

EURES: FACILITATING OCCUPATIONAL MOBILITY ACROSS TRANSBORDER AREAS

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ABSTRACT

EURES, the European Employment Services network, plays a crucial role in promoting labour mobility within the European Union (EU) and the European Economic Area (EEA). Established in 1993, EURES facilitates the exchange of job vacancies and recruitment between European countries, connecting job seekers with employers and providing comprehensive support services. This article examines the initiatives and services offered by EURES to promote labour mobility, including its online job vacancy database, job mobility support, recruitment events, and support for employers. Additionally, the article analyses recent reports of European Commission as well as EURES database to provide insights into the supply and demand side of the labour market, required skills, education levels, and work schedules across different countries and NACE sectors. The findings shed light on the effectiveness of EURES initiatives in facilitating labour mobility and addressing the diverse needs of job seekers and employers in Europe. Data analysis presents large diversity of national labour markets. Imbalances of supply and demand side of labour market for several occupations are revealed. The occupational choice theories are outlined to indicate that it is a subject of substantial academic research. The role of occupational choice seems to be invaluable in terms of balancing labour market as well as in terms of its impact on other life domains.

Key words: EURES, Transborder Regions, Labour Market.

JEL: J24, J63, F15

1. EURES services and initiatives for labour mobility

EURES, which stands for "European Employment Services," is an EU-funded cooperation network that facilitates the exchange of job vacancies and recruitment between European countries. Established in 1993, EURES operates

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as a collaboration between the European Commission, national public employment services, trade unions, employers' organizations, and other stakeholders. Its primary goal is to promote labour mobility within the European Economic Area (EEA) and Switzerland, while also providing services to job seekers and employers outside of these areas.

EURES operates an online job vacancy database where employers can advertise job vacancies, and job seekers can search for opportunities across European countries. This database helps facilitate cross-border recruitment and mobility. EURES offers support services to job seekers looking to work in another European country, including information on job opportunities, living and working conditions, and administrative procedures. It also provides guidance on cross-border labour mobility, recognition of qualifications, and social security rights. Recruitment Events: EURES organizes job fairs, recruitment events, and networking activities to connect job seekers with potential employers across borders.

EURES provides support services to employers seeking to recruit workers from other European countries, including assistance with job postings, recruitment campaigns, and access to a pool of qualified candidates. EURES services to jobseekers and employers include:

- Matching job vacancies with CVs on the EURES portal.
- Providing information, guidance, and other support services for workers and employers.
- Offering information on living and working conditions in EU member states, covering aspects such as taxation, pensions, health insurance, and social security.
- Delivering tailored support services for frontier workers and employers in cross-border regions.
- Supporting specific groups through EURES Targeted Mobility Schemes.
- Assisting with dynamic recruitment events via the European (Online) Job Days platform.
- Offering information and access to post-recruitment assistance, such as language training and support with integration in the destination country.

The European Union's principle of free movement of workers is regarded as one of the most fundamental rights of EU citizens. It grants individuals the freedom to move to any EU Member State, as well as Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland, to seek and take up employment. However, leveraging this right may sometimes appear daunting and challenging. EURES aims to alleviate these challenges by providing support and assistance to jobseekers and employers alike.

Despite its extensive network, EURES may have limited coverage in some regions or sectors, which can make it challenging for job seekers and employers

to find suitable matches. Cross-border recruitment and mobility can involve complex administrative procedures, including recognition of qualifications, taxation, and social security issues, which may deter some job seekers and employers from utilizing EURES services. Further, language and cultural differences can pose challenges for job seekers and employers participating in cross-border recruitment, potentially leading to miscommunication or misunderstandings.

2. Analysis of supply and demand side of labour market through EURES

EURES can serve as a database to derive some insights on labour shortages and surpluses (cf. European Labour Authority (2022), European Commission, (2023)). The recent reports state that the professions that predominated on the list of widespread shortages were primarily in the fields of software, healthcare, construction, and engineering crafts. Conversely, the occupations that featured prominently on the list of widespread surpluses were largely clerical roles, elementary occupations, and professional positions in the humanities and arts. Most of the shortage occupations, indicating a higher demand for these roles than the available supply of jobseekers possessing the necessary skills at the required location, were classified as shortages of significant magnitude. A longitudinal analysis reveals that many of these shortages have persisted over the last five years, suggesting a structural rather than transient nature to these shortages.

The aforementioned reports are based on data available before 2022. The following subchapters present an analysis of the data available on 30.11.2023.

