

*Strategies to promote access to  
employment for all people*



Eurodiaconia is a **dynamic**, Europe wide **community** of organisations founded in the **Christian faith** and working in the tradition of Diaconia, who are committed to a Europe of **solidarity, equality** and **justice**. As the **leading network of Diaconia in Europe**, we connect organisations, institutions and churches providing **social and health services and education** on a Christian value base in over 30 European countries.

We bring members together to **share practices, impact social policy** and **reflect on Diaconia in Europe today**.

Editor: Heather Roy

Authors: Alexander Elu and Célimène Bernard

December 2018



Rue Joseph II 166  
1000 Bruxelles  
Belgium

Tel: +32 (0)2 234 38 60  
Fax: +32 (0)2 234 38 65  
E-mail: office@eurodiaconia.org

[www.eurodiaconia.org](http://www.eurodiaconia.org)



This publication has received financial support from the European Union Programme for Employment and Social Innovation “EaSI” (2014-2020). For further information, please read <http://ec.europa.eu/social/easi>. Eurodiaconia is a network of social and health care organisations founded in the Christian faith and promoting social justice.

## Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Main messages</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Quality services are key to boost employability</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Towards more effective partnerships with public employment services</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Working with employers for sustainable matching opportunities</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>The key importance of intermediate bridges</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Skills for a preventative approach against unemployment</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Quality employment at the base</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Further reading</b>	<b>14</b>

## Introduction

Eurodiaconia is a network of 48 organizations in 32 European countries providing social services and working for social justice. Founded in the Christian tradition we work to ensure that our societies provide opportunities for all people to live in dignity and realize their full potential. Ensuring a social market economy that promotes inclusive growth constitutes a priority for our members and this is demonstrated by their **engagement in the provision of work integration and related social services which often target people with lower employability or requiring specific support to reach employment and social inclusion**, such as unemployed persons, young people, migrants, persons with disabilities or persons with mental health issues, among others.

Such a wide and diverse range of users translates into different approaches to the delivery of social services according to the specific needs of each target group and each individual user. However, such a diversity is underpinned by a strong common principle that guides the work of Eurodiaconia member organizations. Such a principle is to **acknowledge the inner value of all people beyond their ability to carry out employment and the value that is given to them by job market rules**.

Today, the EU is recovering from the economic and social crisis and labour markets are showing positive trends as a result. The unemployment rate in the EU has fallen significantly from a record high of 11% in the second quarter of 2011 and stands at 6,7% in October 2018 (EU-28)<sup>1</sup>. This figure, which

marks a return to pre-crisis unemployment levels, proves the resilience of European labour markets and workers.

However, a closer look at labour market trends shows that unemployment rates vary widely across EU countries and some groups of people remain disproportionately exposed to unemployment and inactivity. In addition, the crisis has created polarisation of jobs -i.e. employment growth has been concentrated at both the bottom and the top of the income distribution- and non-standard forms of employment are on the rise bringing implications for the future of social protection systems, the cohesion of our societies and wellbeing of people. In this regard, Eurodiaconia members witness the rise of in-work poverty, which represents 10% of all workers in the EU (2014)<sup>2</sup>, and the increased demand of social services resulting from this. This shows that employment is not necessarily a way out of poverty and the promotion of quality jobs is necessary to match employment and social inclusion.

Against this background, this policy paper aims to present key recommendations to promote access to employment for all people as a pathway to social inclusion and full participation in society.

## Main messages

- The proclamation of the European Pillar of Social Rights has brought to the fore the fundamental right of everyone to engage in work. Crucially, it also sets out the different elements that need to be in place in order to bring such a right into practice.

---

<sup>1</sup> Eurostat, unemployment statistics, October 2018.  
[https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Unemployment\\_statistics#Recent\\_developments](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Unemployment_statistics#Recent_developments)

<sup>2</sup> Eurofound, In-work poverty in the EU, 2017.  
[https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ef\\_publication/field\\_ef\\_document/ef1725en.pdf](https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ef_publication/field_ef_document/ef1725en.pdf)

Social services connect the level of social rights with the reality of labour markets and workplaces. Therefore, access to quality social services is essential to link the right to employment of all people with the need to address the obstacles that each person faces to realize such an objective.

