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**REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE
COUNCIL AND THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE**

**EURES Activity Report 2006 – 2008 presented by the Commission in accordance with
Article 19 (3) of Regulation (EEC) No 1612/68**

"Towards a single European labour market: the contribution of EURES"

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(Text with EEA relevance)

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1. INTRODUCTION

EURES (European Employment Services) is a well-established European network which aims to promote worker mobility. It comprises the European Commission and the public employment services (PES) of the Member States of the European Economic Area¹, plus Switzerland, and their social partner organisations. Its services have been available to all citizens in the countries covered by the network for some 15 years. During this time EURES has facilitated geographical labour mobility by addressing the fragmentation of information on the availability of labour, vacancies, living and working conditions, as well as education and training opportunities.

Freedom of movement is often considered to be one of the most important – but least used – of the four fundamental freedoms guaranteed by EU law since 1957. The Lisbon Strategy and the European Employment Strategy (EES), which introduced employment as an issue of common concern, both require the elimination of obstacles to mobility and an increase in labour mobility in the EU. The EU Common Principles of Flexicurity provide an overarching framework for current and future employment and mobility strategies, with a particular focus on easing the transition between jobs. In the Communication on New Skills for New Jobs², promotion of mobility and a better match between peoples' skills and job opportunities are to be achieved by the removal of obstacles to the free movement of workers in the EU, as well as more transparent information on labour market trends and skills requirements. The Communication on addressing labour shortages through migration in EU Member States which the Commission will present in 2011 will look at whether migration from outside the EU is part of the answer to labour shortages in certain sectors and labour market challenges due to demographic trends.

The performance of EURES in the period 2006-2008 is assessed in this report on the basis of the findings in the external evaluation report of the EURES network carried out in 2009. The report is structured into four main parts: section 2 deals with the strategic objectives of the EURES network, section 3 with the EURES delivery mechanisms, and section 4 with the service provision of the network; lastly, section 5 looks at the challenges ahead.

2. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES FOR EURES

In the period 2006-2008 the strategic objectives for EURES have been to promote mobility of workers and reduce barriers to mobility by contributing to the development of a European labour market that is open and accessible for all, ensuring the transnational, inter-regional and cross-border exchange of vacancies and job applications, and ensuring transparency and information exchange. The following section explores the outcomes and impact of EURES activities in terms of the difference EURES has made for beneficiaries.

2.1. Outcome of EURES activities

EURES contributes to the development of a European labour market that is open and accessible for all. This is ensured by the provision of labour market information, information

¹ The EU Member States, plus Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein

² COM(2008) 868 final

on living and working conditions and a job matching service via the EURES adviser network and the EURES Job Mobility Portal.

The service offered by the network reflects the clients' needs, whether it is mediated or not. Mediation is provided through the adviser network which offers information to employers, jobseekers and job changers and facilitates job matching. The adviser network comprises two levels: qualified professionals, who act as information and job-brokers across Europe, and EURES assistants who support the qualified professionals and also play a crucial role in service delivery. The unmediated service is provided through the EURES portal.

Clients access and use the information on the portal to make their decisions. Jobseekers and those wishing to change jobs who were in contact with a EURES adviser while looking for a job, were more likely to receive a job offer than those simply accessing the Job Mobility Portal. The EURES adviser network therefore adds value to the services provided by the portal.

The exchange of vacancies throughout Europe is facilitated by the service provided on the portal and through the adviser network. Evidence suggests that employers recruit via EURES and individuals access jobs via EURES. Around 20% of jobseekers and job changers have received a job via EURES and just under half of these have received a job corresponding to their skill level.³

In many countries, EURES contributes to the achievement of PES objectives by helping to reduce unemployment and by promoting worker mobility. In addition, efforts have been made to integrate it into mainstream PES provision. However, the mainstreaming of EURES is not a one-off task, but should be seen as an ongoing process. The mainstreaming of EURES in PES could be improved. The section below outlines how EURES is adding value to the promotion of mobility for workers.

2.2. Impacts of EURES activities

EURES has a role to play in moving towards the goals of sustained economic growth and social cohesion by facilitating the match between jobseekers and job changers and employers through providing information, advice, guidance and mediated exchange to individuals to enable them to exercise their right of free movement in the EU.

