



Towards a European Pillar of Social Rights

ACTIVE SUPPORT FOR EMPLOYMENT

Ensuring that every person affected by unemployment receives support is important to increase their chances to return to work, to enter into new occupations and to prevent social exclusion. This can be done through active labour market policies. Together with unemployment insurance and benefit conditionality, they aim to increase employment opportunities for job seekers, improve matching between jobs and workers, ease access to the labour market, support skills development, and provide support through transitions between jobs. They can contribute to employment and GDP growth and reduce unemployment and benefit dependency.

Challenges

The challenge remains to adequately support young people, who are less experienced, often employed through short-term contracts and thus, more easily laid off in an economic downturn. They are over twice as likely to be unemployed than the average worker. There is also a high share of young people that are neither in employment, education or training (NEETs): 12.5% of young people are NEETs out of which 6.4% are unemployed and 6% are either not available for work or not seeking a job (inactive). A high share of NEETs can demonstrate a lack of access to support services and incentives to register as job seekers. These NEETs are often also the hardest to reach and need more intensive help than that traditionally provided by Public Employment Services, for example by partnering with social services, social workers, or education institutions.

Barriers to getting a job accumulate during long periods of unemployment. Workers with low qualifications and third country nationals are twice as likely to experience long-term unemployment. Some 27% of long-term unemployed are not registered with employment services, thus reducing their access to support. In most Member States there is no re-assessment of the prospects of jobseekers beyond 12 months of unemployment, and very limited coordination of individual support between employment and social services. Only 20% of active measures to foster access to the labour market were directed towards the long-term unemployed. This makes access to jobseeker support more difficult for those most in need.

Situation at EU level

The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union sets out that "everyone has the right of access to a free placement service".¹

The EU Guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States² call for the improvement of labour-market matching and support for sustainable transitions. Also, the Council of the EU adopted the Recommendation³ on

¹ Charter of Fundamental Rights, Art. 29.

² Council Decision (EU) 2015/1848 of 5 October 2015.

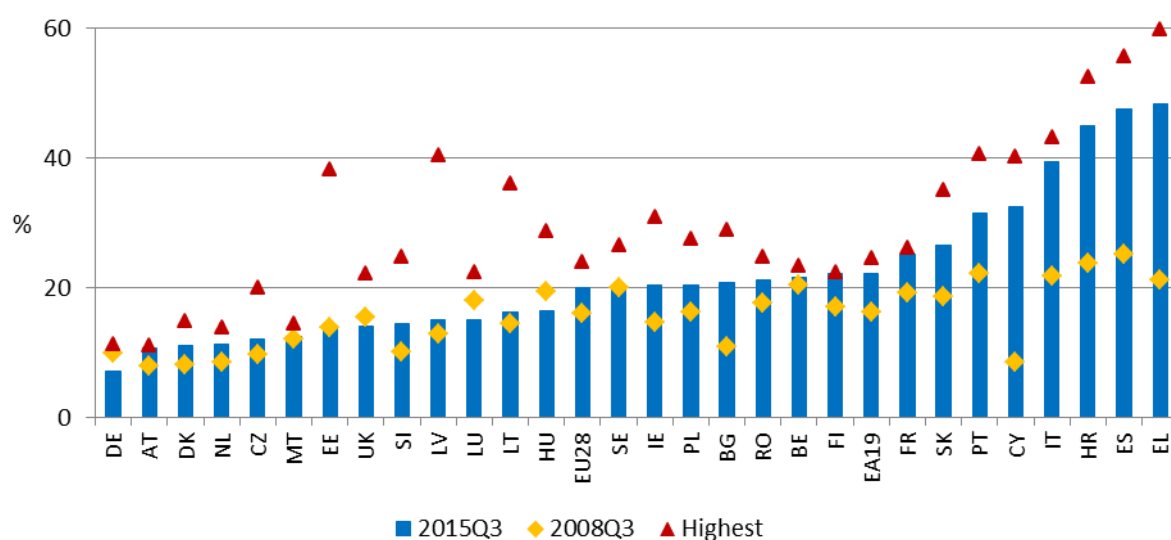
establishing a Youth Guarantee in April 2013. Furthermore, in February 2016, the Council of the EU adopted a Recommendation⁴ on the integration of the long-term unemployed into the labour market.

