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From:	Employment Committee
To:	Permanent Representatives Committee/Council
Subject:	Implementation of the Recommendation on the integration of the long-term unemployed into the labour market – Key Messages from the Employment Committee

With a view to the EPSCO Council on 20 June 2024, delegations will find attached Annex 1: the country-specific conclusions from the Employment Committee on the implementation of the Council Recommendation on the integration of the long-term unemployed into the labour market.

**EMCO PAG Review on Council Recommendation
on the integration of the long-term unemployed into the labour market**

**11-12 April 2024
Country specific conclusions
Final version 05 June 2024**

BELGIUM

Belgium has continued implementing the Council Recommendation. The LTU rate has reached a record low, close to the average EU rate but remains prominently high among vulnerable groups. However, regional differences persist, with higher figures for the unemployment rate and LTU share among the unemployed in Wallonia and the Brussels Capital Region. The results of the LTU data collection shows mixed results with low use of Job Integration Agreements while both exits from the JIA and follow up situations are positive. Overall, the four key areas of the Recommendation are well advanced, particularly Registration and SPOC. The steps taken by some regions to extend the single points of contact to the inactive population, particularly recipients of social and disability benefits and the long-term sick, are a positive development. In terms of building partnerships to support the integration of LTU into the labour market, all regions are making progress, albeit at different pace. Social partners are effectively involved and collaboration with local authorities, social insurance agencies and many other labour market actors is taking place, but to varying degrees among the Regions. Flanders appears to be the most advanced in the involvement of stakeholders and social partners, as well as employers, while in the German-speaking community and as it is already planned in the Brussels Capital Region the participation of all stakeholders, particularly social partners, could be positively enhanced. In Wallonia the zero long-term unemployed zone pilot project and another pilot "one-stop-shop" are ongoing and their efficacy could be usefully monitored and assessed.

BULGARIA

Bulgaria made progress in implementing the Recommendation on the integration of the LTUs in the labour market, but there is substantial room for improvements across several areas. The share of long-term unemployed in the overall unemployment remains very high. This calls for more targeted and sustainable interventions, notably in rural or remote areas, such as hiring specific staff and expanding the number of mediators for youth and Roma, as well as expanding the coverage of the service "Family Labour Consultant". More efforts should be dedicated to those lacking basic skills, including basic literacy and numeracy skills.

Bulgaria implemented measures to provide a single point of contact for the long-term unemployed and legislative measures to simplify their access to labour services. It has also been implementing the job integration agreements since 2018. Yet, the rate of LTUs getting a job integration agreement is still low, and reintegration of LTUs with JIA in the labour market remains difficult.

Extending the scope of cooperation with stakeholders, such as civil society organisations and local organisations (including social enterprises working with vulnerable groups) can be further explored. Expanding opportunities for training could improve the impact of active labour market policies, while direct job creation measures should be targeted at long-term unemployed jobseekers with lower education who have less prospect of quick integration in the primary labour market.

Rigorous and continuous evaluation should be carried out to assess if the measures taken are efficient. Overall, such analysis, done also with support by the social partners, should provide the background for future policy and strengthened partnerships.

CZECHIA

Czechia has taken steps to reinforce the implementation of the Council Recommendation and is performing well with regard to the long-term unemployment rate and with the share of LTU in total unemployment having been reduced more than the EU 27 average since 2016. The data collection shows that Job Integration Agreements are offered to a very large part of the long-term unemployed. Measures and programs have been implemented within active labour market policies. The “integration job”, a pilot program which provides wage subsidies to employers coupled with integration activities for the employee is promising. However, evaluation of its results is necessary after the completion of the program. Job integration agreements as well as the Labour Offices acting as the single point of contact appear to perform adequately.

The continuation of actions to prevent de-registration once the unemployment benefits end and to reach out to the economically inactive people is further encouraged, with specific focus on vulnerable groups, such as persons with disabilities, the Roma and low skilled. In this regard focus on fostering digital skills is advised, also in light of the digital transition of the economy and subsequent higher demand for digital skills on the labour market.

The role of social partners in the PES activities is encouraged; emphasis should be placed upon better integration of social services with ALMPs and improving data collection on the follow-up on the long-term unemployed and sharing that data among all the respective stakeholders.

DENMARK

Overall, Denmark is very advanced in the implementation of the Council Recommendation on integration of the long-term unemployed into the labour market.

