



PEER REVIEW
IN SOCIAL PROTECTION
AND SOCIAL INCLUSION
2008

INITIATIVES BY THE SOCIAL
PARTNERS FOR IMPROVING
THE LABOUR MARKET ACCESS
OF DISADVANTAGED GROUPS

AUSTRIA 24-25.04.08

SYNTHESIS REPORT



On behalf of the
European Commission
DG Employment, Social Affairs
and Equal Opportunities



PEER REVIEW
IN SOCIAL PROTECTION
AND SOCIAL INCLUSION
2008

INITIATIVES BY THE SOCIAL
PARTNERS FOR IMPROVING
THE LABOUR MARKET ACCESS
OF DISADVANTAGED GROUPS

ERNST-ULRICH HUSTER, PROTESTANT UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED
SCIENCES BOCHUM/UNIVERSITY OF GIESSEN
KAY BOURCARDE , UNIVERSITY OF GIESSEN

AUSTRIA 24—25.04.08

SYNTHESIS REPORT



On behalf of the
European Commission
DG Employment, Social Affairs
and Equal Opportunities

This publication is supported for under the European Community Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity (2007–2013). This programme is managed by the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities of the European Commission. It was established to financially support the implementation of the objectives of the European Union in the employment and social affairs area, as set out in the Social Agenda, and thereby contribute to the achievement of the Lisbon Strategy goals in these fields.

The seven-year Programme targets all stakeholders who can help shape the development of appropriate and effective employment and social legislation and policies, across the EU-27, EFTA-EEA and EU candidate and pre-candidate countries.

PROGRESS mission is to strengthen the EU contribution in support of Member States' commitments and efforts to create more and better jobs and to build a more cohesive society. To that effect, PROGRESS will be instrumental in:

- providing analysis and policy advice on PROGRESS policy areas;
- monitoring and reporting on the implementation of EU legislation and policies in PROGRESS policy areas;
- promoting policy transfer, learning and support among Member States on EU objectives and priorities; and
- relaying the views of the stakeholders and society at large.

For more information see:

http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/progress/index_en.html

Further information on the Peer Reviews and the Policy Assessment as well as all relevant documents are available at: <http://www.peer-review-social-inclusion.eu>.

The content of this publication does not necessarily reflect the opinion or position of the European Commission Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities. Neither the European Commission nor any person acting on its behalf is responsible for the use which might be made of the information in this publication.

2008

PRINTED IN BELGIUM

Table of content

Executive summary	5
1. EU context	8
2. National (Austrian) context and overview of the good practices	15
3. Social partner initiatives to improve labour market access for disadvantaged groups	18
4. Relevance and transferability	27
5. Conclusions and lessons learnt	41
References	46



Executive summary

- This 2008 Peer Review in Austria addresses social partner initiatives to improve labour market access for disadvantaged groups. In doing so, it reflects the objectives of the Active Inclusion Policy, and the need to associate the social partners as set out in Article 138 of the EC Treaty. In this respect, the European social partners agreed, in February 2008, to negotiate on an 'autonomous agreement' for the better integration of disadvantaged groups in the labour market.
- This review takes note of the fact that previous Peer Reviews in this area have underlined the need to adopt different approaches for different groups facing disadvantages; the need for an overall approach, but with decentralized activities; and the need to ensure the fullest co-operation between all political, social and civil actors.
- In Austria, policy actions to combat social exclusion take place in a highly developed and long-established, social partnership framework, based on co-operation on economical and social issues between the main social and economic interest groups, and between them and government. This system has been the basis for economic growth and social stability since World War II. The social partnership arrangement is voluntary and based on dialogue and co-operation rather than conflict. This partnership approach includes a specific policy to combat social exclusion.
- The social partners in Austria have established programmes to integrate target groups into the labour market, as well as to improve working conditions as a basis for ensuring a long and healthy working life. Three programmes form part of an overall strategy to provide better information to the business community and to those directly concerned. Two programmes are aimed at providing information and practical assistance for special disadvantaged groups.
- It is well known that some groups are more affected by unemployment than others. These include, in particular, older people, many of whom often stop working well before the official retirement age, some young

people and people with severe disabilities. All these groups are covered in this Peer Review.

- In Austria, older people, young people, and people with disabilities have unemployment rates well below the EU average. However, the employment rate of people with disabilities is no higher than the EU average because of the large number of them who leave the labour market through early retirement.
- All peer countries, with the exception of the UK, have some kind of social partnership arrangement between employers, trade unions and governments, although they often operate in different ways in different countries. The discussion in the Peer Review highlighted the specific characteristic of the Austrian system which undoubtedly makes it easier to implement certain types of measure.
- While the situations may differ in detail between Member States, some groups are almost always further from the labour market than others. Since there are often policy tensions between the desire to improve economic competitiveness and the desire to integrate weaker groups into the labour market it is important to reconcile these objectives. Social dialogue and social partnership are seen as effective ways of achieving this.
- Austria, along with the other peer countries, supports the holistic, long-term, approach of the European inclusion strategy, but recognises that this approach needs to be backed by concrete schemes for the different target groups. Such schemes need to combine, so far as possible, financial aid and the provision of services and advice in order to address individual needs within the integrated, holistic approach.
- The Lisbon strategy underlines the need for more and better information. However, internet-based information systems have had to develop specific actions to overcome the 'digital divide' that disadvantages vulnerable groups. The Austrian examples of internet-based information systems covering health, ageing and disabilities are examples of good practice that employers and employees in other peer countries can draw upon.

- People need information but they also need personal support. The Austrian schemes Service work and health and Job coaching for long-term unemployed young people address these two concerns. The challenge for the future will be to ensure their continued effectiveness and sustainability so as to avoid the need for further intervention.
- In order to further integration and avoid segregation between different groups, the Peer Review also underlined the benefits of a publicly financed intermediate labour market for those who have little chance of becoming integrated into the mainstream labour market. However, appropriate links need to be maintained between the two, and a number of practical issues, such as levels of pay, working time arrangements, employment contracts and access to continuing training, need to be resolved.



1. EU context

The policy framework and the related debate at European level

Social partner initiatives to improve labour market access for disadvantaged groups are the subject of this Peer Review in Austria, which addresses them in the context of the Active Inclusion Policy, while taking account of the requirement to involve the social partners, in accordance with the procedure specified in Article 138 of the EC Treaty. The European Commission's own Social Agenda for 2005–2010 is aimed at strengthening Active Inclusion through income support and access to an inclusive labour market and better quality services.

This is part of the Lisbon strategy and the Nice objectives designed to strengthen social cohesion in the European Union, while addressing several subsidiary objectives, one of which is to address the needs of the most vulnerable sections of society and to prevent social and labour market exclusion.

The revised Lisbon strategy—encompassing the streamlining of employment policy, social inclusion, pension system, health care, and long-term care—brings these objectives together and emphasises that *“making growth and jobs the immediate target goes hand in hand with promoting social or environmental objectives.”*¹ The new approach is intended to promote effective interaction between the various Lisbon objectives and to improve assessment of how social policies can contribute to more jobs and growth (“feeding in”) as well as how the objectives of jobs and growth can serve social cohesion (“feeding out”).² This follows from the multi-dimensional processes of exclusion and strategies of inclusion.³ It is clearly an appropriate area in

- 1 European Commission (2005), *“Working together for growth and jobs: A new start for the Lisbon Strategy”*, Communication from the Commission, COM(2005)24 final. <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2005:0024:FIN:EN:PDF>
- 2 “Feeding in” is about the way social protection and social inclusion policies contribute to greater economic growth and more jobs. “Feeding out” is about creating an economic environment which supports social policy and its objectives.
- 3 All documents and information: http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/index_en.html



which to use the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) in order to promote mutual learning between national and European level.

Unemployment and exclusion from the labour market are persistent problems in nearly all EU Member States. Some groups are more affected than others: especially people with disabilities, young and older people, migrants and the homeless. Moreover, having a job is not sufficient. It is equally important to remain healthy in that job over the longer term, which depends, in part at least, on working conditions.

In this context the three targets of the streamlining process of the strategy revised in 2005 — social inclusion, pension reform and access to both health and long-term care — come together in several initiatives and programmes initiated by the European Commission, with the emphasis on bringing national and European level stakeholders together, given that the multi-dimensional causes of exclusion demand an integrated response.