Situation in the Member States

Recently Member States have placed increased priority on the effective co-ordination of active labour market policies with the administration of benefits and policies to make-work-pay. Public Employment Services need to enhance their effectiveness and efficiency in delivering active labour market policies to ensure jobseekers find jobs more easily at the lowest possible cost.

Young people have been hit hard by the crisis. The EU youth unemployment rate is more than double the overall unemployment rate (19.7% compared with 9% in December 2015) while it also masks big differences between countries. Unemployment and inactivity among young people come with a high cost and necessitate targeted policy efforts, through more activating and preventive policies, underpinned by structural reforms. The Youth Guarantee has triggered improvements in individual support and outreach to non-registered young people.

Figure 1: Youth unemployment rate, 2015Q3, 2008Q3 and highest between the two

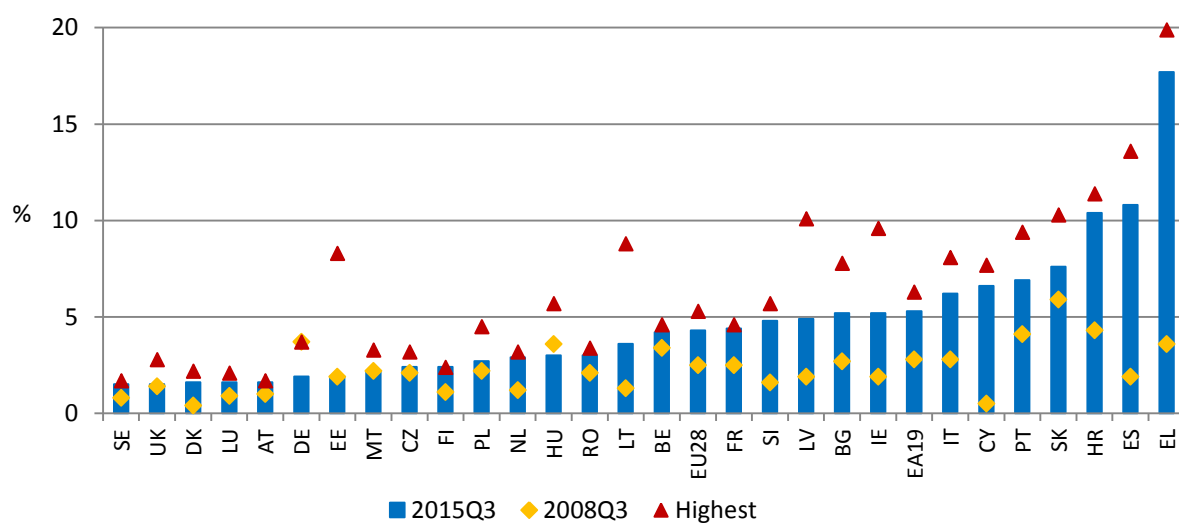


Long-term unemployment continues to be very high across the EU. Some countries have launched programmes to support the long term unemployed, often with support from the European Social Fund. The coverage of such programmes relative to the size of the group, and the involvement of social services, remain limited.

³ 2013/C 120/01.

⁴ Council Recommendation of 15 February 2016 (2016/C 67/01).

Figure 2: Long-term unemployment rate, 2015Q3, 2008Q3 and highest between the two, %



International dimension

The European Social Charter sets out the commitment “to establish or maintain free employment services for all”⁵ and foresees vocational guidance services. Employment services are covered by the ILO Employment Service Convention, 1948 (No.88), complemented by the ILO Private Employment Agencies Convention, 1997 (No. 181) and its accompanying Recommendation (No.188).

⁵ European Social Charter, part II, article 1.3. It is a Council of Europe treaty which was adopted in 1961 and revised in 1996.