Denmark has the lowest long-term unemployment (LTU) rate in the EU, and data show a very high capacity of effective and sustainable integration of the long-term unemployed in the labour market, underpinned by a nearly full implementation of the recommendation on providing LTUs with a Job Integration Agreements within 18 months of unemployment. The results of the LTU data collection shows that Denmark performs well on key LTU monitoring data.

Denmark has taken measures in recent years to strengthen the relations between the unemployed and the already well integrated employment and social services systems. Efforts have also been directed to strengthen reskilling and upskilling, including through financial incentives.

There is a good and well-established cooperation between stakeholders. National and local authorities, social partners and companies work together on combining labour market needs with customised upskill plans, so citizens can obtain both training and employment.

Room for possible improvements can be found in a stronger involvement of social economy enterprises, while differentiating between short-term or long-term unemployed in terms of job placement and job integration could be necessary if pressure on the employment services increases. Mentoring and post-placement support for a better integration of the long-term unemployed in the workplaces could be also considered.

GERMANY

Germany has continued taken steps to implement the Council Recommendation. The long-term unemployment rate is historically low in a context of well performing labour market. The results of the LTU data collection however shows a less positive situation than the EU 27 average on all key monitoring indicators in particular on the use of Job Integration Agreements. The labour market can rely on the very good PES system that proved to be flexible and capable to evolve and renovate

according to the needs of the labour market over time. Some room for improvement can be still seen in the participation rate of women in the labour market and the rate of in-work-poverty.

The four key areas of the Recommendation on LTU are well covered also due to the wide network of Jobcentres. As regards the establishment of partnerships to support the integration of LTU into the labour market the standing participation of the social partners in the board of the National Agency for Employment is particularly important. However, further strengthening of the cooperation between regional and local authorities, employers, and civil society organisations could be of help in providing interconnection for the integration of the long term unemployed into the labour market also through social enterprises. The initiatives specifically designed for unemployed refugees that have been recently launched both at national and local level are welcome.

ESTONIA

Estonia is progressing and showing good results in terms of implementing the Council Recommendation with both the long-term unemployment rate as well as the share of LTU in total unemployment being below the EU average. The result of the LTU data collection shows that Estonia remains above the EU 27 average on both the use of Job Integration Agreements and on exits from these. Progress has been made in terms of the infrastructure of the Public Employment Services, however challenges remain in information sharing due to GDPR issues. A number of active labour market policies (ALMP) is implemented, however more focus should be given on reaching the inactive population, the NEETs and specifically the low skilled, persons with disabilities and older people. To accomplish this goal, efforts need to continue to enhance and reinforce synergies among regional and local authorities, employers and civil society. There is room for improvement regarding stakeholder cooperation, i.e., adopting a proactive approach for collaboration with municipal social services and civil society organisations. The improvement of the functioning of the single points of contact is encouraged in order to effectively connect with the unemployed. Furthermore, the involvement of social partners could be strengthened in policy making and implementation.

IRELAND

Ireland has taken further steps to implement the Council Recommendation. The Irish labour market continues to perform well and both the long-term unemployment rate as well as the share of LTU is well below the EU average. The LTU data collection shows mixed results though influenced also by breaks in time-series. Young people, persons with disabilities and men are more affected by long term unemployment. The four areas of the Recommendation have been progressing over time. The registration in SPOC has been set up as well as the JIA. There are some specific measures and outreach activities for marginalised groups, but they are still facing significant barriers to employment, which are outside the scope of active labour market policies. The number of case officer specifically devoted to LTU has been increased. As regards partnerships and collaboration with stakeholders, several labour market actors are involved in the policy planning through the Labour Market Advisory Council. Local authorities, social services and employers are involved in consultative fora for the integration of vulnerable target groups. Social enterprises are involved in measures to integrate the most vulnerable groups including the long-term unemployed into the labour market. The efficiency of active labour market policies for the long-term unemployed could be further improved by strengthening local partnerships with social partners and employers encouraging the take up of recruitment subsidies and supports.

GREECE

Overall, Greece is making progress in implementing the Recommendation. Labour market conditions in Greece are gradually improving and the employment and activation measures implemented so far

start to show results. Important challenges have yet still to be addressed. Although significantly decreasing, the long-term unemployment rate, affecting in particular vulnerable groups, is well above the EU average as well as the share of LTU in total unemployment. The share of LTUs offered with a JIA remains lower than the EU average.

