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

**EURES Activity Report 2002 – 2003 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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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The role of EURES (European Employment Services) is to facilitate labour mobility on the European labour market by providing services to workers and employers wishing to take advantage of the right to the free movement of workers in the EU in accordance with Regulation 1612 of 1968.

The European Employment Strategy states that action is needed to promote geographic labour mobility in order to achieve a labour market in Europe which functions efficiently. The Employment Guidelines of June 2003 state that the transparency of job and training opportunities at national and European level should be promoted in order to support effective job matching, and in particular that by 2005 jobseekers throughout the EU should be able to consult all job vacancies advertised through Member States' employment services. Achieving this needs to be seen against the traditionally low levels of geographic mobility in the EU, particularly between Member States, but also within Member States.

Efforts to support geographic mobility need to be combined with measures to expand occupational mobility in order to provide openings for workers to move between sectors and regions. The Commission put forward measures to help prepare the European workforce for the future needs of the labour market in its Action Plan for Skills and Mobility<sup>1</sup>. Its Communication on European Employment Mobility adopted in February 2004<sup>2</sup> describes the current state of implementation of the Action Plan in which the modernisation of EURES is one of the key action points, to enable the network to provide more effective support for the increased mobility of workers in the EU/EEA.

The modernisation of EURES through the reform of its legal base is the most important development of the network in the period covered by this report (2002-2003). An important part of the report is thus devoted to the background and objectives of this change.

As all EURES activities carried out by members and partners are based on a framework of guiding principles, EURES performance for the 2002-2003 period needs to be assessed by comparing actual achievements with the specific objectives and priorities that were laid down for this reference period. The latter part of the report is thus structured according to the four objectives that guided the development of EURES for the period covered in this report: furthering political and operational integration; modernising the delivery of EURES services; improving and developing the service package; and managing the network more effectively.

While the report provides information on achievements and the development of EURES at both European and national level, it also supplements the descriptions with information of a more quantitative nature in the cases where such data are available. Most of these data come from questionnaires submitted by the Public Employment Services (PES) to the EURES Co-ordination Office (EURESCO) in December 2003. Additional statistical material on labour mobility within the EU/EEA can be found in COM(2004)66, referred to above.

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<sup>1</sup> COM(2002)72.

<sup>2</sup> COM(2002)66.

## **2. MAIN EVOLUTION OF THE EURES NETWORK DURING 2002-2003**

### **2.1. Reform of the EURES legal base**

EURES was launched by the Commission Decision 93/569 on the basis of Regulation 1612/68 on the free movement of workers. The Treaty itself (Art. 40, ex 49) provides for closer co-operation between national labour market administrations and the mechanisms matching job offers and requests.

Experience gained since the launch of EURES in 1994 had shown that the time had come for improvements in its institutional set-up, particularly in terms of: the division of responsibilities between the different actors in the network; clearer decision-making procedures; an enhanced level of commitment on the part of the partners; streamlined decision-making; and improved capacity for smoother adjustment in the operation of the network.

The legal base of EURES also needed to be better adapted to recent political and organisational developments in the field of employment in Europe. In light of the Amsterdam Treaty, EURES and the issues of geographic mobility needed to be placed more clearly within the European Employment Strategy, more fully integrated into co-operation between the Public Employment Services, and taken into account in the ongoing process of PES modernisation. Finally, full account needed to be taken of the prospective implementation of EURES in the new Member States following enlargement, while at the same time ensuring that the network remained flexible and manageable. The functioning of EURES had also to take into account recent developments in the field of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT).

