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EURES activity report 1998-1999

"Towards an integrated European labour market: the contribution of EURES"

(presented by the Commission)

EURES activity report 1998-1999

"Towards an integrated European labour market: the contribution of EURES"

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Introduction

Labour market trends in the European Economic Area in recent years make geographical mobility of workers an increasingly important economic factor. It is true that unemployment remains very high in a number of Member States or regions, and preventing and reducing long-term unemployment is a major challenge. At the same time, however, the question of employment is increasingly being posed in terms of shortages of manpower for responding to the needs of employers. These tensions in the labour market have a negative impact on growth and on price stability, while the shortage of skilled manpower affects the competitiveness of businesses.

Geographical mobility - both within each Member State and between the Member States in the European Economic Area - is one potential factor for reducing these tensions in the labour market.

This economic change is clearly shown in political declarations at EU level. Thus, in its Opinion for the Lisbon European Council (March 2000), the Employment and Labour Market Committee stressed the need to encourage mobility in a European labour market. It identified a series of specific measures to be taken, particularly in the context of EURES, to contribute to increased mobility. The conclusions of the Lisbon European Council of March 2000 call upon the Council and the Commission on the one hand to *"improve employability and reduce skills gaps, in particular by providing employment services with a Europe-wide database on jobs and learning opportunities"* [1], and, on the other, to develop *"a common European format for curricula vitae, to be used on a voluntary basis, in order to facilitate mobility by helping the assessment of knowledge acquired, both by education and training establishments and by employers".*[2]

The European Parliament, for its part, proposed developing EURES into a "European employment service" in a Resolution in April 2000 on the internal market.[3]

The development of EURES over the two years covered by this report – 1998 and 1999 – needs to be examined in the light of these economic and political developments, particularly in order to determine whether the work carried out during this period will enable EURES to meet the expectations of the European Council.

This development has been characterised primarily by an increasing awareness among EURES partners, and particularly the public employment services, of their evolving role in the context of a *European* employment strategy and a *European* labour market, resulting in better integration of EURES services into the range of services offered to job seekers and employers.

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1 Conclusions of the Presidency, paragraph 29.

2 Conclusions of the Presidency, paragraph 26.

3 Resolution of 13 April 2000 on the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council - The strategy for Europe's internal market (COM(1999) 464).

Thus there has been a large increase in vacancies exchanged, rising from 43 000 at the beginning of 1998 to 166 000 at the beginning of 2000. In addition, the period has been marked by use of the Internet in support of EURES services. The EURES site was inaugurated by the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom and the President of the Commission at the Cardiff European Summit in June 1998. In the space of several months, it became one of the Commission's most visited sites.

Despite obvious progress as shown in the report below, serious challenges remain - for the Commission and for the partners in the EURES network - in order to meet satisfactorily in the coming months and years the expectations of job seekers and of employers affected by geographical mobility, and the challenges set by the European Council and the European Parliament.

1. EURES TASKS AND PRIORITIES

1.1. EURES: a specific service for European citizens

Having its origins in Regulation No 1612/68 on the free movement of workers, EURES was designed to facilitate the exercising of the right of EU and EEA citizens to work in another Member State.

EURES therefore developed with a view to providing a direct service to citizens, whether job seekers or employers, and is thus one of the most visible and effective facets of the Commission's efforts to come closer to citizens.

EURES basically provides information, advice and placement assistance. It is based on a network of experts (Euroadvisers), a large number of contact points in partner organisations and a free-access service on the Internet.

EURES is one of the key players in "Europe Direct", an initiative launched by the Commission at the Cardiff European Council in June 1998, aimed at bringing Europe closer to its citizens.

1.2. An instrument in the service of the European employment strategy

Over and above the individual services it provides for citizens, EURES supports the European employment strategy in a number of ways.

Firstly, EURES contributes to greater *transparency* in the European labour market. This results from its role of providing information on vacancies, on regional labour markets or on living and working conditions in the different Member States. In facilitating worker mobility, EURES helps to provide greater *flexibility* in the labour market. The *adaptability* of undertakings benefits from access to a range of human resources which is not only wider but also richer in terms of skills, work culture and languages. The *employability* of job seekers is greatly improved by occupational experience abroad, even if only short-term. Cross-border EURES make a special contribution to *local development* on the basis of local partnerships. Finally, the *social dialogue* on employment policy is fostered by cross-border EURES.

In summary, the task of EURES is therefore to improve the operation of the European labour market by facilitating the exercise of workers' right to free movement.

1.3. A well-defined framework of priorities

In 1998 and 1999, EURES activities - at partner and at European Commission level - followed a set of priorities defined jointly by all partners together with the Commission. These were:

A. to improve EURES performance with regard to vacancies. In this context, the aim was to increase the number of vacancies in the EURES database with a view to obtaining a critical mass. It was equally important to improve the quality of jobs offered. Finally, the processing of vacancies received by the partner organisations in the network was to be improved;

B. to improve access to EURES services. The aim was not only to strengthen the available human network - particularly by making better use of the resources of the public employment services - but also to develop free access to certain basic services in relation to geographical mobility, particularly through use of the Internet;

C. to improve the quality of EURES services. The aim was to implement EURES quality standards and to train Euroadvisers and make them available to EURES;

D. to improve communication within the network. One particular aim was greater involvement of the entire hierarchy of the employment services. Similarly, measures were proposed for improving communication between the main network players using information and communication technologies.

