



EURES Annual report 2024

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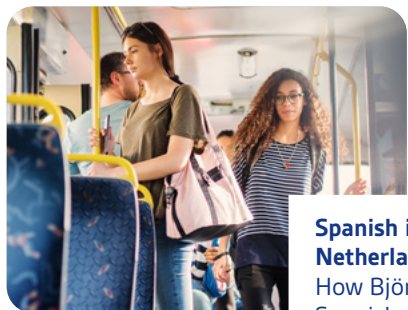
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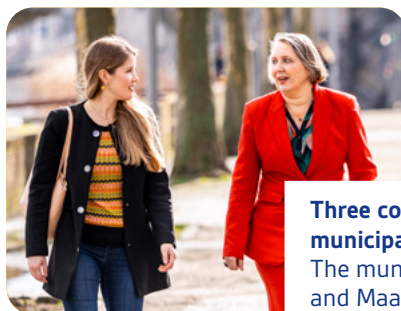
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Welcome

EURES plays a vital role in facilitating fair labour mobility within Europe. Not just by supporting jobseekers to find fair employment that suits them and by offering employers good candidates for vacancies, but also by providing reliable information and personalised advice to jobseekers across borders.

Working in another country involves challenges. All too often migrant workers come to the Netherlands under false pretences, for example, and once here they do not know where to get help and are vulnerable to abuse. As Minister for Social Affairs and Employment, my ambition is to fight abuses and get a better grip on labour migration. I see ensuring smooth labour migration as one of my top priorities.

This example underlines how important it is that jobseekers who want to make the move to another country should be well-informed about their rights and obligations so that they can make a considered choice.

I am therefore delighted that the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment is working closely with EURES Netherlands on an action plan which will ensure that migrant workers will already have access to good information in their home countries. We are starting this initiative this year with Poland and Romania, two key countries of origin for labour migrants to the Netherlands. As part of the action plan, we are also looking at how we can help migrant workers find work in their home country if things in the Netherlands turn out differently than expected. We are thereby gratefully making use of the extensive EURES network that has been steadily built up over the past 31 years.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone at EURES Netherlands for their dedication and contribution to a fair European labour market. Here's to the next 31 years!

Eddy van Hijum

Minister for Social Affairs and Employment

Image: Jiri Buřil



EURES in a nutshell: overview of the network and the terrain



EURES connects jobseekers and employers across the borders of 31 European countries. This chapter zooms in on the fundamentals of the EURES network: from its historical roots and mission to its practical services. An infographic shows the structure of the EURES network. We also consider the challenges and opportunities presented by cross-border labour mobility.

Gain insight into EURES's role in shaping a labour market that is open to all and adapts to changes, while also applying fair rules. A labour market where talent knows no borders.



Introduction by Irma Vijverberg Europe as our domain: a year of collaboration and innovation

In this annual report, you can read about what drives our network. People from our network talk about important initiatives, their field of work and the challenges that they encounter there.

In a dynamic labour market, European and international mobility remains a key issue. Employers are increasingly looking across borders for talent, while jobseekers are discovering new opportunities in other European countries. EURES Netherlands plays an essential role in this by promoting and supporting cross-border labour mobility.

2024 was all about collaboration and innovation. We further strengthened our network, launched new initiatives, and improved our services in response to the changing labour market. Thanks to the efforts of our members and partners and all collaborative partners, we have connected thousands of jobseekers and employers. Cross-border working also received extra attention, with the aim of lowering barriers and raising awareness of the benefits of working across the border.

The pages that follow feature great examples of what the EURES service has achieved in the areas outlined above in 2024. Next year we will continue to work for an inclusive, resilient and fair European labour market.

