



Coordination of Activation Measures: a key challenge

***Position of the
European Social Insurance Platform (ESIP)***

About the European Social Insurance Platform (ESIP)

The *European Social Insurance Platform* (ESIP) represents over 40 national statutory social security organisations in 16 EU Member States and Switzerland, active in the field of health insurance, pensions, family benefits, occupational safety and accident insurance and unemployment insurance. The aims of ESIP and its members are to preserve high-profile social security for Europe; to reinforce solidarity-based social insurance systems and to maintain European social protection quality. ESIP builds strategic alliances for developing common positions to influence the European decision-making process and is a consultation forum for the European institutions and other multinational bodies active in the field of social security.

Statement regarding positions submitted by ESIP: *ESIP members support this position in so far as the subject matter lies within their field of competence.*

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1. Background

The cross border aspects of activation and vocational rehabilitation measures are becoming increasingly important as a result of the following:

- An ageing society in Europe
- An increasing lack of skilled workers and personnel
- The limited financial resources of social security systems due to the effects of the financial crisis.

Here we emphasise that central to all activation and vocational rehabilitation measures stand the individual and his needs.

The growing importance of activation and vocational rehabilitation measures is also emphasised in the UN declaration on the rights of persons with disabilities (UNCRPD), acknowledged in a number of Member States and by the European Union. A European Act governing the accessibility of persons with disabilities is announced to be published in 2014.

2. It is time for action

Against this background ESIP members consider that it is time for action. Many Member States are concerned with the question of how to enable individuals to find or to return to a job in the case of disability or unemployment. In the context of the right to free movement in Europe (Article 48 TFEU) this question also applies to people residing in a Member State that is not the competent Member State.

Based on the administrative and practical experiences of the social security organisations in Europe and their observations, ESIP would like to draw attention to the difficulties that occur in practice when it comes to cross-border activation measures and vocational rehabilitation.

Following the discussions between Member States as well as within the Administrative Commission for the coordination of social security systems there is no common understanding if and to which extent activation and vocational rehabilitation measures lie within the material scope of the coordination Regulations No 883/2004 and No 987/2009. Moreover activation and vocational rehabilitation measures have a specific character: they can be provided by different branches of social insurance depending on the particular case.

Thus, they could be coordinated in different ways pursuant to the special provisions on benefits of sickness, of accidents at work and occupational diseases, of invalidity, and of unemployment.

ESIP therefore welcomes the proposal of trESS (training and reporting on European Social Security) to examine the material scope of the coordination Regulations and especially to examine which chapters can be opened to activation and vocational rehabilitation measures (see the Think Tank Report 2013, Key challenges for social security coordination in the perspective of 2020¹). ESIP would be able to support ongoing activities within the new FreSsco framework (Free movement of workers and Social security coordination). Furthermore, ESIP proposes that this topic should be discussed within the Reflection Forum on “EU social security coordination 2020 and beyond”, based on the trESS report.

3. What could be ESIP’s role?

ESIP is ready to support the above debate at European level.

Broad discussions within ESIP have shown the different ways in which the Member States grant activation benefits. As the policies for activation and vocational rehabilitation preceding cash benefits are in the focus of most recent reforms in Europe, solutions for the handling of cross border cases prior to 2020 would be helpful and welcomed. In ESIP’s view solutions at a lower level than adaptation of the coordination Regulations should also be taken into consideration, e.g. a recommendation or decision of the Administrative Commission illustrating the common understanding of the Member States.

It is a major concern of the social security organisations represented by ESIP to enable and facilitate the cross-border supply of activation and vocational rehabilitation measures so that insured individuals can receive the benefits they need and are entitled to. ESIP therefore offers its administrative expertise in order to find a solution on an EU level on how best to coordinate such benefits, so that disabled or unemployed people as well as employers and institutions can benefit.

In conclusion, ESIP is of the opinion that:

- Cross-border solutions in cases of activation and vocational rehabilitation measures can be found in the framework of the coordination Regulations
- Discussion at European level i.e. within the FreSsco framework and within the Reflection Forum on “EU social security coordination 2020 and beyond” is important
- ESIP can offer experience and expertise in support of this process.

¹ http://www.tress-network.org/EUROPEAN%20RESOURCES/EUROPEANREPORT/trESSIII_ThinkTank%20Report%202013.pdf