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From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	Draft Council Conclusions on European Court of Auditors' Special Report No 25/2021 on ESF support to combat long-term unemployment

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Delegations will find attached a set of draft Council Conclusions prepared by the Presidency with a view to the meeting of the Social Questions Working Party on 3 February 2022.

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

**THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION:**

1. **TAKES NOTE** of the Special Report on ESF support to combat long-term unemployment (LTU), submitted by the European Court of Auditors (ECA).
2. **RECALLS** that nearly 2.7% of the Union workforce<sup>1</sup> remains unemployed for a period of more than twelve months, which accounts for one third of total unemployment in the Union.
3. **RECALLS** that the European Pillar of Social Rights (principle 4) proclaims the right of the long-term unemployed to have an in-depth individual assessment at the latest after 18 months of unemployment.
4. **RECALLS** that not having a formal job for a long period leads to loss of income for the persons concerned and therefore enhances the risk of poverty and social exclusion. Long-term unemployment lowers the potential growth of the Union economies and adds to the costs borne by social services and public finances.
5. **ACKNOWLEDGES** that people who stay out of employment for longer periods may face more difficulties finding work owing to skills erosion as well as loss of motivation and confidence. In addition, employers may be more reluctant to hire someone who has not worked for a long time.
6. **RECALLS** that individualised approaches can help the long-term unemployed to address both social and professional barriers and **UNDERLINES** the importance of providing the long-term unemployed with individual assessments, as suggested in the ‘Recommendation on the integration of the long-term unemployed in the labour market’ adopted by the Council of the European Union on 15 February 2016<sup>2</sup>.

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

<sup>2</sup> Doc. 14361/15

7. **RECOGNISES** the contribution made by the European Social Fund (ESF), as the EU's main funding instrument for supporting Member States' active labour market measures, in allocating nearly EUR 11.4 billion to the investment priority 'Access to employment for jobseekers and inactive people, including the long-term unemployed, and people far from the labour market, also through local employment initiatives and support from labour mobility'.
8. **RECALLS** that ESF support for other investment priorities, such as 'active inclusion, including with a view to promoting equal opportunities and active participation, and improving employability', also contributes to combating long-term unemployment since long-term unemployed persons may face specific issues (mobility, childcare) needing to be addressed before their return to the labour market.
9. **WELCOMES** the common output indicator covering the long-term unemployed in the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+)<sup>3</sup>.

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

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

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

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

13. Step up efforts to further develop a coordinated strategy on employment, through promotion of a skilled, trained and adaptable workforce as well as policies and tools to support access to employment specifically for long-term jobseekers, in accordance with the ‘Council Recommendation on the integration of the long-term unemployed in the labour market’.
14. Apply an individualised approach when implementing activation measures for long-term unemployed persons and offer in-depth individual assessments and guidance to jobseekers to help remove social and psychological barriers, especially through the public employment services of the Member States, as suggested in the ‘Council Recommendation on the integration of the long-term unemployed in the labour market’.
15. Advocate for the implementation of schemes and projects specifically devoted to the long-term unemployed, and favour as much as possible immersion experiences in work situations, in line with the ESF+ objectives and priorities.
16. Reinforce efforts to monitor and evaluate, through appropriate frameworks and dedicated studies, the effectiveness of all operations supported under the specific objectives of the ESF+ that relate to combating long-term unemployment. Use the data collected to improve measures and tools aiming to combat long-term unemployment.