range of specialised social institutions, branches, administrations or agencies which may be involved in long-term unemployment social policies in the 35 countries covered by this report:

- public employment services (PES), which are responsible, at the least, for active employment policies (registration of job-seekers, advice, skills assessment, occupational training, etc.);
- unemployment benefits provision, which in some cases is managed by two main actors, the public organisations and the social partners (social insurance);
- social services and social assistance organisations;
- other social protection bodies, especially those dealing with invalidity, when the unemployed are in poor health or unable to work.

According to ESPN experts, the fragmentation between employment policy institutions and other social protection institutions (especially institutions delivering social assistance benefits) is more pronounced than between the different bodies responsible for employment policy. Indeed, in some countries (e.g. Lithuania [*Lithuanian Labour Exchange*], France [*Pôle Emploi*], Greece (*OAED's Employment Promotion Centres*) and Austria [*Arbeitsmarktservice*]), the different organisations (or institutions or divisions or services) responsible for employment policy are merged into one body.

2.1.2 Long-term unemployment and vertical coordination

The hierarchical organisation differs between institutions and between countries, from the state to the most local level. Levels of decision and provision differ from one policy to another. Some countries (e.g. CY, EL, IE, LI, MK, MT) are highly centralised, with regional and local offices merely applying national rules, while in others a decentralisation of competencies gives some or a lot of autonomy to regional or local offices.

For several decades, the main reforms have involved the decentralisation of competencies from the upper level to a lower one in order to shorten the vertical chain of decisions, to increase the autonomy of intermediate levels (regions and counties) or local bodies (municipalities) and to better match the geographical areas covered by decisions taken by different organisations.

Nordic countries are highly decentralised systems, in which municipalities and regions are in charge of employment and social assistance policies (e.g. DK, FI, IS, SE). However, in Sweden, this trend has been reversed and since the late 1990s state authorities have been "re-centralised" to an increasing extent. Similarly, in Finland, the act on "multi-sectorial cooperation" (2014) compels different actors to coordinate their actions.

In many federal countries (e.g. AT, BE, CH), employment and/or social assistance policies are also mainly the responsibility of regions and municipalities. However, the Swiss expert notes the "cost shifting game" (i.e. trying to shift costs to a different level

[17] See aforementioned 2015 report by the Budapest Institute ("Literature review and identification of best practices on integrated social service delivery").

of government) within multilevel governance, which reduces the supposed effectiveness of the principle of decentralisation of public administrations. For instance, federal administrations tend to limit access to federal programmes by changing the legislation or implementation of the programmes. Cantonal social assistance actors also play the cost shifting game for instance by being proactive in trying to get an invalidity pension (which is paid by federal authorities) for their clients. In Spain (which can be considered as a quasi-federal country), the situation is mixed. Central and regional administrations share the responsibility for employment policies, whereas the responsibility for social assistance policies (and social services) is shared between regions and municipalities.

Social assistance benefits are very often under the responsibility of municipalities, while the employment offices sometimes serve different geographical areas. In Romania, for example, the unemployed receiving the minimum income are registered with the county level employment agencies. In Poland, the employment services are organised at the regional level. In Spain, unemployment benefits are provided by the state, but training services and coaching are provided at the regional level, which is responsible for the unemployed. This entails *inter alia* a more complicated cooperation between the municipalities (social assistance) with supra-local (county, regional) employment policy offices.

2.2 Long-term unemployment, horizontal coordination and the one-stop shop model

At the highest level, especially at the state level, horizontal coordination mainly involves the merging of several institutions. So, for instance, in 2007, a French reform merged the PES and the unemployment insurance body into a new public agency, called “Pôle Emploi”. In Ireland, the departments involved in activation and support to long-term unemployment are being merged into “Intreo”, a social protection department[18]. In Austria, Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey, the two employment policies are already under one state authority.

At the local or intermediate levels, whatever the degree of fragmentation, there is one common trend in European countries which concerns the registration of each unemployed person (supposedly able to work) applying for social assistance benefits as a job-seeker in employment agencies; in other words, job search becomes an eligibility condition for social assistance allowances or services (utilising for example in Slovakia the slogan “Working for basic benefit”). Countries where registering as unemployed is a condition for entitlement to unemployment and cash social benefits include *inter alia* ES, FI, HU, LV, NL, SI, SK and RO. Such a condition may promote partnerships or better coordination between employment and social assistance or social services institutions at the local level.

Within the wide range of types of local arrangements, we can identify one group of countries which is very far from a one-stop shop model. This group includes BG, EL, IT, LT, MK, PT, RS and TR. Experts from these countries highlight the lack of experience of coordination (BG, EL, PT, TR), overlaps (IT), rare cooperation (LT), and the lack of decentralisation (MK).

Another group of countries can be characterised by a “two-stop shop” or a “first-stop shop” which means that two separate bodies cooperate together. This cooperation can take different forms. For instance: a “joint institution” (DE)[19], “formal partnership” (HR, LU), “voluntary agreements” at the regional level (FR) or at local level (EE). In Luxembourg, local social offices are expected to be a nodal point between public and private services. Furthermore, the Dutch experts note the existence of the organisation of one-stop shops for employers who intend to hire or support people with a long

[18] In Ireland, the Department of Social Protection is responsible for Community Employment and Employment Services and Programmes (through the Intreo Offices) but the Education and Training Boards are in charge of the management and delivery of training.

[19] In Germany, the local employment agency and the municipality, while they have to fulfil their own distinct legal tasks, at the same time they are obliged to cooperate closely in the joint institution of the job centre.

distance to the labour market. The Netherlands and Iceland have organised a single point of access to most of the necessary benefits at the regional level. In Austria, local welfare offices and the offices of the public employment service co-operate in a semi-formalised way. In Malta, the Employment and Training Corporation (ETC) works very closely with the Department of Social Security within the Ministry.

Finally, various countries have moved towards a "fuller" one-stop shop approach, which requires the administrative proximity to recipients, the delivery of multiple types of benefits (including activation), common knowledge and skills of the staff as well as a common database of information which can be used by those with different skills. Examples include: a Cantonal Pilot project (CH); the merging and shift of social assistance benefits to local employment offices (CZ); "job centres" or "work and welfare offices" in municipalities (DK, NO, SE); "job shops" working together with social assistance services (BE [Flanders]) or "Job Centre Plus" and "Work Programme" (UK); a National Social Inclusion and Anti-Poverty Strategy draft of a one-stop shop approach towards activation (RO).

With this trend towards increasing integration of bodies implementing long-term unemployment policies, two elements must be considered: the quality and standard of service provision, and the problem of access to and sharing of information.

Merging several benefits and services into a new organisation raises questions concerning the management of the new set-up, which brings together a wide range of different ALMP measures, services and entitlements, as well as questions as to the skills of the staff and the quality of services. The individualisation of services is supposed to allow for support tailored to the needs of the individual (see Section 3), and the fuzzy set of entitlements de facto gives a positive (needs of the applicant) or negative (hierarchical decisions for rationing, personal opinion of members of the staff) discretionary power to the staff in the local offices. This is questionable considering the high workload of the staff (mediators, counsellors, social workers, etc.). Measures taken to counter the risk of unequal treatment include defining minimum standards (e.g. AT, EE, ES, IT, LV, PL, RO, RS, SE, SI, TR), national uniform standards (e.g. DK, IS, SE), charters (e.g. BG), guidance (e.g. FR, LU), and "individualised approach in order to maintain flexibility" (e.g. SE). Furthermore, the ESPN national experts note that the quality of employment services seems to be more regulated than the quality of social services.