While all stakeholders are important, there is also a particular need to involve the social partners in the active integration of people with disadvantages in the labour market, and to strengthen social dialogue at all levels in the European Union.

Social dialogue

In 2006 'A Study on Policies for Involving the Social Partners in the Integration of People at a Disadvantage in the Labour Market'⁴ presented case studies from 8 Member States. It concluded that, in the face of an ageing and declining population, the integration of disadvantaged groups into the labour market was essential for the long-term economic development and social cohesion of the Union and individual Member States.

The study highlighted the fact that types of integration measures used vary between target groups. In summary it stated that:

4 http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/incentive_measures/studies/lm_integr_disadv_people_en.pdf



“In order to achieve an adequate balance between targeted measures and the policy framework, the active involvement of social partner in policy formulation, implementation and evaluation is crucial. The same applies to effective partnerships between different organisations such as social partner organisations, employers, training providers and government institutions such as Public Employment Services. (...)

The research findings demonstrated that social partner organisations in many countries are already active developing and delivering successful integration programmes on their own, and they also play a substantial role in programmes developed on the basis of a wider partnership. Indeed, it is clear that social partner actions on their own cannot address the multiple factors affecting many disadvantaged groups which lead to their exclusion from the labour market. In fact the study illustrated when policies are designed and implemented by the State or other levels of government, the success of the measures can greatly depend on the degree of consultation and participation of other actors, in particular social partners. An early involvement of social partners in policy formulation is crucial to ensure coherence of measures and a degree of ownership (or ‘buy-in’) over a policy measure.”⁵

A European consultation process launched by the European Commission in 2006⁶ addressed the issue of the active inclusion of people furthest from the labour market. The consultation had two goals as stated in its synthesis report: to review the progress achieved and to launch a public debate on possible guidelines for action at EU level. Those participating in the consultation process agreed that the OMC is “an effective tool to share good practice and enhance policies in the active inclusion field”⁷ and underlined the special responsibility of the social partners to participate in the social dialogue in support of the Active Inclusion Policy.

The Joint Reports on “*Social Protection and Social Inclusion*” — for example for 2007⁸ — call for the active social inclusion of all, by promoting participation in the labour market, especially of those furthest away from it. The analysis

5 Cf. reference 4, page v and vi.

6 Communication concerning a consultation on action at EU level to promote the active inclusion of the people furthest from the labour market, COM(2006)44 final.

7 Public Consultation on Active Inclusion, Synthesis report by the Commission Services. http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/spsi/docs/social_inclusion/2006/active_inclusion/synthesis_en.pdf

8 http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/spsi/docs/social_inclusion/2007/joint_report_en.pdf



of national policies shows different forms of ‘active inclusion’ and different ways of combining actions, with Active Labour Market Policies needing to be delivered by partnership between officials and social actors, especially the social partners.

In October 2007 the Commission put forward a new consultation process.⁹ The new Communication asks for a more holistic approach and underlines, again, the need to integrate all stakeholders including the social partners in a strategy of active inclusion. The Commission summarised its expectations as regards the social partners as follows:

“The communication launching the first-stage consultation already stressed the role played by the social partners in many Member States in the design and monitoring of active labour market policies, and in the negotiations on minimum wages. In their response to the Article 138 first-stage consultation, the social partners did not support any legislative options at EU level for active inclusion, but rather favoured a strengthening of the existing Open Method of Coordination as well as a more integrated approach. They also made clear that they had a key role to play in improving the availability of jobs for disadvantaged people and in putting in place suitable recruitment procedures, as also shown by recent tripartite agreements.

In particular, the social partners recalled that their work programme for 2006–2008 highlights how they can deal with the issue of disadvantaged groups. They committed themselves to do so by undertaking to make a joint analysis on the key challenges facing Europe’s labour markets, looking at issues such as the integration of disadvantaged people in the labour market, by defining priorities to be included in a framework of actions on employment and by negotiating an autonomous framework agreement on either the integration of disadvantaged groups in the labour market or lifelong learning.

In the debate following the presentation of the consultation results, it was clearly evident that social partners have a pivotal role in promoting job retention: disadvantaged people, having found a job, may need continued

⁹ Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Modernising social protection for greater social justice and economic cohesion: taking forward the active inclusion of people furthest from the labour market. COM(2007) 620 final, 17. 10. 2007.
<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2007:0620:FIN:EN:PDF>



*support, e.g. in terms of on-the-job training and lifelong learning opportunities as well as suitable and flexible work arrangements to help marginalised people reconcile work with their efforts in dealing with social disadvantage (such as lack of appropriate accommodation, caring responsibilities and health problems). In other words, the process of social reintegration does not end at the doors of the enterprise.*¹⁰

Following the second consultation, and as foreseen in their joint social dialogue work programme for 2006–2008, the European social partners (the European Trade Union Confederation ETUC; Business Europe; the European Centre of Enterprises with Public Participation and of Enterprises of General economic Interest — CEEP; and European Association of Craft, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises UEAPME) announced in February 2008 that they would begin negotiations on an ‘autonomous agreement’ on the better integration of disadvantaged groups into the labour market.

This autonomous agreement will outline ways in which access to, and advancement in, the labour market can be improved for disadvantaged workers, through a series of corrective and preventative measures, including lifelong learning. Negotiations are due to be completed sometime before the end of the year. However, the ‘autonomous agreement’ will probably focus most on people who are closest to, rather than furthest from, the labour market since action in the latter case is likely to require the involvement of other stakeholders, notably public authorities, and would therefore be outside the scope of joint social partner action.

In addition to the social partner responsibilities, the synthesis report stressed the need for a wider consultation of civil society. This report also highlighted the potential role of EU financial instruments, including the European Social Fund and PROGRESS, while pointing out that those furthest from the labour market have not significantly benefited from Community programmes such as EQUAL co-financed by the ESF (European Social Fund).¹¹

¹⁰ COM(2007) 620 final, 17. 10. 2007, page 4.

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2007:0620:FIN:EN:PDF>

¹¹ Public Consultation on Active Inclusion, Synthesis report by the Commission Services. http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/spsi/docs/social_inclusion/2006/active_inclusion/synthesis_en.pdf



References to previous relevant Peer Reviews

The Peer Review system is an important and effective element in the Open Method of Coordination on Social Protection and Social Inclusion, aiming as it does to contribute to better understanding of the Active Inclusion Policies of different EU Member States (especially their national approaches and strategies).

The European Commission indicated in Vienna that it would like to improve these policy tools and that peer reviewers should report the results of the Peer Review back to their Member States in order to achieve this.

At least five previous Peer Reviews have addressed comparable subjects and targets. The Peer Reviews of Austria 2004, Germany 2004, Portugal 2005, Sweden 2006 and Finland 2007 all dealt with the labour market integration of groups needing special support: younger people, women, groups with different and multiple disadvantages and older people.¹²

The Portuguese Peer Review focused on the potential at local level and the mobilisation of all relevant stakeholders, and other reports have dealt with ways of combining different levels of policy. All stress the need for an integrated approach and implementation, with the full cooperation of political, social, and civil actors.

- “Clearing” (Austria 2004) is a service addressing the critical transition between school and working life, targeted at young persons with disabilities or in need of emotional or social support, with a view to integrating them into the labour market.
- One of the main obstacles for women seeking to enter the labour market is the lack of support measures to improve compatibility between family and working life (Germany 2004). Examples of good practice show that local ‘Alliances for families’ and the ‘Career and Family Audit’ programmes are effective ways of integrating more women into the labour market and thereby raising their employment rates in line with policy goals.

¹² <http://www.peer-review-social-inclusion.eu/>



- In Portugal, social networks were formed in 163 municipalities, and 700 decentralised projects were launched between 2001 and 2004. These activities are based on the principle of empowerment, with the focus on strengthening working skills and personal capacity in order to help those concerned find a job (Portugal 2005).
- “Delta”, a project in the Gothenburg region of Sweden, addresses the social integration of those most excluded, often with multiple problems: unemployment, homelessness, illness, poor education, poverty, drug abuse, alcoholism, etc. (Sweden 2006). It adopts an integrated approach, associating many actors including employers, with the aim of helping the people concerned enter the labour market.
- The Finish project recognises that Active ageing strategies to strengthen Social Inclusion will become increasingly important in Europe (Finland 2007). The Finnish strategy focuses on two aspects of ageing: growing older with work or without working.