On the basis of these common aims, each partner was invited to define an annual EURES "development plan", to be implemented with financial support from the Commission. The report below will explain to what extent these aims have been achieved.

2. CONSOLIDATION AND EXPANSION OF THE EURES PARTNER NETWORK

2.1. Greater integration of EURES into the public employment services

The basic partners in EURES are "the employment services of the Member States and any further national partners which they may have".[4]

[4] Commission Decision No 93/569, Article 1.

These partners have not changed during the reference period and are as follows:

A-Arbeitsmarktservice Österreich (AMS)	F-Office des migrations (OMI)
B-FORmation EMploi (FOREM)	GR-Office de l'emploi and de la main-d'oeuvre (OEAD)
B-Vlaamse Dienst voor Arbeidsvoorziening (VDAB)	IRL-Foras Aseanna Saothair (FAS)
B-Office régional bruxellois de l'emploi/Brusselse Gewestelijke Dienst voor Arbeidsbemiddeling (ORBEM/BGDA)	ISL-Direction générale de l'emploi
D-Bundesanstalt für Arbeit (BA)	I-Ministero del Lavoro
D-Bundesverwaltungsamt (BVA)	L-Administration de l'emploi (ADEM)
DK-Arbejdsmarkedsstyrelsen (AMS)	NL-Arbeidsvoorziening (ARBVO)
E-Instituto Nacional de Empleo (INEM)	N-Arbeidsdirektoratet
SF-Ministère du Travail	P-Instituto do Emprego e Formaçao Profissional (IEFP)
F-Agence nationale pour l'emploi (ANPE)	S-Arbetsmarknadsstyrelsen (AMS)
F-Association pour l'emploi des cadres (APEC)	UK-Employment Service

The most significant development during the reference period was the adoption by the directors of the public employment services (PES) on 16 November 1998 of a Memorandum of Undertanding on the development of EURES services. In this Memorandum, the public employment services recognised the importance of EURES as a totally integralelement in their range of services. They undertook to further the integration of the EURES service into their own organisations, in terms both of planning and of management of human resources and processing of vacancies. An evaluation of the implementation of the Memorandum after one year showed that it had contributed to improved knowledge and understanding within the PES. A large number of worthwhile initiatives had been taken, such as the training of officials other than Euroadvisers, including transnational training bringing together line managers from all the partner PES.

EURES is thus confirmed as an effective agent in the Europeanisation of the public employment services, which are increasingly considered agents of the European labour market rather than merely of the national or regional market.

2.2. The consolidation of cross-border EURES

Following a strong expansion in the number of cross-border EURES partnerships (EURES-T) in 1996-97 (increasing from 11 structures to 18), the network underwent a degree of stabilisation with only one new – albeit important – partnership in the Upper Rhine region.

The EURES-T "Oberrhein/Rhin supérieur" has been active since July 1999. This cross-border region covers more than 500 km of the border between Germany (Baden-Württemberg), France (Alsace) and Switzerland (area around Basle). Switzerland has been invited to participate in the EURES-T as an observer. The number of commuters totals an estimated 73 000 (31 000 French commuters to Germany; 1 000 German commuters to France; 31 000 French and 10 000 German commuters to Switzerland).

A cross-border partnership was also successfully established at the end of 1997 between Ireland and Northern Ireland. The partnership, which includes public employment services, trade unions and employers' representatives, covers the whole of Northern Ireland and the six border counties of Ireland. The development of the cross-border structure has been greatly assisted by the peace process and is viewed on both sides of the border as a very concrete example of how effective cooperation can benefit job seekers and employers.

A number of other cross-border regions, particularly in the Scandinavian countries, are currently examining the possibility of applying to establish a EURES-T.

Beginning in 1999, the chairmanship of the cross-border partnership steering committees has been progressively transferred from the European Commission to local partners (transfer already carried out for 11 partnerships as of 31 December 1999). This change is aimed at giving local players more responsibility for the development of cross-border EURES.

2.3. Euroadvisers: the driving force behind the network

Euroadvisers are the driving force behind the EURES network, since they have a key role in delivering information, guidance and placement/recruitment assistance services to both job seekers and employers. There are around 520 in all the EEA countries, including the cross-border regions.

Distribution

The majority of Euroadvisers are from the public employment services (430), while trade unions (77) and employers' associations (13) are represented only in the cross-border regions.

It was decided at the end of 1998 to stop the training of special university Euroadvisers but instead to develop other forms of cooperation between EURES and higher education bodies (including universities), taking into account local traditions and circumstances.