Irma Vijverberg

National coordinator EURES Netherlands

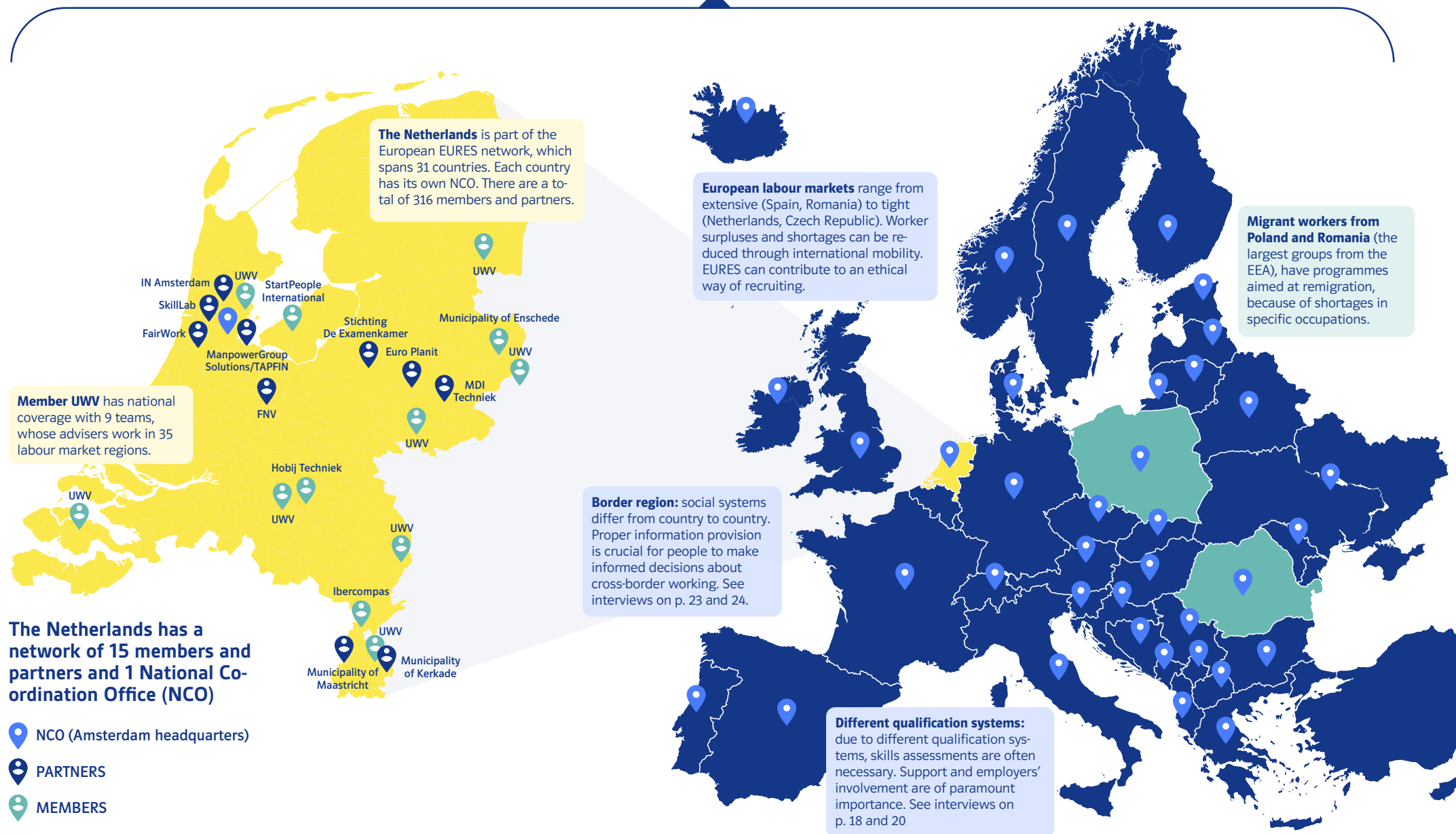
How EURES works



The European Labour Authority (ELA)



European Commission (EC)



EURES: Moving borders in the European labour market

EURES (European Employment Services) has been connecting jobseekers and employers in 31 European countries since 1993. EURES's aim is to promote free movement in Europe. What started as the provision of information between employment services has grown into an active network that brings together supply and demand under fair conditions.

More than 1,000 EURES advisers in Europe promote labour mobility every day. The network has gradually been extended with various organisations alongside the public employment services, such as private parties and social partners. As members or partners, these parties contribute to the services on

offer. The Dutch network has 15 members and partners.

Each country has an NCO that manages the national network. ELA serves as the umbrella organisation, while certain aspects still continue via the European Commission under the EURES Regulation.

New horizons for European workers

Working in another European country offers significant benefits: enhancing professional knowledge, valuable life experience and an international network. The economic perspective is often an important motivation. EURES's strength lies in the combination

of digital services and personal support. The EURES portal enables jobseekers and employers to find one another and access essential information about working in Europe. The EURES portal offers nearly 3 million job vacancies and over a million CVs.

Fair mobility is our prerequisite

Labour migration requires substantial personal investments. People leave their familiar surroundings and network to start anew in a different environment. In addition, precarious situations can occur when housing is part of an employment contract.

Based on this reality, EURES strives for a

broader interpretation of fair work than just the legal requirements. We are working towards a labour market where mobility goes hand in hand with protection, opportunities and respect for everyone's potential.

Our advisers offer tailored solutions to both jobseekers looking to broaden their horizons and employers seeking international talent. This is how we build an inclusive, resilient and fair European labour market together, where borders fade and talent thrives.

If you want to find out more, visit eures-nederland.nl or the EURES portal: eures.europa.eu.

EURES in action: Services and coordination for European labour mobility

Services that connect borders

EURES brings together supply and demand within Europe under fair conditions. Our service provision involves three services: sharing vacancies, sharing CVs and providing support to jobseekers and employers. The provision of information is vital to enable informed choices. Sometimes this means that working in another country is not the best option. For example, because a person will lose out financially or the opportunities in the other country do not offer sufficient prospects.

The right to free movement is laid down at a European level. In addition, each country has its own laws and regulations that affect labour mobility in the areas of work, taxes and social security. EURES' target groups are diverse: all citizens from the 31 countries in

the EEA plus Switzerland who are interested in working across borders, including partners of migrant workers, cross-border workers and recent graduates. Employers with hard-to-fill vacancies are also supported, provided they comply with the fair labour mobility policy. This means that employers take account of the vulnerable position of workers who move to another country for work, among other things.

National Coordination Office: Pivot of the Dutch network

The NCO, based at UWV Werkbedrijf, coordinates the EURES network in the Netherlands on behalf of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment. The NCO manages the admission of new members and partners, monitors the quality of services according to EURES principles, and facilitates

communication and collaboration, for example through network meetings and the website eures-nederland.nl.

The NCO provides training, including an onboarding programme, in collaboration with the ELA. Twice a year, employees of members and partners are invited to a meeting where they are informed about how the network functions, among other things. 107 training courses were provided in 2024. The NCO is also tasked with implementing and monitoring technical and organisational measures relating to the technical infrastructure. The frameworks for these tasks are anchored in the EURES Regulation (EU LEX 589/2016) and additional laws and regulations, allowing for national interpretation.

One specific task of the NCO is the coordination and timely processing of the official European forms of citizens bringing their unemployment benefit entitlements with them to the Netherlands. Jobseekers from other European countries with a PD U2 form can export their unemployment benefit entitlements to the Netherlands for up to 3 months. The requirement is that they look for work in the Netherlands.

