



PES NETWORK WORK PROGRAMME 2025-2026



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The European Network of Public Employment Services was created following a Decision of the European Parliament and Council in June 2014 (DECISION No 573/2014/EU). Its objective is to reinforce PES capacity, effectiveness and efficiency. This activity has been developed within the work programme of the European PES Network. For further information: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/PESNetwork>.

LEGAL NOTICE

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PES NETWORK WORK PROGRAMME 2025-2026

Contents

Context	5
Priorities and overview of the Work Programme 2025-2026	5
Overview Work Programme 2025	8
Overview Work Programme 2026	9

1. Context

The PES Network Work Programme was adopted by the PES Board on 5-6 December 2024. It sets out the key activities for 2025 and 2026 that will help PES to learn from each other and deepen their cooperation as they address persistent labour market challenges.

This Work Programme will be implemented in a fast-moving environment. Today's labour markets are intrinsically linked to global mega trends and often unpredictable situations, which are set to persist in the coming years. Across EU labour markets, skills shortages are intensifying, changes in the nature of work are shaping a new labour market context within which PES operate. The triple (green, digital and demographic) transition is accelerating demands on labour markets, intensifying the need to grow skills and support the sustainable competitiveness of the EU.

In this context, PES provide ever more important and proactive support for labour market transitions, helping jobseekers and employers deal with accelerated and often unforeseen changes. While playing a central role in career guidance and upskilling to support more frequent transitions and career changes, PES' role is also changing with a focus on new client groups. Addressing the evolving needs of those under-represented in the labour market, in some cases PES also work with partners to support people outside of the labour market to make steps to successfully reintegrate into employment. In addition, in increasingly tight labour markets, PES are focusing more on employers' needs and their capacity to integrate jobseekers who need support. PES will also need to anticipate and constantly re-adapt to a 'new normal' in the labour market, whilst integrating agile working practices and increasing investment in the professional development of their staff.

2. Priorities and overview of the Work Programme

As the PES Network celebrated its 10th anniversary in 2024, the PES Network engaged in a strategic reflection. This led to the release of the PES Network Memorandum to the next European leadership in April 2024, which inspired the thematic priorities guiding the 2025-2026 Work Programme.

- **Strand 1: Labour market transitions, skills and labour shortages**, supporting market changes in the context of the triple transitions, including via up/re-skilling, career guidance, labour market intelligence and integration of third-country nationals. Matching the skills and demands of workers and employers will be key for PES to manage the triple transition. As labour markets tighten, ensuring that workers' skills align with employers' demands is crucial for PES to effectively address these transitions. Services need to be reviewed to ensure that workers can re- or upskill and that most vulnerable groups are not left behind. The degree to which national employment systems, and PES, can better identify and measure shortages, use and collect Labour Market Information (LMI) and skills intelligence will be key. PES will have an increasingly important role in providing and adapting career guidance, adapting to new approaches. Re-thinking the role of PES and partnerships will facilitate further progress towards delivering EU targets related to participation in training. Further developing Skills First approaches will also play a key role in this regard. Finally, PES will need to further develop their role to support fair and effective recruitment and integration of third country nationals into EU labour markets.
- **Strand 2: Personalised PES services (jobseekers and employers) and activation**, focusing on PES service to customers (jobseekers and employers), with a specific emphasis on the inclusion, integration and support to vulnerable individuals and groups underrepresented on the labour market. While the 'triple transition' places pressure on labour markets and creates shortages in some sectors, some jobseekers face (structural) difficulties finding employment and other persons of working age are not part of the

labour force. Inclusion of vulnerable groups and activation of people outside of the labour force will be key for successful labour market transitions. Finding solutions to the different barriers people face when integrating the labour market is a longstanding issue, including barriers that may fall outside of the responsibility of PES. More personalised and holistic approaches can be adequate for some customers, and PES need to consider how they respond to the challenges of specific target groups, alone and in cooperation with other services and employers. Working more closely with employers will be essential to increase on-the-job training opportunities, the recruitment of under-represented groups and that employment remains sustainable.