EURES CROSS-BORDER PARTNERSHIPS

1. **H.N.F.K Hainaut / Nord-Pas de Calais / West-Vlaanderen / Kent**
   Belgique/ België, France, United-Kingdom
2. **IGA 1**
   Belgique / België, Nederland
3. **Euregio Gronau / Eschede**
   Deutschland, Nederland
4. **IGA 2**
   Belgique / Beglië, Deutschland, Nederland
5. **P.E.D.**
   Belgique / België, France, Luxemburg
6. **Saar / Lorraine / Luxembourg / Rheinland - Pfalz**
   Deutschland, France, Luxemboug
7. **EURAZUR**
   France, Italia
8. **TRANSALP**
   France, Italia
9. **SØNDERJYLLAND / SCHLESWIG**
   Danemark, Deutschland
10. **EURALP**
    Italia, Österreich
11. **Euregio Rhein - Waal /Rhein - Maas - Nord**
    Deutschland, Nederland
12. **INTERALP**
    Deutschland, Österreich
13. **EDR**
    Deutschland, Nederland



14. **PYREMED / PIRIMED**
    España, France
15. **Northern Ireland / Border counties of the Rep. of Ireland**
    Ireland, United Kingdom
16. **Trans Tirolia**
    Italia, Österreich
17. **ØRESUND**
    Danmark, Sverige
18. **Galicia / Região Norte**
    España , Portugal
19. **Oberrhein**
    France, Deutschland

The changing role of Euroadvisers

Euroadvisers were originally the only people to provide EURES services, mainly through direct contact with job seekers and employers, being the only ones with direct access to the two databases (job vacancies and general information), and most of their activity was directed at meeting requests from users. With the growing process of integration of EURES into the PES, their role has been changing, from a 'first-stop shop' to an 'expert' who coordinates and promotes the use of EURES services at a local/regional level. In order to support Euroadvisers, most PES have trained assistants and other administrative staff, whose main task is to provide information to the public, make an initial pre-selection and, where applicable, refer them to the Euroadviser for guidance and placement services. Moreover, many PES have already installed self-service points for users, and the EURES job vacancies database is often available on these self-service facilities as well as on the EURES Internet site.

Training

Staff training activities for the EURES network have increased. The Commission is responsible for the basic training of new Euroadvisers (around 80 each year). It is assisted in this task by a training team responsible for designing, organising and providing this training. Each year the Commission prepares a transnational continuing training programme according to Euroadvisers' needs (e.g. living and working conditions in some countries, social security issues, vacancy handling, large-scale recruitment, etc.). Line managers (i.e. PES managers at local/regional level) are invited to join some sessions, in order to increase their awareness of the network (e.g. a special seminar for line managers was organised for the first time in Turin in February 1999). Moreover, all countries prepare a national/local training plan for Euroadvisers, assistants and other staff members to cover specific training issues which are not covered in the transnational programme.

3. DEVELOPMENT OF THE EURES SERVICE

3.1. More job vacancies more easily accessible

An important feature of the EURES service is to allow job seekers to identify job vacancies of interest to them in other countries in the single market. This helps to promote greater transparency in the European labour market. Two parallel and complementary approaches have been pursued in this context:

– firstly, significant progress has been made in the numbers of transnational and cross-border job vacancies notified by public employment services to the EURES jobs database in Brussels;

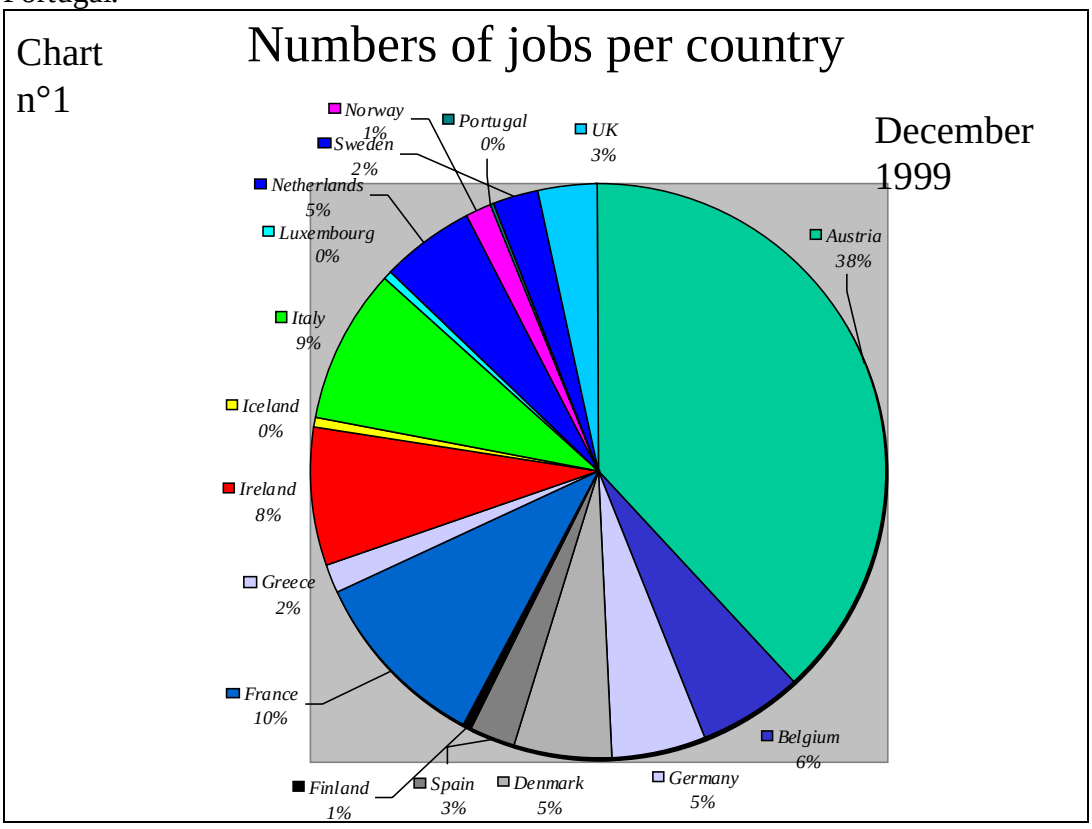
– secondly, the rapid development of information and communication technology, particularly the Internet, has greatly widened the dissemination of, and access to, job vacancies in the single market.