Another challenge is related to the integration of data, especially online data, from different organisations into a new set of data. Effective coordination at the national level generally implies the use of a common database, and the first-stop shop requires at least the exchange of information between two organisations. However, the situation in countries is more diverse. Three main factors explain the limitations on exchange of information and the merging of databases. First, the fragmentation of institutions can justify a desire for each body to use and keep its own database. Secondly, a technical problem of interoperability can prevent easy use of different databases. Thirdly, legal rules of privacy protection can make it difficult if not impossible to merge or match data files or to exchange online information; when exchanges are authorised, some rules severely restrict the types of information which can be transferred from one institution/ organisation to another (e.g. CH, DE, EE, FR, SI, UK). When an exchange is possible between the employment services and the social service bodies, it is bilateral (e.g. AT, CZ, HR, HU, LV, SI). It can also be asymmetric – in Portugal, for example, protocol teams outsourced by Social Security claim not to have access to all the information held by the employment services. Likewise, in Malta, despite the close collaboration (by phone etc.) between the Employment and Training Corporation and the Social Security, they do not share all information; the Social Security only receives a list of persons entitled to benefits from the Employment and Training Corporation.

In several countries, the same database of information is shared (e.g. NL) between the organisations or offices which are involved in the implementation and the management of employment policies. In Slovenia, the registers are linked but the exchange of information covers only two relevant data: whether the person is included in the Register of Unemployed Persons and whether he/she is a cash social assistance beneficiary. In

the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, joint electronic software is used by both the agency for employment and social work centres. In Iceland and Norway, information is shared within the social services. In Finland, a common registration database is to be developed by 2017. In Denmark, Jobnet.dk is an IT platform on unemployed and vacancies which is used and fed jointly by individuals, companies and authorities. Countries with a one-stop shop system, providing that the one-stop shop system involves effective data sharing systems, do not need to have the same problems with data sharing.

For Poland, the expert signals the absence of general rules on this issue and occasional cooperation at local levels.

2.3 Long-term unemployment, outsourcing and the one-stop shop

During the last few decades, another type of organisation was promoted, with the objective of outsourcing the delivery of social policies in general. In Europe, the UK appears to be the country which has moved furthest towards this privatisation process. Following quasi-market and principal agent models, the organisational principle is based on a chain of contractors (public or private) chosen by a competition procedure. Vertical coordination is turned into a relationship between a regulator (the government) and a provider (work programme provider). The UK expert explains that in Great Britain, 18 *prime contractors* are in charge of managing all the services to the long-term unemployed, including their registration. The chain of sub-contractors is decided on by the prime contractor. The second characteristic is the “large degree of organisational discretion given to providers to design an individual pathway back to work for all clients, regardless of their circumstances, time out of work and barriers faced”. The high level of discretion means it is not possible to know to what extent services were tailored, as sub-contractors are not required to provide specific services in the absence of agreed minimum standards. Within this scheme, a provider acts as a one-stop shop and a single point of contact: a single member of staff acts as coordinator for all the services. Thirdly, prime contractors only receive monies from government on a “payment by results” basis. Their performance is assessed by a set of indicators. Consequently, they fall outside the hierarchical organisation of the state, and are not involved in horizontal cooperation between the local offices.

Although most other European countries seem a long organisational distance away from Great Britain, many ESPN national experts note that countries are gradually establishing agreements, contracting out the services to NGOs, social cooperatives, the third sector, private companies and employer associations (e.g. AT, BE, CH, CZ, EE, ES, FR, HU, IS, IE, LT, LU, LV, MK, PL, PT, SE). These agreements between private organisations and the public authority generally focus on one domain of activity, here services to the unemployed, especially the search for jobs. According to the experts, the efficiency of this sort of scheme is not easy to assess and is still unproven. For example, according to the Hungarian expert, the most serious problem reported with outsourced service-provision is the discontinuity of tasks due to the potential non-renewal of the contract between the ministry and the providers or a significant time that can elapse between contracts. Consequently, some clients can experience a kind of absence of service or wait for the renewal of the contract. The Irish expert is concerned about the risk of “undue competition”.

3 Individualised approaches

In their reports, ESPN experts emphasise that people who are experiencing long-term unemployment often have to overcome considerable barriers to access decent and sustainable employment. They are disproportionately more likely to have low education levels or limited skills (or to have their skills becoming redundant), to have lost self-confidence and motivation, to face significant psychological and personal difficulties and to experience the problems associated with being socially excluded such as living in poverty, having inadequate housing, becoming isolated from social networks, experiencing over-indebtedness, suffering from physical or mental ill-health, etc. All of these factors make accessing employment more difficult for the long-term unemployed and make employers more reluctant to hire them.

The longer people are unemployed the more discouraged they tend to become and the further their distance from the labour market can seem with greater and more numerous challenges to be overcome. This means that they are likely to need more support and several steps may be necessary before attending activation sessions (training, job search) or accessing a job becomes a realistic option. Thus, support services need to be adapted to their particular situations and to create positive pathways towards employment. For this reason, it is vital that countries give particular attention to developing individualised, integrated and comprehensive support tailored to people's needs. In this section, we examine the extent to which countries ensure that the long-term unemployed receive such tailored support and we identify the key gaps that need to be addressed to achieve effective systems of individualised support.

3.1 Tailoring support to the needs of individuals

The overall assessment of ESPN experts is that in three countries (IS, LI, NL) the extent and quality of individualised support is very good. In a further 23 countries (AT, BE, BG, CH, DE, DK, EE, FI, FR, HU, IE, LT, LU, LV, MT, NO, PL, PT, RS, SE, SI, SK, UK), it is considered to be of medium effectiveness. However, in nine countries (CY, CZ, EL, ES, HR, IT, MK, RO, TR) this support is rated as weak.

Only a few countries make the long-term unemployed a specific target of their programmes (e.g. IE, LT, PL, SK[20], UK) and indeed many concentrate most of their activation efforts on the more recently unemployed (see Section 1.2). In these countries, support for the long-term unemployed is often quite limited. However, some countries do recognise that the long-term unemployed may need additional support which should be tailored to their particular needs. Thus, some countries increase the intensity and range of support as the period of unemployment increases (e.g. CZ, FI, IS, MT). Some also recognise that among the unemployed there are different groups of needs and so one approach adopted by some countries was (or is) profiling the long-term unemployed (e.g. FR, HU, IE, LT, LV, PT) and in some cases all unemployed (e.g. PL) which means identifying some specific types of unemployed as well as specific packages of benefits and services.

A number of countries have an employment service system and activation measures that are strongly geared towards individual needs (DE, FI, IS, LI, LU, MT, NO, NL, SI). In other countries, this may not systematically be the case but there is often some degree of individual tailoring. In some countries, due to the key role of local actors (municipalities, districts and private organisations) this can vary widely from region to region or municipality to municipality (e.g. CH, IT, UK). In some cases, while overall support systems and services may be limited, successful initiatives may have been developed with European Social Fund (ESF) support. For instance, in the Czech Republic the projects funded under the ESF, where long-term unemployment represents one of the prioritised target groups, allow a more complex and individualised approach to the unemployed.

[20] In Slovakia, this approach is weakened by the fact that there are more than 20 "disadvantaged groups" which, according to the Act on Employment Services, deserve special attention.