There are three findings that are common to these Peer Reviews. First, they underline the need to develop different approaches for different groups facing disadvantages. Secondly, they recognise the need to combine a general approach with decentralized activities. Thirdly, they underline the importance of ensuring effective co-operation between political, social and civil actors.

2. National (Austrian) context and overview of the good practices

Austria has a lower unemployment rate and a higher employment rate than the EU average. Just as in other countries, however, there are problem groups:

- The integration of younger people into the world of work is a persistent problem. In 2005, 6% of young people under 17 lived in a household affected by unemployment.¹³ A failure to graduate from school, or having a low level of education, is one of the main reasons for being unemployed.
- The employment rate of those aged 55–64 in Austria is very low (31%).¹⁴ This not only affects the people themselves, but it also puts pressure on the finances of the welfare state.
- An ageing society, combined with a declining population, means that more older people will need to remain in work longer. Moreover, society as a whole can benefit from their practical knowledge, skills, and innovative potential.
- Disability is not only a medical, physical, or mental problem; it is also a problem because of the way that it is perceived and handled by society.¹⁵

The National Report on Strategies for Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2006–2008¹⁶ of Austria sets out the strategic objectives addressed through the OMC:

13 Republic of Austria: National Report on Strategies for Social protection and Social Inclusion p. 4. http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/spsi/strategy_reports_en.htm

14 ÖSB Consulting. Active Ageing. Recherchestudie zu Good Practice im Auftrag des AMS Österreich, Wien 2005; EUROSTAT quota is a little bit higher: 2005: 30.8%, 2006: 35.5%.

15 Eckhard Rohrmann: Zwischen selbstbestimmter sozialer Teilhabe und fürsorglicher Ausgrenzung. Lebenslagen und Lebensbedingungen von Menschen, die wir behindert nennen, in: Ernst-Ulrich Huster u.a. (Hg.): Handbuch Armut und Soziale Ausgrenzung, Wiesbaden 2008, p. 400 ff.

16 Republic of Austria: National Report on Strategies for Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2006–2008 from Austria, http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/spsi/strategy_reports_en.htm



- The strengthening of social cohesion and ensuring equal chances for everyone through sustainable social protection systems and a policy of social inclusion;
- The overlapping nature of economic, employment and social policy;
- The need to ensure cooperation between stakeholders in formulating goals, implementing policies and evaluating their results.

Austria's policy for combating social exclusion is operated through long-established social partnership, with well developed systems of cooperation on economic and social issues between the major interest groups, and between them and the government.¹⁷ This social partnership has been the basis for promoting economic growth and social stability since World War II. It is based on voluntary agreement and on dialogue leading to co-operation rather than conflict, with the aim of finding solutions that benefit all the different economic and social interests concerned.¹⁸

This co-operation is concerned not only with industrial relations. Austria's social partners have the right to evaluate proposed legislation, to make recommendations and to propose legislation. The representatives of the social partners are members of several commissions, advisory boards and committees; they play an important role in the social security system; they are members of the Advisory Council for Economic and Social Affairs; and they nominate lay judges at labour courts and participate in other courts.

It has been stated that *"For over 30 years the social partners acted as a form of 'shadow government' in economic and social policy, with such close connections to the government that many government decisions corresponded exactly with their proposals."*¹⁹ The increasing 'Europeanisation' and 'globalisation' of the economy since the 1970s has reduced economic independence, however, and weakened the power of

17 Social partnership in Austria: http://www.sozialpartner.at/sozialpartner_start.htm, mission statement in English: http://www.sozialpartner.at/sozialpartner/Sozialpartnerschaft_mission_en.pdf

18 Cf. Karin Hinteregger, Austrian Trade Union Federation within the Peer Review.

19 Hans Steiner from the federal Ministry of Social Affairs and Consumer protection, following the minutes of the Day 1 by Daphne Davies

this approach. Nevertheless, this kind of social partnership still takes place between the following actors:

- The Austrian Federation of Trade Unions (ÖGB) with some 1.4m members;²⁰
- The Federal Chamber of Labour (BAK), a self-governing official body representing all Austrian employees, covering some 2m employees;²¹
- The Federal Chamber of Economy Austria (WKÖ), a self-governed body for businesses with some 340,000 members;²²
- The Chamber of Agriculture (LK), a self governing official body for farmers with some 650,000 members;
- The Federation of Industry (IV), an employers organisation on a voluntary basis representing large firms, with some 2,000 members.²³

The three Chambers — of Labour, Economy and Agriculture — are self-managed entities under public law, with compulsory membership (except for civil servants). The Federal Chamber of Labour in Austria is unique in Europe,²⁴ in that it serves as a chamber for working people across the whole country, with a federal structure that parallels that of the country. As a result, there is extensive co-operation, the programmes covered by this Peer Review being initiated by the social partners rather than the government.

20 <http://www.oegb.at>

21 <http://www.arbeiterkammer.at>

22 <http://www.wko.at>

23 <http://www.industriellenvereinigung.at>

24 Except Luxembourg and the German Federal State Bremen.



3. Social partner initiatives to improve labour market access for disadvantaged groups

In Austria, the social partners have established various programmes that are intended to integrate disadvantaged groups into the labour market and to improve working conditions as a precondition for ensuring a longer and healthier working life. Three programmes are part of an overall strategy to provide better information to the business community and to those directly concerned, through an internet site while two programmes aim to combine information and practical assistance for specific groups of disadvantaged people.

Three internet based information platforms

“Work & age”²⁵

Implementation of good practices

Demographic change (in the form of increased life expectancy, declining birth-rate etc.) is leading to a reduction in the number of people of working age and, as a result the average age of people in paid work has increased.

Despite this, patterns of work organisation remain orientated more towards younger workers and there is a need to increase the participation of older workers and raise their productivity if Europe is to maintain its competitiveness and ensure the stability of its social protection systems. The ‘Work and age’ website was set up to address problems raised by an ageing workforce and to provide general information and models of good practice based on Austrian experience.

Budget and institutional arrangements

The project was set up in 2002/2003 as a joint initiative of the Austrian social partners, namely the Federation of Austrian Industry, the Federal Chamber

²⁵ <http://www.arbeitundalter.at>

of Labour, the Austrian Trade Union Federation, and the Federal Economic Chamber.

The target group is not older workers as such but the employers who employ them, and the aim is to inform them about issues of 'age and work' and to provide examples of good practice, drawing on international experience.

The time horizon is up to 2050 and based on the prospect that employees will need to stay longer in work, young people will need to be better integrated, knowledge will need to be more effectively transferred between generations, and patterns of work organisation will need to take specific account of the needs of employees over 45.

In this context, the project provides information on "work and age", along with 'virtual counselling', to businesses via the internet.

"Work and disability"

Implementation of good practices

This initiative was launched in order to combat the lack of good-practice examples on the internet, knowing that employers with experience in employing people with disabilities recognise that their capabilities are much higher than employers without such experience.

In the face of labour shortages in Europe, it is necessary to make use of all labour resources and to demonstrate ways in which people with disabilities can be better integrated into the labour market as well as society in general.

Budget and institutional arrangements

The internet portal is designed to provide access to support services for both people with disabilities and employers, including information for employers regarding the possibilities of employing people with disabilities, together with good practice examples.



A large number of participants are involved in the project: the Federation of Industry (IV), the Austrian Federation of Trade Unions (ÖGB), the Federal Chamber of Economy Austria (WKÖ), the Federal Chamber of Labour (BAK), the Public Employment Service, the Austrian Social Insurance for Occupational Risks (AUVA), the Main Association of Austrian Social Security Institutions, the Austrian National Council of Disabled Persons, the Federal Social Office (BASB), the Federal Ministry of Social Affairs and Consumer Protection, and the Federal Ministry of Economics and Labour.

The project includes 60 examples of good practice for different jobs (covering a wide range of activities) and is intended to motivate employers to start 'diversity management'. Amongst other things, it provides information about the benefits of employing people with disabilities, about public subsidies and technical aid and about the sanctions that can be imposed for not employing people with disabilities.

The website is currently being re-launched to include new material and will shortly include information in sign language.

"Work and health"

Implementation of good practices

Research has shown that companies are often unaware of all the bodies that can provide information about health at the workplace, which can lead to unnecessary illness and loss of income for employees and a loss of skilled labour for employers.