EURES Jobs Database

The jobs database itself is housed in the Commission in Brussels. Euroadvisers can connect to the database via a fast telecommunications network funded by the Enterprise DG's TESTA programme. TESTA itself is part of the wider Enterprise DG programme "Interchange of Data between Administrations" (IDA), in which EURES is viewed as a prime example of how public administrations can exchange information in a modern, fast and effective way.

Euroadvisers can enter jobs on the database directly or use it to search for jobs in other countries. Most vacancies, however, are not entered by individual Euroadvisers but are directly transferred from national PES databases. This integrated approach, implemented as part of the 1998 Memorandum of Understanding, has led to a *large increase in the number of vacancies available to job seekers* at transnational and cross-border level. The countries which have integrated their systems with EURES are France, Austria, Germany, Norway and Belgium. In addition, Finland and the Netherlands receive EURES job vacancies automatically. There is a commitment to integrate all PES systems with EURES by the end of 2002, starting with the planned integration in 2000 of the PES in Ireland, Northern Ireland, Great Britain and Portugal.

Chart n°1



This chart represents the stock of transnational vacancies in the 17 countries. The spread of vacancies between countries has become more evenly distributed over the years, although Austria is still predominant. As countries integrate their national systems with EURES, it is expected that the spread will become increasingly even.

The major sectors (see Chart No 2) which are advertising vacancies continue to be hotels, catering and tourism, together with the ICT sector. There is, perhaps surprisingly, consistently high demand for skilled jobs in the manufacturing sector.

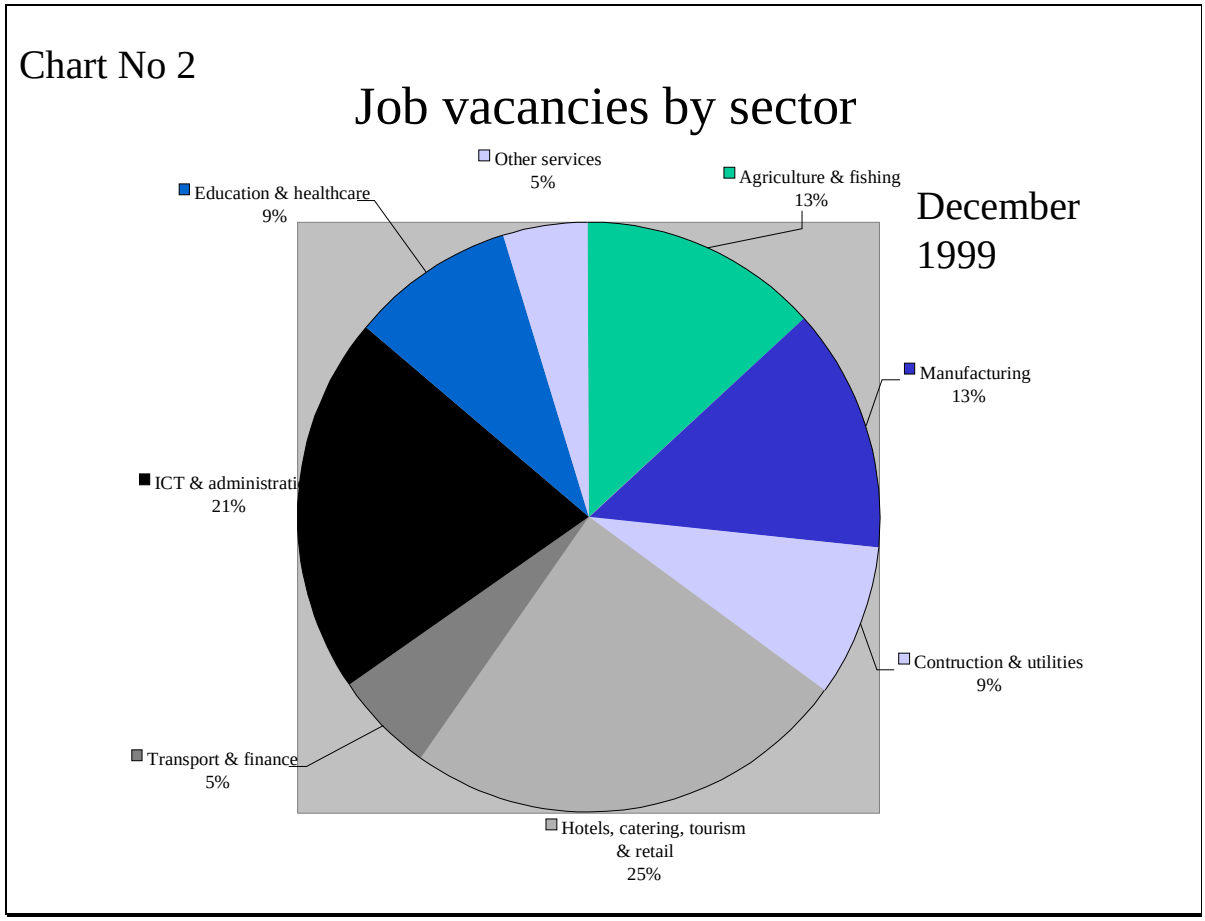
The relatively high proportion of jobs in agriculture is largely due to seasonal vacancies, e.g. in fruit picking, which are notified to EURES and which have proved especially popular with young people.