With these activities, the NCO contributes to an effective EURES network that fairly facilitates labour mobility in Europe, entirely within the frameworks of the EURES Regulation (EU LEX 589/2016) and additional regulations.

Our mission focus: free and fair labour mobility



Fair labour mobility is at the heart of the EURES mission. Based on these fundamental values, EURES works towards a labour market in which borderless opportunities go hand in hand with dignified working conditions for all.

The pages that follow cover the work of FairWork and UWV EURES. These examples show how free movement of labour goes hand in hand with protection and fair treatment of workers from other countries.

FairWork fights for fair labour mobility

In a world in which labour mobility is increasingly common, it is crucial to protect the rights of migrant workers. EURES partner FairWork, an organisation that has been fighting modern slavery in the Netherlands for 25 years, plays a key role in this. Eline Willemsen, programme coordinator at FairWork, shares her insights on the challenges and successes in ensuring fair working conditions for migrants.

'Modern slavery covers crimes such as making people work under very poor working conditions,' explains Eline. 'It often involves little or no pay and very short employment contracts. Vulnerable people are unable to leave these situations because of language barriers or because they lack a residence permit.'

The challenges posed by employment abuse
FairWork focuses on identifying and tackling this abuse. 'Unfortunately, prevention is often not possible, due to limited resources. So we usually only get involved when there are problems already. One of the biggest challenges is tackling practices that are legal but ethically dubious. Because you are allowed to offer people a contract where they can be

out of the job the next day. Legally there is little anyone can do about it, but ethically it is wrong.'

Networking for change

'Through outreach on social media and training courses for migrant organisations, we reach around 1,500 clients annually. To increase our impact and build a wider network, we also collaborate with other organisations. Being affiliated with EURES is valuable in this respect. We recently gave a presentation to EURES partners. They are in touch with employers, and we are in touch with migrant workers. We need one another to spot abuses and then tackle them. So we keep one another well-informed about what is going on in the labour market.'

A stronger position for migrant workers

'We have achieved important successes over the past year, including advocating for a registration system for employment agencies and migrant information points. At an individual level, we have been able to support many migrant workers. For 2025, I hope they become more emancipated and both know and are able to demand their rights.'



Eline Willemsen

Programme coordinator at FairWork



Fair work: A mission without borders

Vera Peek

Manager UWV EURES Transnational jobseeker services team

EURES member UWV provides services to jobseekers and employers looking to work or recruit in Europe. This involves both Dutch residents who want to go to another EURES country and Dutch employers seeking to recruit in other European countries. People who emigrate leave their home country for a new life. How do you ensure that this process is as safe and fair as possible? Vera Peek, who has been working at EURES member UWV since 1997 and manages one of the UWV EURES Transnational teams, shares how she and her colleagues contribute to this.

'When I started working as a manager in 2018, I saw more and more media reports about migrant labour abuse,' says Vera. 'It was time to take a critical look at our role and our collaboration with employment agencies. More is needed for migrant workers alongside Dutch laws and regulations. To build a life in the Netherlands, it's very important that they are able to provide for themselves.'

Language not a barrier: contracts that everyone understands

UWV EURES protects migrant workers for whom it mediates with preventive measures. 'Migrant workers are entitled to the same terms of employment as Dutch workers, including appropriate insurance and fair salaries. Unfortunately this is not always what happens in practice. We saw situations where newcomers signed contracts on their first working day without understanding the content. That is why we make sure they receive a clear, understandable contract before

they arrive in the Netherlands and are fully informed about what to expect.' This is one of the conditions in the EURES service model established in 2020 and reviewed and updated in 2024.

European cross-pollination: developing talents together

'EURES's strength lies in our European network with rapid access points in every European country. We work with passionate people who are willing to go that extra mile.' Reciprocity is important in establishing a European working relationship. UWV EURES collaborates with other parties on this: 'One example is a project in which we help students into a paid internship in the Netherlands in partnership with an adult secondary education institution in Madrid. They gain knowledge and experience here, and after a few years they take their expertise back to Spain. This benefits both countries.'

Fairness knows no borders: Europe's shared approach

'The biggest challenge for fair labour mobility in the Netherlands is tackling rogue employment agencies, which often operate from other countries. There also needs to be more awareness among both employers and consumers. In the e-commerce industry, for example, consumers expect fast, cheap deliveries, which encourages unfair working conditions. Europe must act as a united front. By working together on training, internships and traineeships, we can really make a difference for fair labour mobility.'

Topical and supplementary: our supporting policy



Alongside its core tasks, EURES develops supplementary policies to respond to new developments and challenges in the field of labour migration. The pages that follow provide an insight into current initiatives, such as a joint approach for vulnerable mobile workers from Poland and Romania and liaison with the WIN points, which provide essential support to migrant workers in the Netherlands.

This chapter highlights how collaborations with various stakeholders are helping to strengthen the position of these mobile workers in an increasingly complex labour market.

Focus on topical issues: Fair work in European labour mobility

The EURES network and the NCO are actively involved in various consultation structures related to developments affecting European labour migration. Fair work is at the heart of this: how can European mobile workers work under fair conditions in the Netherlands?

This question extends beyond terms of employment. Fringe benefits such as housing and the associated high costs are also major concerns. In addition, the flexible nature of the Dutch labour market creates uncertainty among mobile workers about the duration and stability of their income.

From insight to action: Recommendations for fair labour mobility

The report 'No second-class citizens' by the Roemer Commission (2020) contains crucial recommendations to protect vulnerable migrant workers. Two priority areas in this are improving the provision of information to migrant workers and tightening regulations around agency employment and secondment. The European Posting of Workers Directive

(Article 56 TFEU) allows migrant workers to be given a contract in one country and then work in another. This arrangement applies to both European and non-European workers. This leads to a lack of clarity about rights and obligations, resulting in sham arrangements and even exploitation.