Further efforts are also needed in integrating guaranteed minimum income beneficiaries into the labour market and in activating vulnerable groups, such as young people, women and persons with disabilities. Better targeted measures, delivered in an integrated manner, together with a more effective outreach system, training programmes and social support measures, would be key to further reducing long-term unemployment rates, also with a view of tackling persisting shortages that affect the economy. Better integrating services, a stronger cooperation with social partners, including business associations and other stakeholders, such as Civil Society Organisations, at regional and local level, can help in designing and adjusting training opportunities for LTU to labour market needs and sectoral labour shortages.

Supporting further digitalisation developments and streamlining back-office processes could reduce administrative workload of DYPA, ensuring sufficient resources and time for more individualised support to LTU. Greece should continue efforts, including by channelling the available EU and national funding in the most effective measures, strengthening partnerships and continuing to improve the quality and the outcomes of labour market integration policies in the future.

SPAIN

Spain is making progress in addressing long-term unemployment through policy reforms and targeted intervention. Despite a downward trend, in Spain long-term unemployment remains a challenge. In 2023, Spain is among the Member States with the highest rate of long-term unemployment in the EU. The results of the LTU data collection are mixed with particularly low use of Job Integration Agreements. LTU affects in particular women, youth, elderly people, and lower-skilled workers. All the key areas of the Recommendation are in place although at a different degree. The new regulatory framework launched in 2023 has already introduced new services to be guaranteed by the PES. However, the effects of the reform will be visible further down the line. The PES are providing the JIA as Individual Employment Itinerary. SPOC are in place in the PES but coordination among the different services is still lacking. More effective ALMPs are crucial to reducing the number of LTU, especially the upskilling and activation policies would be of help. More effective hiring incentives could be introduced. As regards the cooperation with employers at local level this is still a challenge also because of the relevant regional disparities. The many investments in the framework of National Recovery and Resilience Plan are welcome especially those devoted specifically to LTU and to the strengthening of the role of civil society for the integration of vulnerable groups. Monitoring and assessment of these investments are expected.

FRANCE

France has made significant progress since the adoption of the Recommendation, with a significant decline of the share of long-term unemployed. The result of the LTU data collection shows that France performs well especially on the use of Job Integration Agreements. However, some regions and vulnerable groups are more affected by long-term unemployment. In this context, the recently introduced reforms of the public employment services and that of the minimum income could have a positive impact on the long-term unemployed situation provided that adequate means are allocated to the implementation of the new guidance methodology and to further support access of low-skilled to trainings leading to qualifications. The four key areas of the Recommendation are expected to improve as a result of the reform. It is important to continue the previous efforts. Measures have been previously taken to create partnerships and allow collaboration with the private sectors. Despite

positive results, there is still room for improvement. In the context of the reform of the public employment service, a better coordination of the different employment, vocational training, and social inclusion actors in the framework of the National Employment Committee and at local level would facilitate the integration of the long-term unemployed in the labour market. The Zero Long-Term-Unemployment Zones set up to tackle this problem should be further assessed and developed in line with the existing needs.

CROATIA

In Croatia the implementation of the LTU Recommendation has progressed significantly due to the increase in investments in active labour market policies and in the digitalisation of PES services. All four key areas of the Recommendation are well developed - the Job Integration Agreements (JIA) in particular. All these actions contributed to a record low LTU rate, below the EU average, while the use of JIAs as well as follow-up situations situates Croatia's performance above the EU 27 average. The introduction of the JOB+ programme supported by the ESF+ funds could further improve the condition of LTU on the labour market. As regards the creation of partnerships, the cooperation between the PES and the social partners is well established at national level. Still there is room for improvement for involving local and regional stakeholders as well as for more pro-active outreach strategies, implemented in cooperation with all relevant stakeholders, including social partners and civil society organisations for the best integration of the most vulnerable among LTU.

ITALY

Overall, Italy has achieved some progress is acknowledged in the implementation of the Council Recommendation. The Member State has maintained a high level of commitment to improve active labour market policies system and support to jobseekers, with a focus on the more vulnerable in the labour market, including the long-term unemployment in particular by advancing in the implementation of the GOL programme under the RRF. The labour market situation has improved, but significant challenges remain, particularly for the participation rate of women and young people. The long-term unemployment rate has declined since 2016 but remains about twice as high as the EU average and the share of long-term unemployed in total unemployment remains among the highest in the EU. Italy performs well on exits of JIA users, but the coverage of agreements is relatively low. Overall, further efforts are needed to promote social inclusion of vulnerable people.