In the period 2006-2008, EURES was relevant both to the EES and to the Lisbon goals of sustained economic growth and greater social cohesion. However, the first explicit references to it in key policy texts only appeared from 2007 onwards (Job Mobility Action Plan and New Skills for New Jobs Communication)

Furthermore, EURES has a socio-economic dimension to it, thus providing a link to Guideline 19 of the EES as a mechanism that delivers job search assistance and job matching to

³ The external evaluators carried out surveys with jobseekers and job changers and employers. These surveys show that the job vacancies database has facilitated job matching. For example, 6,344 jobseekers and job changers (65.8% of respondents) reported that they have either applied for vacancies of interest or posted their CV on EURES. A total of 1,283 people (20.2% of jobseekers and job changers) reported having received a job via EURES, and just under half of these (609) identified that the resulting job corresponded to their skill level.

facilitate labour market integration⁴. Through its brokerage role and the information it collects and delivers on living and working conditions, including social security, tax and insurance, EURES can help individuals overcome real and potential barriers to mobility.

Guideline 19 also creates a link between EURES and the Flexicurity agenda, insofar as it has the potential to reduce or minimise transitions between jobs. EURES is a tool that helps individuals in the process of their search for a job. Hence it can be considered to be helping to minimise transitions between and into jobs.

3. THE EURES DELIVERY MECHANISMS

The Public Employment Services at central, regional and local levels ensure the delivery of EURES services. In the EURES cross-border partnerships those services are delivered in conjunction with partners organisations such as Trade Unions, Employers Organizations, Chambers of Commerce, etc. In practical terms, the services of the EURES network are delivered by the EURES advisers and other relevant staff of the EURES members and the partner organisations involved. The following section focuses on the human and financial resources allocated to EURES, the EURES training provision and the mainstreaming of EURES into PES. A specific sub-part is dedicated to cross-border partnerships.

3.1. EURES is supporting a fundamental right with insufficient financial resources

The EU has steadily increased its investment in EURES over time. At EUR 21 million, the budget for 2007-2008 was almost EUR 4 million higher than in 2005-2006. Some of this increase is due to the expansion of the network, with Bulgaria and Romania joining the EU in 2007.

Almost three quarters of the total Commission funding for EURES is allocated to members for the delivery of the activities identified in their activity plans. The remainder of the available funding is used for the EURES Job Mobility Portal, EU-level training, the EURES helpdesk and other support activities, such as communication support, translation services and publications.

In general, the funding structure for EURES has been successful, but it also has shortcomings. Grant consumption is running at approximately 75%, with the result that an average of 25% of the available funding allocated to members was unspent each year during the period 2006-2008. Factors that contribute to underspending are unsupported activities, administrative requirements to justify expenditure and when the resources are actually received.

The budget allocated to EURES is fairly small compared to total programme funding in the employment field, both at the EU level and relative to total PES expenditure in the member countries. The financial resources allocated by the EURES members are more than three times the budgeted resources provided by the Commission and four times the eligible expenses. This means that the funding made available by EURES members is essential in terms of delivering EURES services.

⁴ As part of the European Employment Strategy, Guideline 19 in the 2008–10 Employment Guidelines refers to EURES's contribution to the policy objectives in the field of employment and links EURES to the flexicurity agenda, in terms of managing transitions between and into jobs.

Budget commitments and payments 2006 – 2008

	2006	2007	2008
commitments	16 420 284,55	18 370 275,72	20 802 275,36
payments	11 636 119,76	14 546 709,36	14 738 651,59

3.2. EURES is built on a strong human network

Across the member countries there is a network of 851 advisers in place to deliver EURES services to jobseekers, job changers, the unemployed and employers. The number of advisers in each country varies, with half of all advisers working in six countries: Belgium, Germany, Spain, France, Italy, and Sweden.

EURES advisers are PES employees who are assigned at local, regional and national level within their PES organisation. They spend on average 75% of their working time on EURES⁵. In 2008 they recorded over a million contacts (1 093 998) with jobseekers, job-changers and employers, which makes an average of 1 286 individual contacts per adviser. 86% of these contacts were with jobseekers and job changers. The ratio of advisers to registered employers and jobseekers varies, but on average there are 424 jobseekers and 20 employers per adviser.

