Strengthening the European Network of Public Employment Services: Focus on Core Tasks and Added Value

Position paper on the European Commission's proposal to amend the Decision on the PES Network (COM(2026) 563 final)

This document has been machine-translated from German. The original version is available here.

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Summary

The BDA supports the European Commission's proposal to continue the European Network of Public Employment Services (PES Network) on a permanent basis beyond 2027. The network has established itself as a valuable platform for benchmarking, knowledge exchange and the modernisation of public employment services.

- The Commission's proposal rightly emphasises continuity, while at the same time expanding the network's mandate. However, the proposed extensions must remain clearly linked to the network's practical core remit: the exchange of experiences, mutual learning, benchmarking, and support for the modernisation and performance of public employment services. The focus must remain on concrete improvements to job placement, service quality and administrative practice. New objectives, initiatives or changes to the performance comparison indicators may only be pursued if they contribute directly to the network's core mission and create demonstrable added value for the employment services.
- The network should not be extended to perform an independent political steering role. Political objectives must continue to be set through the appropriate European and national procedures, with the involvement of the social partners.
- The positive experiences with the benchlearning process show that the network can make an important contribution to improving the performance of national employment services. Benchlearning should continue to be developed with a strong focus on practical needs.

- The structured exchange of good practice, mutual support in reform processes, and the promotion of innovation and digitalisation create tangible added value for employment services, employers and jobseekers. This exchange must remain at the heart of the network.
- The social partners should be involved in the work of the PES network at an early stage. Proven national models of participation must be maintained in this context.
- The network's activities should be regularly reviewed to assess their specific added value and any potential duplication of existing European instruments.

In detail

Combining long-term continuity with a clear core mission

The BDA supports the continued operation of the PES network beyond 2027. However, amendments to the Commission's proposal are necessary to clearly safeguard the network's core mission. This applies in particular to the proposed extension in Article 3 to the implementation of 'Union policies'. The network's remit should remain limited to the implementation of EU employment policy. The new tasks set out in Article 4(1)(h) and (i) must be explicitly linked to the network's core technical remit, the voluntary nature of cooperation, and demonstrable practical added value for public employment services. The network's activities should continue to focus on cooperation, mutual learning, benchmarking and support for effective public employment services. New objectives, initiatives or changes to the benchmarking indicators should be clearly linked to this mandate and create demonstrable added value for the practical work of employment services.

No political steering role for the PES network

The PES network should not be developed into an independent labour market policy steering body or interest group. This would alter its nature as a technical cooperation network and blur the clear distinction between technical exchange and political decision-making. Political objectives must continue to be set by the responsible institutions, with appropriate involvement of the social partners.

Further developing benchlearning

Benchlearning is at the heart of the PES network. It combines the comparison of performance and service quality with mutual learning. This tool should be further strengthened and remain closely focused on practical needs, including following the revision of the Decision. The new monitoring framework provided for in Article 4(2) should reflect the practical benefits of benchlearning and, as far as possible, build on existing data. Recommendations must take account of the different national structures and leave employment services sufficient flexibility to develop appropriate solutions.

Ensure an open discussion

The Commission's proposal aims to develop and test operational cooperation and joint approaches amongst public employment services. This can usefully complement open professional exchanges, but must remain voluntary, evidence-based and directly relevant to the labour market. The focus should be on approaches that have proven effective in practice. The network should deepen the exchange of ideas on effective job placement, skills and workforce needs, upskilling, digitalisation and cross-border mobility. Successful tools and procedures should be disseminated more quickly and made available to other employment services. At the same time, the new opportunity for operational cooperation should be used to establish a permanent crisis mechanism that enables rapid situation assessment, the exchange of information on effective measures, coordinated support and joint scenario analyses. As employment services are increasingly digitalise and automate their services and make use of AI, they often face similar challenges, both legal and practical. This topic should therefore be explored in greater depth to facilitate exchange, joint pilot projects and mutual learning.

Involve the social partners at an early stage and in a balanced manner

The cooperation with relevant labour market stakeholders provided for in Article 5 is welcome in principle. The social partners should be involved at an early stage and in a balanced manner in relevant work, joint initiatives and pilot projects within the PES network. Their involvement strengthens the practical relevance and improves the quality of the results. At the same time, proven national participation models, such as the self-governance of the Federal Employment Agency, must be preserved.

Avoid duplication of structures and evaluate the mandate effectively

The evaluation to be carried out every six years, as provided for in Article 10, should, in particular, examine whether the network's activities continue to provide tangible added value for public employment services, remain consistent with the network's core remit, and avoid duplication with existing European instruments. This applies in particular to the operational cooperation with EURES, EESSI, Europass and the EU Talent Pool, as provided for in Article 4(1)(i), as well as to cooperation with the European Labour Authority. The respective tasks and responsibilities must remain clearly distinct from one another. It is positive that the reports from the network and its members are in future to be submitted only every two years. The new monitoring framework must not offset this reduction in administrative burden by imposing additional requirements.

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