Budget and institutional arrangements

The internet site "work and health" is primarily targeted at employers, but it is also intended for those at risk. Its aim is to help improve health conditions at work, based on the principle that 'a company is as healthy as its employees'.

Participants are the Federation of Industry (IV), the Austrian Federation of Trade Unions (ÖGB), the Federal Chamber of Economy Austria (WKÖ) and the

Federal Chamber of Labour (BAK). The programme is supported by Pfizer Corporation Austria, the Austrian Social Insurance for Occupational Risks (AUVA), and the Main Association of Austrian Social Security Institutions. There is also a team of advisers.

The platform provides general information about conditions for maintaining good health and respecting industrial health and safety standards, and offers concrete guidance concerning workplace practices. It is based on the results of a questionnaire on self-improvement of work and health and a database of 70 good practice projects.

The measure combines general information, good practice guidance and awards. Like the other programmes, it depends on the active cooperation of users in gathering information and making it available to businesses. The website costs around EUR 20–30,000 a year to maintain.

Evaluation and monitoring

As of now, none of the three internet based platforms have been subject to evaluation.

Two programmes combining information and practical assistance for special disadvantaged groups

Service Work and health — an advisory service for professional prevention²⁶

'Service Work and Health' is a pilot project run by Centre for Vocational Education and Rehabilitation (BBRZ). The participants in the Peer Review visited BBRZ Vienna in order to be introduced to its work, as summarised below.

Implementation of good practice

Occupational disabilities develop slowly so that, in principle, there are opportunities to identify problems in due time and take measures to rectify

²⁶ <http://www.servicearbeitundgesundheit.at>



them. In practice, however, early warning systems are lacking. By the time people admit that their work is making them ill, it is usually too late. Moreover, those affected often try to hide their health problems from their employers for fear of losing their job. As a result, employers do not realise there are problems and, accordingly, cannot take action to address the causes.

Even when employers recognise the problem, they are often unaware of the resources and possibilities that are available, especially if they are in an SME. As a result, many workers remain in their job until their state of health has got so bad that there is a risk of a total incapacity for work. This increases the national rate of disability which results in substantial costs for the disability benefit scheme. In 2007, 26.000 people became eligible for invalidity pensions while 50.000 took up retirement pensions. Accordingly, a third of all those who take up pensions each year do so for health reasons.

At the same time, there are shortages in occupational health care. If people lose their job, they often move back and forth between different systems because of a lack of co-operation between the respective institutions responsible for health care, social security and pensions. For the person concerned, this can mean years of suffering, a loss of income and a reduced quality of life and life expectancy. For employers and the economy it means the loss of skilled and experienced labour. For the government it means a drain on national budgets with disability pension payments amounting to nearly EUR 3 billion a year.

Budget and institutional arrangements

The aim of the project “Service Work and Health” is to promote the early detection and treatment of health dangers so as to prevent on-going damage to the health of employees. The Service uses a case-management approach, focusing on the client’s needs by offering a “One-Stop-Shop” which brings together all the existing provisions and provides a round table for labour market and health care institutions. Case Managers carry out a medical and psychological assessment of the possibilities open to individuals, take responsibility for searching out new employment opportunities (including through career planning and job coaching) and give advice about obtaining

new qualifications or retiring. They also give advice to companies on ways of adapting the workplace to employee needs.

The project had initially focused on employees aged 40+ (and their employers), but the age limit has now been lowered after discovering that health problems can start as early as 30 or 35. Nevertheless, the main age group is aged 45 to 50 and services are used more by women than men.

The service is not only provided to those in employment but also to the unemployed who have recently lost their job due to health problems. Health insurance agencies write to those who have been ill for three months, advising them of the service, while there are also notices in the media about the service. The aim is to create so-called “win-win-situations” by preventing illness and occupational disability and, as a result, a loss of income and quality of life, while benefiting employers, government budgets and the economy as a whole.

The budget for the project is EUR 600,000, based on 600 cases covering 400 people employed and 200 unemployed, and is funded by the Viennese Public Employment Service, the health insurance agencies, the Viennese government, and the Federal Social Office.

Evaluation and monitoring

Evidence shows that rehabilitation is much easier if intervention starts early on, when the person is still employed, rather than after they have been forced to stop work because of an occupational illness. The re-employment-rate of those who become unemployed is relatively low, though, many of them are older workers, who are too ill to work but not ill enough to be eligible for a disability pension. Service Work and Health, through its counselling, gives them a clearer perspective on the available options, such as retraining or retirement.

The project has, however, not managed to reach low-skilled workers, partly because employers are much less concerned about their health needs, since they can be easily replaced, and also because such workers rarely respond



to letters from the health services. As of now, the Service is unclear how to reach them.

Nevertheless, the overall results of the project are encouraging. Two-thirds of the 521 people who passed through the system up to the end of 2007 were still in employment after the care support ended and another 20% had good prospects even though they had been unable to keep their job.

Most of the companies have reacted positively, not least because they did not generally know how best to deal with employees with occupational illnesses. Smaller companies were particularly receptive, while large organisations were often found to have formal systems that, inadvertently or otherwise, served to prevent the re-integration of employees with problems.

Public policy bodies have reacted positively too and it is hoped that the project can be extended nationwide. For this a budget of around EUR 20 million would be required, which is considered both to be affordable and to yield a positive financial return.

Active integration measure: "Give youth a chance"²⁷

Preliminary remark: Austria's Apprenticeship schemes

In Austria, the "dual system of vocational training", which is administered by the Economic Chamber, combines vocational school work and practical training in a company. The three-year training programme is pursued by 40% of Austrian teenagers, which means 130,000 apprentices in 40,000 companies. The scheme provides bonuses to companies and targeted bonuses for apprentices and is responsible to a large extent for the low youth unemployment rate in Austria.

Despite this relatively positive picture, the Austrian labour market faces problems. Declining birth rates have reduced the number of new young people entering the labour market each year, and the trend for more young people to seek university level education has reduced the pool of potential apprentices further still. As a result, the number of apprentices has fallen from

²⁷ <http://www.wko.at/jugendchance>

200,000 in 1980 to 130,000 in 2007. In addition, there is a growing reluctance by companies to take on apprentices because of strict laws preventing them from being dismissed, except under exceptional circumstances.

To address these problems a new Action Plan for youth employment has been negotiated between the social partners. It streamlines the current bonus system for companies and offers youth participants a range of new bonuses. These incentives include special bonuses for additional apprentices of new companies as well as an education guarantee for teenagers.

The plan emphasises greater flexibility. On the one hand, the system allows companies to terminate an apprenticeship. On the other hand, young people who leave a company partway through training are given the opportunity to complete their apprenticeship with another employer or at a special training institution. The updated Plan is designed to ensure that every young person has either a complete education or an apprenticeship. In practice, at the end of their training period, 40% of apprentices stay in the same company while most of the remaining 60% soon find work elsewhere.

Implementation of good practice

In Austria, there are some 1,500 to 2,000 young long-term unemployed who have so far failed to enter the labour market and these young people are targeted, along with potential employers. The aim is to reduce long-term unemployment among young people (aged 15 to 25) and to help them find jobs.

The scheme also seeks to support gender mainstreaming, not through quotas but through special advice on ways of ensuring compatibility between family life and work. It is a combination of practical advice and active inclusion measures. Over a two-year period, the project has worked with young people who have been unemployed for at least six months, giving them an individual 'coach' for nine months to help them find a job, and supporting them once they have started work.

Initially, young people are selected and invited to a personal counselling interview. If they agree, a plan is drawn up for them to follow a training

course. During the first 8 weeks, they take part in professional orientation aimed at acclimatising them to a regular daily routine, at restoring their self-confidence, and at building a relationship with their 'coach'. They learn computer skills and are taught to build their own webpage. This is the most important stage in the project as participants get used to working in groups and sharing experience. During the next stage, the coach takes responsibility for finding a job for them, acting as a link between them and the company. The coach continues to support the young person during their first two months of employment and provides assistance to the employer when and where necessary.

Budget and institutional arrangements

The programme has been set up by the Federal Chamber of Economy Austria (WKÖ) and the Public Employment Service. There are partner institutions in each province in Austria, which organise concrete measures for the young people concerned ("Gesellschaft für Aus- und Weiterbildung GmbH", the "Kärntner Arbeitsstiftung" etc).

