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E-learning course

Learning Unit 3.3 Job Search Assistance

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Current Labour market situation and trends

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1. Social and labour market integration of refugees[1]

Third-country nationals living in the EU face significant barriers when entering the labour market. They are also more at **risk of poverty or social exclusion** compared to natives, even when they are in employment. The socio-economic outcomes of refugees are even worse. **They represent one of the most vulnerable groups of migrants on the labour market and society as a whole**.

With asylum applications in the European Union having surpassed 1.2 million in 2015, the need for a more coordinated European response in all relevant policy areas has become immanent. Beyond meeting the immediate needs of refugees and asylum seekers, it is essential to promote their active integration in host societies. Research suggests that early and effective labour market participation is a key aspect of the integration process and determining for the long-term economic impact of the recent crisis.

Successful integration of refugees and asylum seekers will need quicker administrative procedures, swift access to basic pre-conditions (such as housing and healthcare) and to the labour market, facilitated recognition of foreign qualifications, as well as education and training. This will not happen without considerable efforts. While the integration of refugees and asylum seekers is a competence of Member States, the EU has an important role to play in providing support and incentives for Member States' actions.

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[1] Based on http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1274&langId=en

1.1 Policy Response

Ensuing from the **European Agenda on Migration**[2], the European Commission has put forward several proposals to address some of the integration challenges EU Member States are facing. Central element is the Action Plan on the Integration of Third Country Nationals, which was presented on 7 June 2016. DG Employment plays a key role in the aim to step-up actions to better support the actors working on the integration of refugees and asylum seekers, namely Member States' governments, regional and local authorities, social partners, and civil society.

1.2 Peer Learning and Knowledge Exchange

The European Commission strongly believes that to be effective, integration policies must be developed in dialogue with those working closest to third country nationals. The European Commission is therefore actively promoting the exchange of perspectives and practices among relevant stakeholders.

1.2.1 ESF Transnational Thematic Network on Migrants

Within the E**SF Transnational Platform**[3] the European Commission has set up a **Thematic Network on Migration** that includes representatives from the bodies managing the ESF Operational Programmes, policy experts, stakeholders, academics and social partners. Throughout the programming period 2014 -2020, the network will organise a number of activities such as workshops, peer reviews and site visits.

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[2] https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposal-implementation-package/docs/20160607/communication_action_plan_integration_third-country_nationals_en.pdf
[3] http://ec.europa.eu/esf/main.jsp?catId=56

1.2.2 The European Integration Network

The European Commission aims at reinforcing the policy coordination and cooperation on integration matters through the transformation of the existing Network of the National Contact Points on Integration into a **European Integration Network**[4], with a stronger coordination role and mutual learning mandate. The aim of the Network is to support regular exchanges and mutual learning between Member States on specific aspects and elements of integration through targeted learning activities.

1.2.3 European Network of Public Employment Services

The **European Network of Public Employment Services**[5] comprises all 28 EU countries, Norway, Iceland, and the European Commission. Following a recent event on the integration of refugees, the network published a **paper with key considerations**[6].

1.2.4 European Website on Integration

Regarding integration of third-country nationals in EU Member States, the main EU portal with up-to-date information is the **European Website on Integration**[7]. It provides information on:

- action at EU level in all policy areas relevant to integration,
- country-specific data (for instance responsible authorities and indicators),
- integration practices (that have been evaluated and) considered as good,
- access to EU funding (for instance to AMIF or ESF funded opportunities)
- as well as a library with news, documents and relevant events.

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[4] https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/news/europe-new-integration-network-takes-off-with-first-meeting
[5] http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1100&langId=en
[6] http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=15474&langId=en
[7] https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/

1.2.5 Mutual Learning Programme

The Mutual Learning Programme under the **European Employment Strategy** includes a range of activities to support, coordinate and encourage mutual learning between EU Member States. Within this framework the European Commission organises events on the topic of integration and inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers.

- Integration of Refugees into the Labour Market (Peer Review Event, 11-12 October, Berlin)
- Competence Check for the Labour Market Integration of Female Refugees (Peer Review Event, 26-27 June, Vienna)
- Measures to support the integration of asylum seekers and refugees (Thematic Event, 22 June 2016, Brussels)
- Labour market inclusion of international protection applicants and beneficiaries(Peer Review Event, 23 – 24 May 2016, Madrid)

1.2.6 European employment strategy

The European employment strategy (EES) dates back to 1997, when the EU Member States undertook to establish a set of common objectives and targets for employment policy. Its **main aim** is the **creation of more and better jobs throughout the EU**.

It now constitutes part of the Europe 2020 growth strategy[8] and it is implemented through the European semester, an annual process promoting close policy coordination among EU Member States and EU Institutions.

In particular, the **implementation** of the EES - supported by the work of the Employment committee - involves the following **four steps of the European Semester**:

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[8] https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/economic-and-fiscal-policy-coordination/eu-economic-governance-monitoring-prevention-correction/european-semester/framework/europe-2020-strategy_en

1. **Employment guidelines** are common priorities and targets for employment policies proposed by the Commission, agreed by national governments and adopted by the EU Council.

