

Joint Employment Report 2008

What does the 2008 Joint Employment Report (JER) assess?

The JER assesses the implementation of the employment aspects of each country's national reform programme according to the priorities set out under the EU's Lisbon strategy for growth and jobs. The report gives an update of the employment situation in the EU, traces the principal reforms undertaken and highlights the main challenges for the future. It also includes the latest indicators on the European labour market performance. The JER does cite certain areas where progress has been made as well as areas where it has been limited or insufficient. It looks at gaps and weaknesses as well as the differences from country to country. This year, the report highlights the strong employment expansion which has taken place over the last year. It also points to the encouraging trend that about half of the Member States have developed or are developing comprehensive flexicurity approaches. Finally the report addresses the lack of progress within youth unemployment and investment in training.

What is the JER's link to the Lisbon strategy?

The JER is the employment analysis and reporting part of the Jobs and Growth strategy. As it is jointly adopted by the Commission and Member States, it is an important step in delivering the Lisbon objectives.

Why is the Commission proposing country-specific recommendations?

Alongside the JER, the Commission has proposed country specific recommendations to the Employment and Social Affairs Council for its political endorsement. These recommendations will go to the European Council in March which each year focuses on the Lisbon strategy for Growth and Jobs, allowing Member States to agree together at the highest political level on what they need to do to push reform forward. This will provide a stronger political basis for reform. These recommendations are proposed under Articles 99 and 128 of the Treaty and formally adopted by Member States.

What do the country specific recommendations cover?

The recommendations cover the three strands of the integrated guidelines for the Growth and Jobs strategy which relate to macro-economic, micro-economic and employment reforms. A proposed recommendation signifies that - in the Commission's view - the Member State concerned should initiate or strengthen reforms in this area.

Are there employment recommendations for all Member States?

No. This year, 21 out of 27 Member States have received at least one recommendation in the area of employment on areas where further implementation efforts are needed. Estonia, Ireland, Denmark, Finland, Luxembourg and Sweden do not receive any recommendations this year since their progress in implementing the reform programmes has been significant.

Implementing comprehensive flexicurity approaches is one of the key messages of the JER – how can flexicurity contribute to Growth and Jobs?

Flexicurity is about implementing comprehensive policies for flexible and reliable contractual arrangements, comprehensive lifelong learning, effective active labour market policies and modern social security systems. The aim is for workers to move towards security in the job market as a whole. The Council recently adopted a common set of principles for flexicurity with the aim of encouraging Member States to develop comprehensive flexicurity approaches tailored to the needs of each country's labour market.

Rapid technological progress and increased global competition requires flexible labour markets. Flexicurity is now acknowledged throughout the EU as a key approach to make labour markets more responsive to the changes resulting from globalisation, reduce structural unemployment, facilitate labour market transitions and reduce labour market segmentation.

Which Member States are doing best and which are not doing so well?

The Annual Progress Report (APR) assesses the progress on implementation of each country's national reform programmes according to the priorities set out under the EU's Lisbon strategy for Growth and Jobs. All Member States have made progress but have had different starting positions. This is why it would not be useful to compare or point the finger and say a particular Member State is doing badly. A Member State with several country specific recommendations but with a good reform pace might actually be doing better than a Member States with no or few country specific recommendations but where no new reforms have been initiated. The overall importance is that key challenges are being addressed across Member States. Prosperity in one Member State is eventually translated into prosperity in others. Every Member State needs to perform to its full potential.

What are the next steps?

The JER will be adopted at the Employment and Social Policy Council (EPSCO) on 29 February. There will also be a political agreement on the recommendations at the EPSCO Council (and at the ECOFIN Council) which will then be endorsed by the Spring European Council on 13-14 March. In October 2008, the Commission will receive a new set of national reports which will concentrate on addressing the implementation of the recommendations.