26

If a work placement is successful (the criteria being that the person remains in the job for at least four months, two months of this without a "coach"), the partner institution receives EUR 250. The budget for the first period — from 2005 up until 2007 — was EUR 4.2 million, a third being provided by the Chamber of Economics and two thirds by the Public Employment Service. The Public Employment Service plans to increase the budget to EUR 4.5 million for the next period.

Evaluation and monitoring

The pilot project began in December 2005 and finished at the end of July 2007. It has achieved good results, particularly given the difficult target group it was addressing, with 49% of the 2,012 participants still employed after five months. The project partner emphasises that this result was only possible because the companies concerned accepted their social responsibility. Because of its success, the project was prolonged until the end of 2008.



4. Relevance and transferability

Introduction

All projects are carried out in partnership by the social partners and the official chambers of Labour and of the Economy. They are also linked to Austrian government policy and, through the National Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion for Austria, use the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) to collect information and examples of good practice. The results of these projects will influence future labour market policy, especially towards those who are furthest away from labour market.

The Austrian system of cooperation and social partnership continues to be supported by all those involved because it produces good results, which is not always the case, it seems, with systems in other Member States, although it is recognised that all methods of social and civil dialogue have their advantages and disadvantages.

Comparing approaches across Europe

27

Labour market participation in Europe

The challenge of ensuring the active integration of those furthest from the labour market exists in virtually all Member States. However, the nature of the challenge can vary, as illustrated by comparative data.

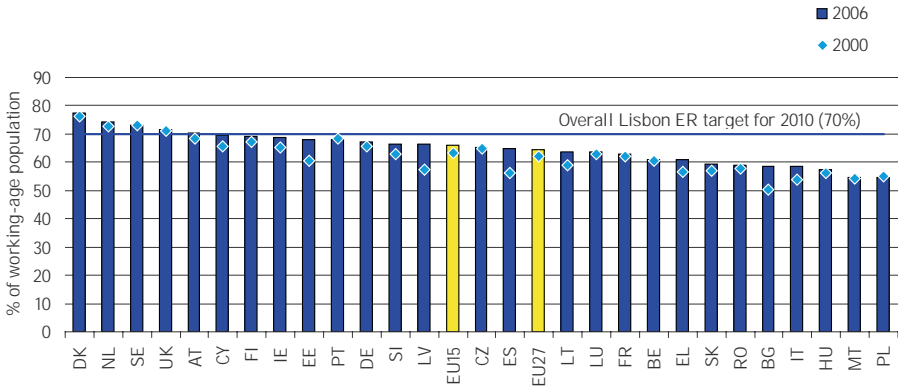
The employment rate in Austria is above the EU average and the rate increased further in 2006. Peer countries Norway and the UK also have employment rates of over 70%, one of the key targets of the EU employment policy guidelines.²⁸

Since 2000, Austria has reduced the unemployment rate of older workers by nearly 50%, at the same time as other peer countries (except Finland) have also reduced the rate to below the average in the EU-27.

²⁸ Council Decision of 22 July 2003 on guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States — 2003/578/EC, in: Official Journal of the European Union, L 197, Volume 46, 5 August 2003.



Overall employment rate for EU Member States, 2000 and 2006

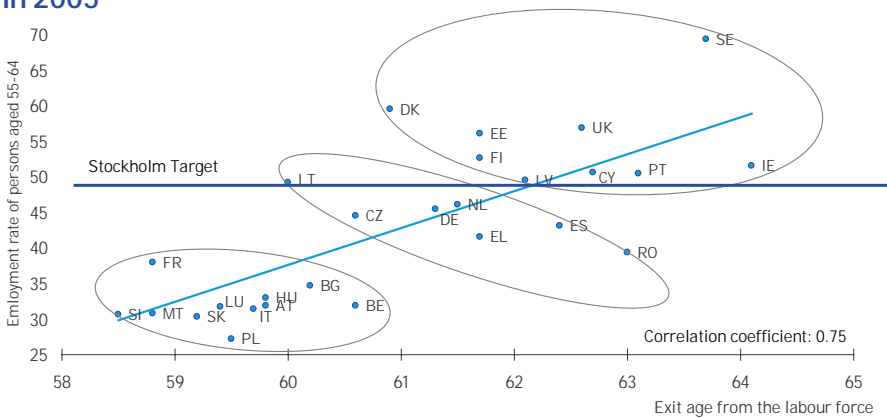


Source: European Commission, Employment in Europe 2007 based on Eurostat, EU LFS annual averages
 Note: Data for RO 2002; 2006 data for DE and FR provisional

On the other hand, Austria has the lowest employment rate of older people as a result of extensive early retirement. This contrasts with peer countries like Finland, UK, Ireland and Slovenia that have a high employment rate for this group and a later average retirement age.

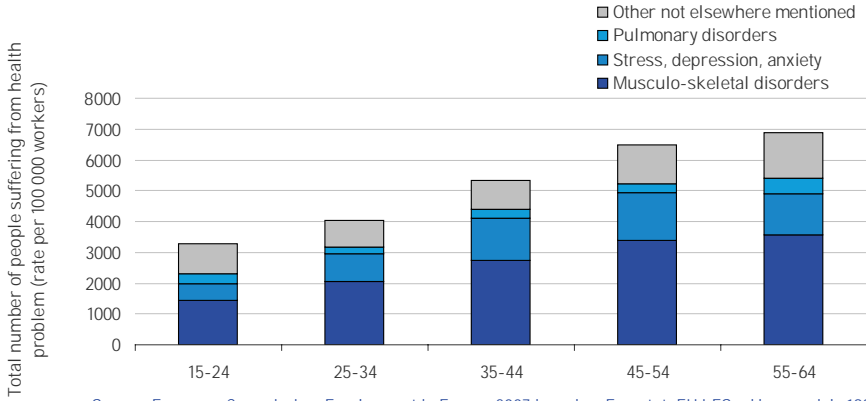
In all Member States, work related health problems increase with age, as does the risk of chronic illness.

Situation with respect to the Stockholm and Barcelona targets in 2005



Source: European Commission, Employment in Europe 2007 based on Eurostat, EU Labour force survey, 2005 results
 Note: Average exit age for CY and DE refers to 2004

Standardised prevalence rate of work-related health problems by diagnosis group and age in the EU* in 1999

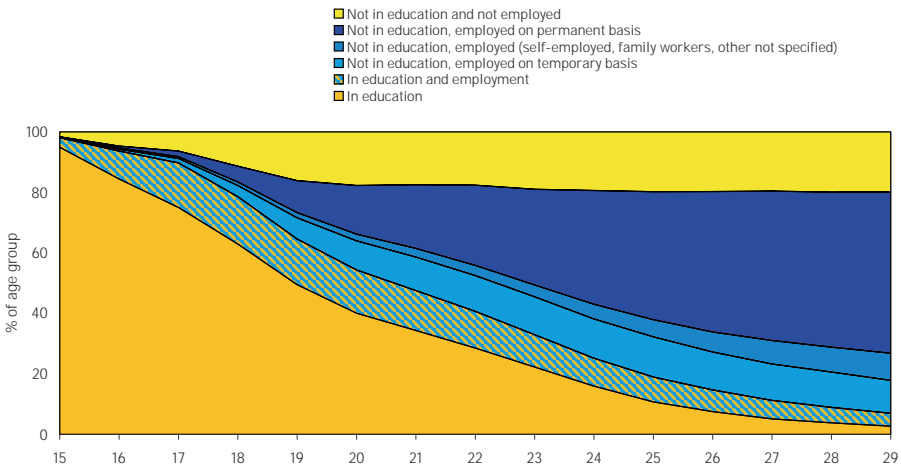


Source: European Commission, Employment in Europe 2007 based on Eurostat, EU LFS ad hoc module 1999
 Note: * EU data covers only DK, DE, EL, ES, HU, IE, IT, LU, PT, FI, SE, UK

After compulsory schooling most young people in Austria have the opportunity to participate in vocational training systems and/or academic studies. The age at which vocational or occupational training starts varies between Member States but, for the EU27 as a whole, most young people are in school, vocational training or employment until they are around 20. Hence the problem of youth unemployment only really becomes apparent after this age.