#### *2.1.1. Objectives of the reform*

The new Commission Decision is designed to underpin occupational and geographic mobility in line with the European Employment Strategy and the Action Plan for Skills and Mobility. In particular it aims to:

- Consolidate and strengthen EURES as a key tool for the purposes of Regulation (EEC) 1612/68, in particular for the monitoring of mobility, support of the free movement of workers and the integration of the European labour markets as well as for informing citizens about the relevant EU/EEA legal provisions;
- Refocus the role of the Commission in relation to the established EURES High Level Strategy Group and the EURES Working Party and strengthen the programming tools to enable the Commission to concentrate on strategic impulse and overall co-ordination, while most operational decisions would be taken by the EURES members and partners;
- Allow for greater responsibility of the EURES members and partners to implement the relevant provisions of Regulation (EEC) 1612/68 by mainstreaming EURES into the activities of the Public Employment Services;
- Provide EURES with a structure that would remain manageable with a larger number of member states after the 2004 EU enlargement
- Allow for greater flexibility for easier adjustment to new technological and other relevant developments;

- Develop better tools for the monitoring and evaluation of activities

### *2.1.2. The new institutional set-up*

The new EURES Decision was adopted by the Commission on 23 December 2002<sup>3</sup>. It defines the overall objectives of EURES and describes the roles and responsibilities of the different actors in the network. The Decision is supported by two programming instruments: the EURES Charter (adopted on 4 April 2003<sup>4</sup>) and the tri-annual EURES Guidelines (agreed by the EURES High Level Strategy Group on 13 June 2003).

The Charter describes the EURES activities, the operational objectives, quality standards, obligations of the members and partners and the common models for the exchange of labour market and mobility-related information between members and partners (in particular the social partners). The Guidelines describe the EURES priorities and outputs to be achieved for a three year period and defines the conditions for financial assistance from the EU. They enable EURES members to define their respective tri-annual activity plans in which they specify the main transnational, cross-border and sectoral activities they plan to undertake during the three year period. The activity plans also contain a financial plan highlighting the financial resources (both national and EU funding) needed to fulfil the plan. The activity plans and the information received annually on their implementation are examined by the Commission with a view to ensure consistency with the Guidelines and the legal framework.

## **2.2. EURES co-operation with Switzerland**

The bilateral agreement between the EU and Switzerland on the free movement of workers that entered into force on 1 June 2002 foresees that the EU and Switzerland also co-operate within the EURES network. Job vacancies and information on living and working conditions and the labour market situation in Switzerland have been made available on the EURES job Portal. Swiss partners have also become active members of the EURES Cross-border partnerships Bodensee (Lake Constance), TransTiroliaGraubünden, and Oberrein/Rhin Supérieur (Upper Rhine). The numbers of workers crossing the borders between Switzerland and the EU are very high and still growing: a further development of this EURES co-operation is in their interest.

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<sup>3</sup> OJ L 5 of 10.1.2003, p. 16.

<sup>4</sup> OJ C 106 of 3.5.2003, p. 3.

### **3. THE EURES OBJECTIVES & PRIORITIES 2002 / 2003 – MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS**

The objectives and priorities that have guided the EURES activities carried out by the members and partners in 2002-2003 are, with a few modifications<sup>5</sup>, similar to the ones for the previous reference period and consist of: 1) furthering political and operational integration; 2) modernising the delivery of EURES services; 3) improving and developing the service package; and 4) managing the network more effectively.

#### **3.1. Objective 1, Furthering political and operational integration**

##### *3.1.1. The fuller integration of EURES in Public Employment Services*

The importance attached to labour mobility in the EU and the corresponding role of the PES has been highlighted over the reference period, with a particular emphasis on the integration of the European dimension in all PES customer-oriented services and the development of professional competencies in their staff in international mobility issues. PES in EU-15 employ approximately 400 EURES advisers<sup>6</sup>, with most spending more than half their working time on EURES services, which are also delivered by regular PES staff, as part of the mainstreaming process.

##### *3.1.2. Strengthening of the link between EURES and the European Employment Strategy*

The European Employment Guidelines for 2002 called on Member States to develop job matching policies, tackle bottlenecks in the new European labour markets, improve databases on jobs and learning opportunities (interconnected at European level), use modern information technologies and experience already available at European level.