Although the stock of transnational vacancies has grown steadily from under 4 000 in 1997 to over 26 000 in 1999 (see Chart No 3), it is the increase in cross-border vacancy exchange which has led to the extremely large growth in the overall stock of EURES vacancies, which passed the 200 000 mark early in 2000.

Increasing transparency

Integration clearly helps to meet one of EURES' key objectives: an open and transparent service which allows citizens easy access to the European labour market. At national level, integrated PES can offer access to EURES jobs via their self-service terminals located in job centres, as is the case in Germany, Austria and the Netherlands. In France, the vacancies are available on Minitel. In other countries,

Chart No 2



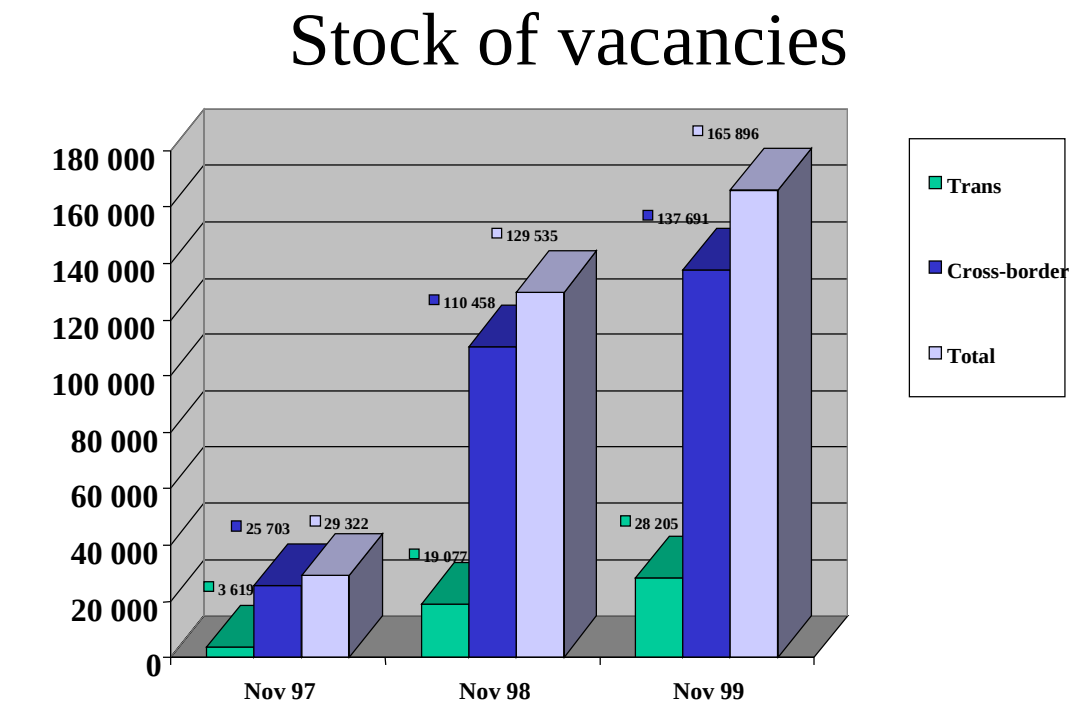
Internet terminals have been installed in job centres and these are linked to the EURES website. This trend towards self-service is growing rapidly throughout the European employment services network and provides a real opportunity for the PES, and EURES, to offer their services to customers at the point of demand. It has the added advantage, in the case of EURES, of freeing-up the valuable human resource of Euroadvisers to provide additional advice and guidance to those job seekers who require a more tailor-made approach.

Increasing access to the Internet and the technology associated with it has also offered new opportunities which help fulfil this objective. The EURES website, http://europa.eu.int/jobs/eures/, was launched in 1998. It contains information on the EURES network, living and working conditions in all of the 17 countries, selected transnational job vacancies and useful links to other websites. It also acts as a gateway to the PES websites where a vast amount of additional information and job vacancies are available. By providing access to EURES jobs via the Internet and a clear link with PES national databases, job seekers now have access to *around 1 million jobs every day*.