Job search has always been the most common topic discussed through the adviser contacts. On average, 41.2 % of the contacts focussed on this issue in the period 2006-2008. The second most common topic was general information on EURES, discussed in some 17.1% of the contacts during the same period. The third most common topic was recruitment, which was discussed in some 15.1% of the contacts in this period.

General Information on EURES	Job search	Recruitment	Social security and taxation	Education and training	Living and working conditions	Other general information and advice
17.1%	41.2%	15.1%	10.1%	1.9%	8.3%	6%

The network is also supported by EURES assistants, with over half of the member countries also employing assistants to support the advisers and deliver EURES services. The human network directly associated with the delivery of EURES services is therefore much bigger than the adviser network alone.

By and large, the level of human resources employed to deliver the EURES service seems adequate to meet the needs of jobseekers, job changers and employers, although additional resources will be required if EURES is to evolve to accommodate new services.

3.3. Training of EURES personnel is vital in order to ensure a professional network

EURES training consists of two components: in-country training and European level training. In-country training comprises a range of different activities, including pre-training, which is a

⁵ The EURES Charter (OJ C 106, 3.5.2003, p. 3) states that the EURES advisers are to work at least for half the time of a regular full-time equivalent on EURES tasks, the rest of the time being devoted to tasks in their national PES.

prerequisite for new advisers before they attend the European level ‘Initial Training’ course and conference.

In the period 2006-08, European-level training was delivered by a private contractor, which provided around 20 individual training courses each year. The training offer was a mix of beginners’ and advanced courses and delivered training for EURES advisers and their line managers. For the various training courses EURES advisers and managers were hired as trainers and worked with the contractor's team.

The training offered is vital to ensuring that the network is professional and operates efficiently and effectively. In general terms, training delivered at the European level and in-country training are complementary, with the former concentrating on theory and the latter on practical issues.

3.4. Towards mainstreaming of EURES in PES

The EURES guideline clearly identifies the priority need to step up the mainstreaming of EURES in PES⁶. This has already produced results showing that the majority of members have made progress. Members have established a clear allocation of staff resources to EURES, time spent on EURES is respected and acknowledged, and there is in-house training of EURES staff and awareness raising for other frontline staff. Between 75% and 100% of frontline advisers in around half of the member countries have received training on EURES.

By integrating EURES into PES services, EURES contributes to the achievement of the PES objectives of reducing unemployment and promoting mobility. Despite efforts made by the PES on the mainstreaming and integrating of EURES, the results of this work differ between the various PES.

3.5. EURES cross-border partnerships

The EURES network has an important role to play in cross-border regions, where EURES advisers provide information and advice to cross-border workers and employers wishing to recruit from the other side of the border. Commuters need assistance with information about insurance, taxes, the social system, education, self-employment etc.

Job-search was the most common issue discussed by cross-border advisers, with an average of 34.6% of contacts focusing on this topic in the period 2007 to 2008. The second most important issue discussed was social security and taxation, with an average of 24.8% of contacts covering this topic during the same period. The third most important issue discussed was general information on EURES, with an average of 12.6% of contacts covering this topic during the same period.

⁶ EURES activities carried out by members and partners are based on a set of guidelines applicable for a three year period.

General Information on EURES	Job search	Recruitment	Social security and taxation	Education and training	Living and working conditions	Other general information and advice
12.6%	34.6%	8.4%	24.8%	3.2%	9.1%	7%

In the period 2006-2008, a total of 22 EURES cross-border partnerships (CBP) were involved in the delivery of EURES services and made a vital contribution to the development of EURES activities. Most EURES CBPs are located in central-western Europe, with nine CBPs in Germany and six in France⁷. As well as the activities delivered by cross-border partnerships, almost all EURES members undertake some form of cross-border activities outside the scope of the existing partnerships.

