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European Union

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### **OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS**

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From: General Secretariat of the Council

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To: Delegations

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Subject: Conclusions on the Special Report of the European Court of Auditors on long-term unemployment (14 March 2022)

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Delegations will find in the annex the Council conclusions on the Special Report of the European Court of Auditors on long-term unemployment, approved by the Council at its meeting held on 14 March 2022.

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**Council Conclusions on the European Court of Auditors Special Report 25/21 on ESF support to combat long-term unemployment**

**THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION:**

1. **TAKES NOTE** of the Special Report on ESF support to combat long-term unemployment (LTU), submitted by the European Court of Auditors (ECA).
2. **RECALLS** that nearly 2.7% of the Union workforce<sup>1</sup> remains unemployed for a period of more than twelve months, which accounts for one third of total unemployment in the Union.
3. **RECALLS** that the COVID-19 pandemic may have a detrimental impact on the number and situation of the long-term unemployed.
4. **RECALLS** that the European Pillar of Social Rights (principle 4) proclaims the right of the long-term unemployed to have an in-depth individual assessment at the latest after 18 months of unemployment.
5. **RECALLS** that not having a formal job for a long period leads to loss of income for the persons concerned and therefore enhances the risk of poverty, social exclusion and health problems. Long-term unemployment lowers the potential growth of the Union economies and adds to the costs borne by social services and public finances.
6. **ACKNOWLEDGES** that people who stay out of employment for longer periods may face more difficulties finding work owing inter alia to skills erosion as well as loss of motivation and confidence. In addition, employers may be more reluctant to hire someone who has not worked for a long time.

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<sup>1</sup> EUROSTAT - [Long-term unemployment by sex \(1992-2020\) - quarterly data](#)

7. **RECALLS** that, considering the diverse situations and needs of the long-term unemployed, an individualised approach can help addressing both social and professional barriers; and **UNDERLINES** the importance of providing the long-term unemployed with individual timely assessments, through employment services together with other partners supporting labour market integration, as suggested in the ‘Recommendation on the integration of the long-term unemployed in the labour market’ adopted by the Council of the European Union on 15 February 2016<sup>2</sup>.
8. **RECOGNISES** the contribution made by the European Social Fund (ESF), as the EU’s main funding instrument for supporting Member States’ active labour market measures, in allocating nearly EUR 11.4 billion to the investment priority ‘Access to employment for jobseekers and inactive people, including the long-term unemployed, and people far from the labour market, also through local employment initiatives and support for labour mobility’.
9. **RECALLS** that ESF support for other investment priorities, such as ‘active inclusion, including with a view to promoting equal opportunities and active participation, and improving employability’, also contributes to combating long-term unemployment since long-term unemployed persons may face multiple barriers (such as mobility problems, inadequate access to childcare, caring responsibilities, social exclusion and health problems) needing to be addressed before their return to the labour market.
10. **WELCOMES** the common output indicator covering the long-term unemployed in the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+)<sup>3</sup> regulation.

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<sup>2</sup> 14361/15

<sup>3</sup> OJ L 231, 30.6.2021, p. 21–59

**TAKES NOTE of the concluding recommendations set out in the Special Report, whereby the Commission should, in the European Court of Auditors' view:**

11. Insist that for the 2021-2027 programming period, the Member States specifically target long-term unemployed persons and their needs by means of ESF+ where national or regional LTU is high;
12. Insist that Member States apply an individualised approach to all the long-term unemployed when 'access to employment' measures are being implemented under the new ESF+, by taking account of jobseekers' profiles and making an assessment of their needs;
13. Evaluate the effectiveness of 'access to employment' operations for the long-term unemployed as part of the ex-post evaluation for the 2014-2020 period and the mid-term evaluation for the 2021-2027 period.

**CALLS UPON THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION, in cooperation with the MEMBER STATES, in light of the recommendations in the Special Report and with special regard to the national circumstances, to:**

14. Step up efforts to further implement a coordinated strategy on employment, through promotion of a skilled, trained and adaptable workforce as well as policies and tools to support access to employment specifically for long-term jobseekers, in accordance with the 'Council Recommendation on the integration of the long-term unemployed in the labour market'.
15. Reinforce efforts to monitor and evaluate, through appropriate frameworks and dedicated studies, the effectiveness of all operations supported under the objectives of the ESF+ that relate to promoting active inclusion, including combating long-term unemployment. Use the data collected, disaggregated by sex, to improve measures and tools aiming to combat long-term unemployment with a particular attention to the different situations faced by women and men.

**CALLS UPON THE MEMBER STATES, with the support of THE COMMISSION, in the light of the recommendations in the Special Report and with special regard to the national circumstances, to:**

16. Take an individualised approach when implementing activation measures for long-term unemployed persons and offer in-depth individual assessments and guidance to jobseekers using all the resources available, including upskilling and reskilling schemes, to help remove social and psychological barriers, especially through the public employment services, social services and health services of the Member States and with the involvement of social partners, as suggested in the ‘Council Recommendation on the integration of the long-term unemployed in the labour market’.
17. Encourage the implementation of schemes and projects devoted to promote active inclusion, including for the long-term unemployed, and favour as much as possible experiences in work-related situations, in line with the ESF+ objectives, priorities and relevant thematic concentrations.

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