New service for job seekers

In 2000 there will be an additional feature on the EURES site, namely the facility for job seekers to register their interest in working in another country by placing their CV, either openly or anonymously, on a database which can then be searched by registered employers. This will run as a pilot project for one year and its future will be evaluated in 2001. In this way the EURES site will, in many ways, reflect at

Chart No 3



European level the range of services currently available in the PES at national and regional level, as well as working towards fulfilling one of the objectives outlined in the conclusions of the Lisbon European Council.

3.2. High-quality services

The Commission aims to ensure that exchanging large numbers of vacancies and making them as widely available as possible is backed up by a commitment to a

high-quality service for both job seekers and employers. During 1999, therefore, a set of EURES quality standards for the handling of vacancies and job applications was agreed following extensive consultation among the partners. These standards will be implemented in each organisation as an integral part of their national quality standards and will be further reinforced by national and regional training of Euroadvisers and other staff managing job vacancies and applications at European level.

A comparison between the statistics on Euroadvisers' activity during 1996/1997 and 1998/1999 shows a reassuring development in activity by the EURES network, even though it reflects only a part of that activity.

EURES contacts with:	1996/97	1998/99	% increase
Job seekers	802 315	1 077 127	25.51
Employers	66 951	105 666	36.64
Others	99 968	148 960	32.89

Placement activity also intensified, increasing from 26 449 in 1998 to 44 460 in 1999.[5]

In addition, a study carried out at the beginning of 1999[6] indicated that the information and advice services provided by the EURES network were highly regarded by users. A large majority of both job seekers and employers expressed satisfaction with the quality of information provided and with the professionalism of the Euroadvisers. The advice given, whether written or oral information, the direct resolution of a problem or a referral to a competent department, was judged satisfactory or highly satisfactory by more than seven out of ten of those questioned.

With regard to the information tools provided to Euroadvisers, EURES has added significantly to the contents of its database (disseminated only within the network) on living and working conditions and regional job markets. Nevertheless, the presence within the Commission of other databases also covering the area of worker mobility in Europe has encouraged EURES to begin a process of fusing three databases (Citizens First, Scadplus and a section of EURESInfo) and should give rise in the spring of 2000 to a single Community database, disseminated under the title "Dialogue with citizens". This new database will have wider subject- and language-based coverage than EURESInfo.

Finally, information and advice, the basic activity of the EURES network and hitherto almost entirely the responsibility of Euroadvisers, is also undergoing changes in so far as, having fulfilled their role as "communicators" of the European dimension within their respective bodies, Euroadviser services are increasingly

5 These figures correspond to the number of job seekers placed by EURES in a post in another partner country.

6 "Eures Cross-border Partnerships – (net)work in progress", B&A Groep Beleidsonderzoek & -Advies b.v., The Hague, 1999.

relayed through other agents who in turn provide information to the public at a more local level (see point 2.3 of this report).

3.3. Additional EURES-T services

Cross-border EURES partnerships contribute to the general tasks of EURES in terms of information, advice and placement assistance for job seekers, workers or employers in the regions concerned. Furthermore, the legal basis of EURES provides for certain additional tasks for the EURES-T by virtue of their specific nature.

Cross-border vocational training

One of the tasks allocated to cross-border EURES is the carrying out of an inventory of vocational training opportunities in the cross-border area. A number of these have been developed, often establishing links - from the Internet sites of partnerships – with various other sites in the cross-border region providing information on the subject and in certain cases enabling on-line registration.

Some partnerships have carried out studies of qualification requirements or on recognition of qualifications in the regions concerned. In the light of these studies, some intend to establish cross-border vocational training actions, open to residents on both sides of the border and leading to qualifications recognised by employers on either side of the border.

The grant for training periods in businesses implemented by the Interalp partnership (AT/DE) provides information on the Internet on training periods at cross-border level.

However, there are still obstacles to following vocational training on the other side of the border, particularly the obligation in some Member States to be resident in the country in which the training is given, or the loss of social security rights, including unemployment allowances, for workers in training.

Obstacles to cross-border mobility

Taking advantage of their favourable position for observing the local labour market, the cross-border EURES partnerships have taken steps to identify the obstacles to mobility in the regions they cover. Apart from specific studies carried out by some partnerships, a joint approach was implemented in order to identify these obstacles with the help of cross-border Euroadvisers. Each of them identified the five main obstacles to mobility at their own border level. Using a common classification, a summary of these questionnaires enabled the EURES report on obstacles to cross-border mobility to be drawn up (Spring 2000). Apart from its informative nature, this report also highlights areas for discussion in order to resolve the obstacles and may, in this regard, be used by administrations or other bodies involved to try to improve the situation.

The report also refers to the fact that in certain partnerships, actions undertaken by Euroadvisers or by partners have made it possible to find solutions to particular obstacles, especially with regard to dual taxation or discrimination in terms of social security cover.

Cooperation and dialogue on the cross-border labour market

The EURES-T are also increasingly becoming forums for analysis, exchanges of ideas and joint actions in relation to cross-border labour markets.