2. **The Joint employment report (JER)** is based on (a) the assessment of the employment situation in Europe (b) the implementation of the Employment Guidelines and (c) an assessment of the Scoreboard of key employment and social indicators. It is published by Commission and adopted by the EU Council.

3. **National Reform Programmes (NRPs)** are submitted by national governments and analysed by the Commission for compliance with Europe 2020. (database – NRPs prior to 2011)

4. Based on the assessment of the NRPs the Commission publishes a series of Country reports, analysing Member States' economic policies and issues Country-specific recommendations.

1.3 Employment Committee

The Employment Committee (EMCO) was created by a Council Decision in 2000, on the basis of Art. 150 of the **TFEU**[9]. It operates within the policy framework of the European Employment Strategy.

EMCO is the main advisory committee for Employment and Social Affairs Ministers in the Employment and Social Affairs Council (EPSCO) in the employment field. (List of EMCO members)

EMCO meets regularly throughout the year, and holds regular discussions with the **European social partners** (trade unions and employers). It also meets regularly with other related committees (especially the committees for Economic Policy, Social Protection, and Education) to discuss issues of joint interest.

EMCO has two sub-groups:

- The **policy analysis group** provides evidence based advice to underpin EMCO work and debate.
- The **indicators group** carries out the technical work on the indicators which are used in monitoring the EU employment strategy.

1.3.1 European Semester

The majority of EMCO's work nowadays is centred around advising Ministers on the **European Semester**[10]. EMCO:

- is responsible for the text of the **Employment Guidelines**
- prepares **Council Conclusions**[11] to be adopted by EPSCO Ministers on the Annual Growth Survey
- agrees the text of the **Joint Employment Report**[12] (which forms an annex to the Annual Growth Survey) that includes the scoreboard of key employment and social indicators

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[9] http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2010:083:FULL:EN:PDF
[10] https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/economic-and-fiscal-policy-coordination/eu-economic-governance-monitoring-prevention-correction/european-semester_en
[11] http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-6885-2017-INIT/en/pdf
[12] http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=2753&furtherNews=yes

- prepares the **Country-Specific Recommendations** (CSRs) in the employment field for adoption by the Council
- provides an **opinion** to Council on the functioning of the Semester, and the **work of individual countries**

1.3.2 Multilateral surveillance

Since 2011, EMCO has pioneered work on monitoring member countries' progress implementing reforms within the Semester and working towards the EU2020 targets. This process is known as **multilateral surveillance**. It relies on a number of tools:

- The **Joint Assessment Framework** (JAF) is an analytical tool based on a set of commonly agreed indicators showing good and bad performance towards the main Europe 2020 targets. A joint proposal for the JAF was put forward in 2010.
- The **Employment Performance Monitor** (EPM) is a joint Commission-EMCO report summarising the JAF assessment and the key challenges it identifies. It is adopted twice a year by the Council and the latest version is also available in French and German). It contains a benchmarking tool for easy comparison of performance against the EU average.
- **Reviews of national reforms**: EMCO conducts a number of reviews of Member State policy initiatives to tackle challenges identified in the CSRs or the EPM. These assessments play an important role in allowing EMCO and the Member States to assess new Commission proposals for CSRs under the European Semester.

1.3.3 Other work

- EMCO participates and contributes to the **Macroeconomic Dialogue**[13] (Cologne process).

- EMCO provides thematic opinions to the Council, or prepares Council conclusions, upon request of the Presidency or on its own initiative. For example, in March 2015 the Council adopted **Conclusions on inclusive labour markets**, which EMCO had prepared.

- EMCO and the Social Protection Committee have contributed to the work on the **European Pillar of Social Rights**[14].

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[13] https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/economic-performance-and-forecasts/economic-performance-country_en

[14] http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=1226

1.4 Social Protection Committee

The Social Protection Committee (SPC)[15] is an EU **advisory policy committee for Employment and Social Affairs Ministers in the Employment and Social Affairs Council (EPSCO)**, established by the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (article 160), which:

- **monitors social conditions** in the EU and the development of social protection policies in member countries. It reports on social inclusion, health care, long-term care and pensions under the social open method of coordination
- **promotes discussion and coordination of policy approaches** among national governments and the Commission. It prepares Council discussions on social protection and on the country-specific recommendations in the context of the European Semester. It also produces reports and opinions on its own initiative or at the request of the Council or the Commission.

