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From:	The Employment Committee
To:	Delegations
Subject:	EMCO review of the implementation of the Recommendation on individual learning accounts: Country-specific conclusions

Delegations will find attached the Country specific conclusions from the review on the implementation of the 2022 Council Recommendation on individual learning accounts.

Country specific conclusions**from the review on the implementation of the 2022 Council Recommendation on individual learning accounts***EMCO PAG meeting on 29-30 October 2024***1. BELGIUM**

Belgium is implementing ILA at both the federal and regional levels, although this process is at very different stages across the federated entities. A Federal Learning Account (FLA) has been set up leveraging the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF), with the involvement of the social partners. It serves to store the right to paid training leave which has been recognised at the federal level, aiming at incentivising adults' participation in training activities. The FLA scheme is complemented by a regional ILA scheme set up in Flanders, also financed by the RRF. Very positively the consultation of social partners has been extensive in the design of both schemes and includes collaboration agreements for the use of sectoral funds for unemployed and inactive people.

For now, the FLA mainly serves as a registry for the “Federal Individual Right, which exists in different forms for workers in the private sector. The full implementation of these ILA schemes depends on effective coordination between the federal and regional levels as well as on the collaboration with employers. As regards the rights to individual training entitlements, their transferability during professional transitions (across employers and employment statuses) is still not possible and there are only limited opportunities for their accumulation. Specific training provisions for those most in need are in place only in Flanders. The enabling framework is particularly strong in Flanders, however there is still no single national digital portal for training rights covering all federated entities and all categories of people, regardless of their job status. Belgium has taken some steps to implement the ILA recommendation. However, considering the participation rate of adults in training activities, which is still low, full alignment with the ILA’s main features is still needed to reach the overall goal of increasing participation in up- and reskilling activities, especially to reach out those who need it the most.

2. CZECHIA

EMCO welcomes the implementation of a pilot ILA scheme in Czechia that already reflects some elements of the Council Recommendation and aims to contribute addressing the still rather low level of adult participation in training. Both the universality of the pilot scheme and the creation of a national training opportunities portal – Database of Re/Upskilling Courses - are worth a particular mention. Training entitlements are set at 2000 euro (50 000 CZK) which is a promising amount and can be spent over the course of three consecutive years. Based on the outcomes of the piloting, Czechia could consider reviewing a number of aspects to fully pursue the potential of ILAs. While the amount of the entitlement seems consistent with on-the-market training costs, the co-payment requirement could deter participation of low-income groups. To attract and engage more working-age adults in training, Czechia could consider expanding the thematic scope of courses available to ILA participants beyond acquisition of digital skills as well as introducing the right to paid training leave in the legislation, in cooperation with social partners. Outreach efforts for the ILA scheme are ongoing but could be improved to specific groups – such as marginalized communities, low-income and low-skilled individuals, older workers - as they may need strengthened support. Czechia needs to engage in further consultation with social partners and relevant stakeholders to ensure the adequate and sustainable funding of the individual learning accounts in the future, through a combination of public and private funding sources, including as an outcome of collective bargaining. In its efforts to reach the full potential of ILAs, Czechia will be supported by the Tripartite Committee for Requalification and Adult Learning.

3. GERMANY

Germany has several schemes for enabling more working-age adults to engage in training. The pilot ILA project “Lebenschancen BAföG” - currently being designed – targets low earners over 25 years of age, hence offering a form of universal coverage in the context of this specific target group. The pilot covers three of the main ILA-specific policy elements: a form of universality limited by an income threshold, transferability is guaranteed across professional statuses and employers, and accumulation of entitlements is possible over a limited time frame. The pilot will involve social partners and aims to ensure relevance of the training. As regards the enabling framework, access to skills validation of non-formal and informal learning in the VET sector requires further development. Germany could explore synergies within the existing system (e.g. with the PES) for offering career guidance, as well as skills validation opportunities.