- At the present stage of implementation, **Eurodiaconia calls upon national authorities to leverage the ambition of the European Pillar of Social Rights to create an enabling framework for quality social services that support access to employment for all people.** At the same time, the EU should monitor progress through macroeconomic governance processes such as the European Semester and guidance through EU funds.
- **Policies and policy-makers must promote a boost in job quality and fight inequalities in labour markets in order to build a sustainable path of economic growth and social development in for Europe.** Social services are key to intervene on and correct such labour market dynamics on the rise. Conversely, the lack of services is often a barrier for many people to access quality jobs, resulting in underutilisation of labour or altogether inactivity.
- The organisation of services around job-seekers from an individual, person-centred approach is key to address the different needs of unemployed people and ensure the effectiveness of work inclusion interventions. **Such a seamless delivery of interventions calls for institutional**

**approaches that facilitate such an integrated approach.** One-stop shops or single points of contact are instrumental to speeding up interventions and increase their overall coherence. However, coordination efforts should be pursued across all the stages and levels of service provision in order to render interventions more effective –minimizing the length of unemployment spells-, as well as more efficient.

- In order to thrive, the action of social services must be accompanied by stronger efforts towards inclusive labour markets and adequate support schemes. Parallel progress on all three fronts is, therefore, essential to grant opportunities for employment and participation in society to all people, irrespective of their perceived ‘employability’. To this aim, **Eurodiaconia calls upon public authorities at all levels -EU, national, regional and local- to mainstream an active inclusion logic<sup>3</sup> in their initiatives and actions towards the promotion of employment.**
- Outreach work is key to re-connect people with public employment services (PES) and income support when this is available. However, equal emphasis should be made on the need to prevent de-registration, which increases with the length of unemployment and announces inactivity. To this aim, employment services should prevent actions that tend to trigger de-registration such as stricter conditionality in benefits or discontinuity in the supply of support services. **For this reason, we call upon PES and benefit agencies to avoid punitive approaches and service**

---

<sup>3</sup> As spelled out in the [Commission Recommendation of 3 October 2008 on the active inclusion of people excluded from the labour market](#), 2008/867/EC

**inefficiencies that, far from being incentives for speedier re-integration into jobs, often impair service support.**

- The experience of civil society at the frontline of service provision gives them a privileged perspective of users' needs, of their experience of service, arising challenges and what works and what does not. However, the potential to initiate and steer interventions given by such an experience is sometimes hampered by the top-down approach adopted by public employment services to partnerships with civil society actors. In this regard, **an increased dialogue between both actors -PES and civil society- is essential to help build more realistic service expectations on both sides, break with routine procedures and put PES in a much closer contact with social innovation led by civil society actors on the ground. To this aim, structured participation channels for civil society operators should be promoted at the relevant levels.**
- Diaconal providers of skills are themselves addressing the challenges linked to the new demand of skills. The more traditional approaches that identified low employability profiles with the need of basic skills only are less effective today. Instead, training and skilling actions currently aim to equip users with horizontal skills that broaden their integration prospects, match more efficiently the skills demanded by labour markets and can adapt more easily to different tasks or sectors. **The transition towards the provision of such cross-cutting skills (e.g. digital) should be further promoted and supported at national and EU levels, in particular through European Social and Investment Funds**

**(ESIF) and newer instruments such as the InvestEU Fund through its social infrastructure window.**

- Enhancing the readiness of job searchers to face labour market challenges will only yield positive results if efforts are paralleled on the demand side. In light of this, **we call upon the mobilization of all instruments at hand for employers and the promotion of incentives for increased flexibility and adaptability of tasks, jobs and work arrangements that ease the inclusion of employees with special needs.** Such efforts are crucial to support and yield tangible results to actions already carried out by civil society to strengthen partnerships with employers.
- Investments made on people with low employability are considerable but their return can be very high when outcomes are successful. To protect such investments, it is key to create sound transition paths between interventions and job placements. Therefore, **it is essential to look at work integration efforts across a continuum, promoting transition points and avoiding a strict two-stepped approach -from interventions into jobs- which seldom works for low employability profiles.** Acknowledging, integrating and supporting intermediate points such as social enterprises or accompaniment services as part of support pathways is key.