3.2 Wide range of services and approaches required to meet needs of the long-term unemployed

Experts highlight the wide range of services and opportunities that have been developed to take account of the complex education, training, health, social and skills needs of the long-term unemployed. These highlight the need for a comprehensive mix of services and approaches to be available (as well as an effective coordinated approach) if an individualised approach is to be effective. On the basis of the national experts' reports we identify below three groups of services. We also identify some countries in which experts specifically highlight the provision of these services, though in varying degrees. Of course, in many instances other countries also provide, to a greater or lesser degree, such services:

a) A first group focuses broadly on education, training and support as well as on developing work experience and preparedness:
   - rehabilitative work experience, participation in socially useful work (e.g. CH, DE, FI, FR, HU, IS, IT, PL, PT, UK);
   - counselling programmes (e.g. AT, CZ, DE, LI, MT, PL, SI, UK);
   - support groups (e.g. LV, PL) and job clubs (e.g. CZ, LT, UK);
   - specialist support for particular groups such as people with disabilities (e.g. AT, DE, FR, IS, RS, SI, UK), Roma (e.g. RS) and older unemployed (e.g. AT, BE, LI, LT, PL, SI);
   - volunteering, social and cultural activities (e.g. LT, LU, UK);
   - education, training, vocational and rehabilitation programmes, which are offered in all countries to varying degrees but are especially highlighted in some experts' reports (e.g. AT, CH, CY, DE, DK, FI, IS, IT, LI, LT, MT, NO, SI, UK);
   - language training (e.g. AT, CH, CY, LI, LV, UK);
   - social rehabilitation to strengthen social skills (e.g. FI, UK);
   - motivation programmes (e.g. CZ, LT, LV, UK).

b) A second important group of services focuses on the physical and psychological health needs of individuals:
   - rehabilitative psychotherapy and psychological services (e.g. CY, FI, IS, LV, SI);
   - medical rehabilitation (e.g. AT, FI, IS, NO);
   - programmes for persons with addictions (e.g. LT, LV, SI, UK).

c) A third group of individual activities is related to the necessary flexible management of the services:
   - extraordinary cash social assistance e.g. (e.g. SI);
   - employment-oriented case management (e.g. AT, DE, LI);
   - flexible application of conditionality to take account of particular situations of individuals (e.g. DK, FI, NL, NO, SI).

3.3 Barriers to effective individualised support

In many countries, experts identify significant barriers or gaps in provision that limit the ability to provide effective individualised support for the long-term unemployed even if this is recognised as being important. These include:

- a tendency to focus efforts more on people recently unemployed and those less distant from the labour market (e.g. BG, DE, MK, NL, PL, RO, UK). This tendency can be reinforced by the demands on the institutions involved to perform and its assessment which often gives the priority to the new and recent unemployed;

- the lack/ geographically uneven availability of support services:
    - lack or uneven availability and quality of social services for instance in more remote rural areas (e.g. CH, EE, EL, HU, LT, LV, TR)
    - lack of support services for least motivated and inactive (e.g. LV, RO);
- the lack of capacity among the agencies responsible to deliver individualised support:
    - high case-loads and insufficient staffing and resources are often noted by the experts (e.g. AT, CY, CZ, DE, EL, ES, FI, HR, HU, IE, IT, LT, MK, PL, SE, SK, TR); in many countries this rationing of services supply is accentuated by the budgetary discipline and austerity measures which reduce the effectiveness of the social policy
    - the lack of expertise and the need to increase staff mediation and counselling capacity through more training and guidance (e.g. BG, CZ, EL, ES, FR, IE, PL)
    - the lack of resources to follow up or check compliance (e.g. BG, HR);
- the institutional fragmentation, insufficient cooperation and exchange of information between employment and social services and the lack of integration of supports, the lack of coordination between national and regional/local authorities and between different providers (e.g. AT, CH, CZ, EL, ES, IT, LT,LV, PL, PT, TR) (see previous section);
- too narrow and rigid an approach which does not allow for tailoring to meet individual needs:
    - limited discretion or little local flexibility on use of budgets and on adjusting budgets across programmes (e.g. IE)
    - too narrow focus on employment at the expense of training, rehabilitation services and social services (e.g. EL, HU, IT, LT, RO, UK)
    - rather limited scope/extent of ALMPs targeting the long-term unemployed (e.g. CZ)
    - lack of administrative flexibility, too strict guidelines and too standardised approach when filling in contracts, and lack of overall framework for using discretion in tailoring support (e.g. CY, EL, PT, SE);
- training opportunities/ qualifications that are not relevant to labour market (e.g. AT, PL) or need to be adapted to the specific target groups (e.g. BE, LT);
- low efficiency of job-matching undermine employers' confidence (e.g. IE).

3.4 Use of individual action plans or integration contracts

As many people experiencing long-term unemployment are very distant from the labour market and have to overcome several barriers in order to achieve employment, it can then often take them several steps before they achieve secure and good quality employment. In such cases, once-off interventions or measures are unlikely to be sufficient. What is needed is a comprehensive approach which addresses their different needs and establishes a clear path of progression towards employment. This implies the development of an individualised plan of action that sets out clear goals and steps and that identifies the responsibilities of both the unemployed person and the supporting services along the way. In order to give such an approach due importance and status, embedding it formally in individual action plans and/or integration contracts can be important and helpful. However, for this to be the case such plans or contracts need to be flexible and responsive to individual needs; they should thus not be too standardised.

The majority of countries have individual action plans which are most often focused on activation measures and are drawn up by public employment services together with the unemployed person (e.g. AT, BE, BG, CH, CZ, DE, DK, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, IE,

IS, IT, LI, LT, LU, LV, MT, NO, PL, PT, RS, SI, NL, SE, SK, UK). In some cases, action plans are tailored to take account of the particular needs of the individual (e.g. AT, BE, DK, FI, IE, IS, LI, PL, SI). For example, in Belgium (Flanders and Wallonia), every trajectory starts with individual guidance by a specialised coach from the PES. In the Brussels Capital Region, special attention is paid to the personal project, the profile, skills and difficulties in finding a job. Elements of the profile and the highlighted solutions are adapted to the needs of the jobseeker and his/her professional ambitions.

In Slovenia, 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 of unemployed persons who are presumed to have addictions, mental health problems or other major social difficulties and are thus considered to be temporary unemployable. Unemployed persons under a 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. In Liechtenstein, the Labour Market Service Centre organises "job-speed-dating" (bringing long-term-unemployed in direct contact to employers) taking the individual abilities of the unemployed person into consideration when inviting employers to the dating.

Slightly under half of the countries (AT, BE, DE, DK, ES, FR, FI, IS, IT[21], LU, LV, NO, PL, PT, SI) have integration contracts which have a greater focus on the individual social and health needs of the unemployed. These are most commonly drawn up between the individual and the social services responsible for welfare benefits.

Where countries have both action plans and integration contracts a key challenge is to bring them together into a coherent integrated approach. Only a few countries fully achieve this. For instance, in Iceland the Social Security Administration (SSA) uses the services of the Vocational Rehabilitation Fund (VIRK) for provision of rehabilitation services for the receivers of the public rehabilitation benefit, with the same individualised form of contracts and surveillance. VIRK rehabilitation works with individually tailored programmes and does contracts with their clients and providers of healthcare services or the various other rehabilitation services. Close surveillance of the individual's progress is an integral part of the service. Provisions include various specialised rehabilitation measures (provided by NGOs, private firms and public healthcare services), psychological services, physiotherapy, bodybuilding, formal education and shorter courses. The close cooperation with all these providers makes for a considerable degree of tailoring of provision to individual health and social needs. Hence there is considerable flexibility. Finland is moving in this direction as in 2014 the Government introduced the Act on Multi-Sectoral Service Cooperation to improve the effectiveness of the cooperation between different actors and to improve the integration of different benefits and services. Slovenia has gone further and the cooperation of the Employment Service of Slovenia and centres for social work in performing services and active labour market policy measures is included in both the Labour Market Regulation Act (2010) and the Social Assistance Benefits Act (2010).

The existence of individual action plans or integration contracts is not a panacea for achieving individualised support. In too many countries such plans contain a standard set of measures applicable to all unemployed and are not sufficiently tailored to the individual needs or challenges that often face the long-term unemployed (e.g. BG, DE, HR, HU, IE). For instance:

- in Bulgaria, individual plans are not really individual but represent routine patterns of action;

[21] In Italy, customised plans are agreed upon between social services and recipients in some municipalities but are not consistently developed across the country.