In Germany, no universal legal right to continuous training is in place. Paid training leave is present in most but not all federal states. Finally, there is scope for further enhancing the digital infrastructure through a single national registry (for quality assurance) and a portal for the end users to access their individual accounts. Sustainable funding needs to be assigned to the ILA scheme. Outreach to the most in need of upskilling and reskilling should consider specific challenges such as language barrier for people with a migrant background and the lack of childcare facilities in some regions that affects women’s access to training.

4. GREECE

Greece developed a coherent legal framework for ILA, broadly in line with the provisions of the Council Recommendation, including with the involvement of social partners. While some key aspects of entitlements as transferability and accumulation are still to be clarified, it is very positive that the Greece ILA scheme grants additional entitlements for individuals who are most in need of upskilling and reskilling. A single portal for training opportunities is being developed, which will contribute to addressing the current fragmentation of skills providers and to the change of landscape regarding trainings and support people's professional advancement. Additionally, the use of the Labour Market Diagnosis Mechanism to inform training programs design will help in ensuring the relevance of training offered with labour market needs. To fully exploit the potential of ILA, Greece is encouraged to expand access to guidance to all target groups, develop a system of recognition of qualifications as well as to develop an effective outreach strategy. Greece needs to engage in consultation with social partners and relevant stakeholders to ensure the adequate and sustainable funding of the individual learning accounts as well as of the digital platform, through a combination of public and private funding sources, including as an outcome of collective bargaining. EMCO looks forward to exchange with Greece based on insights and preliminary assessment of the implementation of the first phase of the ILA scheme which is expected in the next year.

5. SPAIN

Spain does not have an ILA scheme in place, at present. However, the upcoming law on the “Training at Work” system is expected to establish ILA as an individual right to training for all workers, transferable across employers and labour market statuses. The Spanish labour law regulates a paid training leave of 20 hours per year, cumulative for a period of up to five years. Positively, the new ILA system is expected to use a single digital portal linked to the integrated public information system (SISPE). Public Employment Services (PES) can allocate additional entitlements to those in greater need, providing flexibility in addressing upskilling demands. Since in Spain career guidance and individualised profiling services are guaranteed by PES throughout the national territory, the provision of career guidance within the “Training at Work” system would benefit from alignment with the registries and standards of the general VET system. This is expected to continue in the ILA scheme implementation. While Spain excels in basic and advanced digital skills, there is scope for improving the share of ICT specialists, including on-the-job ICT training. The upcoming law for the “Training at Work” system can rely on a monitoring system and external evaluation already in place.

6. FRANCE

France is the most advanced EU Member State in the implementation of the Council recommendation on individual learning accounts. All aspects of the recommendation are covered to a high extent and the involvement of social partners in the creation of the scheme and in legislative reforms is ensured.

The established institutional framework gives the workers training rights which can be spent via a single digital portal. The participation rate of individuals in learning is above the EU average, but as evidenced by the review there is still the need to reach out to the less qualified workers, inactive, and senior workers. Additional efforts could be also made to incentivise training related to in-demand sectors of the economy and to improve the guidance offered to workers in the use of their ILA. Very valuably, a quality certification system for training organizations receiving public funds to combat fraud has been set up. Very structured competence validation and registration systems (passport) are in place. Currently, France does not use EU funds for the ILA implementation but did for a limited scope in digital skills under the RRF until 2021. Further, the funding in general is managed at central level. The efforts made in monitoring, evaluating and adjusting the functioning of the ILA, such as the reports published by France Compétences and the statistical office of the Labour Ministry, are commendable and are further encouraged.

7. CROATIA

A voucher scheme has been introduced in Croatia in 2022, following changes in the legal framework to ensure prerequisites and procedures to encourage adult learning and the acquisition of new skills. The voucher system is the first step towards the establishment of individual learning accounts and has a number of the elements of ILA Recommendation implemented, such as universality, being already available to all employed and unemployed persons and covering all working-age adults. The system positively includes social partners. The scheme includes an online platform with catalogue of skills and programmes and has limited coverage due to modest funds used for financing. The national Forum for lifelong professional guidance and career development serves as a working group that will facilitate its further development into a more comprehensive ILA scheme in the future. The working group to develop national model for ILA will also discuss different modalities of sustainable funding. To bring the voucher scheme more in line with the key points of the ILA Recommendation, the widening of the coverage of the scheme could be considered. The sustainability of the funding could be strengthened by involving adequate funding combining public and private funding sources. The transferability and accumulation of training entitlements could be added.