- **Strand 3: Data and technology**, focusing on digitalisation in PES services and processes (including data and labour market intelligence), the use of Artificial Intelligence and sharing solutions. Digitalisation and technology have changed how PES interact with customers and have provided PES with new avenues of data collection that help better understand, design and target future services. They also feature strongly in PES's priorities as supporting solutions for the outreach, coaching, training and employment of target groups. The use of data from digitalisation to shape customer journeys and improve services takes priority for PES, focusing on the link between digitalisation, data and analytics. Notably, how PES ensure that digital solutions benefit the most vulnerable customers remains an important area. In a fast-evolving context, maintaining regular exchange among PES on their latest developments will be key. Besides, PES' emphasis is also increasingly turning to exploring the potential of Artificial Intelligence, particularly with the introduction of the EU AI Act, which entered into force on 1 August 2024. Discussions must include ethical use of AI for labour market purposes, and where PES stand in their understanding and sophistication of AI use.
- **Strand 4: PES governance, ecosystem and performance**, focusing on PES organisation, performance, use of external instruments, supporting improvements via Benchlearning and adapting staff and resource management to new ways of working. Anchored in previous PES Network conversations around

systematic / continuous change and quality management, this strand is most closely linked to the Benchlearning exercise. Priorities will respond to threefold challenges across PES: training staff, adapting capabilities and building capacity to better respond and adapt to the requirements of the triple transition (organisational transformation) and using new technologies to the benefits of PES and their users; maintaining service levels and quality in a resource constrained PES environment; adapting staff and resource management to new ways of working (e.g. digital, hybrid). PES will also exchange on how they (can) involve partners and other key actors in the PES ecosystem more intensively and strategically, notably Private Employment Services, NGOs, municipalities, other relevant public authorities, civil society, social partners and employers. This includes multi-level cooperation to better design and deliver services responding to changing labour market requirements. Several cross-cutting issues (including those outlined in the PES Network Decision and Updated Strategy) will be addressed and integrated into the activities throughout the Work Programme. These include the triple transition (green, digital and demographic), digitalisation and gender equality. The Work Programme will also address issues around support to the most vulnerable and non-discrimination. Particular emphasis will be placed on supporting people with disabilities, young NEETs and older workers.

PES Network objectives and mission

The PES Network aims to encourage cooperation between Member States within the areas of PES responsibility, in order to contribute to the implementation of the Union's employment policies (Article 3 of Decision No 573/2014/EU establishing the PES Network). In particular, the Network aims to support vulnerable social groups with high unemployment rates; gender equality; decent and sustainable work; the better functioning and inclusiveness of the labour markets; [addressing] skills shortages and skills matching; better integration of labour markets; geographical and occupational mobility; the assessment of active labour market initiatives (Article 3 of PES Network Decision). Its activities contribute to implementing the principles in the European Pillar of Social Rights, to the objectives of the European Green Deal and to the achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Building on these objectives, the PES Network Strategy adopted in June 2021 sets out a renewed mission and vision equipping PES to face complex challenges. The Network's vision is to be a vehicle for enhanced European PES cooperation, enabling national PES to play their role as key actors in the employment services ecosystem. The PES Network aims to empower, educate, and improve so that it can achieve its core purpose – to promote modernisation of individual PES, encourage optimum use of technology and data, and facilitate enhanced competencies for staff. This was reiterated in 2024 in the PES Network Memorandum for the Next European Leadership.

PES Network initiatives

The PES Network Decision outlines key PES Network initiatives, which include modernising and strengthening PES in key areas; developing and implementing Benchlearning; providing mutual assistance through cooperation between members of the Network; co-operating with labour market stakeholders (both public and private partners); promoting and sharing best practices; preparing reports at the request of the European Parliament, the Council, the Commission, or on its own initiative and contributing to the implementation of relevant policy initiative (Articles 4 and 5).

The core of PES Network activities is the development and implementation of a European-wide PES Benchlearning system, defined as the 'process of creating a systematic and integrated link between benchmarking and mutual learning activities that consists of identifying good performances through indicator-based benchmarking systems [...] and of using findings for tangible and evidence-informed mutual learning activities, including good or best practice models'. The Benchlearning should be funded under the European Social Fund+ (2021-2027). The Youth Guarantee (YG) Council Recommendation (reinforced in 2020) specifically mentions the PES Network's role in awareness-raising and dissemination of results and good practice examples among Member States. The PES Network also provides support to the implementation of PES-related Country Specific Recommendations issued in the context of the European Semester.

This Work Programme builds on concerted strategic reflections with PES Network members and encapsulates key shared priorities. It remains a living document and as such it can be adjusted to reflect changing priorities, as determined by the PES Network Board or rapid changes in the European labour market. An update to this programme will be undertaken and adopted by the Board in late 2025.

