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COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE EVALUATION

Accompanying the document

Proposal for a
DECISION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL
amending Decision No 573/2014/EU on enhanced cooperation between Public
Employment Services (PES)

{COM(2019) 620 final} - {SWD(2019) 1350 final}

This staff-working document presents the main findings of the evaluation of the Network of European Public Employment Services. The evaluation assesses the state of play and degree of implementation of the Decision establishing the Network and evaluates whether the Network has fulfilled its legal obligations and achieved its objectives. It also draws conclusions and provides for lessons learnt which can shed light on possible future cooperation between European public employment services (PES) post-2020.

1. Context

Decision No 573/2014/EU of the European Parliament and Council on enhanced cooperation between Public Employment Services ('the Decision') establishes the European Network of Public Employment Services ('the Network') from 17 June 2014 until 31 December 2020. The Network brings together the PES of all EU Member States, Norway and Iceland and the European Commission.

The Network has been set up to contribute to the European employment strategy to create more and better jobs throughout the EU, as an integral part of the Europe 2020 growth strategy. The relevant chapters of the European Pillar of Social Rights, which was proclaimed by the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission in 2017, have also become guiding in setting the Network's initiatives and actions. The Network promotes cooperation among PES, and helps them boost their performance and prepare for future labour market challenges. It implements an EU-wide benchmarking initiative (combining benchmarking and mutual learning), aimed at strengthening PES capacity, effectiveness and efficiency. It does so by providing a platform for comparing PES performance at European level, identifying good practices and establishing a mutual learning system.

This evaluation is not required by the Decision, but in the interest of good administration and in line with the 'evaluate first' principle¹, it is undertaken to take into account the lessons from past EU action and to better design future interventions after 2020.

2. Scope

The timeframe for the evaluation covers the period from June 2014 until July 2018, while some of the evaluation sources (such as the 2018 annual report) cover a full calendar year. Assessment activities included consultation (public consultation, targeted consultations, evaluation workshop, case studies), along with desk research and an external study. Targeted stakeholders included representatives from the 32 PES involved in the Network, relevant EU-level organisations and bodies (such as EMCO, EU-level private employment services and temporary work agencies, the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network), relevant international organisations (such as the ILO, OECD, the World Bank, the World Association of Public Employment Services (WAPES)), the PES Secretariat, contractors, former members of the PES Network or those involved with PES cooperation before 2014.

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/law-making-process/planning-and-proposing-law/better-regulation-why-and-how_en

3. Main findings and lessons learnt

The evaluation covers the five criteria set out by the Better Regulation requirements, namely relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence and EU added value.

The Decision remains highly **relevant** for PES. The Network's objectives and initiatives, as outlined in Articles 3 and 4 of the Decision, encompass the key areas of PES responsibility and provide a robust framework for the policy and concrete activities of the Network. By providing a broad framework for Network activities, the objectives enable a flexible approach to addressing priorities for action related to labour market developments.

The evaluation demonstrates that the Network has been **effective** in delivering on its objectives and initiatives. The Network has proven that it is an effective vehicle to support national PES in the individual challenges they face and to foster European cooperation. In particular, the benchlearning initiative serves as a fruitful example of an EU shared tool promoting comparability, learning and maturity among the PES.

Some Network activities are difficult to quantify, and 4 years is a short period to realise certain gains and make all of them visible, such as changes in organisational culture. However, the willingness of PES to participate in benchlearning and mutual learning, as well as positive feedback from PES demonstrate that the Network outputs are highly **efficient**.

The evaluation shows that there is a **good degree of coherence** between the Decision and the EU policy framework (for instance with concrete policy initiatives, such as the recommendations on the Youth Guarantee and the integration of long-term unemployed in the labour market). No duplication of policy actions were identified. The Network has demonstrated flexibility to target new topics, such as the integration of migrants and refugees, the prevention of unemployment and skills shortages. The Network also supports national PES in the implementation of country-specific recommendations addressed to Member States in the context of the European Semester on active labour market policies and PES issues.

An **added value** of the PES Network has been a structured framework for assessing PES performance and capacity and for facilitating comparisons, peer learning and improvements. The evaluation demonstrates several other results of the Decision that would not have been achieved by voluntary cooperation of national PES. Some important achievements are greater ownership, the provision of individual PES learning and collective mutual learning, ensuring a collective voice and a formal platform in policy-making at EU level, and contributions to the EU2020 objectives.

Overall, the evaluation shows that the Decision has been **successfully implemented** and some **lessons learnt** could be identified. Generally, less advanced PES have benefitted more from participating in the Network in terms of the progress they have made on performance, but advanced PES have also progressed. As potentials to further improve efficiency, the evaluation identifies some areas, such as focusing on smaller and more targeted learning events and the potential for further use of digital solutions. As key actors in the implementation of the European Social Fund, PES also play an active role in the development of a comprehensive strategy for a policy framework for active labour market policies within their respective Member States, thereby contributing to the effective and efficient spending of EU funds. The evaluation also demonstrates that financial, organisational and expert support from the EU level is essential to ensure the continuous participation of all PES.