29

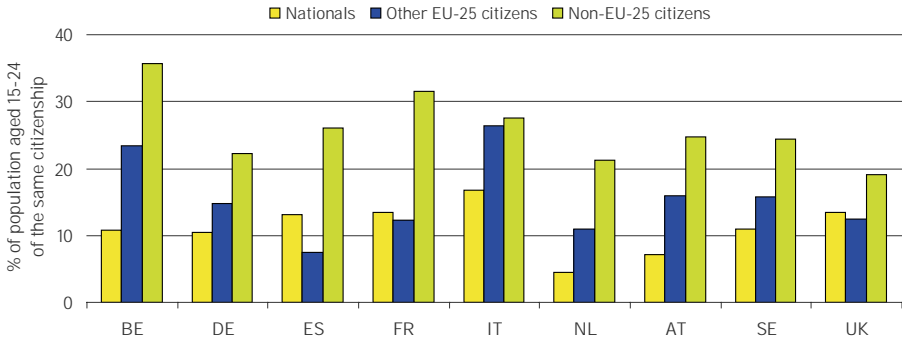
Activity status of young people by age in the EU-27, 2006



Source: European Commission, Employment in Europe 2007 based on Eurostat, EU LFS annual averages



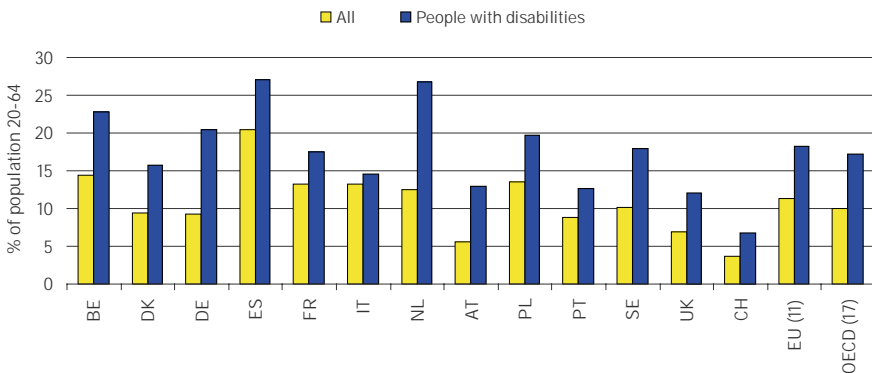
Young people (aged 15-24) not in education, employment or training by citizenship and country of residence, 2006



Source: European Commission, Employment in Europe 2007 based on Eurostat, EU LFS annual averages
 Note: data for "Other EU-25 citizens" for ES, FR, LU, NL, AT uncertain due to small sample size

Trends in youth unemployment vary across the peer countries. In three countries — Ireland, the UK and Norway — the rate remained much the same between 1999 and 2006. In Finland, Slovenia and Spain, the rate fell, although the level was around or above the EU average.

Unemployment rates, late 1990s



Source: OECD 2003, Transforming Disability into Ability - Policies to promote work and income security for disabled people

The rate in Austria was only a third of the EU average in 1999 and, while it has doubled since, it was still only 9.1% in 2006, much lower than the level in EU-15, EU-25, or the peer countries.²⁹

The unemployment rate for people with disabilities is also below average in all peer countries (except Spain and Finland), EU-15 and EU-25, with rates in Norway and Austria being the lowest.

To sum up, Austria has a low unemployment rate, especially for older people, but the rate of early retirement is high. However, the unemployment rate of young people has increased even though, in comparison with the EU average and other peer countries, it is still relatively low. The same is true with regard to people with a high degree of disability. For these reasons, these groups were selected as the subject of the Peer Review in Austria.

Peer countries and NGOs comments

Finland

Labour market policy in Finland provides only limited protection for particular jobs, but a wide-ranging and general system of support for entry and re-entry into employment. In comparison with other Member States, the employment rate is very high and the unemployment rate very low.

The country's labour market challenges can be seen in the fact that, in 2006, 60% of unemployed jobseekers had problems finding employment because of a lack of suitable vocational skills, disability, age, or because they were from an immigrant background, with 44% of the long-term unemployed aged over 55, and 21% with disabilities.

Finland's Active Inclusion Policy for those furthest from the labour market is built on three principles. Firstly, active labour market policies are accorded an important role. Secondly, Finland considers itself to be one of the front-running countries in developing occupational health and safety strategies as a way of keeping an ageing workforce employed. And thirdly, the Finns

²⁹ EUROSTAT, http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page?_pageid=0,1136184,0_45572595&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL (02.05.08)



are in favour of developing an intermediate labour market for five groups of people: the long-term unemployed, people with disabilities, people who are seen as likely to become long-term unemployed, people who have retired due to illness and certain groups of immigrants with inadequate skills.

Finland shares with Austria a long-standing tradition of co-operation between the main social and economic interest groups and the government, and a close co-operation between central and local government and the labour market organisations. This tripartite cooperation has played an important role in the integration of people into the labour market and in the development of occupational health services. However, the influence of the social partners in Finland has been less apparent in efforts to integrate the long-term unemployed into the labour market, even though there are corresponding Finnish counterpart actions for all five good practice initiatives addressed in the Austrian Peer Review.

Ireland

In Ireland some 20% of people of working age receive Social Welfare Payment; among these are jobseekers, one-parent families and recipients of illness benefits and disability allowances. The Employment Support Services have various schemes: Back to Education (which provides second-chance education), Back to Work (which provides technical assistance and training grants), and Activation and Family Support Programmes.

As stated, *"the aim is that welfare dependant people should have access to inclusion and progression, to quality work and learning opportunities which will encourage greater self-reliance and self-sufficiency"* — in other words they will be encouraged and helped to enter or re-enter the labour market.

In 2006, the social partners signed a 10-year agreement outlining an active case management service for social welfare clients of working age, in which all the relevant stakeholders — clients, agencies and service providers — participate. Part of this agreement includes a National Action Plan for Social Inclusion.

The government is also working to develop a lifecycle approach as part of its strategy for tackling social inclusion, using ESF resources to develop a comprehensive employment strategy for people with disabilities.

Norway

With its strong economy, Norway has a high employment rate with around 70% of women of working age and 80% of men of working age in work. On the other hand, the country is one of the OECD countries with the highest proportion of its population not working because of illness and disability.

In response, the social partners and the government have made several tripartite agreements and promoted various schemes designed to improve the working environment, to encourage older people to remain in work, and to train and encourage young people who have problems entering the labour market.

Actions include a mix of information, advice, and concrete schemes of Active Integration Policy targeted on vulnerable groups. Among these are “The Tripartite Agreement on a More Inclusive Work Life”, the establishment of “Work Life Centres”, “Centre of Senior Policies”, and “Idébanken”.

However, the main problem — that 25% of the adult population below the official pension age of 67 are not in work — remains, so the country is now looking for a better link between welfare and workfare policies. This raises issues for employers. Should there be sanctions for not employing older people? Should employers bear more of the responsibility for employees absent because of sickness or health problems? What can employers do to keep older workers longer in employment? How can employers be encouraged to keep people with disabilities in work?

Slovenia

Slovenia is a new Member State that has had to rebuild, not only its economy, but also its social security system. With the setting up a tripartite Economic and Social Council of the Republic of Slovenia (ESS), the social partners have a direct influence on this process.



The country's aim is to address its national objectives within the framework of common European strategies. In this respect there are several schemes to integrate the unemployed into the labour market, based on the feeding-in and feeding-out concept, with the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion, the New Scholarship Act, the Active Employment Policy, and the 'quota system' which requires employers to hire people with disabilities. There are also various information and educational programmes for different social groups.

The policy aim is to strengthen public-private partnerships and to develop social dialogue in order to establish an innovative, and comprehensive, model to promote the employment of vulnerable groups, and to help them obtain better access to the labour market and lifelong learning.

The employment rate of older people is one of the lowest in the EU, while the unemployment rate of young people is high, even if they have high skills. There are, therefore, specific schemes to tackle high unemployment.

In this context, various alternative ways of addressing social inclusion have been discussed at a political level, including proposed amendments to both the Pension and Disability Insurance Act and the Health Care and Health Insurance Act.

Spain

The importance of social dialogue has increased in Spain in recent years, with a tripartite declaration for social dialogue being made and a Commission for the Monitoring and Evaluation of social dialogue created. The Government has also announced a reform of the social dialogue system.

