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NOTE

From:	Presidency
To:	Permanent Representatives Committee/Council
Subject:	Follow-up of specific employment-related issues - Public Employment Services (PES) Network: bench-learning

Delegations will find attached a background note on the above subject with a view to the EPSCO Council on 13 October 2016.

Benchlearning within the European Network of Public Employment Services

Through the implementation of benchlearning, the PES Network has become a driving force for PES reform across Europe.

Political support for benchlearning at both the European and national levels will be decisive in maintaining the strong momentum to deliver increased PES performance and better outcomes for jobseekers and employers.

More effective and efficient **Public Employment Services (PES)** are essential to the successful functioning of national labour markets and in ensuring the success of the Europe 2020 Strategy for jobs, and smart, sustainable, and inclusive growth. PES are at the forefront of delivering the Youth Guarantee, combatting long-term unemployment and supporting the labour market integration of refugees.

By founding the **European Network of PES** in 2014, Ministers demonstrated their resolve to collaborate jointly on labour market challenges, and work towards increasing PES performance across Europe. All EU Member States plus Iceland and Norway participate.

The **PES benchlearning system** is at the core of the Network's activities. Benchlearning links indicator-based **benchmarking** with **mutual learning**, identifying good performances and then using findings for mutual learning activities to increase the standard of service delivery to jobseekers and employers. Assessment is both qualitative and quantitative and leads to recommendations for reform for each PES.

The **qualitative assessment** examines PES performance through a series of 29 performance enablers (indicators) in fields including: performance management and target setting, effective channelling and profiling of jobseekers, tailored use of active labour market instruments, management of transitions, relations with employers, stakeholder partnerships, and PES resource allocation.

Evaluation methodology is based on excellence model of quality management using a Plan, Do, Check and Act cycle and is composed of self-assessment questionnaire and follow-up evaluation site visit of EU PES expert team.

The **quantitative assessment** is built around indicators under 4 headings: reducing unemployment for all age groups and for vulnerable groups; reducing the duration of unemployment and reducing inactivity; filling of vacancies; customer satisfaction with PES services.

First results of bench-learning are very positive:

- The first PES have already set up their **reform agendas** on the basis of their assessment results. Topics addressed include:
 - ✓ new performance management approaches
 - ✓ better targeting activities
 - ✓ modernising profiling systems
 - ✓ better supporting the individual to find the right job
 - ✓ implementing an employers' strategy to attract more vacancies
 - ✓ measuring jobseeker satisfaction to see if PES really meet the requirements of the customers
- A complete set of 30 **self- and external assessments** is available in the Network and the set of quantitative data is steadily improving, allowing a first evaluation of performance of the European PES.

- Benchlearning creates **transparency of PES performance**. Good practice is systematically identified, and **mutual learning activities are underpinned by evidence**.
 - In turn, PES are empowered to work towards better performance using the results of the process in defining and driving their ongoing **reform agendas**. Heads of PES update the PES Network Board on reform and actions undertaken a year after the site visit by submitting a report. The **cycle of PES performance improvement** continues through annual data collections, and bi-annual site visits.
 - Mutual learning activities are progressing and the PES are actively learning from each other's good practices. A whole series of **learning events** which is highly appreciated and attended by PES representatives is organised by the Commission to support the process of continuous improvement.
 - Moreover, PES are actively engaged in **helping each other** to develop their capabilities, and are willing to continue to commit to this.
 - The first cycle of benchlearning will be completed by identifying **correlations between the structure of PES and operational results** in order to take forward evidence-based learning.
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