## Quality services are key to boost employability

Against this background, the role played by social services is key. Social services repair the effects of unemployment, of inequalities generated by labour markets and act upon the

issues linked to low quality jobs. Conversely, the lack of services is often a barrier for many people to access quality jobs. It also results in inactivity or the underutilisation of labour, which is correlated with in-work poverty and a high risk of unemployment. **Services are, therefore, key to break the cycle of inactivity, substandard employment, poverty and unemployment.**

In addition, the lack of services or obstacles to accessing them prevents the use of untapped sources of jobs with large potential to contribute to European economies. For example, refugees and asylum seekers are the target group of projects such as ‘handsON’ run by the [Salvation Army in Switzerland](#). In Liebefeld, Region of Bern, ‘handsON’ has a so-called ‘factory’, which is used as a training centre for practical experiences, schooling and meetings of the asylum seekers and refugees with the job coaches. The ‘handsON’ production facility gathers participants’ work experience, improves their knowledge of German and of the Swiss labour market and increases their chances for independence. Participants benefit from qualification measures, intensive language courses, practical training modules and a personal job coach<sup>4</sup>. Access to affordable and quality services is key to unblock such bottlenecks and, therefore, should lie at the heart of employment policies.

The essential role played by social services has already been emphasised in key initiatives such as the 2016 Council Recommendation on the integration of the long-term unemployed into the labour market<sup>5</sup>, which stressed in particular the synergies established between these and employment services to achieve sustainable

employment outcomes, or the principles enshrined in the 2008 Recommendation on the Active Inclusion of people excluded from the labour market<sup>6</sup>, where access to quality services is pointed as a key channel towards job opportunities for all people. **Some of the main trends operating today in labour markets and social protection systems call upon an even stronger emphasis on the need for increased social investment in social services.** In this regard, the disruptive effect of technological change and faster depreciation of skills, combined with stricter entitlement rules and less generous duration of social (unemployment) benefits call for an increased and continued investment in quality social services that are conducive to sustainable employment paths.

The organisation of services around job-seekers from **an individual, person-centred approach is key to address the different needs of job seekers** and to ensure the effectiveness of work inclusion interventions, which in some cases such as the ones often dealt with by Eurodiaconia members, are of a multi-layered, complex nature and may involve different types of services and providers too. A seamless delivery of interventions calls for institutional approaches that facilitate such an integrated approach. One-stop shops or single points of contact are instrumental to speeding up interventions and increase their overall coherence. However, coordination efforts should not be limited to the contact with end users. Instead, it should also be pursued across all the stages and levels of service provision, in order to render interventions more effective –minimizing the length of unemployment spells-, as well as more efficient.

---

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.eurodiaconia.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Pub-2017-Guide-to-integration.pdf>, pp.13 & ff.

<sup>5</sup> [Council Recommendation of 15 February 2016 on the integration of the long-term unemployed into the labour market](#), 2016/C 67/01.

<sup>6</sup> [Commission Recommendation of 3 October 2008 on the active inclusion of people excluded from the labour market](#), 2008/867/EC.

Our member organizations emphasise the importance of **operationalising such a personalised approach through trust**. Open door policies and informal contacts can build a strong relationship between users and providers, avoiding a perception of the latter as ‘controllers’ and working together to identify needs and goals through mutual trust. To this aim, our members stress the important role that past service users can play as mentors.

The integration of different services calls for the availability of and access to those. **Services, however, are unequally distributed across regions and the divide between cities and periphery is, especially, a big hurdle to accessing work inclusion interventions for many people.** Such a gap is especially problematic considering that unemployment and inactivity are often correlated with regional decline. Public authorities should guarantee equal access to employment services and all types of support opportunities by all people irrespective of where they live. To this aim, European Social and Investment Funds (ESIF) should be fully mobilized to ensure that a regional dimension is fully mainstreamed in the fight against unemployment.