The location of EURES CBPs corresponds largely to this pattern of commuting. The number of commuters has increased in the past few years. According to one study, around 780 000 people were cross-border commuters in 2006-2007 in the EEA/Switzerland. For the EU-15, between 1999-2000 and 2006-2007 their number increased by 26%. Most of the commuting activities are concentrated in the central-western region of Europe. The main destinations are Switzerland, Luxembourg, Germany, the Netherlands, Austria and Belgium. These countries receive around three quarters of all commuters. The main countries of origin are France, Germany and Belgium, which account for approximately 60 % of all EU outgoing commuters.

The cross-border partnerships have improved the visibility of EURES and have established a wide range of activities to provide information to jobseekers, job changers, commuters and employers in cross-border regions.

4. EURES SERVICE PROVISION

The EURES network assists jobseekers, job changers and the unemployed, as well as employers, through the delivery of a range of services via the EURES Job Mobility Portal and the EURES adviser network. These include direct job matching assistance and indirect job matching assistance by providing information on the labour market situation and information on living and working conditions in other EEA countries, plus Switzerland.

4.1. EURES as a mechanism for job matching

The EURES Job Mobility Portal has played an important role in disseminating information on opportunities for jobseekers, job changers and the unemployed, as well as for employers. Through the portal, jobseekers, job changers and the unemployed have access to job search and an opportunity to publish a CV, while employers have access to CV search and an opportunity to publish vacancies.

⁷ See the Annex to this report for the number of cross-border partnerships in which a country participates.

Overview of registered jobseeker on the EURES portal per country 2006-2008:

Country	Number of jobseekers	Country	Number of jobseekers
Belgium	9,671	Netherlands	5,092
Czech Republic	11,396	Austria	3,551
Denmark	2,379	Poland	25,040
Germany	21,185	Portugal	22,724
Estonia	4,413	Romania	18,090
Ireland	3,854	Slovenia	2,588
Greece	6,091	Slovakia	3,923
Spain	50,923	Finland	4,123
France	16,524	Sweden	4,966
Italy	49,307	United Kingdom	10,824
Latvia	5,767	Norway	2,497
Lithuania	4,526	Switzerland	2,283
Hungary	12,744		

The portal is appreciated by both groups of users, who clearly see the benefit in being able to access – or post – information on vacancies across the EEA territory. According to an online survey among users, the CV set-up function is the most useful of the EURES services for jobseekers and job changers. Among employers who placed a job advert, 19% had offered a job to one or more applicants and just under half of those applicants have obtained a job corresponding to their skill level. Almost 70% of jobseekers and job changers have either applied for vacancies of interest or posted their CV on the portal. The portal has thus made job matching easier, with jobseekers and job changers having found jobs and employers having filled vacancies. This can be further improved through the synergy, currently under development, with the widely used Europass CV online tool.

However, there are several aspects of the portal that could be improved in order to increase the effectiveness of job matching via EURES. These include technical aspects such as improved functionalities, as well as the type and quality of information inputted. The responsibility for providing updated information and ensuring the quality of vacancies posted on the portal lies with the EURES members.

The human network of EURES advisers adds value to the already existing information available on the portal, especially when it comes to their knowledge and experience of topics such as taxation or the recognition of qualifications. Some of the main benefits of the adviser network appear to be their assistance in helping clients to navigate on the portal themselves,

especially aimed at people with low IT skills, their knowledge of the portal, and also in speeding up the job search process. The vast majority of users consider that the EURES advisers are very helpful and provide high quality services. However, their work could be made easier by ensuring the proper functioning of the portal, integration of EURES into PES and intensification of contacts with employers.

In addition to the adviser network and the Job Mobility Portal, a number of other types of activities are carried out in order to promote job matching; these include job fairs and other recruitment events, information sessions and meetings, for instance with employers, and promotion activities. Job fairs and recruitment events seem to be successful as far as job matching is concerned. In the period 2006-2008, more than 11 000 successful job-matches took place at 248 events. In addition, a further 15 000 job outcomes were registered by the EURES network in the same period.