The SPC developed in 2012 a monitoring tool which identifies annual key social trends to watch in the EU: it is called **Social Protection Performance Monitor (SPPM)**

1.4.1 Main outputs

The most important Social Protection Committee's output are the following ones:

- **European Pillar of Social Rights**[16]
- **European Semester:**
  - analysis of the social protection and social inclusion aspects of the Annual Growth Survey
  - multilateral reviews on the implementation of the country-specific recommendations (CSRs) and examination of the relevant aspects of the National Reform Programmes in the area of social protection and social inclusion

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[15] http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32015D0773

[16] http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?advSearchKey=EPoSRSPC&mode=advancedSubmit&catId=22&policyArea=0&policyAreaSub=0&country=0&year=0

- discussion of the country-specific recommendations (CSRs) related to social protection and social inclusion
- horizontal assessments of the annual package of CSRs
- evaluation of the annual European Semester cycle
- Integrated Guidelines

- Social dimension of the EMU
- Mid-term-review of the Europe 2020 Strategy
- EU countries' strategic social reporting
- Annual reports on the social situation in the EU and on developments in social protection policies
- Thematic reports, such as:
  - Social protection systems in the EU: financing arrangements and the effectiveness and efficiency of resource allocation[17]
  - Pension adequacy
  - Child poverty and well-being
  - **Social services of general interest**
  - Long-term care (key messages)
  - JAF Health

Opinions and other working documents produced by the Social Protection Committee are available using the **documents database for employment, social affairs & inclusion[18]**. Social Protection Committee documents can also be downloaded from the Council of the EU's public register[19].

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[17] http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=7743&visible=0

[18] http://ec.europa.eu/social/keyDocuments.jsp?type=0&policyArea=750&subCategory=758&country=0&year=0&advSearchKey=&mode=advancedSubmit&langId=en

[19] http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/documents/access-to-council-documents-public-register#

1.4.2 Organisation and working methods

The main characteristics of the Social Protection Committee are the following ones:

- **composition** – 2 delegates from each EU country and the Commission. The Commission members to the SPC are Michel Servoz, Director General of DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion and Manuela Geleng, acting Director for Social Policies.

- **chairperson** elected for 2-year term (renewable once): Ulrika Hall (SE)

- **Bureau** assisting the chairperson which consists of: the Commission, 4 Vice-Chairs (2 elected Vice-Chairs, 1 representative from the current and 1 representative from the next Council Presidency country), the SPC Secretary, the General Secretariat of the Council, and the Chairperson of the Indicators Sub-Group. Current elected Vice-Chairs: Alexis Rinckenbach (FR) and Diana Jakaite (LV).

- **Secretariat** provided by the Commission through a team of officials including Kornelia Kozovska, Paul Minty and Ginta Niedra. The current SPC Secretary is Kornelia Kozovska.

- Indicators sub-group (ISG) – permanent sub-group, Chair: Rudi Van Dam (BE), Vice-Chair: Volker Schmitt (DE)

- Working Group on Ageing Issues – ad-hoc group, Chair: Andraž Rangus (SI)

1.5 Social services of general interest

In the EU, social services play a crucial role in improving quality of life and providing social protection. They include:

- ➢ social security
- ➢ employment and training services
- ➢ social housing
- ➢ child care
- ➢ long-term care
- ➢ social assistance services

These services are a vital means of meeting basic EU objectives such as **social, economic and territorial cohesion, high employment, social inclusion and economic growth**. The EU encourages cooperation and the exchange of good practice between EU countries to improve the quality of social services, and provides financial support for their development and modernisation (eg from the European Social Fund).

1.5.1 Community rules and social services

In modernising social services to better respond to changing needs, societal challenges (for example population ageing) and financing constraints, **national authorities are increasingly diversifying the ways in which these services are organised**, **provided and financed** (eg increased decentralisation, outsourcing of certain tasks to private – profit or non-profit – providers). Consequently, **a growing proportion of these services now come under the scope of Community rules** on competition and the internal market.

In this new environment, public authorities, service providers and users have asked for **clarification of the legal framework**. A broad consultation process carried out over the last few years has shown that most difficulties relate to a lack **of awareness or misinterpretation of the rules** rather than dissatisfaction with the rules themselves. To help address this and answer the needs of public authorities, service providers and users, the Commission has developed FAQs on the applicability of state aid and public procurement rules and an interactive information service.

1.5.2 Supporting the quality of social services

Interest is growing among public authorities, services providers, users and other stakeholders in the **debate on the quality of social services**. The Commission supports the development, (within the Social Protection Committee) of a **voluntary EU quality framework** providing **guidelines on how to set, monitor and evaluate quality standards**. This initiative is part of a strategy which includes financing (via the PROGRESS programme[20]) of bottom-up, transnational projects to develop mechanisms for defining, measuring, assessing and improving the quality of social services.

1.5.3 Latest policy developments

The results of a consultation process to **clarify the specificities of social services of general interest** are contained in the 2007 Communication on services of general interest[21] (including social and health services).

The Communication:

- lists several specific aims for social services
- explains how these aims are reflected in the ways the services are organised, delivered and financed
- proposes a strategy to clarify the applicable legal framework

In November 2008, the Social Protection Committee adopted a report on the application of Community rules to social services of general interest, which assessed the strategy put in place by the Commission and made recommendations.

The Commission published its first biennial report on social services of general interestin 2008, giving an overall picture of these services in the EU.

The report:

- describes the socio-economic role of such services and the major economic and societal changes to which they have to adapt

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[20] http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=327&langId=en
[21] https://ec.europa.eu/info/topics/single-market/services-general-interest_en

- looks at the way they adjust to evolving needs and constraints
- considers how these changes affect the organisation, financing and provision of social services of general interest in terms of relevant Community rules.

It is based on a 2008 study on social services of general interest.