- in Croatia, a formal activation contract has been introduced, signed by the unemployed person and their counsellor in the Croatian Employment Service, and setting out the obligations of the unemployed person. However, these plans seem rather vague and far from a tailored approach;
- in Germany, in practice, the aims and content of the integration contract are highly standardised, not explained well enough to the benefit claimant and not individually tailored enough. Promoting and challenging elements are not adequately balanced;
- in Greece, the drafting of “individual action plan” is in practice a “one-size fits all” routine procedure, which is hardly tailored to the specific needs of the long-term unemployed;
- in Hungary, the cooperation agreement between the client and the PES can be quite formal and general, containing only regulations regarding the frequency of visits to PES, verifying the intensity of job-search, that the job offered must be accepted, but may include training, active tools etc. in addition to that;
- in Ireland, the tailoring of support and the degree of recognition of individual needs appears to be underemphasised in much of the system which concentrates on generic procedures and is stretched in terms of manpower resources. Some of the conditions of effective tailoring of services – such as local discretion – are in place but there is a strong top-down approach in setting targets;
- in the United Kingdom, there has been little evidence of such innovation and clients have mostly been offered a limited range of options rather than services tailored to their needs.

Annex 1 Overview tables

In preparing their reports, ESPN experts were asked to complete a summary table assessing their country's performance in supporting the long-term unemployed in five areas: income benefits, social services, activation services, coordination between services (employment, social assistance and social services) extent of individualised support. Their findings are brought together in the table below under the three columns, very good, medium and weak.

Experts were also asked to indicate in a few words the key gaps that they consider would need to be addressed to improve effectiveness in each of the five areas. Experts could identify between one and three gaps in each area. A number of themes recurred across the 35 countries and these are also summarised in the table below.

Policy area	Very good	Medium	Weak	The most urgent gaps/issues that ESPN experts consider need to be addressed in their country to improve effectiveness of policies supporting the long-term unemployed[22]
Effectiveness of benefits and services supporting the long-term unemployed: ***INCOME BENEFITS***	CY LI IS NL	AT CH CZ DK FI FR IE IT LU MT NO RS SI SE	BE BG DE EE EL ES HR HU LT LV MK PL PT RO SK TR UK	1. Benefit inadequacy, low or no benefits, benefits not preventing poverty[23] - AT BE BG CZ DE EE EL ES FI HU IE IS LT LV MK PT RO RS SE SI SK TR 2. Low benefit coverage - EE EL ES HR IT LV PL PT RS 3. Need to improve incentives to take up employment[24] - AT CH CZ ES FI IE UK 4. Benefits insufficiently tailored to the needs of long-term unemployed (LTU) - BG IT LT PL TR 5. Problems caused by conditionality[25] - HU NO SK TR 6. Problems of interface/links between insurance and assistance benefits[26] - DK LU PT SE 7. Data/information/research gaps[27] - IT FR LU 8. Limited/too short duration of benefits - EE EL ES 9. Need to improve links to other measures[28] - FI PL

[22] Experts were asked to identify only the most urgent gap or gaps (maximum 3 per policy area).

[23] For example: Low benefits for some groups (AT); Social assistance provision does not sufficiently protect the long-term unemployed against poverty (CZ); Subsistence benefits and unemployment assistance benefit are below absolute poverty line (EE); Benefits fall far below the poverty line (EL); Benefits prevent poverty but recipients request higher amounts (IS); Reduced social assistance cash benefits for long-term unemployed (LT); Low amount and "disincentive" design of the social financial assistance (MK).

[24] For ex.: No progressive tapering-off of benefits (AT); Need for financial rewards or back-to-work benefits for social assistance recipients (CZ); Lack of compatibility between unemployment benefit and access to employment, including lack of tapering of benefits when entering employment (ES); Provision of help with cost-of-job search (IE); Means-testing increases employment threshold (FI); High marginal withdrawal rates for low-paid claimants (UK).

[25] For ex.: Easy to fall out of system due to number of sanctions (HU); Discretionary nature of social assistance benefits and harsh means-testing make it highly unattractive as a fall-back option for LTU (NO); Mandatory work for minimum income recipients not effective activation tool (SK); Non-take-up in social assistance due to administrative discretion (TR).

[26] For ex.: Reform unemployment insurance scheme needed (DK); Lack of sequence between benefits (PT) Low coverage of insurance and assistance increasingly used (SE).

[27] For ex.: Lack of social impact assessment (IT); Need to find out about resources from part-time activities (FR); Lack of data on LTU receiving personal benefit (LU).

[28] For ex.: Need to complement benefits with social assistance and housing allowance (FI); Review and strengthen cash benefits linked to activation services (PL).

Policy area	Very good	Medium	Weak	The most urgent gaps/issues that ESPN experts consider need to be addressed in their country to improve effectiveness of policies supporting the long-term unemployed[22]
Effectiveness of benefits and services supporting the long-term unemployed: ***SOCIAL SERVICES***	IS LU NO NL SE	AT BE BG CH CY DK FI IE LI LT MT PL PT SI	CZ DE EE EL ES FR HR HU IT LV MK RO RS SK TR UK	1. Most disadvantaged not reached/LTU not sufficiently targeted[29] - BG EL ES FR HR IS LI MK RO RS SI 2. Lack of coordination/weak links between services[30] - CH CZ EL ES IT LT LU PL UK 3. Poor quality/narrow range/ineffectiveness of services, too bureaucratic, staff training needed[31] - BE EL FI FR RO 4. Lack of or very limited/overstretched/understaffed/overcrowded social services - CY FI HU SI TR 5. Significant geographical variation in provision[32] - AT BG EE LV 6. Data/information limitations[33] - DE PL 7. Need to improve specific services - Housing SK - Childcare AT IE NO PL

[29] For ex.: Need to address the profound lack of specific services targeted at LTU (EL); Improve knowledge of needs or LTU re housing, mobility, childcare (FR); Need to better reach immigrants (IS); Consider specific measures to help non-German speaking foreigners with higher unemployment, addressing psychological problems (social isolation and illness) in a more appropriate way (LI); Need to better reach out to most vulnerable and to increase registration of LTU in employment programmes (RO); Need to address the lack of activation programmes for persons with major social or other problems as reasons for their temporary unemployability (SI).

[30] For ex.: Strong social orientation of social services needs to be balanced by working more in conjunction with case workers from public employment services (CH); Lack of coordination/cooperation with employment services/labour exchange (CZ, LT); No links with income benefits &activation services (EL); Highly fragmented intervention between various services, lack of cross-linkages (ES); Lack of systematic links with income benefits (IT); Need to develop social services offices' role as first resort (LU); Social services not sufficiently focused on employment outcomes (UK).

[31] For ex.: Work experience programmes not very successful (BE); Highly bureaucratic procedures to access health services and other social programmes (EL); Public sector savings on staff leads to longer queues and worse quality (FI); Social action training for staff needed (FR); Employment services not very effective (RO).

[32] For ex.: Large regional variation (AT); Non-availability in most disadvantaged areas (BG); No uniform service standards available, hence the quality of social services varies across regions (EE); Weak rural provision (LV).

[33] For ex.: Lack of information on scope and availability of services (DE); Lack of common database of benefits and of standardised regulation on exchange of data using electronic channels (PL).

