

Spain's Activation Strategy for Employment

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The Europe 2020 Strategy sets out a target of increasing the employment rate to at least 75% by 2020 for the EU as a whole, with Spain's target set at 74% in its National Reform Programme. According to official data, over the last three years the employment rate in Spain has been recovering at a faster rate than the EU average. Despite this, the unemployment rate in our country stands at 16.38%, the second highest in the European Union, eight points above the euro area average. In order to reduce this unemployment rate and achieve the expected employment rate, Spain has adopted its Activation Strategy for Employment 2017-2020.

1. Spain's Activation Strategy for Employment 2017-2020, approved by Royal Decree 1032/2017 of 15 December, is aimed at the still high number of people (3,410,182) seeking employment, according to the register of the different national and regional Employment Services. There is thus a need to create more and better jobs, adapted to the needs of the technical and organizational change taking place in a context of major demographic challenges, as the percentage of the working age population will be thirteen points lower than now in 2050 (from 66.3% to 53.4%).

The above provides for the incentivizing of activation and permanence in the labour market in order to include in employment all potential assets; the promotion of investment in human capital throughout the working life so that workers can remain permanently skilled and thus be able to adapt to changes and have productivity growth accelerated; and, thirdly, the

incentivizing of greater motivation derived from having employment with rights, equality and quality, particularly in balancing work and life. The priority objective is that, once the Spanish economy is creating jobs on a continuous basis, this positive trend is consolidated, encouraging, in addition, employment that is inclusive and of a higher quality. This requires, among other measures, strengthening the capacity and effectiveness of the National Employment System; increasing the effectiveness of training for employment; and improving the efficiency of programmes and plans for activation and integration into employment.

2. Spain's Activation Strategy for Employment determines the conceptual and organizational framework to which all the actions carried out within the National Employment System must refer in terms of activation policies and vocational training for employment, the principles, common objectives, both structural and strategic, the instruments to be used, the strategic planning of the actions to be developed and the financial resources that are expected to be available for the fulfillment of these objectives and actions. It does not include the operational programming of programmes and measures, a function that will fall to each of the Annual Employment Policy Plans, as operational instruments called upon to develop and translate into actions that set out in this Strategy. Taking into account this structuring role, it is up to the different agencies and bodies that make up the National Employment System to determine the actions to be carried out in order to achieve the structural and strategic objectives set out in the Strategy itself, within the framework of the principles and with the resources that it also provides for.

To this end, the Employment Services will have to modernize, improve their performance and better adapt their role to the new demands of the Spanish society, promoting the activation and entry of jobseekers. To this end, they should facilitate transitions from both employment and unemployment, providing continued support throughout the entire working life and promoting activation, helping to bridge the gap between skills needed and those possessed by many workers, and combating social exclusion through better coordination of active policies and economic protection against unemployment and other social policies. In order to win the battle for competitiveness, it is essential to be able to count on all available talent, and this requires more workers, workers who are more productive and more motivated.

3. The Strategy is based on four key objectives: reducing unemployment, increasing the activation of employment and reducing periods of unemployment, improving the participation of employment services in filling vacancies and improving the level of satisfaction of employers and jobseekers with regard to the employment services.

The following five strategic objectives are also identified: (a) to promote the activation and improvement of the employability of young people, with particular attention to those with the greatest training deficiencies and the risk of job insecurity, through instruments such as the youth guarantee scheme and coordination with the education system; (b) to promote employment as the main instrument of social inclusion, improving, as a priority, the activation and re-entry of the long-term unemployed and those over fifty-five years of age; (c) to promote,

in accordance with the needs identified in the personalized diagnoses and with the needs of the productive system, a training offer aimed at a changing labour market, better adjusting skills and facilitating labour transitions; (d) improve the performance of employment services by modernizing the instruments of the National Employment System; and (e) address activation policies from a holistic perspective that takes into account their sectoral and local dimensions and establishes frameworks for collaboration with employers, social partners and other public and private actors.

Added to these are the structural objectives grouped into the six priorities of employment activation policies included in the Spanish Employment Act (guidance, training, employment opportunities, equal opportunities in access to employment, entrepreneurship and improvement of the National Employment System's institutional framework).

Moreover, the principles relating to the employment services on which this strategy is based include those of: (a) effectiveness, results-oriented; (b) continuous improvement in the performance of all functions; (c) quality in the provision of services to jobseekers and employers; (d) individualized attention, diagnosis and support to jobseekers, as well as adjustment to the specific needs of employers, the needs of the labour market and the reality of the territory in which action is taken; (e) collaboration with social partners and other public and private, sectoral or local actors, including employers; (f) coordination between active policies, economic protection against unemployment and other social protection benefits; (g) promotion of an entrepreneurial culture and entrepreneurship; (h) promotion of improved competitiveness of the productive fabric, especially of small and medium-sized enterprises; (i) modernization of employment services and their institutional framework; and (j) allocation of human, financial, material and technological resources necessary for the efficient fulfilment of the objectives of the National Employment System and adequate coverage for all jobseekers, among others.

The implementation of the Strategy will be carried out through the Annual Employment Policy Plans, operational instruments through which the Strategy must be developed and implemented by way of specific actions. They will be drawn up every year jointly by the national and regional employment services. The Annual Employment Policy Plans are built on the basis of the provision of employment activation services and policy programmes proposed by the employment services. In this sense, services are the actions that must be provided in a continuous and sustained manner over time, while programmes are based on specific actions that reinforce and focus the effort on concrete objectives over a period of time and at specific costs.

Finally, it should be stressed that the direct sources of funding for this Strategy are mainly: (a) funds from the Spanish Government Budget, which will be included in the budgets of the Ministry of Employment and Social Security, to which the National Employment Service is attached; (b) funds from the vocational training for employment contribution; (c) funds from

the unemployment contribution, since the Unemployment Protection System comprises both unemployment benefits and specific training, further training, guidance, retraining and professional integration measures for unemployed workers. To these direct sources we must add the funds from the regions' own resources and those from the European Social Fund.

In conclusion, a new framework for a challenge as difficult as that of reducing unemployment, increasing employment and improving the quality of employment. The optimistic projection of economic growth accompanies this employment policy, which is required to meet the objectives set by the European Union for 2020 and necessary to bring our rates closer to the average of our environment.