2.1. Statistics available at EURES

EURES presents its own statistics on employers and jobseekers. Employers may be analysed through the job offers while the jobseekers can be analysed through their CVs uploaded on the platform and their search activity.

EURES received over 1.1 mln. of CVs. Among jobseekers, 30% have upper secondary education, 18% Bachelor degree or equivalent, 15% lower secondary education, and 11% Master degree or equivalent. Their most popular education field are business, administration and law, Information and Communication Technologies, and social sciences, journalism and information. Jobseekers may also express in their CVs a desired occupation. The most of them indicated general office clerks (111 ths.), shop sales assistants (106 ths.), waiters (60 ths.), cleaners and helpers in offices, hotels and other establishments (53 ths.), and civil engineering labourers (39 ths.). Jobseekers may list their skills with respect to ESCO, which stands for European Skills, Competences, and Occupations (ESCO). ESCO is part of the Europe 2020 strategy. The ESCO is a multilingual classification that identifies and categorises skills, competences, and occupations

relevant for the EU labour market and education and training. The next table presents the most common skills of jobseekers.

Table 1. Most common ESCO skills

ESCO skill	Count
Office software	94,271
Use word processing software	48,821
Merchandising techniques	44,949
Apply safety management	40,055
Debt collection techniques	39,156
Use spreadsheets software	31,896
Ergonomics	31,845
Use communication techniques	28,657
Security regulations	24,847
Project management	22,336

Source: EURES (date of access: 30.11.2023).

It may be noted that the most common skill pertains to office software, especially for working with documents and spreadsheets. Further, merchandising techniques are required and then safety management. Jobseekers can select multiple language skills. Among them, the most popular are English (567 ths.), French (525 ths.), Greek (275 ths.), Spanish/Castilian (162 ths.), and German (109 ths.).

Three thousand companies offer a job in over 3.3 ths. workplaces. It includes 1072 companies from Germany, 285 from Netherlands, 191 from Austria, and 156 from Denmark. There are 273 large enterprises (over 250 persons), 574 medium-sized enterprises (50-250 persons), 1068 small enterprises (10-50 persons) and 1092 micro enterprises (less than 10 persons). According to NACE classification, the most of companies represent Employment activities (515 companies), Computer programming, consultancy and related activities (221 companies), Food and beverage service activities (219 companies), Specialised construction activities (153 companies), and Human health activities (148 companies).

Finally, we are going to investigate the most desired occupations by jobseekers and the most frequently offered occupations by employers. Note that EURES statistics present only top 10 occupations in terms of jobseekers and top 10 occupations in terms of employers. Thus, we are not able to compare supply and demand side of labour market by exact number of CVs and vacancies whenever a given occupation is not present on one of these lists.

Table 2. Occupations on supply and demand side

Occupations	Desired by jobseekers	Offered by employers
Shop sales assistants	105,657	92,351
Waiters	60,388	-
Cleaners and helpers in offices, hotels and other establishments	52,964	42,012
General office clerks	110,619	-
Sales and marketing managers	27,908	-
Freight handlers	26,692	62,440
Cooks	29,298	-
Civil engineering labourers	39,398	-
Manufacturing labourers not elsewhere classified	32,326	49,901
Secretaries (general)	27,207	-
Nursing professionals	-	60,647
Agricultural and industrial machinery mechanics and repairers	-	56,139
Accountants	-	52,071
Building and related electricians	-	49,056
Social work associate professionals	-	42,518
Metal working machine tool setters and operators	-	38,276

Source: EURES (date of access: 30.11.2023).

Among the most desired occupations by jobseekers and the most frequently offered occupations by employers, there are only four occupations that are both in top 10 of both rankings: shop sales assistants, cleaners and helpers in offices, hotels and other establishments, freight handlers, and manufacturing labourers not elsewhere classified. The highest discrepancy occurs for freight handlers since there are 27 ths. CVs with that occupation and 62 ths. offers. On the other hand, supply and demand side is well-balanced in a case of shop sales assistants, cleaners and helpers in offices. Nursing professionals (61 ths.), agricultural and industrial machinery mechanics and repairers (56 ths.) are the most wanted by companies among those occupations which are not in the top 10 of occupations stated in jobseekers CVs while general office clerks (111 ths.) and waiters (60 ths.) are the most sought occupation by jobseekers which are not in the top 10 of occupations wanted by companies.

2.2. Exploratory analysis of job offers at EURES

EURES contains approximately 4.5 mln. job offers. Database enables several filters facilitating seeking for a job offer which meet desired criteria. It includes the following search criteria:

- country and NUTS 2 level region
- required experience
- education level
- sector according to NACE classification
- work schedule

For these criteria, summary statistics were derived with respect to the country. Since there is no obligation to fill up whole description of a given job offer, summary statistics are presented only for those countries that at least 20% of description of job offers has a given criteria description filled up.