PES Network Work Programme 2025

Labour market transitions, skills and shortages	Lifelong and career guidance in the new world of work From entering to staying in the labour market <i>Study, Skills Week</i>	Skills-first approaches Stepping up the shift towards 'Skills first' approaches in PES processes and activities <i>Thematic Review Workshop</i>	Individual Learning Accounts PES Capacity Survey 2024 <i>Dissemination Webinar</i>	Fair recruitment of third country nationals Exchanging practices and PES tools <i>Thematic Review Workshop</i>	PES supporting the Green Transition From commitment to practical steps and new strategies <i>Working group (taxonomy), Dissemination Webinar</i>	Labour market information Measuring labour shortages: <i>Focus group EU Labour Market Barometer</i>
Personalised PES services (to jobseekers and employers) and activation	Inclusion and activation of under-represented groups <i>Opinion paper (input to the European Pillar of Social Rights review)</i>		Supporting LTU and minimum income recipients PES cooperation with stakeholders <i>Cooperation with the Minimum Income Network</i>		PES services to employers <i>Round table discussion</i>	Return mobility Targeted discussion <i>Jour Fixe</i>
Data and technology	Digitalisation in PES Bringing together practitioners and exploring challenges (including targeted digital service delivery) <i>Working Group</i>		Developing a common framework for ethical standards of AI Common quality and ethical standards for the use of AI in PES <i>Working Group</i>		Open-source digital space for PES Exchange expertise, pool resources and tools <i>Within Digitalisation Working Group</i>	Cybersecurity <i>Targeted discussion</i>
PES governance, ecosystem and performance	Benchlearning Qualitative and quantitative assessments of PES performance (Closing fourth cycle of assessments) Working Group/Steering group <i>Annual Data Collection</i>	PES Capacity Report Update on trends in PES and thematic focus (including support to young NEETs) <i>Reference Group, survey and report Dissemination Webinar</i>	Strengthening multi-level cooperation in PES PES cooperation with Private Employment Services <i>Conference</i>	Mutual Assistance Projects <i>Targeted peer support</i>	Evidence-based service design <i>Jour Fixe (annual)</i>	
PES Network governance	Board and AFEPAs meetings Policy updates (incl. on initiatives related to Skills, Pillar of Social Rights, Talent Pool)	EU Enlargement and the PES Network Stepping up cooperation with candidate countries <i>Mapping cooperation, synergies with existing projects</i>	Partnerships with PES Network – level stakeholders		Communication Annual Report, Newsletters, videos, PESpod podcast, PES practices, website, social media, infographics and collaborative workspaces <i>Communication activities, Working Group</i>	Evaluation of PES Network Decision

PES Network Work Programme 2026

Labour market transitions, skills and shortages	Lifelong and career guidance in the new world of work From entering to staying in the labour market <i>Dissemination Webinar and Study Visit</i>		Skills-first approaches Stepping up the shift towards 'Skills first' approaches in PES processes and activities <i>Study Visit</i>	Stakeholder Conference <i>Topic tbc</i>	Labour market information <i>Data and AI to collect/compile LMI: (format TBC) EU Labour Market Barometer</i>		
	Personalised PES services (to jobseekers and employers) and activation	More inclusive PES, labour markets, and societies <i>Thematic Review Workshop, Survey (scope tbc)</i>	More inclusive PES, labour markets, and societies PES support to persons with disabilities <i>Seminar with partners/stakeholders (Q1, timing tbc)</i>	PES support to employers New and emerging alliances between PES, partners and employers (including SMEs) in the context of the triple transition <i>Capacity Report (thematic) and Dissemination Webinar</i>	PES services and resilience in a rapidly evolving context Using EU funds to support resilience through targeted services <i>Opinion Paper, study and Dissemination Webinar</i>		
Data and technology	Digitalisation in PES Bringing together practitioners and exploring challenges (including targeted digital service delivery) <i>Working Group</i>			Open-source digital space for PES Exchange expertise, pool resources and tools <i>Within Digitalisation Working Group</i>			
	PES governance, ecosystem and performance	Benchlearning Taking stock from 4th cycle and planning next steps Working Group/Steering group <i>Annual Data Collection</i>	Thematic learning dialogues Peer support in tackling key challenges - building on outcomes from 4th cycle of benchlearning	PES agility and strategies to adapt to changing requirements Adaptability to adapt services, processes and activities <i>Format tbc</i>	Mutual Assistance Projects <i>Targeted peer support</i>	Evidence-based service design <i>Jour Fixe (annual)</i>	
PES Network governance	Board and AFEPAs meetings	Planning next Work Programme Support the development of the next Work Programme <i>Working Group</i>	Communication Annual Report, Newsletters, videos, PESpod podcast, PES practices, website, social media, infographics and collaborative workspaces <i>Communication activities</i>	EU Enlargement and the PES Network Stepping up cooperation with candidate countries <i>Synergies with existing projects</i>	Partnerships with PES Network – level stakeholders / social partners	Knowledge Hub Optimising use of digital tools to share information on PES developments within the Network	Evaluation PES Network Decision