Despite some positive experiences, the issue remains in Italy to improve multi-level coordination and public-private partnership, as well as involve local partners in establishing effective structures for formal stakeholders' cooperation with the view of enhancing active labour market policies and support to jobseekers, including to integrate LTU. Formalised cooperation between key stakeholders could also help in better identifying training needs to overcome skills mismatches and labour shortages, consolidating specialised skills overtime and articulating effective training strategies. As such, Italy should speed up the implementation of ESF+ programmes under the current programming period, in particular of the National Programme "Youth, Women and Jobs", which provides funds for the modernisation of PES. Overall, while some progress is acknowledged, Italy is encouraged to continue the implementation of the Council Recommendation, especially by promoting partnerships and stakeholder cooperation and by channelling available EU funding and national funding into the most effective measures.

CYPRUS

Cyprus made overall progress in implementing the Recommendation, in particular through its new ALMP strategy for 2023-2025 and upgrading its Public Employment Services. Labour market conditions

in Cyprus are gradually improving. Unemployment dropped below the EU average in 2023, in parallel with the share of LTUs in total unemployment. Cyprus provides very limited monitoring data within the framework of the LTU data collection. There are still important challenges regarding the activation of vulnerable groups, including young people not in employment, in education or training (NEETs), women and persons with disabilities. Better targeted measures, delivered in an integrated manner, together with a more effective outreach system, upskilling and reskilling training programmes and social support measures, would be key for the reintegration of the most vulnerable, including the LTU, into the labour market.

A comprehensive monitoring system would ensure identifying priority areas to provide funding to groups most in need of support. Furthermore, partnership agreements at local level and involvement of the Social Partners in designing and adjusting training opportunities for LTU are yet to be activated. Supporting digitalisation and further strengthening of its human resources would increase PES capacity and ensure more efficient support to vulnerable groups.

Cyprus should continue to follow this positive path, including by channelling the available EU and national funding in the most effective measures and by continuing improving the quality and outcomes of the labour market integration policies in the future.

LATVIA

Latvia is demonstrating progress with regard to the implementation of the Recommendation, as depicted in the long-term unemployment figure which is steadily decreasing. The LTU data collection shows that Latvia performs very well on the use of Job Integration Agreements while less successfully on the exits from these.

With regard to the PES support, Latvia shows an effective implementation of the single point of contact to support the long-term unemployed. Also, the provision of individual assessments, including the individual job search plans are well noted. Steps are encouraged to be taken to enhance the capacity building of PES which will have an important impact on better service delivery, especially for vulnerable groups of long-term unemployed.

According to the self-assessment, a number of employment policies (training, subsidies, regional mobility etc.) have been applied, continuous evaluation of those policies is welcomed in order to identify if these policies have an impact on the continuous reduction of the long-term unemployment rate and particularly on raising employability of older people and persons with disabilities. Digital skilling programs are encouraged to improve the skills of the registered unemployed, including LTU.

The planned initiative to incentivize and encourage LTU to be more active at regional and local level has been highlighted. There is room for improvement with regard to stakeholder cooperation and partnerships, especially at local level, i.e. strengthening PES capacity and adopting a proactive approach for collaboration with municipal social services, local employers, local health providers and civil society organisations. The improvement in coordination among central, regional and local authorities and social services is expected to have a positive impact on the promotion of outreach activities and activation of the long-term unemployed.

LITHUANIA

Lithuania has taken steps to maintain the long-term unemployment rates at a steadily low rate. Both the long-term unemployment rate and the share of LTU in total unemployment is at EU 27 average and the results of the LTU data collection shows that Lithuania performs well on the use of Job Integration Agreements (JIA) while follow up results of JIA users are below the EU 27 average.

A development has been presented with regard to the partnerships and social partners involvement. At a local level more efforts would be essential to increase the coordination and stakeholder involvement, also via joint projects together with the municipalities and the regional PES, so as to

improve capacity of the services and provide targeted employment and skilling programs to the unemployed.

The municipal employment enhancement programs based on a case management approach are expected to have a positive impact on the provision of more targeted services to the most vulnerable. Long-term unemployed are offered participation in subsidized employment. Further room for improvement could be seen in terms of job retention programs, where the involvement of employers plays a key role. In this direction PES and social partners could work further to increase such engagements.