EURES is committed to strengthening the position of mobile workers by providing transparent information, raising awareness among employers, and creating closer collaboration between European countries.

A recent example is the 'Provision of information and support services for mobile workers of Polish and Romanian origin' action plan. For this, the NCOs concerned are working closely with various members and partners, and a conference was organised in early 2025 to further promote exchange and a joint approach between different organisations. The WIN points are also included in this.



Every migrant worker has their own needs and challenges. Martin Slaats, senior policy officer at the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment (SZW), is committed to improving the position of migrant workers. He shares his vision of free labour mobility under fair conditions and talks about the WIN points that play a vital role in supporting this group.

'Migrant workers are often seen as a single vulnerable group, but the reality is more diverse,' explains Martin. 'Some have been here long enough to speak a little Dutch and are looking for language courses. Others, who have just arrived, wonder why a GP will not prescribe antibiotics. Because of this variation, there is no one-size-fits-all solution; many need personalised support. We offer exactly that through the WIN points.'

Not being sent from pillar to post: immediate help at WIN points

The WIN points serve as the first point of contact for migrant workers. '11 of the planned 35 WIN points are currently open, spread across different regions,' says Martin. 'Most enquiries are work-related and administrative in nature, such as help with DigiD applications, but also issues around housing and healthcare. Our aim is to prevent people from being sent from pillar to post.'

Network of specialists: an appropriate answer to every question

SZW works with various organisations to support migrant workers. 'Our network of

partners is extensive. Thanks to our broad network, we can immediately refer people to the right body. So we sometimes describe ourselves as a pillar without a post.' For example, FairWork helps in cases of worker exploitation, and Stichting Barka supports homeless migrant workers.

We also work with UWV, the Juridisch Loket legal advice bureau, the Tax Administration and local initiatives such as Stichting Polka, founded by and for Polish women in The Hague.

These local organisations are vital because they understand the cultural context, and often see what lies behind a request for help. Their shared background helps to reduce the barrier for migrant workers in seeking help. This not only allows them to respond better to the actual needs, but also to offer concrete and targeted support that really connects with the migrant worker's lived experience.'

Brabant's success as a blueprint: the national ambition of WIN points

Martin is proud of the successful launch of the five new WIN points in the province of Noord-Brabant and the inclusion of the four existing points in the WIN project. 'Our target for 2025 is to double this number. The target group needs permanent support. At SZW we are developing an agreement in which we want to arrange practical support from employers. It allows employers in the region to collaborate and show their good intentions by joining.'



**WIN points:
versatile signposting
in labour mobility**

Martin Slaats

Senior policy officer at the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment (SZW)

Figures for EURES Netherlands 2024

People and collaboration

122 employees

There were 122 EURES employees working in the Netherlands at 10 partners and 5 members at the end of 2024. That does not include the NCO Netherlands (9 people, including interns).



60 projects

Some 60 projects focusing on recruitment in Europe were set up in the EURES Netherlands network in 2024. This does not include information provision and networking activities.



17 countries

Although the service covers all 31 countries in the network, each member and partner has its own focus in service provision. There was intensive collaboration with 17 countries in 2024: Belgium, Germany, Slovakia, Sweden, Romania, Austria, France, Spain, Italy, Portugal, Poland, Ireland, Finland, Estonia, Lithuania, Denmark and Luxembourg.



Information provision and tailored advice

25,860 jobseekers

25,860 jobseekers and employed people were provided with information and advice about working in another EURES country. Approximately half these people were from the Netherlands (13,528), and the other half from the EEA plus Switzerland. Over a quarter of these citizens (6,566) were given information about working in a border area.



5,255 employers

In addition, 5,255 employers were helped with tailored advice on recruiting in a EURES country. The majority of these were based in the Netherlands (4,916). 1,730 employers received specific advice on recruiting in the Belgian and German border areas.



466 events

EURES Netherlands organised nearly 466 events, reaching more than 10,000 jobseekers and employed people. Of these, 174 were purely aimed at providing information, 88 focused on recruitment and selection, and 204 meetings had a mixed objective.



Strength through collaboration: our partners have their say



EURES's strength lies in collaboration. In this chapter, EURES's partners talk about their experiences and successes. From integrating Spanish workers in the Netherlands to innovative projects in the welding sector. Each story illustrates how joint efforts lead to concrete results. We also highlight the support for partners/spouses moving along with them, who often face their own challenges in the labour market. These stories show how the EURES network works in practice: connecting, supportive and result-oriented.

Figures for EURES Netherlands 2024

Placement, recruitment and selection

17,228 CVs

EURES members and partners processed 17,228 CVs from jobseekers, the majority of which were from jobseekers from other EURES countries (12,387).



5,914 vacancies

In addition, 5,914 vacancies were handled and processed. A vacancy may comprise multiple jobs. The majority of these vacancies (5,838) came from Dutch employers.

