



Report on the Regional Workshop of WAPES European Region on Labour Market Shortages held in Lugano on 4th and 5th of September 2024

1. Overview

The regional workshop, “Public Employment Services Facing the Challenges of Labour Market Shortages,” organized by the WAPES European region, took place in Lugano, Switzerland, on September 4-5, 2024. Hosted by the Public Employment Services of the Netherlands and Switzerland, this event brought together experts, policymakers, and stakeholders to address the multifaceted issue of labour market shortages. The workshop succeeded in fostering a platform for mutual learning, exchange of viewpoints, and collaborative discussions on potential solutions.

2. Key Workshop Themes

The event revolved around several critical themes regarding labour market shortages, including their causes, impacts, and potential solutions.

a. Understanding Labour Market Shortages

The discussions provided an in-depth analysis of the underlying factors contributing to labour shortages in various sectors. Participants acknowledged that demographic changes, technological advancements, and skills mismatches are primary contributors to these shortages. The conversations emphasized how these shortages impact productivity, sustainable economic growth, and social cohesion.

b. Long-Term Strategies and Resilience

A significant highlight of the event was the focus on adopting long-term strategies to build resilience within labour markets. Public Employment Services were recognized as crucial in promoting adaptability and inclusiveness. Ideas were shared on investing in skills development, promoting labour force participation among underrepresented groups, and embracing innovation to foster a dynamic and flexible labour ecosystem.

c. The Role of Public Employment Services

The workshop underscored the pivotal role PES play in addressing labour market challenges. Through their expertise in labour market functioning and recruitment, PES can provide insights into emerging trends and sectoral needs. The sessions highlighted how effective skills matching by PES can bridge the gap between job seekers and employers, contributing to smoother market transitions and reduced skill mismatches.

d. Enhancing Cooperation

Discussions also explored how migration and the movement of skilled workers between European countries affect labour markets. Participants considered the benefits of increased bilateral cooperation, including sharing labour market information and co-financing education and training initiatives. The consensus was that such cooperation could result in more sustainable talent attraction strategies, benefiting both sending and receiving countries.

3. Workshop Structure and Sessions

The workshop featured plenary sessions, interactive forums, and case studies that provided a comprehensive exploration of the issue.

Highlights included:

Day 1:

- Opening remarks and keynote speeches that set the stage by addressing global employment trends, demographic shifts, and the evolving role of PES.
- Plenary sessions focusing on "Unlocking Labour Market Potentials" and exploring best practices for integrating diverse workforce segments, including individuals with disabilities and women in transitional economies.
- Workshops on retaining talent, leveraging labour market intelligence, and exploring the new roles of PES in enhancing labour market potentials.

Day 2:

- Presentation by the Ukrainian PES, detailing their response to the labour market crisis induced by war.
- Sessions featuring case studies and best practices, including tackling labour and skill shortages related to the green transition in Sweden and implementing vocational training platforms in Kazakhstan.
- The workshop concluded with reflections, a summary of insights from various discussions, and closing remarks emphasizing the need for ongoing collaboration.

4. Outcomes and Reflections

The workshop successfully provided a space for deep discussions, knowledge exchange, and strategic thinking on labour market shortages. Key takeaways included:

- **Shared Challenges and Best Practices:** Participants from various countries recognized that while labour shortages manifest differently across regions, many of the underlying issues, such as skills mismatches and demographic shifts, are common. The exchange of best practices, including targeted upskilling initiatives and employer-focused retention strategies, was particularly beneficial.

- **Future Roles of PES:** There was a strong emphasis on the evolving roles of PES. Moving beyond skills matching, PES are now seen as active agents in shaping labour markets, promoting inclusivity, and driving institutional reforms.
- **Collaboration and Cooperation:** The importance of bilateral and regional cooperation was reiterated throughout the sessions. By sharing labour market intelligence and aligning training programs, countries can foster a more sustainable approach to managing labour migration and talent retention.

5. Next Steps and Closing Thoughts

The workshop concluded with a call to action for continued dialogue, mutual support, and innovative strategies to address labour market shortages across Europe. The insights gained during the event will serve as a foundation for developing resilient, inclusive labour markets. Furthermore, participants agreed on the importance of PES's role in navigating future challenges, adapting to changing labour dynamics, and implementing effective labour market policies.

The event, followed by the European Network on Regional Labour Market Monitoring's annual conference, provided an extended opportunity for networking and further exploration of the themes discussed. In retrospect, the workshop marked a significant step towards understanding and addressing the complex issue of labour market shortages in the European region.