5. CHALLENGES AHEAD AND OUTLOOK

The pace of change on the European labour markets, triggered by the effects of the economic crisis, and the overall modernisation of PES are the main challenges for EURES in the coming years. In order to address these changes, a stronger development of EURES is needed. EURES has to be further developed as a results oriented network, demonstrating its added value for the client groups and the PES. The Monti report acknowledges that the EURES network is a success story⁸. Compared to other Commission networks, EURES has a significantly stronger focus on employment opportunities and is also the only one providing a specific job-matching service.

EURES must maintain its strong role as an instrument for promoting mobility. This means that the regular information and advice tasks will still remain. However, in order to address the real needs of the EURES clients and provide measurable outcomes, EURES must be re-positioned as a key tool to improve matching between jobseekers and vacancies throughout Europe by focusing on matching and placement for all legally resident workers and jobseekers who have the right to work in another EU country, thereby becoming an instrument at the service of the European Employment Strategy.

PES need to further include EURES in its service delivery package and client contacts and to use the expertise of the EURES advisers to further mainstream and integrate the European dimension in all relevant activities. PES should integrate the EURES service offer within their front line service offer, as well as in their rapid response schemes, to further help employers and workers cope with change.

In the future, EURES will offer more personalised mobility assistance to jobseekers, employers, workers, apprentices and university graduates. Achieving a better balance of vacancies and applications for employment must be the main goal of EURES. Mobility within the EEA and Switzerland has to be made an attractive option.

⁸ M. Monti, A New Strategy for the Single Market, 9 May 2010, p. 59.

To allow EURES to meet these challenges, several initiatives have already been set in motion or are under evaluation:

- Develop a standard multilingual dictionary of occupations and skills to enhance the quality and transparency of vacancy information and improve matching between jobseekers and vacancies. Effective matching of skills, jobs and learning opportunities on the European labour market can only be achieved if there is a common multilingual classification of skills, competencies and occupations. The name of this multilingual dictionary is European Skills, Competencies and Occupations (ESCO).
- Create a "match and map" function which offers a user-friendly, transparent online service for citizens, providing qualitative information on occupations, skills, learning and training opportunities across the EU. This function will be part of EURES and linked to the Ploteus and Euraxess portals, and will provide clear geographical mapping of the job offers matching a user's profile, feedback on why jobs and skills do not match, and information on learning opportunities.
- Establish a European Labour Market Monitor with periodic, up-to-date information on short-term trends on the European labour market. This will improve data collection in order to identify and anticipate surpluses and shortages on labour markets better and analyse mobility flows. This would allow workers or jobseekers with the relevant skills and qualifications to know where they had a good chance of a job.
- Modernise the EURES Job Mobility Portal by adding more interactive sections. This is intended to be the European Union's largest employment website with graphic presentations, a link to the Europass CV creation tool and a more user-friendly CV search functionality, a social networking section for jobseekers and a virtual job fair. The revamped portal will also have a section specifically dedicated to young graduates, which will bridge the gap between academia and business, and support matching and job placement for young people.
- Work is also ongoing to create a scheme entitled "Your first EURES job": this scheme is designed to financially support mobility among young people across Europe in their efforts to enter the labour market.
- Establish systematic cooperation mechanisms with other EU networks by finding synergies or appropriate ways of working together.

ANNEX
to the EURES Activity Report 2006-2008

Statistics on the use of the European Job Mobility Portal

Table 1: Number of visits at the EURES Job Portal per month 2007-2008

Month	Visitors
Apr.-07	746 434
May-07	807 962
June-07	778 391
July-07	825 436
Aug.-07	787 524
Sept.-07	862 158
Oct.-07	974 595
Nov.-07	925 574
Dec.-07	835 674
Jan.-08	1 382 187
Feb.-08	1 360 996
Mar.-08	1 575 820
Apr.-08	1 975 491
May-08	1 486 182
June-08	1 305 630
July-08	1 277 264
Aug.-08	1 227 002
Sept.-08	1 545 773
Oct.-08	1 619 020
Nov.-08	1 539 167
Dec.-08	1 206 529