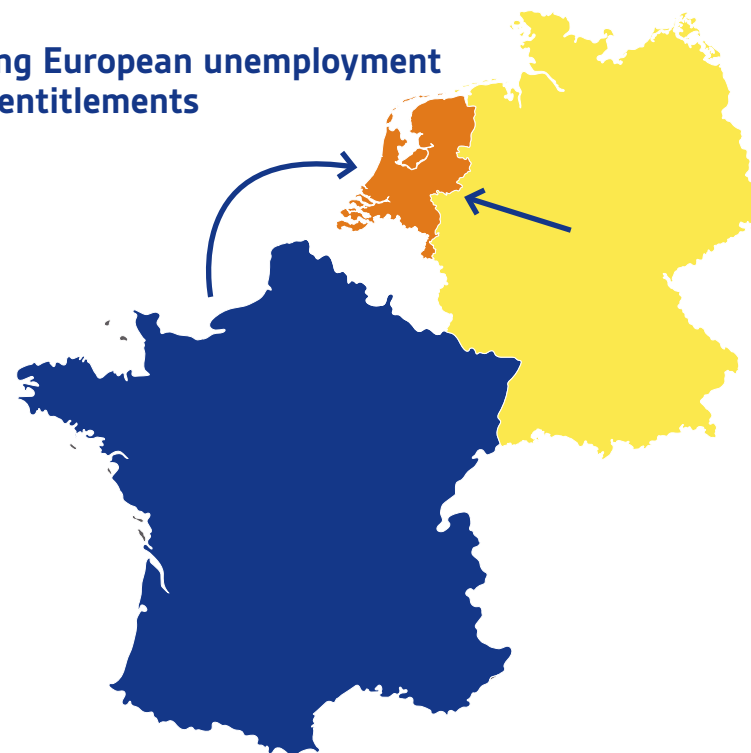


1,602 jobs

1,602 jobseekers found jobs through the European services of one of our members and partners. Of these, 1,550 jobseekers came to the Netherlands from another EURES country for a job.



Importing European unemployment benefit entitlements



267 unemployment benefit entitlements

A total of 267 jobseekers with foreign unemployment benefit entitlements came to the Netherlands in 2024. Half of these jobseekers came from Germany and France.

From paella to polder: Spanish integration in the Netherlands

In the dynamic European labour market, good preparation for an international career is crucial. Björn Coenen, owner of EURES member Ibercompas, mediates between the Spanish and Dutch labour markets. Ibercompas mainly recruits Spanish workers for the Netherlands. 'We support them in their job search and ensure a good start in the Netherlands.'

To qualify, potential workers must meet specific requirements. 'We think that both the social and the professional aspects are important. Candidates must therefore meet a number of important criteria. Such as being able to speak English at B1 level, and having a clear motivation to work in the Netherlands.'

Finally, it's important that they realise what impact moving to another country will have. If we are doubtful about any of these aspects, we do not start a process. By doing so we seek to avoid downside risks.'

Clogs on, vamos: preparing Spanish workers

Once a candidate meets the stipulated criteria, the process begins. 'We prepare the Spanish workers as well as possible in advance. In Spain, they take an e-learning which we have developed in our own studio, during which they learn about practical matters in the Netherlands, such as using public transport and contracts. They also learn the basics of Dutch language and culture, so they are more aware of differences between Spain and the Netherlands. On arrival they already know some basic phrases like: 'Good morning, how are you?' Parental support is also essential for young Spaniards (up to the age of 23). So we always talk to the parents as well. Their approval is required to make the move abroad.'