The main difference between the Spanish social dialogue system and the Austrian is that, unlike in the latter, the social partners participate in discussions and publish recommendations, but do not get involved in concrete initiatives. The groups affected by unemployment are much the same as in other Member States.

The labour market integration of older people with disabilities is the focus of a specific information platform. Beside this, there are concrete projects



— notably under APTRA (Adaptation of working place, recommendations and technical assistance) — that are carried out with the support of the European Social Fund and the European Fund for Regional Development. There are also special schemes for young people, including a virtual office for the 'emancipation of young people, and active employment measures (Workshop-Schools and Occupational Centres, Employment Workshop, Experimental Programmes in Employment Issues).

Although Spain has a very high rate of occupational injuries, there are fewer efforts to strengthen actions to address occupational health and risks at the working place, although quality at work is now one of the areas of concern being covered by social dialogue.

UK

In the UK, active labour market policies have succeeded in reducing unemployment, but the people who remain outside the labour market are generally those facing the greatest obstacles.

The government sees integration into the labour market as the best way of tackling social exclusion, with policies oriented towards the local delivery of services targeted at the needs of the individual. While this approach is generally seen to be positive, it also raises contentious issues, which are not fully resolved, such as whether any job is better than no job at all, or whether low-skilled lone parents of young children should always be encouraged to work. People unemployed for longer than six months can take part in a number of different programmes — the so-called New Deals for different groups. These programmes offer an initial orientation phase of interviews and advice, following by a period of intensive support including work-related training. Lone parents are a particular target group, linked to the ambitious aim of halving child poverty by 2010 as compared with the level in 2000.

The Government is also working with employers to make the workplace safer and healthier. Internet based information-platforms have been created, including for people with disabilities. In UK there are no social partnership structures comparable to those in other Member States.



Peer country	Form of social partnership	Schemes for young people	Schemes for older people	Occupational health schemes
Finland	Well-developed tripartite cooperation	“Youth guarantee” and others	“Longer careers?” and others	Programme for Health promotion and others
Ireland	Social Partnership Agreement	Back to Education Allowance	National Action Plan for Social Inclusion	Activation Assistance and Training Grants
Norway	Well-developed tripartite cooperation	“Youth guarantee”	Centre of Senior Policies	Working Environment Act
Slovenia	Tripartite social dialogue, Economic and Social Council (ESS), Social Agreement 2007–2009	New Scholarship Act; Vocational Education and Training Act, Information centre, Initiatives of the Student Organisation	Promotion project 2005	Health Care and Health Insurance Act, conflicts within the reform process
Spain	Competitiveness, stable employment and social cohesion. A declaration for social dialogue 2004	Virtual office, active employment measures	Information platform, APTRA, ESF, EFRD	Yearly medical examinations
UK	Not similar to Austria, put participation of the social partners on several levels	New Deal for young people	New Deal 50+	Better working conditions: negotiations between government and employers

Mental Health Europe (MHE)

More than 27% of adults in Europe are said to experience at least one form of mental illness during a year, and mental health problems can be seen as both a cause and a consequence of social exclusion.

Stigma and self-stigmatization are among the main factors contributing to the social exclusion of people experiencing mental health problems, with unemployment, poverty and homelessness being the main sources of social disadvantages.

Poverty and homelessness are often the consequences of the lost of a job, hence the need to develop affordable and adequate housing as one of the means of promoting social integration. Hence a successful Active Inclusion Policy requires effective cooperation between the state, municipalities and NGOs working in this area, with an appropriate emphasis on addressing the needs of people with mental health problems.

BUSINESS EUROPE

Labour market integration is seen as the best way to fight social exclusion by encouraging those on social benefits to move into work. This is particularly important for disadvantaged groups, whose integration could also help address concerns about labour shortages given the ageing of the population and the workforce. This is seen an important part of the 'flexicurity' approach, with barriers to full participation needing to be broken down through action on both the demand and supply sides of the labour market.

The social partners recognise the importance of ensuring the integration of disadvantaged groups in the labour market, and an agreement on a joint labour market analysis was reached within their work programme 2006–2008 at the Tripartite Social Summit on 18 October 2007.

The European social partners issued a recommendation on social cohesion and social inclusion in which they underlined the need to develop skills and address educational disadvantages through training and education, to ensure equal access to health, education, housing and social security services, to enforce anti-discrimination legislation at the European and





Schemes for people with disabilities	Internet based information	Intermediate labour market	Specific characteristics	Peer country
Disability Policy Programme (planned)	yes	yes	Definition of people with disabilities	Finland
ESF-Programme, Activation and Family Support Programme	n.s.	Back to Work Allowance	Ethnic groups, lone parents	Ireland
"More Inclusive Workplace", "Idébanken"	"Idébanken"	Labour market programmes	New pension reform	Norway
"Quota system"	No until now	Some schemes, ESF supported	Building up "a relatively good functioning system of social protection and social care for vulnerable groups"	Slovenia
Part of general schemes	Several	Part of employment schemes	Gender problematic	Spain
Reduce the 'employment rate gap'	DirectGov, DialUK	Work-related training	Reduce child poverty, lone parents	UK

national level, and to make effective use of existing financial instruments such as the European Social Fund.

The social partners have agreed to begin negotiations on an ‘autonomous framework agreement’ for the better integration of disadvantaged groups in the labour market, in which other stakeholders, such as public authorities, should be involved. It was also agreed that the term “disadvantaged groups” is too vague, and that there was a need to develop a more appropriate concept. At this stage, the timetable for this work has still to be agreed.

Peer countries discussions concerning the transferability of good practice

As has been stressed, Austria has a specific **system of social partnership**, which makes it easier to implement certain types of measures. However, with the exception of the UK, all other peer countries have some kind of social partnership between employers, unions and governments; although there are variations in the way these operate. In Norway, for example, there is a formalised tripartite agreement between the government, employers and employees while in others, such as Finland, there are moves to ‘roll back’ such partnerships. In this context, the importance of including NGOs in the social partnership framework was stressed, since their broad perspective and approach enables them to become actively involved in a variety of different schemes.

All delegates wanted improved provision for **people with disabilities**, including those with mental health problems, recognising that legal provisions and financial incentives already exist in some countries. Companies in Slovenia, for example, have quotas for employing disabled people backed up by financial incentives. Ireland gives subsidies, based on the level of disability. In Spain, companies employing workers with disabilities pay reduced social contributions. On the other hand, the Norwegian peer reviewers commented that action to improve the employment prospects of the long-term sick had proved ineffective in practice.



The group addressing the needs of **young people** felt that, in the past, too much emphasis had been put on academic rather than vocational training, and that vocational training should probably be increased. The Slovenian peer reviewers mentioned that, in their country, there were scholarships and learning projects for young people with problems.

Most **Lone parents** are women, and they need adequate childcare if they are to enter full-time employment. Employers must also recognize their specific requirements, such as the need to take time off occasionally in order to look after sick children.

For **older workers** a dual approach was recommended: either retaining them in the labour market or encouraging them to return to work if they had already left. Measures to support this could include increasing the value of deferred pensions or providing subsidies to employers who take on older workers.

The concern was expressed, that while **Internet platforms** perform a useful function, not everyone has access to IT equipment or the knowledge or ability to use it.

Finally, the need for **Intermediate labour markets** was stressed since these could ease disadvantaged people into work, from which it would be possible to progress more easily into the open labour market.

5. Conclusions and lessons learnt

Conclusions

System of social partnership

The Austrian approach may not be immediately transferable to other Member States due to the very specific characteristics of the system, with active inclusion policies based on a consensual social model of all the social partners, including the Federal Chamber of Labour, the relationship between the different Chambers (including the Federal Chamber of Economy); and a strong social protection system, all of which have taken many decades to develop.

However, elements of the approach are by no means specific to Austria and a number of the peer countries (e.g. Norway, Finland, Ireland, and Slovenia) also involve the social partners in policy making through such means as tripartite agreements. Overall, the peer reviewers felt that the contact, coordination and agreement between Ministries and between social partners in Austria on the best way to integrate people into the labour market could usefully be emulated in other countries.