Policy area	Very good	Medium	Weak	The most urgent gaps/issues that ESPN experts consider need to be addressed in their country to improve effectiveness of policies supporting the long-term unemployed[22]
Effectiveness of benefits and services supporting the long-term unemployed: ***ACTIVATION SERVICES***	AT HU IS LU MT NO	BE CH CY CZ FI DE DK EE IE LI LV PL SE UK	BG EL ES FR HR IT LT MK NL PT RO RS SI SK TR	1. Need to improve quality/range of services[34] - BG CZ DK ES FR HU LT MK PL SE SK TR 2. Lack of activation services sufficiently targeted at LTU[35] - BG DE EL IE IT LV NL RS SE SI TR 3. Low coverage of services, low prop. of LTU benefiting from services[36] - BE CH CY EE HR PL RS SI UK 4. Services not sufficiently targeted at high risk groups[37] - DE IS LT LU NL RO UK 5. Need to improve coordination between measures and actors[38] - BE DE EL ES FI 6. More focus needed on labour market/employers and/or less on public work[39] - HU LI SE TR 7. Need to address problems arising from conditionality[40] - BE ES UK

[34] For ex.: Activation is often simulated, activities initiated by the labour office are pro forma and participation is just for keeping registration (BG); People who are initially activated are often disappointed by the lack of available training and job opportunities (BG); Need to increase scope of ALMPs for LTU and to increase staff capacity (CZ); Better educational measures are needed for certain groups (DK); Lack of evaluation of effectiveness of measures (ES); Training programmes need to be more efficient (TR); Need to invigorate activation of job seekers and employers and services (FR); More training and support is needed for public workers (HU); Need to address discriminatory attitudes to LTU (LT); Prevalence of passive support in ALMPs (MK); Need to reduce bureaucratic burden in public employment services (PL); Inadequate control of private service providers (SE); Balance between top-down rules and autonomy for caseworkers must be improved and heavy workload on caseworkers addressed (SE); Need to shift towards skill upgrading (SK).

[35] For ex.: Insufficient diversity in the services on offer to be able to tailor support to individual needs (BG); LTU underrepresented in ALMPs (DE); Need to address the lack of activation services tailored to the needs of LTU (EL); Lack of activation services after 1st year of unemployment (IT); Lack of funds (SI); Need to address low motivation among unemployed (SI); Need for directive to focus on those farthest from labour market (SE).

[36] For ex.: Need for upscaling of targeted schemes (e.g. W²) (BE); Services unevenly available (CH); Understaffing (CY); Only small proportion of LTU covered (HR); Identification and reduction of risks related to profiling the unemployed to profile III, reducing the access to selected activation measures (PL); Too many ALMPs with too little coverage (RS); Low levels of innovation and Payment by Results regime lead to lack of help for many claimants (UK).

[37] For ex.: ALMPs not directed to non-motivated people (LT); Lack of services for youth at high risk and minimum income recipients (RO); Need to reach immigrants better (IS); Need to adapt service to LTU requiring intensive job integration services and accompaniment (LU); Insufficient focus on those with massive integration barriers (DE); Lack of services for (older) LTU in most municipalities (NL); Creaming and parking persist (UK).

[38] For ex.: Activation of benefit schemes: substitution effects between target groups (BE); Not early and effective enough to prevent LTU (DE); No links with income benefits and social services (EL); Irregular spending levels between different types of activation support (ES).

[39] For ex.: Trap to remain in public work and need to include public work in period of registered employment (HU); Need to encourage private-sector employers to integrate long-term unemployed with more effort (LI); Insufficient involvement of employers (SE); Structural problems in labour market (TR).

[40] For ex.: Activation of benefit schemes risks leading to a “carousel effect” (i.e. with recruitment subsidies or temporary wage subsidies, employers tend to hire the worker as long as necessary to cash in the full subsidy. Subsequently, the worker is dismissed and replaced by a new one, “ideally” with the same recruitment subsidy) (BE); Making benefits

Policy area	Very good	Medium	Weak	The most urgent gaps/issues that ESPN experts consider need to be addressed in their country to improve effectiveness of policies supporting the long-term unemployed[22]
Coordination between employment, social assistance and social services	LI NO SI	AT BE BG CY DE DK EE IS FI FR IE LU LV MK MT NL RO SK	CH CZ EL ES HR HU IT LT PL PT RS SE TR UK	1. Information gaps/lack of common data base[41] - BG EL ES FI HU IT LV PL PT RO 2. Improved/enhanced cooperation methodologies needed[42] - AT CZ DK FI FR LU PL PT RO 3. Administrative fragmentation/barriers, legal barriers[43] - AT CH ES IE IT LT LV SE 4. Lack of or very limited/sporadic formal coordination[44] - BG DE EL HU IE IT UK 5. Cooperation too ad hoc/discretionary/lacking clear model or principles[45] - CZ EE LT NL RO 6. Lack of time, resources, staff capacity[46] - ES HR HU NL TR 7. Need for (increased) one-stop shop approach[47]

conditional on activation in a context of low administrative capacity and resources often results in unrealistic and empty action plans (ES); Poorly targeted and harsh sanctions regime does not lead to increase in employment rates (UK).

[41] For ex.: No common data base and piecemeal exchange of data (BG); Lack of common data between competent services (EL); Need for more effective utilisation of register data (FI); Need to develop local information base to support coordination between services (PL); Need to improve information sharing/ databases (PT).

[42] For ex.: Need for integrated and national model of case-management (AT); Need to implement casework methods in employment and social services (CZ); Need to strengthen the cross-disciplinary measures and rehabilitation teams (DK); Coordination should be more effective (FI); Closer links needed between housing and employment (FR); Need for a "one file" system to complete current cooperation agreements & data exchange and process evaluation of cooperation quality (LU); Need to identify and disseminate good practice in cooperation (PL); Need for stronger involvement of the PES in the accompaniment of the Social Integration Income recipients (PT); Need to address lack of common understanding of goals (RO).

[43] For ex.: Lack of clear responsibility in case of persons with benefits from PES and GMI (AT); Incentives go against coordination (CH); Dispersion of legal competences and administrative and procedural barriers and fragmentation of agents (state and regional public employment services, third sector organisations, private enterprises) (ES); Potential fragmentation across activation and education services (IE); Fragmented work organisation with risks of duplication and overlaps (IT); Inefficient division of responsibilities between employment offices and social services (LT); Counsellors working in parallel (LV); Centralisation of certain services has hindered coordination and low interest in coordination from national level (SE).

[44] For ex.: At local level, coordination on specific cases is rare (BG); Coordination is insufficient between job centres & municipalities and between job centres & employment agencies (DE); Coordination arrangements are lacking and must be put in place (EL); Lack of coordination between Work Programme and social services (UK).

[45] For ex.: Need to establish coordination arrangements (CZ); Coordination between national Unemployment Insurance Fund and local governments is currently on a voluntary ad hoc basis and should be formalised, e.g. to ensure systematic bilateral exchanges of information (EE); Lack of clear model of cooperation leads to institutional interests being maximised (LT); Poor cooperation between agencies even within the same job-seekers' centre (NL).

[46] For ex.: Insufficient training for professions outside the department (employment or social services) (ES); Lack of human resources and high caseloads (HR); Insufficient budget for effective cooperation between agencies (NL); Lack of capacity in employment agency (TR).

[47] For ex.: Not all one-stop job shops offer a truly integrated service (BE) ; Lack of one-stop shops for the delivery of integrated services (both employment and other social services) (EL).