During 2002 – 2003, the EURES job vacancies database was widened and strengthened. The internet web-site used by the general public to access vacancies was enhanced and incorporated into the new European Job Mobility Portal (described in more detail in point 3.2.1). During 2003 the learning opportunities Portal, PLOTEUS, was incorporated into EURES in order to enhance the interaction between jobs and learning opportunities.

##### *3.1.3. Co-operation with other European programmes and initiatives*

83 % of the PES report having co-operated with the Leonardo da Vinci programme on vocational training, such as joint EURES/Leonardo da Vinci promotional activities, and co-operation on the international placement of unemployed persons in job-training. Closer co-operation in the education and training field has also been evident through the incorporation of information on learning opportunities (Ploteus) in the Job Mobility Portal (see above).

Co-operation between EURES and Interreg has continued, with 56 % of the EURES members reporting co-operation with Interreg. A number of the PES have also co-operated with the Equal-programme on the integration of disadvantaged people (28%), while a few report having co-operated with the Socrates education programme.

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<sup>5</sup> i.e. emphasising more the contribution of EURES to the EES, the fuller integration of EURES in PES, evaluation, promotion of EURES towards employers, and preparations for EU enlargement.

<sup>6</sup> In addition to the PES EURES advisers, approximately 200 EURES advisers, employed mainly by the social partner organisations, work in cross-border regions.

### *3.1.4. Preparations for enlargement*

The work has focused on assisting the new Member States with establishing their EURES infrastructure, encouraging twinning operations with PES in existing Member States, building up a network of contact persons, supporting the new Member States in the development of their human resources, informing them on the conditions necessary to effectively take part in the activities of the EURES network and helping them draw up tri-annual activity plans for the years 2004-2007.

EURES managers were appointed in all new Member States and participated as observers in the EURES Working Party from October 2002 onwards, and took part in training sessions organised by EURESco on the management of the network, IT questions, the selection and training of EURES advisers, the development of tri-annual activity plans and the management of Community grants. EURES advisers were also appointed in all new Member States, approximately sixty of them starting their initial training in December 2003 (for completion by June 2004).

The PES in the new Member States were provided with the support to prepare for technical connection to the EURES IT systems. A number of the new Member States created national EURES web-pages, and all supplied information on living and working conditions and labour markets to be included in the EURES job mobility Portal.

Several bilateral co-operation projects between PES in old and new Member States took place, including recruitment projects, and the exchange of information.