The organization and provision of interventions under such principles should be at the earliest stages of unemployment possible and with additional efforts when the odds of re-employment are lowest. In many cases, the increased difficulty to render somebody employable or the probability that an unemployed person remains so for many months can be easily predicted upon registration into employment services. In these cases, **early intervention is essential to maintain the employability of workers and prevent their fall into long-term unemployment or inactivity.** Early action is also cost-effective if it makes income

support unnecessary and avoids the cost of interventions which tend to increase with the length of unemployment.

## Towards more effective partnerships with public employment services

Many of the services aimed at boosting the employability of all profiles of people are provided in partnership with public employment services (PES). In many cases, registration in a PES is required to kick-start interventions towards employment. For this reason, outreach towards people who have dropped from the mainstream support path or have been outside the public orbit for a long time spell is key. **By working closer to such profiles, Eurodiaconia members have a unique know how on reaching out to potential users of employment and social services who can start their path towards employment.**

For example, the **VAMOS project run by the Helsinki Deaconess Institute in Finland** is to reach out to young people who are outside education or labour market, and who either need support to link with the public sector services or for whom the network of public support has failed. VAMOS users are allocated to their own individual youth workers, who set up integrated support programmes on an individual basis. VAMOS is voluntary and free of charge. Within a year, 65% of the youth are (back) in education, employment or to activities that lead to either. Due to its success, VAMOS has spread from Helsinki into six more cities throughout Finland and every year there are about 2,000 young people involved in VAMOS.

Outreach work is key to re-connect people with employment services and income support when this is available. **However, parallel emphasis should be made on the need to**

**prevent de-registration, which increases with the length of unemployment and announces inactivity.**

To this aim, employment services should avoid actions that tend to trigger de-registration such as stricter conditionality in benefits or discontinuity in the supply of support services.

More generally, our members' experience at the frontline of service provision gives them a privileged perspective of users' needs, of their experience of service, arising challenges and what works and what does not. However, the potential to initiate and steer interventions given by such an experience is sometimes hampered by the top-down approach adopted by PES to partnerships with civil society actors. Also, it is often difficult to bridge the gap between the goals of PES and reality on the ground. In this regard, **it is essential that an increased dialogue between both actors -PES and civil society- helps build more realistic service expectations on both sides**, breaks with routine procedures and puts PES in a much closer contact with social innovation on the ground.

PES and employment authorities also hold the main responsibility towards the evaluation of interventions. Whilst evaluation is a key element of an increasingly outcome-oriented approach to such interventions, it is essential that the measurement of the effectiveness of interventions takes into account the obstacles and complexities associated to each case. For this reason, **employment services plan interventions in a way that their universal reach is guaranteed** and the 'creaming' of the 'best' -more employable- job seekers avoided. In the same vein, the measurement of effectiveness should in every case avoid a mere count of the number of people who found a job. Evaluating the impact of active labour market policies is, in fact, a multi-

faceted, complex and costly exercise which, for instance, should be supported by individual data checked against control groups which are adequately defined. It also requires a certain time perspective if, for instance, the quality of new jobs and tenure are to be considered as desirable outcomes of placement services.

At the same time, a disproportionate focus on effectiveness should not inhibit the potential to explore innovative service mixes that could be conducive to employment, especially in light of different, increasingly complex social issues such as those brought by the crisis and the profound changes operated in the world of work.

**Against this background, Eurodiaconia calls upon reinforced monitoring that ensures that PES or other bodies in charge of pricing and evaluating active labour market policies create the right incentives to enable access to employment for all people.** At EU level, the Social Protection Committee (SPC) should engage in such a monitoring activity and offer guidelines on comparable standards for the evaluation of effectiveness in interventions, taking into account in every case the specific objectives and challenges associated to different target groups. The lessons learnt from the Active Inclusion Recommendation or ESF evaluations could be mobilised towards this aim. In our view, the assessment of quality of services is essential to offer a comprehensive picture of the effectiveness and quality of support towards employment. For this reason, we encourage increased collaboration between the SPC and the Employment Committee (EMCO) on key policy initiatives in the area of employment and, in particular, the assessment of the implementation of the *Council Recommendation of the integration of the long-term unemployed into the labour market*.