Graph 1: Number of visits at the EURES Job Portal per month 2007-2010

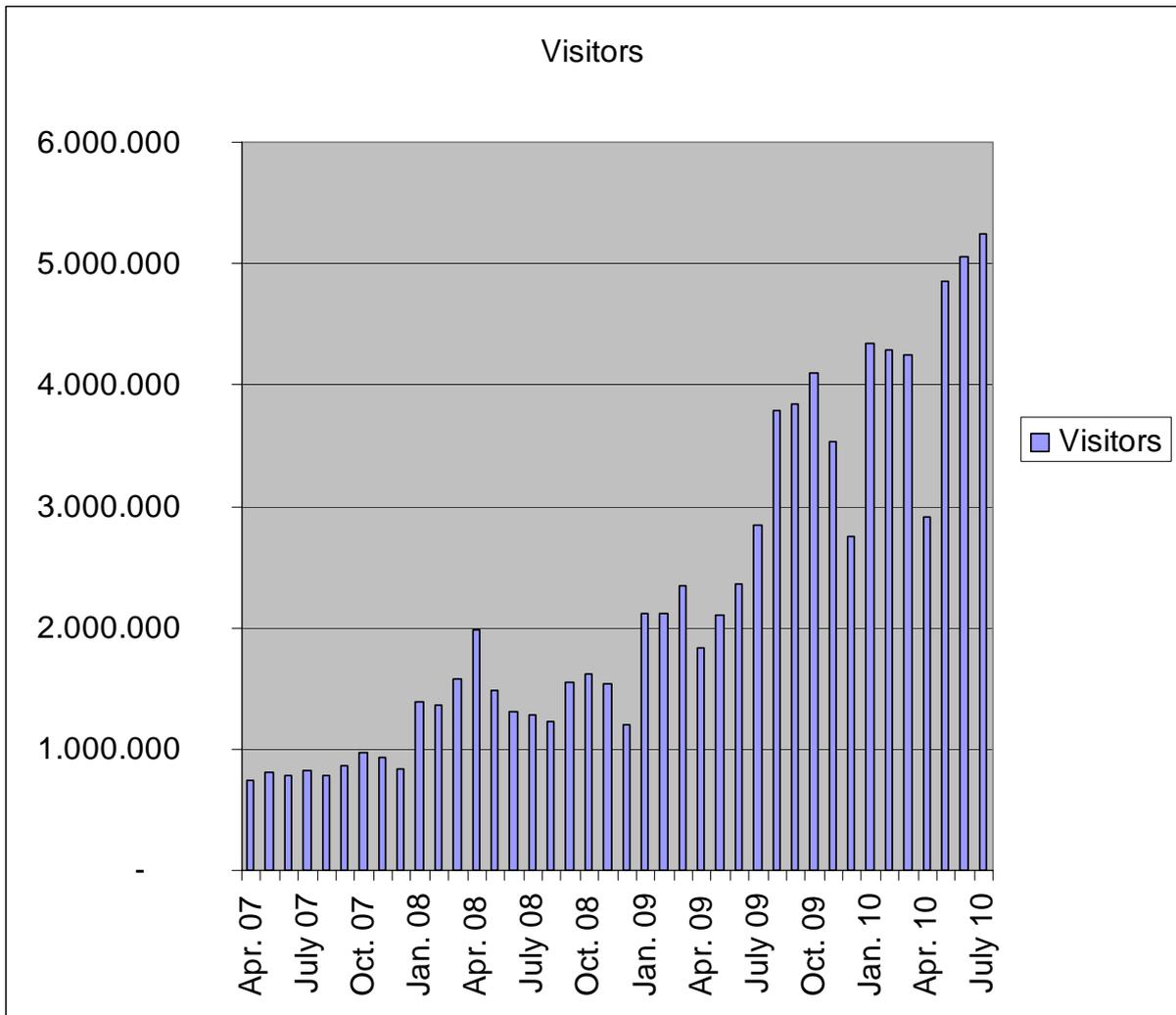


Table 2: Number of EURES cross-border partnerships (CBP) in which a country participates

Country	Number of EURES CBP
Belgium	4
Czech Republic	2
Denmark	2
Germany	9
Spain	2
France	6
Italy	3
Luxembourg	2
Hungary	1
The Netherlands	4
Austria	3
Poland	1
Portugal	1
Slovenia	1
Slovakia	2
Finland	1
Sweden	2
United Kingdom	2
Switzerland	3
Lichtenstein	1