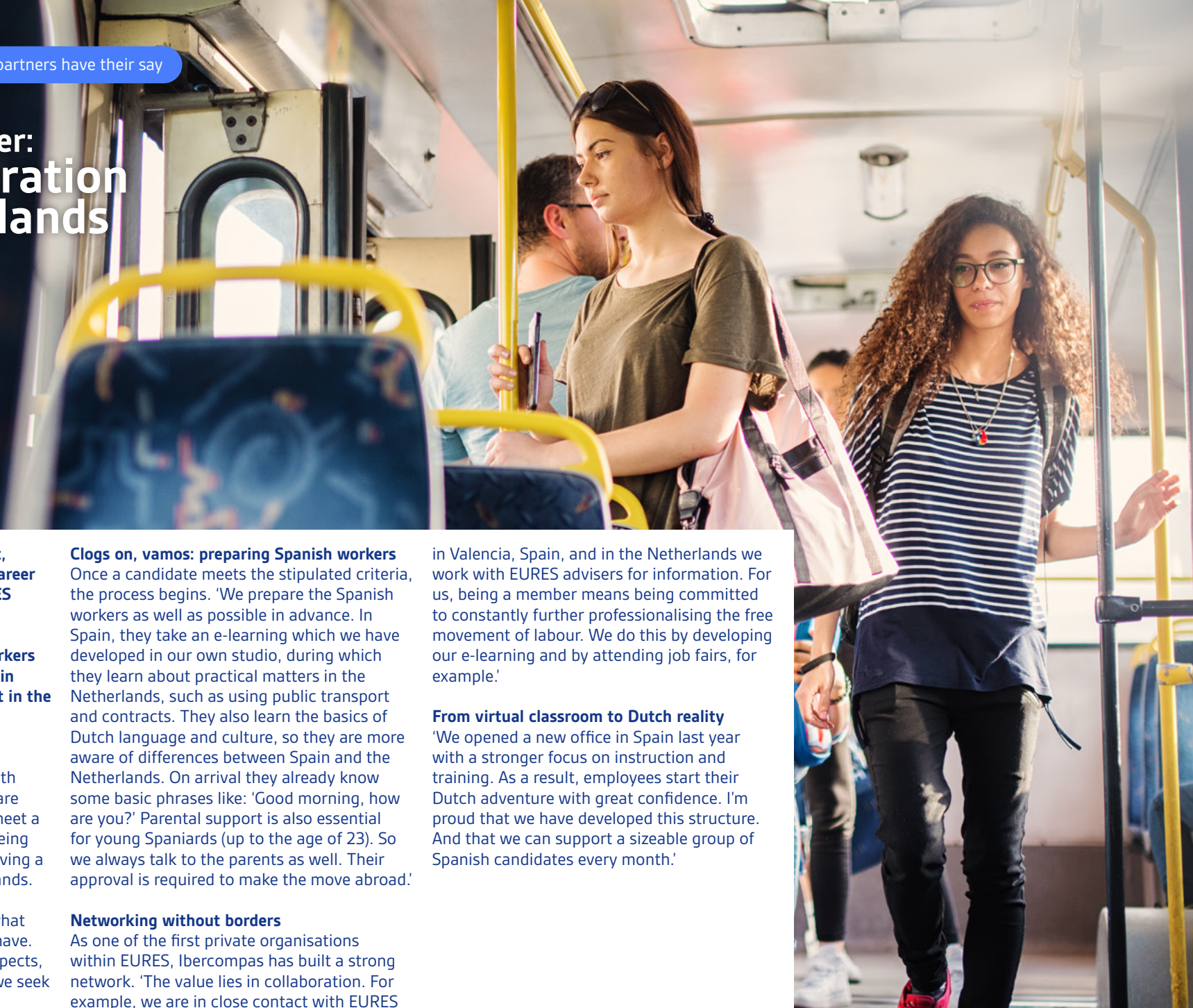
Networking without borders

As one of the first private organisations within EURES, Ibercompas has built a strong network. 'The value lies in collaboration. For example, we are in close contact with EURES

in Valencia, Spain, and in the Netherlands we work with EURES advisers for information. For us, being a member means being committed to constantly further professionalising the free movement of labour. We do this by developing our e-learning and by attending job fairs, for example.'

From virtual classroom to Dutch reality

'We opened a new office in Spain last year with a stronger focus on instruction and training. As a result, employees start their Dutch adventure with great confidence. I'm proud that we have developed this structure. And that we can support a sizeable group of Spanish candidates every month.'





Regional and national support for spouses:
**IN Amsterdam and UWV
EURES join forces**

Conchita van der Sande

Project manager International talent at IN Amsterdam
Jobseekers Service at UWV

**Yohana Dumas Carvalho
- van der Velde**

Transnational Advisor at EURES

From language barriers to culture shock, the challenges when emigrating are overwhelming - not only for knowledge migrants, but also for their partners. EURES partner IN Amsterdam and EURES member UWV play an important role in integrating these spouses in the Amsterdam metropolitan area and the Netherlands, respectively. Conchita van der Sande from IN Amsterdam and Yohana Dumas Carvalho - van der Velde share their insights.

'Spouses in the Netherlands face a variety of challenges, including language barriers and adapting to a new work culture,' explains Conchita. Yohana, herself an expat from Brazil, adds: 'Many newcomers are unfamiliar with the Dutch work culture and employers' expectations. For example, they may feel uncomfortable when asked about their personal life in a job interview. Purely because such a question is unusual in their home country. They then don't know how to react. Such situations can complicate their integration into the labour market.'

Support that works: from group workshops to personal advice

To support spouses with this, the Transnational Jobseekers Service Team (Team Werkzoekendendienstverlening Transnationaal) at UWV has developed a programme that IN Amsterdam is happy to support. They organised seven workshops in the Amsterdam area in 2024, reaching 65 jobseekers. The workshops consist of four mornings with a focus on practical job interview tips and discussing cultural differences. The results have been positive:

the workshops score an average rating of 9 and almost 20% find work in less than three months. Participants feel motivated and see better job application results.

From referral to success: an ideal combination

The collaboration between IN Amsterdam and UWV is proving to be of great value. 'Thanks to the collaboration with UWV, we can easily refer to services that we do not offer in-house,' says Conchita. Yohana agrees: 'The collaboration allows us to better reach and support candidates, with concrete examples of success. For example, a group of international healthcare professionals felt very supported by the workshop about applying for jobs. These positive experiences not only demonstrate the effectiveness of our services, but also inspire and motivate other spouses. They show that integration into the Dutch labour market is feasible, regardless of a person's background or situation.'

Further growth in 2025: more sectors, more regions

'Looking to 2025, we see a year filled with potential and growth for our programme. We aim to reach an even wider group of spouses, targeting labour shortage sectors including healthcare, education and construction and engineering. As EURES partner and member organisations, we aspire to expand our area of operation; to roll out our services nationwide in collaboration with the Netherlands Enterprise Agency and the international welcome centres. With the ultimate goal of collectively supporting as many spouses as possible,' conclude Conchita and Yohana.

Sparks of opportunity: from potential to professional expertise in the welding sector

In a labour market that is changing rapidly as a result of technological developments, adaptability and learning new skills are essential. Like in the engineering sector, where demand for qualified professionals continues to grow. Niek Jans, Operations Manager at EURES member HOBII, shares his views on reskilling and upskilling in the welding sector.

'The demand for qualified technicians continues to grow,' says Niek. 'We are responding to this in various ways. Hence we are recruiting new welders through our offices in Poland, the Baltic States, Romania, Portugal and Spain. We determine their potential using theoretical and psychological tests. We also analyse their attitude, behaviour and skills.'

Learning to weld: from classroom to shop floor
HOBII works with welding schools in various countries in Europe. 'This collaboration

ensures us a basic level of welding when these welders enter the Dutch labour market.'

Once in the Netherlands, HOBII offers a work & learn programme, which is taken by eight students at a time.

'Our small-scale training course in the Netherlands offers welders the opportunity for further learning before they actually start working for a company. It's all about hands-on time - that's how you learn the trade. At the same time, that poses the biggest challenge: finding a company willing to invest in a "new" welder.'

Building trust with EURES

Niek emphasises the value of the EURES network for HOBII's recruitment activities. 'It's great to be able to use the EURES name. It immediately inspires confidence among employers and jobseekers. EURES is a name with nothing but good intentions.'