Work schedule is filled up for 71.2% offers. Among them, 83% are full-time jobs, 12.5% are part-time jobs, and 4.8% are with flexible schedule. The next figure presents vacancies by work schedule with respect to the countries. Flexible schedule is very popular in job offers from Netherlands, where it stands for 69% and quite popular in Estonia (23%). Part-time jobs are the most frequent job offers in Lithuania (42%) and quite frequent in Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Estonia, Germany and Finland ranging from 18% to 21% of all offers.

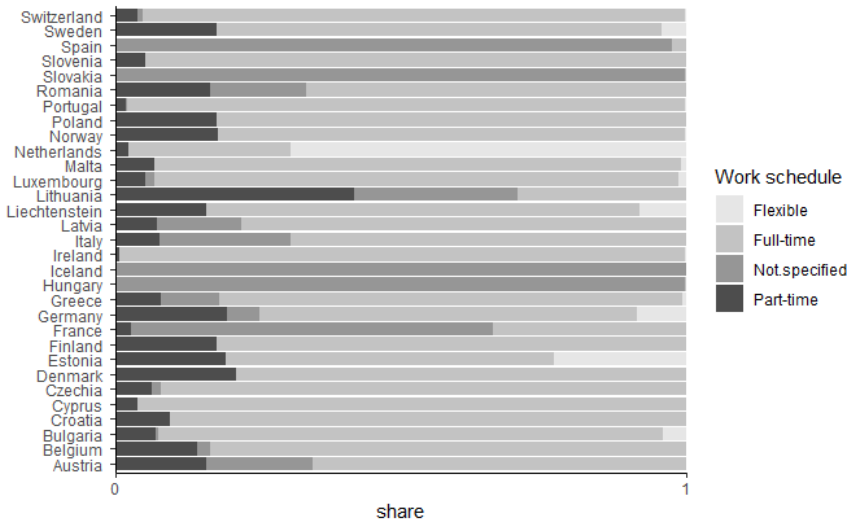


Figure 1. Vacancies by work schedule.

Source: own study, based on the data of EURES (date of access: 30.11.2023).

Contract type is filled up for 88% offers. Among them, over a half (53%) are contracts to hire and direct hire, 40.5% are temporary jobs, and 0.5% are offers for self-employed. Other contract, that is, internship, apprenticeship, volunteer, on-call etc. stands for 0.3% of offers. The figure 2 presents vacancies by contract type with respect to the countries. Contracts to hire are the great majority in Spain, Austria, Croatia, Malta and Cyprus. Temporary jobs stands for approximately 50% of offers in the remaining countries. The highest share (10%) of job offers for self-employed occurs in Romania while for others countries that share does not exceeds 1.7%. Remaining contract types including internship, apprenticeship, volunteer, on-call etc. with a share over 1% occur in Belgium, Sweden, Norway and France.

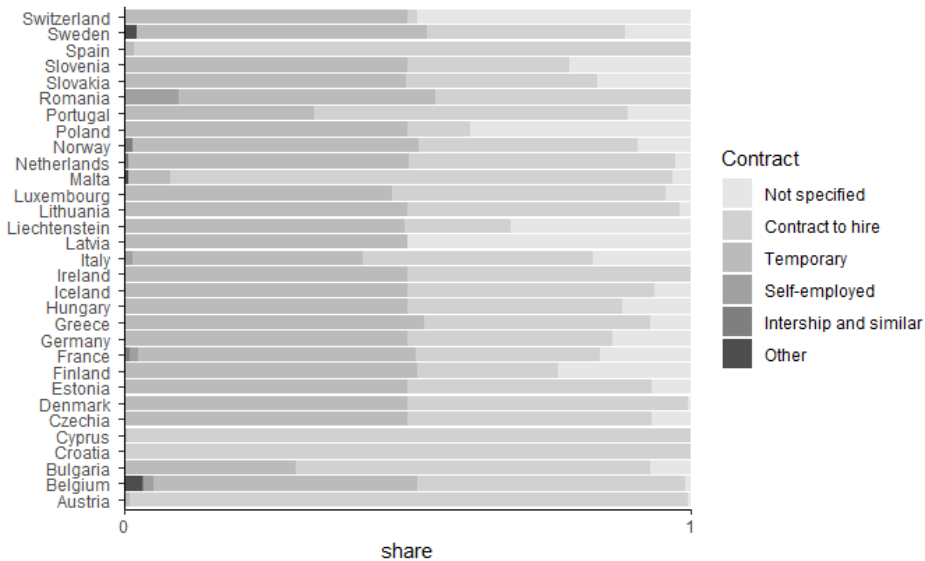


Figure 2. Vacancies by contract type.