## **3.2. Objective 2, Modernising the delivery of EURES services**

### *3.2.1. Launch of the new European Job Mobility Portal*

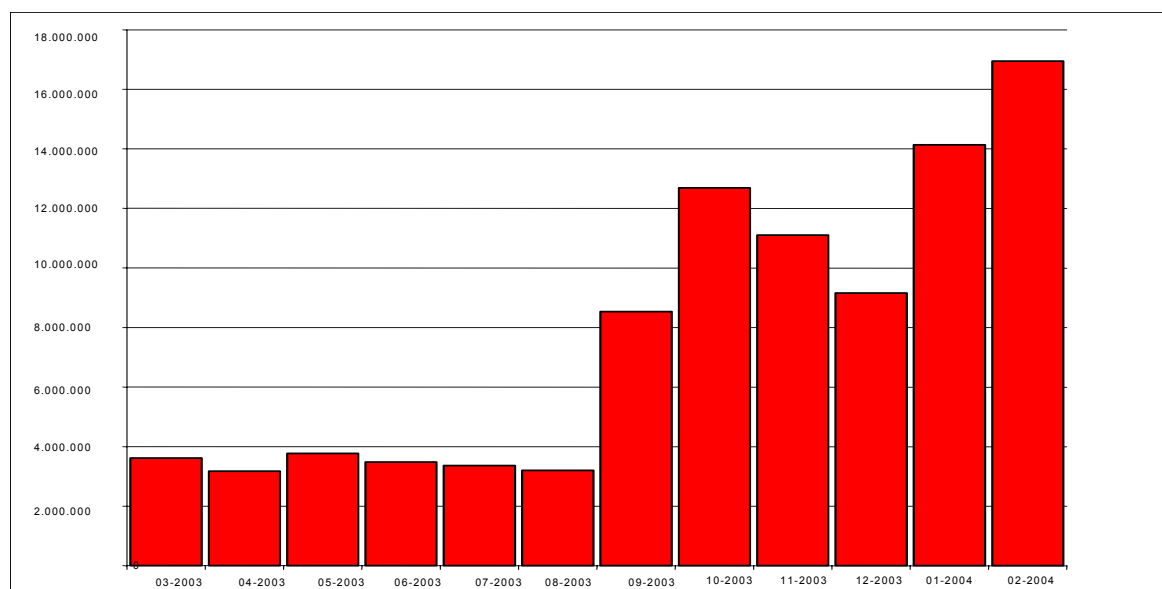
Action point 23 in the Commission's Action Plan for Skills and Mobility announced the creation, in 2003, of a "One-Stop European Mobility Information Site" as a means to improve information and transparency of job opportunities in Europe. This new Portal – the "European Job Mobility Portal" (<http://europa.eu.int/eures>) – was a further development of the EURES web site, and was launched on 19 September 2003 together with the Mobility Information Campaign which is described in more detail in point 3.3.3. The Portal provides user-friendly access to the information needed by those contemplating a move for career or for learning purposes. The EURES website has been one of the most visited sites in the Commission. The Portal is available at entry level in all official EU languages, with parts of the country-specific information in English, French, German and the national language of the country concerned.

The new Portal makes access to information easier by integrating all services related to labour mobility, i.e. employment matters (particularly job offers, CVs), learning and training issues, general working and living conditions, citizen's rights, etc. As well as implementing the decision of the Barcelona European Council of March 2002 to establish a one-stop European Job Mobility Information Web Site by the end of 2003, the Portal also supports the objectives of the Employment Guidelines: develop the job-matching capacities of Public Employment Services; prevent skills shortages and enhance occupational mobility; promote geographic mobility; and enhance the functioning of labour markets by improving databases on jobs and learning opportunities which should be interconnected at European level.

The Commission structured the main elements of the new Portal as follows:

- Find a job - job vacancies throughout the EEA via the EURES job vacancies database and links to other sites, e.g. the Researcher's Mobility Portal<sup>7</sup>;
- CV on-line - Information on jobseekers through the EURES CV database;
- Living and working - living and working conditions in the EEA countries, trends in the labour markets and the transitional arrangements for the free movement of workers from, to, and between the new Member States;
- Learning – education and training opportunities throughout Europe, e.g. websites of higher education institutions, databases of training courses, schools, etc., provided by PLOTEUS, managed by the Commission's Directorate General for Education and Culture (and for which the operational funding is provided under the EURES budget);

Since its launch in September 2003, the number of hits per month on the new Portal has increased substantially as shown in the graph below<sup>8</sup>, with the number of hits increasing further after a direct link to the Portal was provided for on the <http://europa.eu.int> home page, the official website of the European Union.



*Number of hits per month on the European Job Mobility Portal from March 2003 to February 2004*

<sup>7</sup> [http://europa.eu.int/eracareers/index\\_en.cfm](http://europa.eu.int/eracareers/index_en.cfm)

<sup>8</sup> Quantitative information on the number of hits per month on the portal does not exist before March 2003. It is important to note that the number of hits per month does not equal the number of persons having accessed the portal as one person can generate several hits as he/she moves around in the portal (hits represents the total number of requests made to the server during a month). The trend towards increased number of hits does, however, indicate increased usage of the portal.



### 3.2.2. *Training*

The Commission attaches great importance to the qualifications and training of EURES advisers. In addition to participating in training at national level and before taking up their duties, all EURES advisers participate in an initial training programme organised by EURESCO, focusing on the European Employment Strategy, European social policy issues and the acquisition of basic skills and knowledge relevant to international mobility issues.