## Working with employers for sustainable matching opportunities

Enhancing the readiness of job searchers to face labour market challenges will only yield positive results if efforts are paralleled on the demand side. Employers are core to fostering fair, inclusive and sustainable jobs that provide increased employment opportunities for people who are perceived as having 'lower employability'. Eurodiaconia members acknowledge the key importance of supporting the demand for jobs. For example, and together with the services provided to job seekers, the **Casa del Lavoro** of our Italian member **Diakonia Valdese** offers services to companies as potential employers. Such services include trainings on legislation and active labour market policies available to hire specific profiles of people, talent scouting or human resources consulting. By doing so, our member organizations are contributing to bringing forward one of the key provisions of the *Council Recommendation on long-term unemployment*. **This avenue should be further pursued and supported, in particular through reinforced commitment mechanisms that tie the provision of such services to the creation of employment opportunities for people with low employability.**

Financial support could also be added to the mix. In some cases, the recruitment of people with low employability is hindered by high non-wage labour costs that limit the reach of employers' partnership with work inclusion services. **To prevent this, targeted subsidies to employment could be further developed if they are specifically aimed at groups of people who are underrepresented in the**

**labour market, have specific obstacles to access employment or have objectively lower chances of becoming employed.** Such a targeting is crucial to address pure employability issues and avoid the deadweight loss originated by subsidising jobs that would have been created anyway.

In order to ensure their positive effect, subsidies should be accompanied by measures that ensure an effective and permanent increase of people's skills, for instance through training, mentoring, etc., that guarantee the sustainability of placements beyond the subsidised period and create the conditions for the extension of employment; for instance, checking that the beneficiary is still employed by the firm at a certain point in time after the expiration of the subsidy, or verifying net job creation in the firm to prevent a mere substitution of 'old' workers by 'subsidised' ones<sup>7</sup>.

On the other hand, the long-term unemployed or people with 'low employability' may benefit especially from worker-friendly environments which are better suited to accommodate their capacities and needs. **To this aim, employers should be encouraged to create increased flexibility and adaptability of work arrangements that ease the inclusion of employees with special needs.** In the same vein, **the promotion of job carving in order to customise job duties to the capabilities of profiles requiring extra support** is another channel to bridge the integration of people with special support needs into employment.

Such efforts should be the result of an inclusive approach to employment that acknowledges the benefits of a more diverse workforce

---

<sup>7</sup> European Commission, *European Semester Thematic Factsheet. Active Labour Market Policies*, 2016.

at both firm and social levels. In order to guarantee the success of such efforts, **it is crucial that also employees understand such benefits and own the goal of a more inclusive workplace**. This is an important aspect because the inclusion of people with low employability at the firm level can sometimes fail if colleagues perceive such a process as a burden or an increase in their workload due to stereotypes against people's productivity. For this reason, partnerships with employers should ensure that employees are part of the conversation.

### The key importance of intermediate bridges

Investments made on people with low employability are substantial but their return can also be very high when outcomes are successful. To protect such investments, it is key to ensure a smooth transition between interventions and job placements. Eurodiaconia members witness on a daily basis the importance of such transition points and strive to create intermediate spaces to pave the way towards sustainable placements in mainstream labour markets. Therefore, **it is essential to look at work integration efforts across a continuum, stressing transition points and avoiding a strict two-stepped approach -from interventions into jobs which seldom works for low employability profiles.**

To do this, it is key that public authorities do their best to create an enabling framework that maximises the opportunities and spaces for the work inclusion of people with added vulnerabilities. In this regard, the different

social enterprises set up by many of our member organisations are often a stepping stone towards integration into mainstream labour markets. For example, the network of social businesses run by the [Stockholm City Mission](#) provides training and employment opportunities for people outside the labour market, often long-term unemployed persons due to mental and/or physical health issues or structural discrimination in the labour market. The social enterprises include 17 second hand shops, a warehouse and redistribution centre, two social supermarkets, a shop selling remade products, a temporary job service targeting people with substance abuse issues, a café, a bakery and catering service, among others. In light of this, **the EU should continue to command the promotion of an enabling ecosystem for the social economy and social enterprises through the Social Business Initiative and Member States following suit.**