8. CYPRUS

EMCO welcomes the implementation of the ILA scheme, on a pilot basis, in early 2025. Among the main strengths of the piloting scheme the full accumulation and transferability of entitlements, the already well-developed training system managed by the Human Resource Development Authority (HRDA), and the involvement of social partners since the very early stages of policy design are to be mentioned. In view of scaling up the ILA on a permanent basis, however, Cyprus should address a number of visible weaknesses of the pilot scheme. First and foremost, universality of ILA should be pursued, including by considering additional entitlements for individuals who are most in need of upskilling and reskilling. The single digital portal for training opportunities should be further developed and additional flexibility could be provided to participants in the choice of training opportunities. The current legislation on paid training leave could be reviewed to incentivise broader engagement of working adults in lifelong learning opportunities. EMCO welcomes the ongoing reflection on possible sources of funding for ILA and encourages Cyprus to further engage in consultation with social partners and relevant stakeholders to ensure the adequate and sustainable funding of the individual learning accounts as well as of the electronic platform, through a combination of public and private funding sources, including as an outcome of collective bargaining.

9. LATVIA

Latvia has launched the individual learning account (ILA) pilot scheme, and a single digital portal has been created to enable all individuals to access personalised learning programs as well as to enable quality assurance for training providers. The single digital portal is intended to facilitate the managing of multiple sources of funding for reskilling and upskilling. The focus on digital skills should contribute to further increase of the adult learning and training participation, considering the still low adult learning participation rate. The scheme is implemented across Latvia, with no specific regional or municipal level requirements. To reach the ambitious objectives of the proposed ILA scheme, a clear system for distributing the individual entitlements, with particular attention on supporting those most in need of upskilling and reskilling, needs to be developed. At the same time the effective involvement and contribution of employers should be enhanced. Sustainable funding is key also through the mobilisation of private resources. Latvia could consider providing further incentives for individuals to participate in adult learning, including through improving conditions and coverage of paid training leave and considering involvement of employers into the system by co-funding adult learning.

10. LITHUANIA

Lithuania has a quite extensive framework regulating participation of adults in education and training. The recent introduction of the national ILA scheme via a lifelong learning platform (KURSUOK), planned in the Recovery and Resilience Plan, is welcome. The platform is open to anyone willing to attend a training with special attention to digital competence development, however entitlements are available only once every 5 years, which might hinder the participation if the credit entitlement is exhausted quickly. Lithuania could consider expanding the eligibility criteria to ILAs to encompass the whole adult population including those more distant from the training system, namely the inactive persons and the ones without qualification and to tailor the outreach measures to those groups accordingly. In this regard, it is appreciable that the inclusion of the unemployed is planned. A model for guaranteeing a sustainable use of the funds is needed, as ILAs shall be funded mainly from the RRF and ESF+ until 2029. Involvement of the social partners should be improved in all aspects of the decision-making process on the Platform and the ILA scheme. In view of the successful implementation of the ILA scheme, the future integration of the KURSUOK Platform and PES IT system, the introduction of a career guidance module and the creation of a multi-stakeholders ILA network could be valuable steps.

11. HUNGARY

In Hungary a plan for the establishment of ILA is under preparation, and ESF+ funds are earmarked for its piloting. At this stage only a few features of the ILA plan are presented. Most elements of the enabling framework, as well as its governance and monitoring framework should still be worked out. The regular involvement of social partners and other stakeholders in the development, piloting and governance of ILA is welcome. To support the ILAs, a single national digital portal is being developed to serve as a national registry of all training and trainers receiving public funds. The portal will allow access to personal virtual accounts storing financial entitlements for learning. Considering the lack of or low digital skills especially among vulnerable groups, Hungary could reflect on the integration of digital skills training offers in the portal. In Hungary, there is no universal entitlement for paid training leave and income replacement. A step in the right direction is the support to learning that will be available for all adults through the ILA. The upcoming pilot is recommended to also incorporate tailor-made learning offers for vulnerable groups. The validation of informal and non-formal learning and guidance for adults are currently less developed and need upscaling possibly through a wider coordination with the PES and synergies among services. According to the current ILA design, individuals will accumulate training entitlements received from different sources, but their use will be limited in time. Within the pilot it is advised to assess what timeframe for accumulating entitlements serves best individual skills development needs. Steps should also be taken to ensure sustainable funding of ILAs.