For instance, studies have been carried out on trends in qualification requirements at cross-border level, characterisation of commuter flows, equal opportunities, comparison of collective labour agreements and comparison of functions on either side of the border.

The majority of partners have also collected statistics on cross-border labour markets and disseminated them either on paper or on Internet sites.

Joint actions on cross-border employment areas are also carried out by the public employment services, particularly in relation to significant recruitment or redundancy actions, the setting up of cross-border "job clubs" or the exchange of good practices between their organisations.

The social partners are also closely involved in preparing and editing documents and brochures on living and working conditions in the cross-border zone. In addition, they are often in charge of or associated with surveys or studies relating to undertakings or to commuters in their regions. Having the cross-border social partners within the same forum also promotes cross-border social dialogue, and some studies on relevant topics have been carried out.

Synergies with Interreg

The Commission communication on the new Interreg III initiative[7] provides for consultation of the cross-border EURES for cross-border cooperation in the field of labour markets. In this context, EURES organised a seminar in Barcelona in September 1999 with EURES coordinators and partners, representatives of the LACE network and people involved in the management of Interreg at national and Community level, in order to get to know each other better and to identify additional actions to be implemented between EURES and Interreg. This approach will be developed during 2000 with the aim of bringing out Interreg III projects promoting transparency and mobility at the level of cross-border labour markets.

Evaluation and follow-up

During 1998, the Commission carried out an external evaluation of five of the oldest partnerships. This study showed that users were very positive about the services provided by Euroadvisers (approximately 72% of those questioned were satisfied or very satisfied). On the other hand, it appears that the network is still little-known among the public.

The evaluation report also recommends the establishment of information networks at local level to take charge of collecting and processing the information required by partners (particularly Euroadvisers) and the public in general ("resource centre" or "labour market observatories").

[7] Communication from the Commission to the Member States COM(2000) 1101.

This evaluation enabled all EURES-T partnerships to fine-tune their development strategies and operating methods in order, among other things, to make them more available by means of Internet sites.

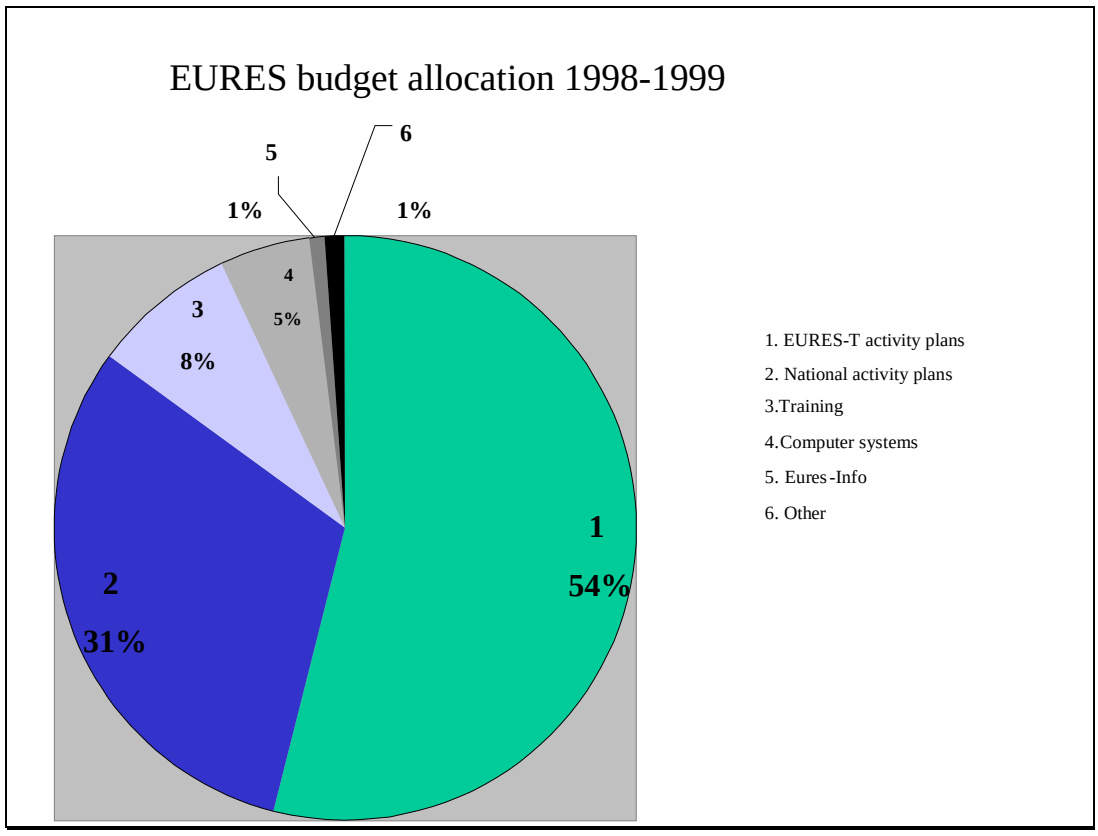
4. FUNDING

The EURES budget is voted each year by the budgetary authority. For 1998 and 1999, it amounts to a total of € 10 million, or € 0.5 million less than for the two previous years. In 1999, a ceiling of € 450 000 was set in the context of the total for expenditure on technical assistance and administration. In addition to these amounts, EURES receives a contribution from EFTA (€ 187 000 in 1998 and € 196 000 in 1999) under the terms of the agreement on the European Economic Area (participation of Norway and Iceland).

