



BY HENRI CARUANA



# IMPROVING JOB MOBILITY IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

Seeking greener pastures in another EU Member State has become a growing phenomenon amongst the Maltese workforce, particularly amongst the younger generations. Freedom of movement for workers is one of the basic rights acquired by Maltese citizens and other nationals of Member States upon EU membership. However, despite the existence of this right for all EU citizens, only 2% of EU nationals reside and work in another Member State, whilst non-EU nationals account for almost double this amount. On the other hand, mobility patterns are changing as young and highly skilled workers opt for shorter mobility periods to improve career prospects and enhance lifelong learning.

Job mobility and flexibility strengthen the EU's competitiveness in a constantly evolving labour market and create new employment opportunities. In this regard, the European Commission launched a Job Mobility Action Plan for 2007-2010 with the aim of overcoming present challenges and stimulating the mobility of workers across the European Union.

The first objective identified by this Action Plan is to improve existing legislation and administrative procedures. In the early 1970s, Member States started regulating the coordination of social security systems in order to better safeguard workers' rights and benefits as they take up employment in various Member States. However, the evolving mobility patterns mentioned previously require adjourned administrative and legal measures to cater for these new scenarios. A regulation that shall come into force in 2009 will ensure that the exchange of information between national institutions shall become fully electronic. Furthermore, the gradual introduction of an electronic version of the European Health Insurance Card should accelerate the processing of workers' social security claims.

To improve job mobility, there should also be better coordination between stakeholders and authorities of the respective Member States. The Commission intends establishing an inventory of job mobility schemes to create better awareness on employment opportunities across the EU, while ensuring that labour standards are safeguarded as workers find employment outside their home country. The implementation of the European Qualifications Framework will also ensure greater recognition of qualifications in different Member States, thereby removing possible restrictions to mobility.

EURES, the European Employment Services agency, has a crucial role to play in strengthening workers' mobility. This agency has a network of 750 advisors located in



the EU-27 as well as an Internet portal available in 25 languages, which advertises over a million vacancies. Reinforcing the quality of the services provided by EURES shall be an integral part of the Action Plan's implementation. Lastly, it is essential to increase awareness on the benefits of job mobility. Lack of information on the rights attached to free movement as well as the advantages of taking up employment in another Member State are amongst the main issues that need to be addressed. Over the coming years, the Commission shall be closely monitoring all these issues and providing the necessary impetus to ensure that mobility is truly an instrument for more and better jobs. © More information is available from *Forum Malta fl-Ewropa* on telephone 2590 9101 or email [foruminfo@gov.mt](mailto:foruminfo@gov.mt)

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