LUXEMBOURG

Luxembourg has taken new measures and all the four areas of the Recommendation on LTU have progressed significantly. Labour market developments are overall positive although recent trends point to a slowdown. The long-term unemployment rate is below the EU average in 2023 and is characterised by a high share of older workers. The results of the LTU data collection shows that Luxembourg performs well on key monitoring indicators. The development of SPOC is welcome. However, despite the individualised profiling and support, most measures are not designed to target specifically LTU and the eldest among them. As regards the creation of partnerships with labour market actors there is evidence of good collaboration with all stakeholders. Tripartite social model is a fact, and the “JobBoard” platform ensures the involvement of employers. However, local partnerships need to be reinforced and social enterprises could be usefully engaged in the labour market re-integration paths for the long-term unemployed.

HUNGARY

Hungary has planned further measures to implement the Council's Recommendation. The LTU rate is significantly below the EU 27 average while the share of LTU shows an increasing trend. According to the LTU data collection, Hungary performs relatively well on the key monitoring indicators. The long-term unemployment rate is well below the EU average, while one-third of the unemployed are long-term unemployed. Youth are more affected. The four key areas of the Recommendation on the integration of LTU into the labour market are implemented based on services provided to all unemployed people by the PES which belong to the central public administration and act as government office also in the management of LTU policies. The single point of contact and the job integration agreement (as an Individual Action Plan) is in place to assist the LTUs. The planned IT development of the PES is a good opportunity to ensure cooperation and data-sharing among services and administrations. Hungary positively supports the employment of LTU through a number of measures implemented also with EU funds. An enhanced focus on NEETs and young adults should positively affect long-term unemployment in the future. Regarding stakeholders' involvement the PES have good connections mostly with employers. Stakeholder involvement continues to be weak and further deteriorated since 2021. Partnerships appear to be lagging behind, especially about the involvement of social partners and civil society organisations in the design and carrying out of the measures targeted to LTU. The “Presence programme” has the potential to build a support network for the most vulnerable in “catching-up municipalities” with the involvement of social services as well as social enterprises. Monitoring and assessment of the Programme will be crucial.

MALTA

Malta is implementing the Council Recommendation through targeted interventions. Malta presents positive figures for long-term unemployment. Long-term unemployment represents around one third of total unemployment, with low registration rates to PES. The results of the LTU data collection are

mixed with low outcome of exits by Job Integration Agreements but high outcome of follow-up indicators. Some LTU groups remain more vulnerable such as youth. The four key actions of the Recommendation have been further implemented and the commitment of the government to supporting LTU integration is visible. The assistance to LTU by the side of the employment counsellor is comprehensive. Social partners are members of PES Board (Jobsplus). Agreements between the PES and civil society organisations are in place to facilitate inclusion of specific vulnerable persons. Further efforts would be needed to make lifelong learning more attractive for the long-term unemployed also with the collaboration of civil society and social enterprises. The PES has a specific unit focusing on employers' relations and financial incentives for the hiring of LTU are in place. Malta should continue strengthening the programmes that showed their efficacy over time, at the same time to further focus on the most vulnerable groups and the registration to PES.

THE NETHERLANDS

The Netherlands has taken measures to reinforce the integration of long-term unemployed. The Dutch labour market is performing well with high employment rates and low unemployment rate. In 2023 the long-term unemployment rate was well below the EU-average. The Netherlands performs very well on the key LTU monitoring indicators. It should be emphasised that the share of long-term unemployment is higher among older people, non-EU born, vulnerable persons. In The Netherlands all four areas of the Recommendation are well developed due to the well-established infrastructure to re-integrate unemployed back into the labour market. It is positive to note that the country is working on further enhancing cooperation among services to ensure that people in need have always a starting point in their region. Although the long-term unemployed can benefit of all the measures offered to the unemployed, more specific support and a stronger cooperation with local stakeholders, employers and civil society can be established to help address the specific needs and challenges of this target group, as experienced with the BasisBaan project.

