

# Proactive and effective policies

Strategic Foresight – scenario 8

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# Key features of the scenario

- The European economy and labour market are being transformed by automation, which modifies activities and occupational profiles and creates more job opportunities than it displaces. Routine and tedious tasks are increasingly performed by robots, resulting in redesigned job profiles in various sectors and industries.
- Social partners collaborate to co-design solutions for restructuring companies, and public policies, including Active Labour Market Policies and education, are strengthened to support jobseekers and vulnerable groups. Re- and upskilling programmes expand, and PES serve as the primary point of contact for jobseekers and businesses.
- The labour market dynamism creates new employment opportunities. As highly skilled workers have more access to telework and remote working arrangements, they become more inclined to travel, search for novel experiences, exercise their right to free movement, and support local economies in remote locations. At the same time, return mobility is supported by increased access to advice before and after returning to the countries of origin and by updated and transparent details on living and working conditions.
- Automation has a mixed impact on the labour market. On the one hand, it solves traditional shortages in construction and health care and creates some labour surpluses in occupations involving low-skilled and routine tasks. On the other hand, it increases shortages and makes it difficult to find and keep qualified IT professionals who can assist automation initiatives and technician roles that install, repair, and maintain the functioning of robots. Retraining and up-skilling opportunities allow displaced workers to acquire the skills needed to transition into emerging industries less exposed to automation.
- New policies are developed to enhance spatial mobility and address regional labour market imbalances. Jobseekers have expanded access to housing information, regional social support services and cross-border matching services. Tax systems are streamlined to increase compliance and facilitate cross-border working and recruitment.
- EURES consolidates its role in assisting cross-border recruitment and in connecting jobseekers with transnational opportunities based on an expanding network of Members, Partners and other stakeholders. Cooperation with local and regional authorities augments EURES services and expands its delivery to more sectors and regions, removing labour mobility barriers and consolidating local and regional development and growth.
- Technological advancements augment EURES job-matching services, and the EURES portal informational role is extended by ensuring access to details regarding the cost of living, housing and related services, collective agreements that govern employment relations and working conditions, as well as multilingual support and real-time communication tools.
- By leveraging the vast EURES network, advisers are prepared to provide specialised guidance and assistance to people desiring to broaden the scope of their employment search and to companies, including SMEs, looking for workers in other European countries.
- EURES develops and uses enhanced instruments for labour market foresight that examine the preferences of employers and jobseekers. Additionally, it boosts services for small and medium-sized businesses through specialised experts and implements awareness-raising initiatives about the benefits of utilising the EURES network.

# Expected developments

Up to 2030, digitalisation continues to have a significant impact on the European economy and labour market. It contributes to the growth of employment opportunities that exceed the number of jobs lost and brings transformations in tasks and occupational profiles. **Technology** continues to advance, particularly automation, as the 'AI revolution' is yet to have the fullest impact predicted. Routine and tedious tasks are increasingly performed by robots supporting and **displacing parts of the workforce** in sectors such as mining and quarrying, manufacturing, construction, and agriculture. This results in **redesigned job profiles** in the aforementioned sectors as well as in financial and insurance services, health care, education, and other sectors. In some sectors, large and medium companies have the flexibility to choose between humans and machines for specific tasks, with decisions based upon consideration of the economics of automation. Other factors considered include the speed with which businesses develop, adopt, and adapt new technologies and the speed with which business processes can be redefined. Automation leads to an increased **demand for workers with specialised skills** in operating and managing automated systems. In this context, employers focused on delivering shareholder value and constant productivity improvements 'dictate' working conditions, leading to changes in wages, benefits, and job security for some workers. However, policymakers' timely updates to legal and institutional frameworks ensure fair employment practices and support for those affected or at risk.

As technology deployment is relatively easy to anticipate, shifts are manageable for most of the workforce. The low- and medium-skilled profiles (e.g., cleaners and helpers, mining labourers, assemblers and mobile plant operators) displaced by automation remain in the labour market due to the **timely support** provided by various initiatives that have been developed. Social partners engage in meaningful discussions and negotiations, co-designing solutions that benefit both employers and workers in companies that need to restructure their activities. Public policies (e.g., Active Labour Market Policies, education and training provision, and social inclusion interventions) are strengthened and adapted to provide adequate support for jobseekers and vulnerable groups in the labour market. The relevance and availability of re- and upskilling programmes expand as workers and jobseekers increasingly invest financial resources and time to participate in such activities. Public resources only cover the participation in education and training for vulnerable groups such as people with disabilities, long-term unemployed, youth and older people. **Public Employment Services (PES)** are well positioned within a wider employment services delivery ecosystem to act as the **primary point of contact** for a substantial number of jobseekers and businesses aiming to fill vacancies. With the goal to better meet the needs of specific market segments and vulnerable categories (e.g., people with disabilities, inactive people who want to rejoin the labour market, and long-term unemployed), PES **collaborate** with private and third sector players (e.g., recruitment agencies, counselling and guidance services, education and training providers) to expand the range of services delivered, and share approaches and lessons learnt on efficient practices that support mobility of workers in the labour market. At the same time, new technologies - such as matching algorithms - and well-designed subsidies facilitate the match between supply and demand on local/regional labour markets. Modernised PES are able to deliver activities that further promote effectiveness and efficacy in labour market services.