Source: own study, based on the data of EURES (date of access: 30.11.2023).

Required education level is filled up only for 35.6% offers. More than half (54.1%) enterprises require secondary level of education, 26.5% require tertiary level of education and 6.9% primary level of education. The figure 3 presents vacancies by education level with respect to the countries. Nearly half of job offers in Luxembourg has tertiary level of education required. Approximately 30% with tertiary level of education required occurs in Belgium, Croatia and Slovenia. These vacancies are mostly in the sectors: administrative and support

service activities, information and communication, and professional, scientific and technical activities. On the other hand, primary education level is necessary for majority of job offers in Cyprus in the sectors: accommodation and food service activities, wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motor-cycles.

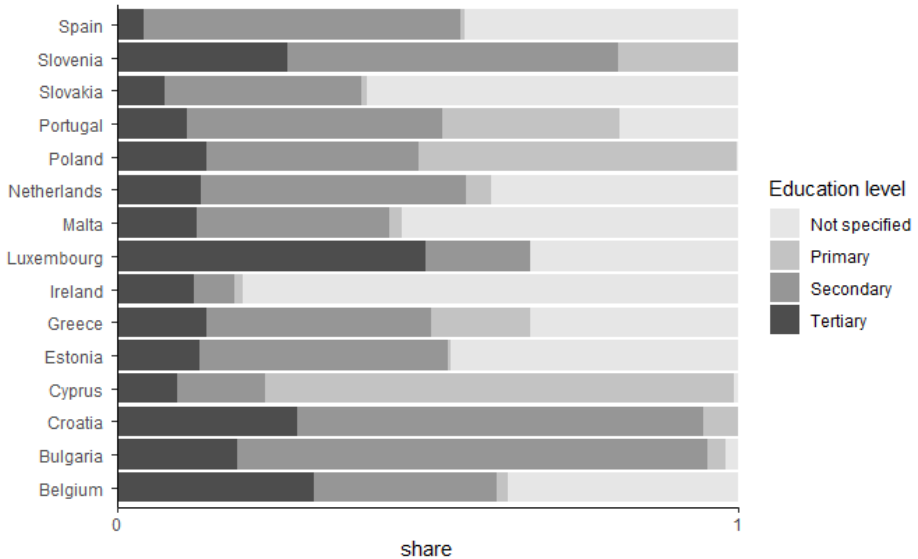


Figure 3. Vacancies by education level.

Source: own study, based on the data of EURES (date of access: 30.11.2023).

Similarly to education level, the required experience is filled up only for 31.4% offers. Concerning the other offers, for a half of jobs (49%) no experience is needed. Up to 2 years of experience is expected in approximately 40% of offers. The remaining ones expect at least 2 years of experience. The figure 4 presents vacancies by required experience with respect to the countries. More than 5 years of experience or 2 to 5 years of experience, among all countries in EURES, is the most frequently expected in Luxembourg. It is strongly connected with job vacancies in the country, of which 27.8% is in professional, scientific and technical activities sector, 15.5% is in administrative and support service activities sector, and 13.6% is in financial and insurance activities.

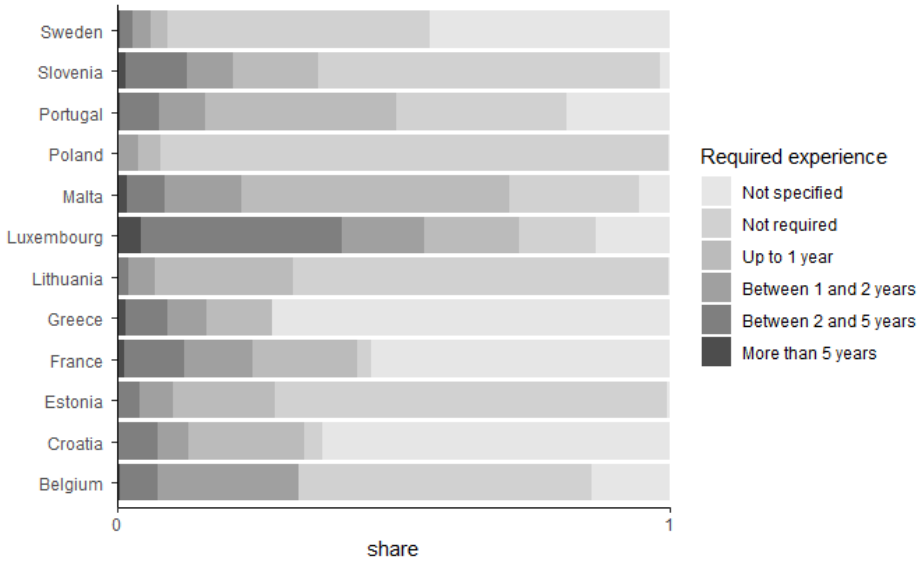


Figure 4. Vacancies by required experience.