Policy area	Very good	Medium	Weak	The most urgent gaps/issues that ESPN experts consider need to be addressed in their country to improve effectiveness of policies supporting the long-term unemployed[22]
				- BE CY EL IS MT
Extent of individualised support	IS LI NL	AT BE BG CH DE DK EE FI FR HU IE LT LU LV MT NO PL PT RS SE SI SK UK	CY CZ EL ES HR IT MK RO TR	1. Insufficient tailoring of support and too narrow approach[48] - BE BG CZ DE EL ES HU IE LT PT RO SE UK 2. Need to (further) develop capacity for quality support[49] - BG CY CZ DE EL ES HR IE IT LU NL PL TR 3. Lack of or variation in availability of support, esp. for most at risk[50] - CH CY EE EL FR HU LV RO RS 4. Lack of integration contracts[51] - EL IT LU MT 5. Employment barriers[52] - PT TR

[48] For ex.: Training topics are related more to the different aspects of the service provided and less to the specific target groups (BE); Need for actual individual plans rather than routine patterns of action (BG); Need to increase extent and variety of ALMPs to meet needs of individualised support and to introduce profiling and early assessment (CZ); Integration contracts insufficiently balanced and individually tailored (DE); Lack of a tailor made approach to LTU (EL); Short duration of programmes to tackle longer, more complex labour insertion action plans (ES); Insufficient interviewing and lack of recognition of clients' needs, and lack of administrative flexibility or discretion to tailor support (HU); Need for more tailoring to individual need/circumstance (IE); Too narrow approach focussed on labour market and lack of recognition of the need for social work support (LT); Need for higher involvement of the PES in the existing frameworks providing extra support prior to activation and lack of administrative flexibility and overall framing for discretion in tailoring the support (PT); Lack of active involvement of local social assistance services (RO); Caseworkers room for manoeuvring might be limited (SE); No mechanisms to ensure Work Programme contractors provide personalised services in practice (UK).

[49] For ex.: No control of compliance with agreed individual plans (BG); Understaffing (CY); More mediation and counselling capacity needed for front-line staff (CZ); Framework conditions not adequate for employment-orientated case management (DE); Need to increase PES's capacity by recruiting new qualified and well trained staff (EL); Limited administrative capacity of national and regional employment services to design and offer integrated action plans to beneficiaries and insufficient coordination between public services and private placement agencies for the extension of individualised support (ES); No follow up of activation plans (HR); Insufficient human resources/staff capacity (IE); Lack of comparative analysis at national level and low levels of information & collaboration between services (IT); Lack of effectiveness evaluations (LU); No recent studies on the effectiveness of individualised support for LTU (NL); Need to reduce administrative burden on employees and to develop guidance & training materials for public services workers (PL); Lack of capacity in employment agency (TR).

[50] For ex.: Support unevenly available (CH); Lack of comprehensive plan (CY); Lack of appropriate level of social services provided by local governments hinders reintegration of LTU with multiple problems into society and labour market (EE); Lack of PES sufficient personnel (in quantitative and qualitative terms) (EL); Need to shift from trialling to widespread implementation (FR); Wide variation in the accessibility of individualised support (HU); Lack of support services for least motivated long-term unemployed (LV); Very limited availability (RO); Support unevenly available depending on the groups (RS).

[51] For ex.: Lack of an integrated contract (EL); Very few initiatives of integration contracts (IT); Need to extend "cooperation covenant" to all unemployed (LU); Very good individualised approach but introduction of formal contract would be welcome (MT).

[52] For ex.: Obstacles to social assistance individualised support when activation does not include employment (PT); Structural problems in labour market (TR).

Policy area	Very good	Medium	Weak	The most urgent gaps/issues that ESPN experts consider need to be addressed in their country to improve effectiveness of policies supporting the long-term unemployed[22]
				6. Various[53] - AT DK IS NL SE

[53] For ex.: Lack of information on extent of individualised support (AT); Need to better support persons with mental illness (DK); Overall high level but could reach immigrants better (IS); Too many exemptions (social assistance) from job acceptance on social grounds which limits chances of LTU to integrate (NL); Too much discretion, which may lead to inequalities (SE).

Annex 2 Presentation of the European Social Policy Network (ESPN)

A. ESPN Network Management Team and Network Core Team

The European Social Policy Network (ESPN) is managed jointly by the CEPS/INSTEAD Research Institute and the independent research company APPLICA, in close association with the European Social Observatory.

The ESPN Network Management Team is responsible for the overall supervision and coordination of the ESPN. It consists of five members:

NETWORK MANAGEMENT TEAM

Eric Marlier (CEPS/INSTEAD, LU)
Project Director
Email: eric.marlier@skynet.be

Hugh Frazer (National University of Ireland Maynooth, IE)
Independent Experts' Coordinator and Social Inclusion Leader
Email: hughfrazer@eircom.net

Loredana Sementini (Applica, BE)
Communication/events and IT Coordinator
Email: LS@applica.be

Bart Vanhercke (European Social Observatory, BE)
Overall Social Protection Leader
Email: vanhercke@ose.be

Terry Ward (Applica, BE)
MISSOC Leader
Email: TW@applica.be

The ESPN Network Core Team provides high level expertise and inputs on specific aspects of the ESPN's work. It consists of 14 experts:

NETWORK CORE TEAM

The five members of the Network Management Team

Rita Baeten *(European Social Observatory, BE)*, Healthcare and Long-term care Leader

Marcel Fink (*Institute for Advanced Studies, Austria*), MISSOC Users' Perspective

Andy Fuller *(Alphametrics)*, IT Leader

Anne-Catherine Guio *(CEPS/INSTEAD, LU)*, Quantitative Analysis Leader, Knowledge Bank Coordinator and Reference budget

Saskia Klosse *(University of Maastricht, NL)*, MISSOC and International Social Security Legal Expert

David Natali *(University of Bologna [IT] and European Social Observatory [OSE])*, Pensions Leader

Monika Natter *(ÖSB, AT)*, Peer Review Perspective

Stefán Ólafsson *(University of Iceland, IS)*, MISSOC Users' Perspective

Frank Vandenbroucke *(University of Leuven [KU Leuven])*, Decision-making Perspective

B. ESPN national independent experts for social protection and social inclusion

AUSTRIA

Marcel Fink (*Institute for Advanced Studies*)
Expert in Social inclusion, Long-term care and Pensions
Email: fink@ihs.ac.at

Monika Riedel (*Institute for Advanced Studies*)
Expert in Healthcare and Long-term care
Email: riedel@ihs.ac.at

National coordination: Marcel Fink

BELGIUM

Ides(bald) Nicaise (*Research Institute for Work and Society – HIVA, KULeuven*)
Expert in Social inclusion
Email: Ides.nicaise@kuleuven.be

Jozef Pacolet (*Research Institute for Work and Society – HIVA, KULeuven*)
Expert in Healthcare, Long-term care and Pensions
Email: jozef.pacolet@kuleuven.be

National coordination: Ides Nicaise

BULGARIA

George Bogdanov (*Hotline ltd*)
Expert in Social inclusion
Email: george@hotline-bg.com

Lidia Georgieva *(Medical University Sofia)*
Expert in Healthcare and Long-term care
Email: lidia1001@gmail.com

Yordan Hristoskov *(Institute of Economic Studies at Bulgarian Academy of Sciences)*
Expert in Pensions
Email: yhristoskov@vuzf.bg

Boyan Zahariev *(Open Society Foundation)*
Expert in Social inclusion
Email: bzahariev@osi.bg

National coordination: George Bogdanov

CROATIA

Paul Stubbs (*The Institute of Economics*)
Expert in Social inclusion
Email: pstubbs@eizg.hr

Ivana Vukorepa (*University of Zagreb*)
Expert in Pensions
Email: ivana.vukorepa@pravo.hr

Siniša Zrinščak (*University of Zagreb*)
Expert in Healthcare and Long-term care
Email: sinisa.zrinscak@pravo.hr

National coordination: Paul Stubbs

CYPRUS

Panos Pashardes (*University of Cyprus*)
Expert in Social inclusion and Pensions
Email: p.pashardes@ucy.ac.cy

Mamas Theodorou (*Open University of Cyprus*)
Expert in Healthcare and Long-term care
Email: m.theodorou@ouc.ac.cy

National coordination: Panos Pashardes

CZECH REPUBLIC

Ivan Malý (*Masaryk University*)
Expert in Healthcare and Long-term care
Email: ivan@econ.muni.cz

Robert Jahoda *(Masaryk University)*
Expert in Pensions
Email: jahoda@econ.muni.cz