Contradiction between economic competitiveness and the integration of disadvantaged groups

Although there are big differences between Member States, overall, there are groups who are further away from the labour market than others in all countries. In policy terms, there has often been a contradiction between the pressure to strengthen economic competitiveness and the desire to encourage the integration of the most disadvantaged groups into the labour market. These differing objectives need to be reconciled, with social dialogue and social partnership being important elements in doing so.

Defining the target groups

Target groups are not always separate and self-contained and the fact that they become target groups in the first place may reflect inadequate aspects

of general policies or provisions — for example, in relation to childcare or health and safety at work.

It is important to consider the consequences of defining a target group. Is it a means of ensuring that specific needs are met or does it risk becoming a pretext for social exclusion? Some national schemes may have unexpected, perverse effects of this kind, and future strategies should monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of each measure in the light of this.

A holistic and long-term approach

Austria and the other peer countries support the holistic, long-term, approach of the European inclusion strategy but recognise that the approach needs to be backed up by concrete measures for the different target groups, each combining so far as possible financial aid, services and advice. There is also a need to agree priorities and to ensure that measures combine individual attention with a holistic, integrated, approach.

More support and advice or more efforts to strengthen personal responsibility?

All peer countries agree that it is both a social responsibility and an economical necessity for people who are especially at risk to be better integrated into the labour market. However, there are different approaches which can be followed, raising a question about whether there is a need for more support and advice or for more pressure on people themselves and more emphasis on personal responsibility, or a combination of both?

Similar schemes in the peer countries

There are similar schemes in the peer countries which operate successfully:

- Internet based platforms: “Idébanken — inkluderende arbeidsiv” in Norway, Internet platforms run by the Spanish Institute for older and disabled people and social services (IMSERSO) and DirectGov in the

UK; while in Slovenia, the intention is to assess the Austrian experience carefully.

- Work and age: Finland sees itself as one of the ‘front-runners in developing occupational health and safety strategies’.
- Younger people: Back to Education Allowance in Ireland and ‘Workshop-Schools and Occupational Centres’ in Spain.
- People with disabilities: New Deals for Disabled People in United Kingdom and Mental Health Europe (MHE).
- Work and health: Forum for well-being at work and TYKES in Finland, and Tripartite agreement on a ‘More Inclusive Working Life’ in Norway.

Lessons learnt

Different countries — different target groups

In Austria, there are problems concerning early retirement, in Finland and in a number of other countries, there is already a shortage of skilled labour. Keeping people in work demands a new philosophy regarding both the organisation of work and the operation of the health system. More preventive care is needed with much closer links between work and the health system. This is most likely to be achieved in a tripartite system with a clear strategy, such as that launched by the European Commission with the new communication process which began in October 2007.

Digital information — digital divide

The Lisbon strategy emphasises the need for more and better information. However, alongside internet-based information systems, there is a need to develop specific measures to overcome the ‘digital divide’ if vulnerable groups are to benefit fully. In this respect, the Austrian internet-based information systems on health, ageing and disabilities are examples of good practice that could be adopted by employers in other peer countries.



Services for advice and personal support

People need information but they also need personal support. The Service work and health and Job coaching for long-term unemployed young people programmes in Austria address these two concerns in ways that provide useful examples for comparable services in other peer countries. A particular challenge for the future will be to ensure their continued effectiveness and sustainability so as to avoid the need for further intervention.

Specific programmes for target groups and for individuals

Those who are furthest away from the labour market need specific programmes but also personal help. Job coaching is particularly important in this respect and, since there are comparable coaching systems in several Member States, it might make sense to have a Peer Review on this topic.

Migrants

The Austrian projects did not address the needs of migrants seeking to enter the workplace. Some participants reported that the availability of a pool of cheap — sometimes illegal — migrant labour could reduce the pressure on employers to integrate people with disabilities or social disadvantages into work.

Intermediate labour market

The Peer Review underlines the need to create a publicly financed intermediate labour market for those who have no chance of becoming integrated into the mainstream labour market, while ensuring appropriate links between the two. In this perspective, a number of practical issues need to be addressed, not least in terms of payment conditions, working time, limited or unlimited contracts and continuing training. While there are opportunities, there are also possible obstacles and the question remains as to how to ensure that such schemes result in better integration and not more segregation.

Employment — how long, under what conditions and with what results?

Employment in Austria and most other Member States is a precondition for entering social security systems that provide access to support in the event of sickness, accident, invalidity and retirement. The question arises as to the conditions which should apply to those furthest away from the labour market when they are helped into employment, which is related to the issue of defining minimum standards in working life. Reflecting the comments from the UK, there is also a tension between people getting into work and finding the 'right' job. In addition, a balance needs to be struck between the rights of individual and their responsibilities.



References

Official documents

All documents and information: http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/index_en.html

ECOTEC Research and Consulting Limited (2006): A Study on Policies for Involving the Social Partners in the Integration of People at a Disadvantage in the Labour Market http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/incentive_measures/studies/Im_integr_disadv_people_en.pdf

European Commission (2005), "*Working together for growth and jobs: A new start for the Lisbon Strategy*", Communication from the Commission, COM(2005)24 final, Brussels. <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2005:0024:FIN:EN:PDF>

European Commission (2006): *Concerning a consultation on action at EU level to promote the active inclusion of the people furthest from the labour market*, COM(2006)44 final. <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2006:0044:FIN:EN:PDF>

European Commission (2006): *Public Consultation on Active Inclusion*, Synthesis report by the Commission Services http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/spsi/docs/social_inclusion/2006/active_inclusion/synthesis_en.pdf.

European Commission (2007): Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. *Modernising social protection for greater social justice and economic cohesion: taking forward the active inclusion of people furthest from the labour market*. COM(2007) 620 final, 17. 10. 2007. <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2007:0620:FIN:EN:PDF>

European Commission (2007): *Joint report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion*, http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/spsi/joint_reports_en.htm#2007

<http://www.peer-review-social-inclusion.eu/>

http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/spsi/expert_reports_en.htm

Republic of Austria: *National Report on Strategies for Social protection and Social Inclusion*, http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/spsi/strategy_reports_en.htm

Internet connection of social partners and projects in Austria

<http://www.arbeiterkammer.at>

<http://www.arbeitundalter.at>

<http://www.arbeitundbehinderung.at>
<http://www.arbeitundgesundheit.at>
<http://www.armutskonferenz.at/armutskonferenz-startseite.htm>
<http://www.industriellenvereinigung.at>
<http://www.landwirtschaftskammer.at>
<http://www.oegb.at>
<http://www.servicearbeit undgesundheit.at>
Sozialpartnerschaft in Österreich: http://www.sozialpartner.at/sozialpartner_start.htm
<http://www.wko.at>
<http://www.wko.at/jugendchance>
http://portal.wko.at/wk/format_liste.wk?SBID=1808&TtID=0&DstID=0&AngID=1

Miscellaneous

BBRZ Österreich: *Service Arbeit und Gesundheit. Beratungsstelle für berufliche Rehabilitation. Konzept für die Beratungs- und Betreuungseinrichtung.* Typoskript o.J.

BBRZ Österreich: *Service Arbeit und Gesundheit 40+.* Quartalsbericht 01. 04. 2007 bis 30. 06. 2007, Typoskript o.J.

Ernst-Ulrich Huster, Jürgen Boeckh, Hildegard Mogge-Grotjahn (ed.): *Handbuch Armut und Soziale Ausgrenzung*, Wiesbaden 2008.

ÖSB Consulting. *Active Ageing.* Recherchestudie zu Good Practice im Auftrag des AMS Österreich, Wien 2005.







<http://www.peer-review-social-inclusion.eu>

Initiatives by the social partners for improving the labour market access of disadvantaged groups

Host country: **Austria**

Peer countries: **Finland, Ireland, Norway, Slovenia, Spain, United Kingdom**

Access to employment is a key requirement for people to be able to avoid the risk of poverty and social exclusion. In 2007, the Commission published a Communication stating that a more strategic approach was needed to ensure that those disadvantaged are integrated into the job market in the longer-term and not just the short-term. The aim, therefore, should be to ensure access not only to employment as such but to jobs which are stable and provide a reasonable level of income over a number of years.

Social partners are of central importance in this respect and the Peer Review will throw light on the initiatives taken by social partners to help improve the access of disadvantaged groups to employment. The groups concerned include a number of different sections of the population, and the social partners in Austria who are hosting the Peer Review will present a range of different initiatives centred on three main themes: work and age, work and disability and work and health.