AUSTRIA

Austria experienced a strong economic recovery after the pandemic and its overall unemployment rate remains well below the EU average. The Member State has successfully implemented the LTU Recommendation as evidenced by the decrease in the LTU rate to a record low in 2022. Hence, Austria is well advanced in implementing the LTU Recommendation while the results of the LTU data collection show mixed results on key monitoring indicators. In this context the main persisting challenges are the low labour market participation of women, due to the limited supply of quality and affordable childcare, and that of low-skilled people, older workers and those with a migrant background. The new job bonuses seem to move in the right direction. Austria offers a solid welfare and unemployment benefit system providing incentives for registration of the LTU with the PES as well as an efficient single point of contact system. As regards the creation of partnerships the cooperation among the PES, social partners and employers is very well developed although not specifically focused on the long-term unemployed needs. A more holistic approach involving civil society entities could be of help in addressing inactivity and long-term unemployment especially among persons belonging to the most vulnerable groups. Promising pilot projects (such as the MAGMA project on the job guarantee) at local level for the integration of LTU in the labour market could be replicated on other territories according to different local situation.

POLAND

Poland shows good results in terms of its unemployment and long-term unemployment figures however, however little progressed has been observed in terms of implementing the Council

Recommendation. The LTU data collection shows that Poland performs average on the use of Job Integration Agreements while only few JIA users are known to be in employment after 12 months. Measures demonstrating the effectiveness of the single point of contact for job seekers have been presented. Local stakeholders and social service providers should play a larger role in promoting programs and activities for the unemployed, particularly to improve the PES outreach to the LTU, which remains a major challenge. PES should continue its actions to further enhance synergies and partnerships with the relevant social services and institutions for the provision of more targeted support, particularly to the inactive and the most vulnerable categories.

The Central Database of Job Offers and ePraca application are highlighted as it seems that emphasis is placed on employers' engagement. Central and regional PES should look into how to more effectively engage social partners, particularly trade unions, in order to better tailor their services to the needs of workers. The role of EURES was well noted and its involvement could be further encouraged.

Furthermore, it is acknowledged that youth are one of the main categories of long-term unemployed, and that well-tailored services, particularly for women and young parents, will significantly improve PES offer and may increase its outreach to the LTU.

PORTUGAL

Portugal is making progress on addressing the long-term unemployment challenge. Portugal has been consistently reducing its share of long-term unemployed, however one in four unemployed is LTU. Portugal is still among the Member States with the highest share of LTU in the EU. The key LTU monitoring indicators show mixed results. Three of the four key areas of the Recommendation show a good progress, with several access points to registration, the activation of the single point of contact, dedicated case manager for the long-term unemployed persons, and the Job Integration Agreement in place. Incentives for companies to hire unemployed persons are in place although not specifically targeted at long-term unemployed. Concerning stakeholders' involvement and partnerships building, Portugal has taken action to involve civil society organisations in measures targeted to the most vulnerable long-term unemployed, however further efforts could help strengthening future activities. A larger participation of social partners at the local level in the design of programmes and activities specifically devoted to long-term unemployed persons would be welcome. Improved exchange of information and data among all partners should be ensured in the future. The existence of the Manager+ figure in PES is crucial for the relationship with employers and to promote the benefits associated with hiring long-term unemployed persons.

ROMANIA

Romania is making slow progress in implementing the Council Recommendation. The LTU rate has increased since the pandemic and is now above the EU average for the first time since Romania's accession to the EU while the share of LTU in total unemployment is around the EU 27 average. Long-term unemployment is also unevenly spread across the regions. The implementation of the four areas of the Recommendation is still challenging for the Country. The most criticalities relate to the stakeholders' involvement while the most advanced area is the Job Integration Agreement. The updated profiling procedures and the case management approach are positively in place. A minimum quality standard for case management should be ensured all over the country. In Romania there is very limited cooperation and information sharing among the different stakeholders involved in labour market policies. As regards partnerships creation and stakeholders' involvement, tripartite council are in place at local level but the collaboration with the PES for the integration of long-term unemployed needs to be strengthened. Collaboration with employers is structured but at different rates in the various territories and it should be further developed beyond access to financial incentives. It is

strongly recommended that existing partnerships with local authorities, employers and NGOs are reinforced and extended.