Another very important instrument is public procurement thanks to the opportunities made available by Directive 24/2014<sup>8</sup> to maximise the social impact of contracting procedures carried out by public authorities. The light regime<sup>9</sup> applicable to operators with a social aim should be a lever for more and better services for work inclusion. Also, the use of reserved contracts<sup>10</sup> where competition is restricted to operators employing a significant share of people with disabilities or with another type of disadvantage can broaden the space for the employment of such profiles and create new bridges for the integration in mainstream labour markets. In light of this, we call upon the mobilization of these instruments to operationalize existing policy frameworks to support access to employment for all (Council

---

<sup>8</sup> Directive 2014/24/EU on public procurement and repealing Directive 2004/18/EC.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, arts. 74-76 and annex XIV

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, art. 77

Recommendation on LTU, Active Inclusion Recommendation, etc.).

Another element of such a broader approach towards interventions are accompaniment services. **Accompanying new entrants during the first weeks of employment increases significantly the success and sustainability of placements and secures a return on investments made on support measures.** For example, in the Czech Republic the [Agency for Supported Employment and Social Rehabilitation](#) operated by the [Diaconia of the Evangelical Church of the Czech Brethren \(DECCB\)](#) supports adult people with learning disabilities or mental illnesses and accompanies them when they start a new job. This accompaniment, done in close cooperation with the employers, is key and helps in particular to plan realistic workloads for users, eases their communication with their new colleagues and liaises between supervisors and the newly placed worker. The integration of Agency users in firms is largely a success story, as 90% of people accompanied through the job integration programme are still employed after one year of contract.

### [Skills for a preventative approach against unemployment](#)

A crucial angle to increase the likelihood of job seekers to find suitable jobs has to do with developing the right set of skills. In light of today's fast technological change and digitalisation, workers are faced with ever increasing challenges to render their skills suited and relevant for labour demand across their lifecycle. In this regard, access to reskilling, upskilling and lifelong learning

lies at the base of more inclusive labour markets where all people have a chance to participate in employment, strengthening their position in the labour market and preventing the creation -and transmission- of inequalities. Along these lines, the 2018 Country Specific Recommendations<sup>11</sup> underscored the strategic importance of skills.

In our view, investments on skills towards inclusion should combine two complementary approaches. On the one hand, investments on skills should primarily target people with the lowest skill levels. By targeting such groups, labour market polarisation would be contained on the lower end, preventing further labour-related inequalities. To this aim, relevant action has already taken place in the form of a Council Recommendation on Upskilling Pathways<sup>12</sup> which targets people with the largest skill deficits. One of the main points of the Recommendation has to do with the key importance of validation and recognition of skills. Eurodiaconia encourages stepped up efforts on this front because they will benefit relatively more people with lower employability, who are also those with relatively lower formal education levels and more non-formal skills. Also, validation is crucial to facilitate the integration into labour markets of specific target groups such as migrants. In this regard, partnerships between skill and training providers -such as Eurodiaconia members- and education institutions should be promoted.

On the other hand, investments in skills should not be limited to guaranteeing a minimum level but ensure continued skill relevance and upskilling throughout the lifecycle. Diaconal providers of skills such as the [low-tec](#) project – integrated in the Protestant trade association

---

<sup>11</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/2018-european-semester-country-specific-recommendations-council-recommendations\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/2018-european-semester-country-specific-recommendations-council-recommendations_en)

<sup>12</sup> [Council Recommendation on Upskilling Pathways: New Opportunities for Adults](#), 2016/C 484/01.