That goes for us as well. It is a noble endeavour to give migrant workers the chance of a better life.'

Forged for success

'We are proud of the successful placements of our welders in various European projects. Welders who could not find work in Spain due to lack of experience now have jobs in the Netherlands because of our partnership. I think it's important to look at someone's potential, because experience is something you can acquire. These successful placements show that investing in people pays off. We want to be able to offer this to even more migrant workers in 2025. Every successfully trained welder who can get a job is a success for us.'

Border regions in the spotlight: successes highlighted



Border regions are the testing ground for European labour mobility. This chapter presents successful initiatives in these dynamic regions, like the North Sea Port Talent project that contributes to seamless labour mobility. It also zooms in on how municipalities such as Kerkrade and Maastricht are actively promoting cross-border employment in an area where three countries - the Netherlands, Germany and Belgium - meet. These practical examples illustrate how local collaboration leads to practical solutions to the unique challenges and opportunities that characterise border regions.

Europe in the Netherlands: A changing demographic puzzle

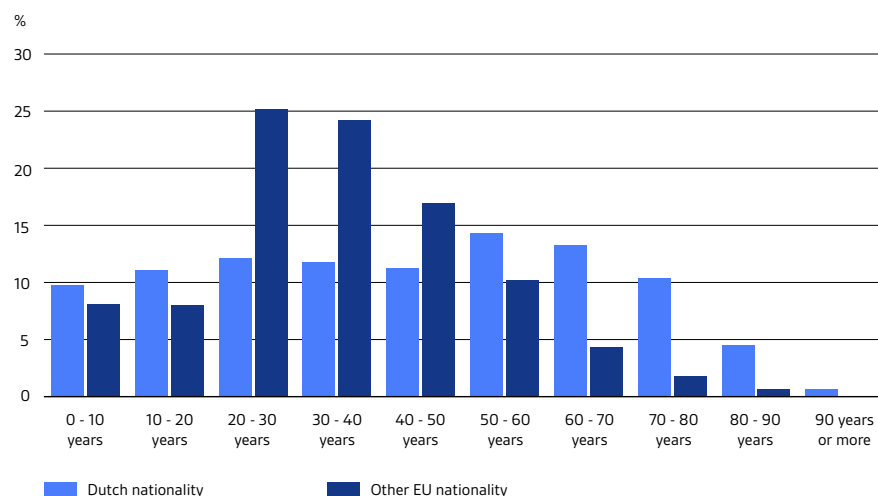
At the start of 2024, the Netherlands had 745,500 residents with a nationality from another EU country. This group, predominantly aged between 20 and 50, mainly come to the Netherlands for work, study or family reunification. With 4% of residents holding another EU nationality, the Netherlands ranks ninth in the European Union.

Young European boost

The new Europeans in the Netherlands are younger than the native population on average. This demographic injection brings not only workers but also cultural diversity. Nearly 649,000 of them are eligible to vote for the European Parliament - a sign of how European democracy transcends borders.

These figures reflect how labour mobility within Europe not only creates economic opportunities but also contributes to a richer, more diverse society. Exactly what EURES strives for.

Age breakdown, 2024



Source: Netherlands Statistics

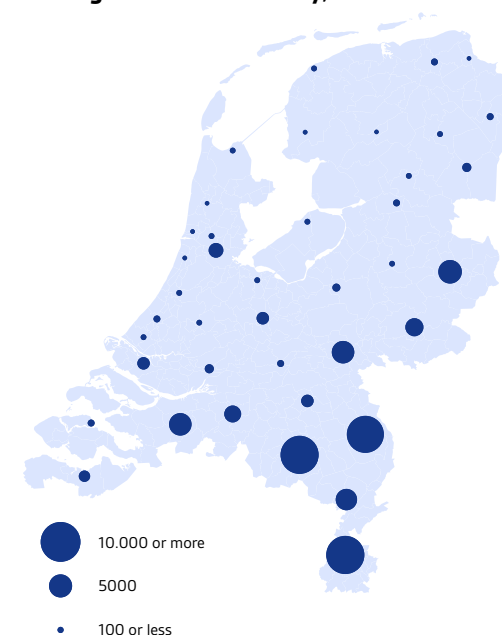
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Cross-border commuters*

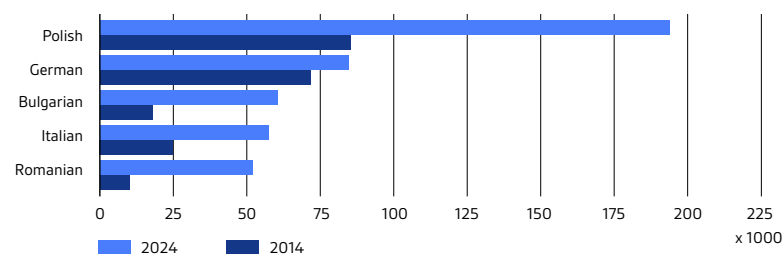
In 2023, almost 89,000 people working in the Netherlands lived across the border: 44,000 in Belgium and 45,000 in Germany. That's 2,000 more than a year earlier. Most of them work near the border. Fewer people commuted to neighbouring countries from the Netherlands than vice versa in 2021, some 19,740. Of these, some 11,000 Dutch people were working in the Flanders area of Belgium and almost 7,000 worked in the German state of North Rhine-Westphalia.

The number of commuters from the Netherlands to Belgium and Germany has been declining since 2017. Differences in salaries, living costs and laws and regulations around taxes and social benefits often make it less advantageous for Dutch people to commute to Belgium or Germany than the other way round. The figures from 2023 show a similar picture in terms of commuting to Germany.