SLOVENIA

Slovenia has made progress in all the four key areas of the Recommendation on LTU. Slovene labour market shows positive trends with high labour market participation and low unemployment rate in 2023. Efforts in the past years helped to lower the long-term unemployment rate below the EU average. The results of the LTU data collection shows that Slovenia performs well on key monitoring indicators, notably on the use of Job Integration Agreements as well as on follow-up situations. Legislative measures and pilot actions to integrating the long-term unemployed into the labour market have been introduced and carried out. The strategy for working with long-term unemployed persons is also welcome. Nonetheless further efforts are needed to improve modernisation and digitalisation of PES that could help the cooperation between PES and the Centres for Social Work both at central and local level and make these institutions to perform the workload more efficiently. At the same time also Data Collection on the Long-Term Unemployed should be prioritised to facilitate the monitoring and evaluation of all measures. The cooperation with employers is already in place through the Regional Employers Offices and further improvement is expected from the online employment platform, still under development, that will enable digital connection of PES with labour market actors. Pilot projects with the involvement social enterprises for the integration of LTU are ongoing, however a more systematic and regular cooperation between PES, civil society organisations and local authorities could be gainfully developed at local level to integrate LTU into the labour market. Furthermore, very focused measures, reflecting the specifics of the LTU should be considered by PES.

SLOVAKIA

Slovakia is showing progress in reducing the long-term unemployment rate which still remains high and-demonstrates some development in implementing the Council Recommendation. The LTU rate is well above the EU 27 average and has increased since the pandemic, while the share of LTU in total unemployment is the highest in the EU. The results of the LTU data collection show that Slovakia performs below the EU 27 average on all three key monitoring indicators. A number of projects have been presented with a view to adequately integrate long-term unemployed in the labour market through more individualised approaches. To this end, the use of funds from the cohesion funds and the ESF+ are positively noted.

Furthermore, development has been shown in the enhancement of the digitalisation of services. Continuous efforts in this direction, in combination with the increase of interoperability among PES, social services and other relevant stakeholders are encouraged.

However, there is a room for further improvement in the promotion of more targeted active labour market policies, particularly the underrepresented groups, the low skilled and the non-registered people. Steps need to be taken in order to further promote quality upskilling and reskilling programs to the registered unemployed, notably green skills as stipulated in the country report.

Some measures have been presented with regard to the reinforcement of partnerships among the central, regional authorities, local services and NGOs and Slovakia intends to incentivize employers to integrate long-term unemployed in the labour market.

FINLAND

Finland has made progress on the integration of the long-term unemployed into the labour market. Both the LTU rate and the share of LTU in total unemployment is below the EU 27 average. The LTU

monitoring data shows that Finland performs well on the use of Job Integration Agreements while less on exits from these. Finland presented a number of policies to provide more targeted services to the unemployed through the reform to decentralise its services to municipalities. Measures have been put in place to enhance the profiling capabilities of the job seekers, namely the recently established statistical profiling tool, the Abilitator and the Job Market Finland. In addition, Finland demonstrates a satisfying application of the job integration agreements.

The Nordic model of employment services, funded by the RRF and foreseen to improve targeted services to the unemployed is positively noted, yet the impact of the reform would need to be further evaluated. The role of social economy and social enterprises is well noted.

Also, the model “Own coach” appears to have a good effect on a more tailor-made approach and its usage should continue. In this regard cooperation of PES with employers, local authorities and municipalities could increase the employability of the jobseekers. Focus should continue to be given on skills development targeted to the long term unemployed and the underrepresented groups.

SWEDEN

Sweden has achieved substantial progress in the implementation of the Council Recommendation on the integration of long-term unemployed. The labour market in Sweden is very dynamic: a vast majority of the population is either in employment, in education, or looking for a job. There are even pressing labour shortages in many sectors, such as the teaching profession, or green jobs in the Northern regions of Sweden.

The 2022 data collection showed that all registered unemployed in Sweden receive support that corresponds to the Job Integration Agreement, and the share of these who eventually finds a job raised from 50.4% in 2019 to 58.2% in 2022, above the EU average. Around two thirds of these are still employed after 12 months, also above the EU average.

Despite facing challenges, such as high unemployment rates and disparities among certain demographic groups, there has been a decrease in the number of long-term unemployed people, which remains well below the EU average.

The well-established social dialogue practices and collaborative efforts between stakeholders have surely helped to achieve this, although the lack of sufficient involvement of civil society organisations in policy design poses a barrier to inclusivity and comprehensive solutions.

Furthermore, the new model of collaboration between the Public Employment Service and municipalities is a notable result that tackles one of the main shortcomings of Active Labour Market Policies in Sweden.

However, some challenges persist, such as the Public Employment Service’s struggle to effectively match jobseekers with vacancies.