Most of the budget is used to fund activities by national and cross-border partners for the development of the EURES service, in particular information, promotion and support activities or computer equipment.

Moreover, the budget funds a number of services of benefit to all partners, such as basic and ongoing training for Euroadvisers and the development, administration and updating of the databases containing vacancies and information on living and working conditions.

The figure below illustrates budget allocation for 1998 and 1999 (average).



There is heavy demand from network partners to simplify the procedures for allocating Commission grants and for obtaining multiannual grants.

5. PRIORITIES AND CHALLENGES

There are four main areas for determining the priorities and challenges facing EURES in the next few years:

– political and operational integration;

– modernising the means of providing services;

– improving the range of services;

– re-examining administration methods.

These areas are reflected by the EURES partners in the aims and priorities for the next three years (2000-2002), developed on the basis of an in-depth analysis of their strengths and weaknesses, the political and socio-economic changes affecting them and future European labour market requirements.

5.1. Political and operational integration

Better use deserves to be made of EURES' contribution to important political priorities defined at European Union level. As a direct service to job seekers and employers, EURES helps to promote a "citizens' Europe", one of the main objectives on the Commission's agenda. As a tool contributing to the emergence of a European labour market, EURES supports not only the completion of the internal market but also the implementation of the European employment strategy and the success of economic and monetary union. The conclusions of the Lisbon European Council in March 2000 are consistent with taking greater account of geographical mobility and favouring a European exchange of vacancies in the context of the economic and social priorities of the EU.

EURES' contribution to other Community initiatives should also be exploited in a more systematic manner. Cases in point are the Interreg programme (see 3.3), the EU programmes for vocational training (Leonardo da Vinci), education (Socrates) and youth, or measures in support of local employment initiatives.

There should also be integration within partner organisations. In particular, it will be essential to maintain the impetus given by the Memorandum of Understanding on EURES approved by the directors of the public employment services in 1998, in order to ensure the integration of EURES into the PES.

Finally, the enlargement of the European Union is a major challenge. It will require a commitment by the network to contribute to the harmonious integration of the new countries.

5.2. Modernising the means of providing services

It is essential that the particular skills of Euroadvisers are used to the full, freeing them from basic tasks which can be carried out more effectively using new technologies and enabling them to offer advice, guidance and placement services with higher added value. In addition, wider human resources networks in and

external to, the partner organisations should be developed in order to offer EURES services as widely as possible.

The rapid development of information and communication technologies enables EURES to modernise its means of providing services by responding to a legitimate demand from citizens for autonomous and rapid access to basic information and services. One of the central access points will be the EURES website http://europa.eu.int/jobs/eures. This will offer access to the PES sites, EURES vacancies and a EURES job seekers' database.

It is also essential for national and cross-border websites to offer clear and visible access to all EURES services. In addition, national Intranets are an easily adaptable tool for providing EURES information to all PES staff. The equipment provided by the increasing number of call centres at European and national level will also make it possible, and economic, to provide basic EURES services both to job seekers and employers.

In response to a request from the budgetary authority, a specific report will be submitted to it in 2000 on the resource requirements linked to increased use of the Internet.

5.3. Improving the range of services

The Commission and the partners will give priority to sources of information on living and working conditions with a view to enabling access to a full, precise, multilingual database available to all potential users. In addition, the EURES labour market database should be developed as a tool not only for informing job seekers or employers about conditions in the labour market, but also as an observatory for assisting EURES partners in identifying trends in that market with regard to supply and demand and real and potential bottlenecks. The number and quality of vacancies also demands a real commitment by the partners to ensure that all appropriate vacancies are exchanged at transnational and cross-border level using integrated methods and ensuring that they are processed in accordance with high standards. Job seekers will be able to disseminate their CVs at European level, thus placing them in direct contact with potential employers.

At cross-border level, higher priority will be given to two sectors which are not yet fully developed, namely information for citizens on opportunities for cross-border training and identification of obstacles to mobility. Finally, in order to develop their range of services and increase their local impact, the cross-border EURES partnerships should take advantage of the opportunities provided by Interreg 3 to support additional activities to promote an integrated labour market.

5.4. Re-examining administration methods

The administration methods initially defined for the EURES network should be adapted in response to various findings and developments:

– the EURES partner organisations, and in particular the public employment services, have made considerable progress during the 1990s;

– the increased number of cross-border partnerships and the prospects for enlargement make it necessary to rethink the role of the Commission, particularly in terms of simplifying its relations with the partners;

– ongoing discussions of ways to externalise certain Commission activities should also have repercussions for the tasks incumbent upon the Commission and the partners respectively;

– the funding mechanisms, both within the Commission and in the partner organisations, mobilise significant human resources to an extent which can appear disproportionate. The annual nature of the budget does not promote long-term planning.

In accordance with the above, the Commission is currently examining a possible revision of its 1993 Decision on EURES.