Europe has made significant **economic and labour market progress**, overcoming previous crises by implementing a compelling interplay between workers and technology, enhancing cooperation for effective policy development, and strengthening labour market institutions. Economic growth creates labour market dynamism and enhances inclusion. Vulnerable groups are adequately supported, enabling them to access emerging employment opportunities and contributing to Europe's more prosperous and inclusive society. As access to telework and remote working patterns becomes prominent among highly skilled workers in the European labour market, a notable shift is observed, with individuals increasingly inclined to seek new experiences living abroad, **exercising their right to freedom of movement** and stimulating local economies in remote areas. Also, significant economic and labour market opportunities encourage **return mobility** towards Eastern European countries. The EURES portal and the well-developed information services further enable these mobility patterns by providing timely and transparent details on how earnings compare to the cost of living in specific regions for those in search of mobility experiences and targeted advice for those returning to their countries of origin.

The intended outcomes of **climate mitigation and adaptation efforts are achieved** in Europe. A coordinated strategy not only lessens the effects of climate change but also helps to create the perspective of a future in which the preservation of the environment and economic development go hand in hand. **Demand for various 'green jobs'** emerges rapidly as climate mitigation initiatives become more prevalent. Sectors such as renewable energy, sustainable mobility, and environmentally friendly technology experience rapid growth and employ a wide range of skilled professionals. The economy grows, and the number of jobs created increases in the regions that are actively investing in these sectors. Precision agriculture, resilient farming methods, and sustainable land management are the cornerstones of the agricultural sector's revival. Agricultural workers in places that are resilient experience stability and growth opportunities. Jobs in infrastructure maintenance and coastal tourism are in demand, improving the economy in such regions and providing opportunities for low and medium qualified positions (e.g., lifeguards, chefs and restaurant staff, water sport and maritime instructors). High-tech industries are encouraged to grow through investments in sustainable practices and climate-resilient technologies. Adapted education and training policies support the supply of high-skilled professionals needed, consolidating Europe's position as a global leader in 'green innovation'.

The 'Renovation Wave' implementation generates **new jobs in the construction sector** for local businesses and raises the European standard of living in general. 'Nearly zero-emission' building represents the standard for new building developments. At the same time, **housing affordability has been successfully restored** by thoughtful social housing policies. The increase in housing supply has a knock-on effect on related sectors such as real estate and construction, and the demand for workers grows, determining some short-term shortages for workers that are successfully solved through PES interventions.

## Expected impact on labour market imbalances

The deployment of automation to boost output and streamline processes creates **skill shortages** in fields requiring **high technical proficiency**, particularly in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics). As a consequence, medium-sized companies and SMEs face difficulties finding and keeping qualified IT professionals who can assist their automation initiatives. This results in short-term delays in process implementation, increasing costs and sometimes disrupting business operations. Such shortages occur with both highly skilled IT professionals capable of organising, implementing and supervising initiatives involving automation and for technician roles that instal, repair and perform predictive maintenance tasks. To facilitate the implementation of effective policies, social partners strengthen their role in the design and implementation of education and training policies, supporting the expansion of up- and reskilling offers that can help close the talent gap for specific profiles and occupations. Training funds and tax incentives for SMEs encourage investment in upskilling initiatives. At the same time, public resources partially cover the training costs for jobseekers and, in higher proportion, for people from vulnerable groups.

The use of **automated technologies** addresses traditional labour shortages across a variety of skill levels and professions, including sectors such as construction and health care. Technologies such as 3D printing and robotic bricklayers may accelerate construction processes, improve efficiency, and lessen the demand for workers in the sector, which **assists in addressing shortages**. In the health care sector, automation technologies such as telemedicine platforms focused on preventive services and robotic surgery systems enhance care delivery, simplify workflows, and lessen medical personnel's workload and reduce employment related stress, further reducing shortages.

**Labour surpluses** occur in specific occupations (e.g., warehouse workers, food preparation, data input) where typically **routine tasks** are bundled, enabling these to be performed by new automated systems. However, numerous programmes have been created to assist people whose job roles have been restructured as a result of automation in identifying how to remain active members of society. Initiatives that combine retraining and upskilling allow displaced workers to invest finances and time in acquiring skills needed to transition into emerging industries and services that are less exposed to automation. Additionally, PES improves visibility and awareness of the services available to assist people in successfully navigating the labour market and securing appropriate employment. Entrepreneurship support programmes enable some jobseekers to establish their own enterprise as a feasible alternative to salaried employment. Adequately designed and implemented safety nets (e.g., unemployment benefits, training incentives, basic income support) guarantee stability and ensure that citizens receive financial support during transition periods.