In the period 2002-2003, 126 EURES advisers completed the initial training programme. More specialised knowledge, such as differences in social security regimes and taxation policies, is the subject of advanced training courses; approximately 400 EURES advisers participated in such courses.

### 3.2.3. *The use of call centres*

All basic EURES information should be easily accessible, and new technology, including call-centres, should be used; thirteen PES reported having such facilities and twelve of them indicated being able to provide basic information on EURES through these centres.

Another gateway to EURES is the helpdesk, established to provide quick and accurate answers to requests from jobseekers, employers and others. It registers and replies to all enquiries sent by email, fax or telephone. A phone number accessible in all EEA countries provides free of charge access to the help desk, but most inquiries are sent by email.

## **3.3. Objective 3, Improving and developing the service package**

### 3.3.1. *Promotion*

There is a constant need to provide jobseekers and employers with information about the opportunities on the European labour market, and many promotion activities have been carried out through the PES national website, job fairs, brochures, leaflets, etc., with EURES advertisements being published in magazines and journals.

### 3.3.2. *Co-operation with employers*

The monthly reports of EURES advisers confirm that EURES is more known among jobseekers than among employers. A working group on employers' needs met in 2002 to strengthen the network's approach towards employers, a seminar was held in Spain in May 2002, and the EURES Working Party adopted recommendations in December 2002 to: promote the establishment within the PES of a specific unit dealing with services to employers; make each PES include in their EURES subsidy request for 2003 actions points to improve existing services to employers; step up promotion activities; and evaluate existing services and promotion activities towards employers.

### 3.3.3. *Other promotional activities*

The Commission's Action Plan for Skills and Mobility announced an EU-wide mobility information campaign, which was launched in September 2003 with the slogan "Job Mobility – Your future?". In addition to the promotional activities carried out by the EURES members, the campaign also included nine specific projects, ranging from an information bus to a photographic competition, to represent a broad collection of initiatives from across the EU and to reach a wide range of audiences. The campaign was launched together with the unveiling

of the new European Job Mobility Portal which has regularly provided news on the campaign, while the campaign has been used to draw the public's attention to the existence of the Portal.

#### *3.3.4. Cross-border partnerships*

A new cross-border partnership around the "Lake Constance" was created in Autumn 2002 (EURES Bodensee). In November 2002, the Swiss Canton Graubünden joined the existing partnership TransTirolia.

Following a feasibility study on the "Guadiana" region along the southern part of the border between Portugal and Spain, the Commission proposed that the regional actors should start cross-border co-operation through the national EURES activity plans of the Spanish and Portuguese PES.

##### *3.3.4.1. Involvement of the social partner organisations*

The social partners are active members of the cross-border partnerships where they support regional labour market initiatives. They are represented by their European associations in the EURES High Level Strategy Group and the EURES working party. The trade unions are represented in all EURES cross-border partnerships (with co-ordination being provided by the inter-regional trades union councils and the European Trades Union Confederation) and are active promoters of the EURES services through specific trade union EURES advisers. These EURES advisers deal with many questions from cross-border workers, not only on job possibilities, but also on living and working conditions, and they contribute to the elimination of obstacles to mobility. The employers' associations are also active partners, although not represented in all of the partnerships. The ETUC also organised training seminars designed to meet the needs of EURES advisers in border regions and developed European information material.

### **3.4. Objective 4, Managing the network more effectively**

#### *3.4.1. Redefinition of the role and the mandate of the different actors in the network*

One of the most important features of the EURES reform was the creation of the High Level Strategy Group, made up of the Heads of the EURES members (Heads of PES), with observers representing the European social partners. Its main task is to advise the Commission on promoting and overseeing strategic planning and development. EURES thus became anchored at the highest level in the PES, which take on a greater responsibility for EURES and the integration of the European labour markets.