for Professional and Social Integration (FABI) of [Diakonie Rheinland-Westfalen-Lippe](#) -member of [Diakonie Germany](#)-are for instance actively addressing the challenges linked to new technologies by organizing a significant size of training interventions around digital skills. This is an important transformation with respect to the more traditional approaches that link low employability profiles with the need of basic skills only and acknowledges the cross-cutting role of digital skills. This will help anticipate changes in the demand of skills and equip workers to better manage career transitions. **To this end, we call upon a renewed approach to active labour market policies and skilling actions that treat such interventions as a preventive arm against unemployment, skill obsolescence and a weakened position in the labour market** from workers who are either without a job or, even if employed, are at greater risk of losing their jobs in light of the mentioned trends. In the same vein, **support towards the provision of relevant skills should be further promoted at EU level, in particular through European Social and Investment Funds (ESIF) and newer instruments such as the InvestEU Fund through its social infrastructure window.**

Skills are a cushion and a necessary condition to improve the employability prospects of people. However, skills are not an insurance against labour market shocks. In some cases, investment in skills is being promoted as a way to increase the resilience of people against labour market shocks and overcome, to some extent, increased issues of lack of access to social protection in new or non-standards forms of work<sup>13</sup>. In our view, this is a misguided approach to skills, as these must be made

compatible with the necessary income support to guarantee adequate standards of living. Recent initiatives such as the proposal for a *Council Recommendation on Access to Social protection*<sup>14</sup> address the issue in the right way and are especially relevant in light of the positive correlation between non-standards jobs and the likelihood of unemployment. However, such an emphasis on adequate income support needs to be mainstreamed further.

## Quality employment at the base

The reach, capacity and repairing power of social services is limited. For this reason, **it should be a priority to take action to boost job quality and fight inequalities in labour markets in order to address the root causes of unemployment, in-work poverty and social exclusion.**

In this regard, it is essential to promote a proactive approach to policymaking that stops looking at new forms of work or changing labour markets as exogenous global shocks to which people and social services need to adapt and react upon. Policies should aim to shape and promote the quality of jobs and labour markets in order to create better conditions for people's lives and invest in a sustainable model of economic growth for Europe. These links lie at the heart of the European Pillar of Social Rights and, for this reason, its implementation is crucial to bring quality of employment back at the centre of social market economies in the EU.

Within this restored approach to quality in its different facets, **it is essential to focus our**

---

<sup>13</sup> OECD (2017), Employment Outlook 2017, OECD Publishing, Paris.

<sup>14</sup> COM(2018) 132 final on [Access to Social protection for workers and the self-employed](#).

**attention to the degree of inclusiveness of labour markets as measured by the employment access for potentially disadvantaged groups<sup>15</sup>.** This should be a key priority in order to render our labour markets, workplaces and societies more inclusive. Also, it is a mandate that draws upon the commitment to deliver on rights frameworks to which the EU and Member States are parties. Services should, once again, be put in a position to fully deliver on their role as devices linking rights with practice.

## Further reading

- Eurodiaconia response to the Proposal for a Council Recommendation on the integration of the long-term unemployed into the labour market (2015)
- Eurodiaconia Mapping of Services for Work and Social Inclusion of long-term unemployed persons (2016)
- Eurodiaconia Mapping of Good practice on Skilling interventions for work and social inclusion (2017)
- Eurodiaconia policy paper “Building up skills for social inclusion (2017).

---

<sup>15</sup> This is the approach in the renewed OECD Jobs Strategy. For further details on the list of indicators see OECD, *Employment Outlook 2017*, OECD Publishing, Paris, chapter 1

# Eurodiaconia

 Connecting faith  
and social justice  
through action

Rue Joseph II 166  
1000 Bruxelles  
Belgium

Tel: +32 (0)2 234 38 60  
Fax: +32 (0)2 234 38 65  
E-mail: office@eurodiaconia.org



@eurodiaconia



Eurodiaconia



Eurodiaconia.Brussels



eurodiaconia



eurodiaconia.org



Eurodiaconia is a federation of 48 social and health care organisations founded in the Christian faith and promoting social justice. Eurodiaconia is a registered aisbl in Belgium. This publication has received financial support from the European Union Programme for Employment and Social Innovation "EaSI" (2014-2020). For further information, please consult: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/easi>. The information contained in this publication does not necessarily reflect the position or opinion of the European Commission.

Copyright © 2018 Eurodiaconia All rights reserved.