A balanced strategy is adopted to encourage spatial mobility and effectively resolve labour market imbalances. Citizens have enhanced access to information regarding housing options, employment opportunities, earnings and the cost of living, collective agreements that govern employment relations and working conditions, and other regional social support services. A renewed focus on expanding cross-border matching services is adopted, facilitating mobility, including for people who want to return to their countries of origin, and improving the matching between available skills and labour demand in other regions and countries. SMEs and jobseekers receive more active support due to increased coordination and cooperation between public authorities that share effective approaches and harness lessons learnt from previous policy implementation. Tax systems are redesigned, making them easier to understand, increasing compliance, and facilitating cross-border working and recruitment. Additionally, services that provide enhanced housing assistance and relocation support programmes facilitate mobility across Europe, thereby alleviating labour market imbalances.

## Expected impact on EURES services

The importance of the EURES network and its services delivered in the context of the European labour market is widely acknowledged. Dedicated financial resources consolidate and further expand the services provided by EURES as a key solution for enabling fair and safe labour mobility. Supported by a **growing network of Members, Partners and other interested stakeholders**, EURES consolidates its **labour market information** and intelligence capabilities, anticipating changes, emerging skills and employment opportunities. The enhanced information services strengthen EURES' role in assisting **cross-border recruiting** and in connecting jobseekers with available transnational opportunities.

People with different skill levels can easily browse the **intuitive EURES portal**. **Self-assessment functions** provide efficient access for clients to self-manage their labour market integration journeys. EURES portal's timely updated information is made possible by enhanced **interconnections to Member and Partner platforms** and the strengthened **cooperation with education and training providers**, allowing access to details on upskilling and reskilling opportunities. In addition to efficient job-matching services augmented by technology, the EURES portal and linked platforms (such as Europass) gather a wide range of **information**, such as accurate and transparent details about earnings and the cost of living in specific regions of Europe, relevant collective agreements and working conditions, details about training and educational opportunities, housing and related services, as well as access to multilingual support and real-time communication channels. To this end, EURES services manage to cover more sectors, regions, and an increasingly diverse range of clients, **supporting** both the **return mobility** of people who want to return to their countries of origin and the relocation of **highly skilled workers** looking to experience living and working abroad. Moreover, partnering with local and regional authorities helps to remove labour mobility barriers and consolidate local and regional development and growth.

Collaborative platforms and knowledge-sharing projects are promoted with the goal of tackling the rising need for **network-wide mutual learning and training on the development and use of automated systems**. Such initiatives allow stakeholders to share approaches and lessons learnt regarding the mobility of workers, as well as exchange insights and good practices in developing automated systems that facilitate mobility. This includes organising meetings, webinars, and training sessions on new automation technology and developing online resources and training modules accessible to all Members and Partners. The EURES network facilitates and encourages peer-to-peer learning programmes, partnerships with academic institutions and business leaders to provide specific training, and the utilisation of digital tools and platforms to support ongoing learning and developing the skills of EURES Advisers, including the use of automation to streamline services.

EURES Advisers, in **partnership with European bodies and networks** such as Euroguidance, Eurodesk, and Europass, make it easier for workers and jobseekers to access relevant information, learning resources, details about available education and training programmes and opportunities to validate their skills acquired in non-formal and informal contexts. EURES delivers specialised guidance and **assistance to people displaced by automation** who desire to update their competencies and allows them to broaden the scope of their employment search. This support increases labour mobility across Europe, effectively adapts labour supply to match changing demand, and facilitates social integration.

Various **labour market anticipation instruments** are developed, providing EURES with a good overview of the evolution of employers' and jobseekers' preferences and needs. Fostering a **closer connection with employer organisations** also assists in tailoring the services offered to the specific requirements of individual enterprises. EURES services for SMEs are strengthened, including quicker procedures and dedicated advisers with expertise in understanding the specific needs of such companies.

The EURES network improves its communication services and significantly develops its **outreach strategy** including promoting inspiring success stories to support and encourage mobility. It also consolidates the campaigns that raise awareness among workers, jobseekers and enterprises, especially SMEs, of the advantages of using the updated and expanded EURES services. EURES can further utilise existing services to promote the advantages of mobility to enhance transitions. Strengthening partnerships increases the role of activities provided by Members and Partners, such as group counselling and information sessions with newly registered unemployed and, to improve education-to-employment transitions for students. This approach focuses on proactively communicating details of existing services rather than waiting for jobseekers to approach an adviser or visit the EURES portal.

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