Tomáš Sirovátka (*Masaryk University*)
Expert in Social inclusion (and Long-term care)
Email: sirovatk@fss.muni.cz

National coordination: Tomáš Sirovátka

DENMARK

Jon Kvist *(Roskilde University)*
Expert in Social inclusion, Long-term care and Pensions
Email: jkvist@ruc.dk

Kjeld Møller Pedersen *(University of Southern Denmark)*
Expert in Healthcare
Email: kmp@sam.sdu.dk

National coordination: Jon Kvist

ESTONIA

Mare Viies (*Tallinn University of Technology*)
Expert in Social inclusion
Email: mare.viies@gmail.ee

Andres Võrk (*Praxis*)
Expert in Healthcare, Long-term care and Pensions
Email: andres.vork@praxis.ee

National coordination: Andres Võrk

FINLAND

Laura Kalliomaa-Puha (*Social Insurance Institution of Finland - Kela*)
Expert in Healthcare and Long-term care
Email: laura.kalliomaa-puha@kela.fi

Olli Kangas (*Social Insurance Institution of Finland - Kela*)
Expert in Social inclusion, Healthcare and Pensions
Email: olli.kangas@kela.fi

National coordination: Olli Kangas

FRANCE

Gaël Coron (*EHESP French School of Public Health*)
Expert in Pensions
Email: Gael.Coron@ehesp.fr

Gilles Huteau (*EHESP French School of Public Health*)
Expert in Healthcare
Email: gilles.huteau@ehesp.fr

Blanche Le Bihan (*EHESP French School of Public Health*)
Expert in Long-term care
Email: blanche.lebihan@ehesp.fr

Michel Legros (*EHESP French School of Public Health & National Observatory on Poverty and Social Exclusion*)
Expert in Social inclusion and Healthcare
Email: michel.legros@ehesp.fr

National coordination: Michel Legros

GERMANY

Gerhard Bäcker *(University of Duisburg/Essen)*
Expert in Long-term care and Pensions
Email: gerhard.baecker@uni-due.de

Walter Hanesch *(Hochschule Darmstadt – University of Applied Sciences)*
Expert in Social inclusion
Email: walter.hanesch@h-da.de

Gerhard Trabert *(Hochschule RheinMain – University of Applied Sciences)*
Expert in Healthcare
Email: gerhard.trabert@hs-rm.de

National coordination: Walter Hanesch

GREECE

Yiannis Sakellis *(Panteion University of Political and Social Sciences)*
Expert in Healthcare and Long-term care
Email: ioannisakellis@gmail.com

Menelaos Theodoroulakis *(Research Institute of Urban Environment and Human Recourses)*
Expert in Pensions and mental health care
Email: mtheodor@pepsaee.gr

Dimitris Ziomas *(Greek National Centre for Social Research – EKKE)*
Expert in Social inclusion and Long-term care
Email: dziomas@ekke.gr

National coordination: Dimitris Ziomas

HUNGARY

Fruzsina Albert (*Hungarian Academy of Sciences Center for Social Sciences and Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church*)
Expert in Social inclusion and Healthcare
Email: albert.fruzsina@gmail.com

Róbert Iván Gál (*Demographic Research Institute, Central Statistical Office and TÁRKI Social Research Institute*)
Expert in Pensions and Long-term care
Email: gal@tarki.hu

National coordination: Fruzsina Albert

ICELAND

Tinna Ásgeirsdóttir (*University of Iceland*)
Expert in Healthcare and Long-term care
Email: ta@hi.is

Stefán Ólafsson (*University of Iceland)*
Expert in Social inclusion, Healthcare, Long-term care and Pensions
Email: olafsson@hi.is

Kolbeinm H. Stefánsson (*University of Iceland and Statistics Iceland)*
Expert in Social inclusion
Email: kolbeinn@hi.is

National coordination: Stefán Ólafsson

IRELAND

Mary Daly *(University of Oxford)*
Expert in Social inclusion
Email: mary.daly@spi.ox.ac.uk

Gerard Hughes *(School of Business, Trinity College Dublin)*
Expert in Pensions
Email: gehughes@tcd.ie

Sara Burke *(Centre for Health Policy and Management, Trinity College Dublin)*
Expert in Healthcare and Long-term care
Email: sarabur@gmail.com

National coordination: Mary Daly

ITALY

Matteo Jessoula (*University of Milano*)
Expert in Pensions
Email: matteo.jessoula@unimi.it

Emmanuele Pavolini (*Macerata University*)
Expert in Healthcare and Long-term care
Email: emmanuele.pavolini@unimc.it

Filippo Strati (*Studio Ricerche Sociali - SRS*)
Expert in Social inclusion
Email: srs@srseuropa.eu

National coordination: Filippo Strati

LATVIA

Tana Lace (*Riga Stradins University*)
Expert in Social inclusion and Healthcare
Email: tanalace@inbox.lv

Feliciana Rajevska (*Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences)*
Expert in Long-term care and Pensions
Email: mailto:rajevska@latnet.lv

National coordination: Feliciana Rajevska

LIECHTENSTEIN

Wilfried Marxer (*Liechtenstein-Institut*)
Expert in Social inclusion, Healthcare, Long-term care and Pensions
Email: wilfried.marxer@liechtenstein-institut.li

Patricia Hornich *(Liechtenstein-Institut)*
Expert in Social inclusion, Healthcare, Long-term care and Pensions
Email: patricia.hornich@liechtenstein-institut.li

National coordination: Wilfried Marxer

LITHUANIA

Romas Lazutka *(Vilnius University)*
Expert in Pensions and Social inclusion
Email: lazutka@ktl.mii.lt

Arūnas Poviliūnas *(Vilnius University*)
Expert in Social inclusion and Healthcare
Email: povilar@delfi.lt

Laimute Zalimiene *(Vilnius University*)
Expert in Healthcare and Long-term care
Email: laimaz@ktl.mii.lt

National coordination: Arunas Poviliunas

LUXEMBOURG

Jozef Pacolet *(Research Institute for Work and Society, Catholic University Leuven*)
Expert in Healthcare, Long-term care and Pensions
Email: jozef.pacolet@kuleuven.be

Hugo Swinnen *(Independent social policy researcher)*
Expert in Social inclusion
Email: hswinnen@home.nl

National coordination: Hugo Swinnen

FYR of MACEDONIA

Dragan Gjorgjev *(Institute of Public Health and Public Health Department at the Medical Faculty)*
Expert in Healthcare and Long-term care
Email: dgjorgjev@gmail.com

Maja Gerovska Mitev *(Institute of Social Work and Social Policy, Faculty of Philosophy, Ss. Cyril and Methodius University)*
Expert in Social inclusion and Pensions
Email: gerovska@fzf.ukim.edu.mk

National coordination: Maja Gerovska Mitev

MALTA

Rose Marie Azzopardi (*University of Malta*)
Expert in Healthcare and Pensions
Email: rose.m.azzopardi@um.edu.mt

Mario Vassallo (*University of Malta*)
Expert in Social inclusion, Healthcare and Long-term care
Email: mario.vassallo@um.edu.mt

National coordination: Mario Vassallo

NETHERLANDS

Karen M. Anderson (*Radboud University Nijmengen*)
Expert in Pensions and Long-term care
Email: k.anderson@fm.ru.nl

Marieke Blommesteijn (*Regioplan Policy Research*)
Expert in Social inclusion
Email: Marieke.blommesteijn@regioplan.nl

Katrien de Vaan (*Regioplan Policy Research*)
Expert in Healthcare and support
Email: Katrien.de.vaan@regioplan.nl

National coordination: Marieke Blommesteijn

NORWAY

Axel West Pedersen (*Institute for Social Research*)
Expert in Social inclusion and Pensions
Email: awp@samfunnsforskning.no

Anne Skevik Grødem (*Institute for Social Research*)
Expert in Social inclusion
Email: a.s.grodem@samfunnsforskning.no

Marijke Veenstra *(Norwegian Social Research - NOVA*)
Expert in Healthcare and Long-term care
Email: mve@nova.no

National coordination: Axel West Pedersen

POLAND

Agnieszka Chłoń-Domińczak (*Warsaw School of Economics – SGH and Educational Research Institute*)
Expert in Pensions and Social inclusion
Email: Agnieszka.Chlon@gmail.com

Agnieszka Sowa (*Institute of Labour and Social Affairs and Centre for Social and Economic Research, CASE Foundation*)
Expert in Healthcare and Long-term care
Email: Agnieszka.Sowa@case.com.pl.