12. POLAND

The commitment and efforts to expand opportunities for adult learning in Poland by introducing an ILA pilot are welcome, also in light of the efforts aimed at achieving the adult learning national target for 2030. The fact that Poland has involved social partners in the running public consultations on the concrete implementation of the ILA pilot is welcome and can potentially contribute to its better design. It is as well positive that Poland aims to introduce the ILA pilot on a universal basis and will leverage on the already existing Database of Development Services to create a single national registry of training opportunities. The success of an ILA scheme will crucially depend on clarifying key features like the amount of the entitlements, their transferability and accumulation, strengthened support for those most in need of training, as well as aligning training with high-in-demand sectors and occupations and the provision of guidance and validation. The current legislation on paid training leave could be reviewed to incentivise broader engagement of working age adults in adult learning opportunities. Additionally, Poland is encouraged to look into ensuring coherence and integration of the ILA and other schemes, such as training vouchers for jobseekers within one ILA framework. Poland could leverage piloting the ILA scheme to develop a comprehensive monitoring framework, including to track long-term outcomes of ILA and assess quality and performance of training courses. Poland needs to engage in further consultation with social partners and relevant stakeholders to ensure the adequate and sustainable funding of the individual learning accounts in the future, through a combination of public and private funding sources, including as an outcome of collective bargaining.

13. ROMANIA

Romania is developing a pilot ILA scheme in the construction sector, with support from the ESF+. Considering that no scheme of the sort was ever introduced before in the country, the good will and efforts shown by the authorities are commendable. The involvement of key social partners and stakeholders, from the ILA early design stage, is also welcome. Implementation of the pilot is expected to start in 2025, with several elements that still need to be developed such as the single digital portal and the national registry of eligible training, career guidance and validation opportunities. The single national digital portal for the ILAs should be already developed in the pilot in a way to be later utilised by all individuals. It is recommended that the ILA scheme includes tailor-made programs for those most in need of upskilling and reskilling. The National Register for authorized training providers already in place could effectively contribute to the ILA development. The right to paid training leave is already included in the Labour Code and career counselling and skills validation opportunities are available free of charge for jobseekers and students. The pilot project will incorporate awareness-raising campaigns on the importance and opportunity of participating in training through the ILA pilot. It is expected to reach 6000 professionals of the construction sector. The conclusion of the negotiations with the Ministry of European Investments about the use of ESF+ support for the pilot should be sped up and result in launching the call and fully developing, implementing, evaluating and possibly expanding the pilot.

14. SLOVAKIA

The establishment of a clear legal basis via the New Law on Adult Education, the transferability of entitlements, the creation of an ILA platform, the focus on the validation of learning are all positive aspects of the ongoing developments related to ILAs in Slovakia. The ILAs are expected to be fully rolled out starting from 2026. Digital portal is planned to include features to enable accessibility. Some key aspects, however, need further attention. The currently limited amount of the entitlement in the pilot phase seems insufficient for specialised training. The take up of specialised training can be further limited in light of the fact that the entitlement cannot be accumulated over the course of time. The lack of an effective right to paid training leave for ILA training offer can prevent workers from fully enrolling in ILA schemes. Additionally, Slovakia could consider using the possibility of streamlining similar initiatives initiated by different authorities under one common ILA scheme. EMCO welcomes the ongoing reflection on possible sources of sustainable funding for ILA and encourages Slovakia to further engage in consultation with social partners and relevant stakeholders to ensure the adequate and sustainable funding of the individual learning accounts as well as of the single national digital portal, through a combination of public and private funding sources, including as an outcome of collective bargaining.