New job-descriptions were drawn up for the EURES managers in June 2003 to enable the PES to identify the most adequate position for a EURES manager in its hierarchy, identify the stakeholders of the EURES manager at various levels, and form the basis for training EURES managers from the new Member States. Similarly, a new job-description for EURES advisers was established in September 2003.

#### *3.4.2. Simplification of financial procedures*

As enlargement may lead to the establishment of numerous new cross-border partnerships, both between old and new Member States and between new Member States themselves, the EURES structure needs to remain manageable. After the EURES reform, the annual subsidy requests of the cross-border partnerships are integrated into those of the EURES members.

The responsible EURES member (the PES) submits the planned activities of the cross-border partnership to EURESco as part of their national activity plan and thereby endorses these activities. For the PES, this implies taking over the administrative responsibility for the cross-border partnerships and thus a greater involvement in the development of cross-border labour markets and a better co-ordination of relevant activities therein. For EURESco, it implies a simplification of financial procedures, as the EURES member responsible for the cross-border partnership is accountable to the Commission for the management of Community funds allocated to cross-border activities. Furthermore, it is the EURES members that ensure adequate procedures are in place to acquit these responsibilities.

Financial procedures between EURESco and the EURES members have also been streamlined by a new financial vademecum in order to assist the EURES members with the sound management of the grant agreement.

### 3.4.3. Evaluation

EURES members and partners are committed to monitor and evaluate all EURES activities within their responsibility. The objectives and indicators reported to EURESco following the 2002 and 2003 financing periods were satisfactory.

EURES advisers' monthly reports show that they are contacted mainly by jobseekers; on average 68% of contacts were with jobseekers, with employers representing 7.8%.

Reliable data do not exist to evaluate the number of successful international placements achieved through EURES due the increased use of self-service tools (especially the Internet), and the trend towards private provision of employment services in some Member States. Jobseekers who do obtain a job abroad through EURES are not obliged to inform EURES.

At EU level, an external evaluation of EURES is expected to be carried out in 2004-2005 and will be available for the next reference period.

## 4. FUNDING

The EURES budget available for 2002 and 2003 was € 14.5 million for each year. In 2002 and 2003, a ceiling of € 450 000 and of € 405 000 respectively was set for expenditure on technical assistance and administration. In addition to these amounts, EURES was allocated a contribution from EFTA (€ 307 587 in 2002 and € 312 825 in 2003) under the terms of the agreement of the European Economic Area (participation of Norway and Iceland). Actual expenditure and distribution of funds between the cross-border partnerships and the PES' for the reference period is shown in the table below.

Actual expenditure 2002 – 2003:

	2002	2003
Crossborder partnerships	6.132.491	7.443.411
EURES national	4.300.491	5.106.768
Diverse activities	2.396.797	2.689.516
Total	12.829.979	15.239.695

In 2002 the available budget was used for about 85%, mainly due to spending less than forecasted in the cross-border partnerships and on diverse activities. In 2003 the available budget was entirely used; in particular the increase in volume and quality of the subsidy requests from the cross-border partnerships permitted this full utilisation.

## **5. CHALLENGES AHEAD AND OUTLOOK**

The successful integration of the new Member States in the EURES network is the main challenge. 2002 – 2003 started the build up of a viable EURES network in all new Member States, and the coming years will be devoted to strengthening this, with EURES being fully integrated into the PES, more EURES advisers being trained, and cross-border partnerships, both between new and old Member States and between new Member States themselves, possibly being established. Correct and timely information on transitional arrangements for the free movement of workers (provided to EURESco by the EURES national members, and including measures that may restrict access to the labour markets of the EEA) must be provided on the European Job Mobility Portal.

EURES must develop a common IT platform so that jobseekers throughout the EU/EEA can consult all job vacancies (estimated at 3 million) advertised through Member States' employment services by 2005. Webservices technology will be used to enable each PES to display, in real time, all jobs based on search parameters related to country and job category.