Source: own study, based on the data of EURES (date of access: 30.11.2023).

There is also a possibility of advanced search that additionally may take into account: extra benefits, job title, employer’s name or even browsing job description. Only 2% offers specified extra benefits. Among them, 65.2% covers travel expenses, 17.5% includes accommodation, and 17.0% includes meals. Accommodation is in general included in some offers in Austria, Croatia, and Czechia (3 ths. of offers on average). Great majority of them are in the sectors: accommodation and food service activities, construction, manufacturing.

3. Occupational choice

Analysis of supply and demand side of labour market via EURES recent data and several European Commission reports revealed the high imbalance of job vacancies and job seekers for many occupations. It may stem from the lack of sound information flow between companies, universities etc. Occupational choice often is not a subject of concern on early stage of education.

Occupational choice theory explores the processes and factors that influence individuals' decisions regarding their careers and professions. It delves into the complex interplay of personal characteristics, societal influences, economic factors, and environmental circumstances that shape occupational preferences and outcomes. Several prominent theories have been developed to understand and explain occupational choice:

Trait-and-Factor Theory (Parsons, F. (1909)). It emphasizes matching individual traits and abilities with the requirements of specific occupations. It suggests that career decisions should be based on a thorough assessment of one's aptitudes, interests, and values, followed by a systematic exploration of potential career options.

Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) (Lent et. al. (1994)). SCCT integrates principles of cognitive psychology and social learning theory to explain career development. It emphasizes the role of self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations, and personal goals in shaping career choices.

Theory of Vocational Personalities and Work Environments (Holland (1997)). Holland's theory proposes that individuals can be classified into six personality types (Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional) and that people tend to choose occupations that align with their dominant personality traits.

Social Cognitive Theory of Career Decision Making (SCCT-CDM) (Lent et. al. (2009)). SCCT-CDM extends social cognitive career theory by incorporating additional factors such as contextual influences, career decision-making self-efficacy, and goal intentions.

Recent research papers study an impact of occupational choice on other life domains. Brennan, Gallagher (2017) delve into the process of occupational choice, considering intrinsic and extrinsic influences. It focuses on gender and adolescence, examining how contextual factors shape occupational decisions. The research involved interviews with adolescent boys and girls aged 11-14 years. Findings reveal that gender plays a role in occupational choices through mechanisms like social systems, physical resources, institutional opportunities, and self-expectations. Szilagy et al. (2019) pointed out that while the impact of cancer and its aftermath on individuals is profound at the bio-psychosocial level, there remains a dearth of knowledge regarding the prevalence of professions among childhood cancer survivors. They analysed the primary factors influencing career choices and current occupations among former Austrian childhood cancer patients, with particular emphasis on occupations in the healthcare field. Kelly et al. (2014) explores the impact of work on people's lives. It highlights the significant time individuals spend working and its potential effects on health behaviours. For instance, they found out that blue collar work early in life is associated with increased probabilities of obesity, at-risk alcohol consumption, and smoking, and increased physical activity later in life.

These theories provide foundational works in the field of vocational psychology and career development, offering insights into the theoretical frameworks and empirical research underlying the theories of occupational choice. Recent research show that career development has a tremendous impact on many other life domains. Hence, more emphasis should be put on shaping and advising vocational choices of individuals.

4. Conclusions

EURES initiatives and services play a vital role in promoting labour mobility within the EU and EEA countries. By providing comprehensive support to both job seekers and employers, EURES facilitates the exchange of job vacancies and recruitment across borders, contributing to the EU's broader goals of economic integration and social cohesion. The analysis of EURES statistics highlights key trends in the labour market, including the distribution of job offers, required skills, education levels, and work schedules across different countries. While EURES has made significant strides in promoting labour mobility, data analysis revealed that significant imbalance of supply and demand side for several occupations persist. An introduction of complex system of tools enhancing sound occupational choice will be a challenge for Europe.

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