Irena Topińska (*Centre for Social and Economic Research, CASE Foundation*)
Expert in Social inclusion and Pensions
Email: irena.topinska@case.com.pl

National coordination: Irena Topińska

PORTUGAL

Isabel Baptista (*Centro de Estudos para a Intervenção Social - CESIS*)
Expert in Social inclusion
Email: Isabel.baptista@cesis.org

Céu Mateus (*Division of Health Research, Lancaster University, Furness College*)
Expert in Healthcare
Email: ceum@ensp.unl.pt

Heloísa Perista (*Centro de Estudos para a Inclusão Social - CESIS*)
Expert in Social inclusion and Pensions
Email: heloisa.perista@cesis.org

Maria de Lourdes Quaresma (*Centro de Estudos para a Intervenção Social - CESIS*)
Expert in Long-term care and Pensions
Email: mlurdes.quaresma@gmail.com

National coordination: Isabel Baptista

ROMANIA

Dana Otilia Farcasanu *(Foundation Centre for Health Policies and Services*)
Expert in Healthcare (insurance and policies)
Email: dfarcasanu@cpss.ro

Luana Pop (*Faculty of Sociology and Social Work, University of Bucharest*)
Expert in Social inclusion
Email: Luana.pop@gmail.com

Daniela Urse (Pescaru) (*Faculty of Sociology and Social Work, University of Bucharest)*
Expert in Pensions
Email: daniela_pescaru@yahoo.com

Valentin Vladu (*Community Care Foundation*)
Expert in Long-term care
Email: valentin_vladu@yahoo.com

National coordination: Luana Pop

SERBIA

Jurij Bajec *(Faculty of Economics)*
Expert in Social inclusion and Pensions
Email: jbajec@ekof.bg.ec.ra

Ljiljana Stokic Pejin *(Economics Institute Belgrade)*
Expert in Social inclusion, Healthcare and Long-term care
Email: ljiljana.pejin@ecinst.org.rs

National coordination: Ljiljana Stokic Pejin

SLOVAKIA

Rastislav Bednárik (*Institute for Labour and Family Research*)
Expert in Pensions and Long-term care
Email: Rastislav.Bednarik@ivpr.gov.sk

Andrea Madarasová Gecková *(P.J. Safarik University in Kosice)*
Expert in Healthcare and Long-term care
Email: andrea.geckova@upjs.sk

Daniel Gerbery (*Comenius University*)
Expert in Social inclusion
Email: daniel.gerbery@gmail.com

National coordination: Daniel Gerbery

SLOVENIA

Boris Majcen *(Institute for Economic Research*)
Expert in Pensions
Email: majcenb@ier.si

Valentina Prevolnik Rupel (*Institute for Economic Research*)
Expert in Healthcare and Long-term care
Email: rupelv@ier.si

Nada Stropnik (*Institute for Economic Research*)
Expert in Social inclusion
Email: stropnikn@ier.si

National coordination: Nada Stropnik

SPAIN

Ana Arriba González de Durana *(University of Alcalá)*
Expert in Social inclusion
Email: ana.arriba@uah.es

Gregorio Rodríguez Cabrero *(University of Alcalá)*
Expert in Social inclusion, Long-term care and Pensions
Email: gregorio.rodriguez@uah.es

Vicente Marbán Gallego (*University of Alcalá)*
Expert in Long-term care
Email: vicente.marban@uah.es

Francisco Javier Moreno Fuentes (*IPP-CSIC)*
Expert in Healthcare
Email: javier.moreno@cchs.csic.es

Julia Montserrat Codorniu *(Centre of Social Policy Studies)*
Expert in Long-term care and Pensions
Email: jmontserratc@gmail.com

National coordination: Gregorio Rodríguez Cabrero

SWEDEN

Johan Fritzell (*Stockholm University and Karolinska Institutet*)
Expert in Social inclusion and Healthcare
Email: johan.fritzell@ki.se

Björn Halleröd (*University of Gothenburg*)
Expert in Social inclusion
Email: Bjorn.hallerod@gu.se

Joakim Palme (*Uppsala University*)
Expert in Pensions
Email: Joakim.Palme@statsvet.uu.se

Pär Schön (*Stockholm University and Karolinska Institutet*)
Expert in Long-term care
Email: par.schon@ki.se

National coordination: Björn Halleröd

SWITZERLAND

Giuliano Bonoli *(Institut de Hautes Etudes en Administration Publique - IDHEAP*)
Expert in Social inclusion, Healthcare, Long-term care and Pensions
Email: giuliano.bonoli@unil.ch

Cyrielle Champion *(University of Lausanne*)
Expert in Social inclusion
Email: cyrielle.champion@unil.ch

Philipp Trein *(University of Lausanne*)
Expert in Healthcare and Long-term care
Email: josephphilipp.trein@unil.ch

National coordination: Giuliano Bonoli

TURKEY

Fikret Adaman *(Bogazici University)*
Expert in Social inclusion and Healthcare
Email: adaman@boun.edu.tr

Dilek Aslan *(Hacettepe University)*
Expert in Long-term care
Email: diaslan@hacettepe.edu.tr

Bekir Burcay Erus (*Bogazici University)*
Expert in Social inclusion and Healthcare
Email: burcay.erus@boun.edu.tr

Serdar Sayan (*TOBB Economics and Technology University)*
Expert in Pensions
Email: serdar.sayan@etu.edu.tr

National coordination: Fikret Adaman

UNITED KINGDOM

Fran Bennett (*University of Oxford)*
Expert in Social inclusion
Email: fran.bennett@dsl.pipex.com; fran.bennett@spi.ox.ac.uk

Jonathan Bradshaw *(University of York)*
Expert in Social inclusion and Pensions
Email: Jonathan.bradshaw@york.ac.uk

Caroline Glendinning (*University of York)*
Expert in Long-term care
Email: caroline.glendinning@york.ac.uk

Alan Maynard (*University of York)*
Expert in Healthcare
Email: Alan.maynard@york.ac.uk

National coordination: Jonathan Bradshaw

Annex 3 Countries' official abbreviations

A. EU countries

EU countries prior to 2004, 2007 and 2013 Enlargements (EU-15)		EU countries that joined in 2004, 2007 or 2013	
BE	Belgium	***2004 Enlargement***	
DK	Denmark	**CZ**	Czech Republic
DE	Germany	**EE**	Estonia
IE	Ireland	**CY**	Cyprus
EL	Greece	**LV**	Latvia
ES	Spain	**LT**	Lithuania
FR	France	**HU**	Hungary
IT	Italy	**MT**	Malta
LU	Luxembourg	**PL**	Poland
NL	The Netherlands	**SI**	Slovenia
AT	Austria	**SK**	Slovakia
PT	Portugal		
FI	Finland	***2007 Enlargement***	
SE	Sweden	**BG**	Bulgaria
UK	United Kingdom	**RO**	Romania
		2013 Enlargement	
		HR	Croatia

In EU averages, countries are weighted by their population sizes.

B. Non-EU countries covered by the ESPN

Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (MK), Iceland (IS), Liechtenstein (LI), Norway (NO), Serbia (RS), Switzerland (CH), Turkey (TR).

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