Cross-border commuters from Belgium and Germany, 2023



EU nationalities in the Netherlands



Poles make up the largest EU community

Over a quarter of all EU citizens in the Netherlands hold Polish nationality, followed by Germans (11%). Since the EU enlargements to include Poland (2004), Romania and Bulgaria (2007) and Croatia (2013), this population has grown significantly. This migration flow illustrates how the free movement of people, a core value of the EU, keeps the labour market dynamic.



North Sea Port:
**Collaboration without
borders for a stronger labour
market**

Younes El Azzouti

Account manager from UWV's EURES
Zeeland and West Brabant team

Tsun Man

Account manager from the Flemish
Employment Service (Vlaamse Dienst voor
Arbeidsbemiddeling - VDAB)

The Netherlands and Belgium share more than just a border. In the North Sea Port region, which stretches from Vlissingen to Gent, employers and other stakeholders are working closely together to strengthen the labour market. Younes El Azzouti, account manager from UWV's EURES Zeeland and West Brabant team, and Tsun Man, account manager from the Flemish Employment Service (Vlaamse Dienst voor Arbeidsbemiddeling - VDAB), talk about their joint mission in the North Sea Port Talent project.

'For us, the region has no national borders,' says Younes. 'Whether someone travels from the Netherlands to Belgium or vice versa, every employee deserves fair pay.' This vision is at the heart of North Sea Talent's approach. This project joins the forces of the City of Gent, the Association of Gent Port-Related Enterprises (Vereniging voor Gentse Hangegebonden Ondernemingen - Voka/VeGHO), VDAB, North Sea Port and UWV to strengthen the labour market in the region.

Virtual exploration: the unknown side of port work

One of the biggest challenges is changing the port's image. Younes says: 'A lot of young people think of a port only in terms of dirty hands and pollution. The port has much more to offer and offers plenty of opportunities, including in HR, ICT and sales. That's why we like to showcase the port's diversity. To do this, we organised an event in November: the North Sea Port Talent Experience Day. Here, visitors can discover as many as 50 different roles within the port area using simulations and VR glasses.'

Recruitment 2.0: gamification reveals more than interviews

The collaboration goes beyond traditional recruitment. Tsun says: 'We advise employers on boosting their intake and a more efficient progression of employees. We have also developed a recruitment game that enables us to see someone's skills without communication. This enables us to look at an employee's development potential. So you can see whether someone can progress to team leader, for example.'

Borders are fading: Flemish shuttle is a potential solution for the Netherlands

Tsun continues: 'Companies in border regions often bump up against national laws and regulations. That is why we work closely with EURES advisers. We inform jobseekers about opportunities to work over the border and act as a guide: we help (prospective) cross-border workers get off to a good start in terms of social security and taxation. For example, we are currently studying whether the Flemish shuttle service Max Mobiel, which brings people who don't have their own transport to work, can also be implemented in the Netherlands.'

Bringing talent on board: the port as a career path

Younes and Tsun have ambitious plans for the future. 'We want to get even more people enthusiastic about working in the port. We are organising boat tours for schoolchildren and developing an innovative labour market portal which will enable schools to offer internships, and jobseekers can find available vacancies,' conclude Tsun and Younes.



Melissa Heidenrath

Cross-border Working Coordinator at the Municipality of Kerkrade

Helmi van Bergen

Border Info Point Information Officer at the Municipality of Maastricht

Tax differences, varying terms of employment, and unfamiliar regulations: those living in and around the South Limburg border region face a variety of employment choices. Two municipal councils, both EURES partners, play a vital role in facilitating cross-border labour mobility. Melissa Heidenrath (Municipality of Kerkrade) and Helmi van Bergen (Municipality of Maastricht) talk about day-to-day cross-border service provision in the three-country region of the Netherlands-Belgium-Germany.

'The puzzle of foreign laws and regulations deters workers from stepping across the border,' explains Helmi. 'Take sick leave, for example: in the Netherlands, your employer continues to pay your salary for two years, while in Belgium you end up on statutory sickness benefit after one month. Without this knowledge, you run significant risks as an employee. And this is precisely where our advice makes the difference.' Melissa, who works on the Dutch-German border, adds: 'But employees need to know how to find us. The post-COVID labour market makes it harder to reach workers. That's why we've launched a marketing campaign to make our services more visible.'

Crossing the border without surprises

Melissa and Helmi organise targeted activities to encourage cross-border working. 'We organise information sessions and workshops, and we attend job fairs,' says Melissa. 'Many people wrongly think they need to be fluent in German in order to work in Germany. By removing such misconceptions, we open doors.' Helmi also targets employers: 'For

international recruitment, we advise HR departments in advance. Companies need to understand the implications of labour migration for both parties. This avoids surprises for both the employer and the employee.'

Short lines of communication, big impact

Collaboration within the EURES network is proving very valuable. 'We are literally on the border, with colleagues from the Bundesagentur für Arbeit, UWV and various employer service points in the same office,' says Melissa. 'The lines of communication are short and we can act quickly.' Helmi works closely with various information services: 'We make each other stronger. If anyone has specific questions about recognition of qualifications, for example, we refer them to the appropriate body. We make a difference for employees by contributing to their cross-border careers from A to Z.'

Navigator in cross-border opportunities

'We want our marketing campaign to ensure that more people know how to find us,' says Melissa. Helmi agrees: 'It's vital that employees know that we are the point of contact for anyone thinking about working in another European country. Only with a proper provision of information can people make informed decisions about cross-border working. We are here to make that step less scary and clearer. So that employees know exactly what they're getting into.'

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