Annex 2.

**Measures implemented in relation to employed persons, unemployed persons and seniors**

### **Preventive support measures for employed persons**

**Public awareness measures to promote a longer and better working life**

**Objective:** Promote awareness among employers and older workers, as well as the general public on trends in ageing society and labour force and possible solutions to promote longer and better working lives.

**Target group:** Employers (merchants and state or local government institutions) and persons aged 50 and older exposed to the risk of unemployment.

**Responsible institution:** Ministry of Welfare, State Employment Agency (hereinafter – SEA).

The measures were implemented under the ESF project “Support for longer working life”[[1]](#footnote-1).

**Financing and sources:** 7.3.2 specific support objective “Extend the ability to work and employment of elderly”.

Activities planned for 2019 (seminars, TV and radio campaigns) were moved to 2020 to align with the next round of employer applications. In 2020, the planned application was not organised, therefore the public information activities were not carried out in full. In 2019, 3 publications were published on the SEA website on the results achieved by the project.

On August 1, 2020 amendments to Cabinet Regulation No. 504 of August 2, 2016, Regulations for implementation of 7.3.2 specific objective “Extend the ability to work and employment of elderly” of the Operational Programme “Growth and Employment” (hereinafter - Cabinet Regulation No. 504) came into force, according to which implementation of the ESF project “Support for longer working life” No. 7.3.2.0/16/I/001 was terminated with August 31, 2020. The measures foreseen in the project were not fully implemented.

**Evaluation of the potential of the work environment and human resources in merchants and local government institutions**

**Objective:** to promote the quality of jobs in line with the needs of older workers, thus contributing to the maintenance of the working capacity and employment of older workers.

**Target group:** Employers (merchants and state or local government institutions) and persons at risk of unemployment aged 50 and over in sectors with a higher proportion of older employees.

**Responsible authority:** SEA.

The measures were implemented under the ESF project “Support for longer working life”.

**Financing and sources:** 7.3.2 specific objective “Extend the ability to work and employment of elderly”.

As part of the **measure**, the following activities have been implemented between 1 January 2019 and 31 December 2021:

On 1 October 2018, employers' application for participation in the event “Assessment of the potential of the working environment and human resources” was announced. In total, 2295 employees over the age of 50 were applied by the employers for participation in the project. Applications had been submitted by employers of different sizes representing different regions. In the first round, contracts for the assessment of the working environment and human resources were concluded with 15 employers, while the evaluation was carried out with 12 employers.[[2]](#footnote-2)

Assessments of the working environment and human resources potential with employers were launched in January 2019. The assessments resulted in individual evaluations for 1095 employees. Figure 6 shows a number of trends identified during the project:

* when applying for the project, the employer indicated the number of employees over the age of 50 who are applying for the project, but when the assessment process started, some employees were no longer willing to participate in the project (had changed their mind, for personal reasons; saw no benefits or needs; there was insufficient information on the support provided by the project; the employer had not explained the conditions, benefits) or had terminated the employment relationship;
* not all employees who received individual assessments agreed to contract for support measures. The main reasons were the lack of willingness to delay work, or the employer did not provide opportunities to receive support measures during working hours; lack of finances (e.g. travel costs and time to be spent receiving health services); unavailability of services in the immediate region, etc.

According to the methodology, it was initially necessary to determine the compliance of employees with the target group criteria in accordance with COM Regulations No. 504 (see explanation of criteria in Table 2). First, the conformity assessment took place upon receipt of information from the employer regarding the level of education of employees, the existence of sick-leave certificates (hereinafter - SLC) and the results of mandatory health examinations (hereinafter - MHE). All employees had an interview with a doctor of occupational health and occupational diseases to assess the state of health. Slightly more than half of the participants in the evaluation qualified for the project according to the educational criterion, while 45% of participants qualified according to the health criterion.

*Figure 6. Target group compliance with specified criteria*

*Data Source: SEA*

*Table 2: Explanation of criteria*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Education | The education of a person does not exceed the average level of general or professional or vocational education or the person has higher education, but he or she is employed in low-skilled jobs (works of simple professions according to the ninth basic group of the Classification of Occupations). |
| Health | Non-conformity of the state of health with the work to be performed or signs of occupational diseases has been determined for the person in the mandatory health examination or the person has been sent to an extraordinary mandatory health examination, or the person has been in a long-term absence due to incapacity for work (during the last year incapacity for work for at least one month continuously or two months with interruptions) - MHE or SLC has been established. |
| A person has been diagnosed with an occupational disease or, in performing an assessment of the potential of the working environment and human resources, non-conformity of the state of health with the work to be performed or signs of occupational diseases, which were previously not detected in the mandatory health examination, but have been determined in the assessment. |
| Part-time and low income | A person is employed part-time and on low income, which is less than 80 per cent of the minimum wage determined in the state. |

*Data Source: SEA*

**Objective**: to promote the maintenance of the working capacity and employment of older workers.

**Support measures to promote the capacity, skills and health status of older workers**

**Target group:** persons aged 50 and over at risk of unemployment working in sectors with a higher proportion of older workers.

**Planned activities:** support measures which include the adaptation of the workplace in accordance with the opinion of an occupational therapist, health measures, mentoring and the application of alternative forms of work.

**Responsible authority:** SEA.

The measures were implemented under the ESF project “Support for longer working life”.

**Financing and sources**: 7.3.2 specific objective “Extend the ability to work and employment of elderly”.

As part of the **measure**, the following activities have been implemented between 1 January 2019 and 31 December 2021:

* **Workplace Adjustment**

The support measure “Adjustment of the workplace” was aimed to workers who comply with section 3.1.1 of Cabinet Regulations No. 504[[3]](#footnote-3) in order to adjust the existing or the new workplace and to ensure the working environment appropriate to the employee`s state of health. A lump-sum grant in the amount of EUR 711 was provided for the adjustment of the workplace to the employer, which was planned to be granted according to the workplace adjustment estimate submitted by the employer.

The necessary workplace adjustments were determined by specialists from the work environment and human resources potential assessment team (labour protection specialist, occupational health and occupational diseases physician and occupational therapist). As a result, an ergotherapist's opinion was drawn up on the adjustments needed by the employee and their justification.

Within the framework of the project, four characteristics were taken into account when assessing the necessary improvements in the working environment:

1) justification for the prevention of possible health disorders and reduction of existing health disorders;

2) tasks/duties (according to the job description) which are difficult to perform without improvement of the working environment;

3) technical parameters for improvement of the working environment, for example, dimensions and different specific technical data for identification of the adaptable file;

4) the potential impact of improvements in the working environment on the performance of the work duties/tasks and health of the employee, including when assessed in connection with the possibility of developing the occupational disease.

Experience gained during the assessments has shown that workers need to take preventive measures to maintain and improve health in good time in order to be able to carry out their work without adverse effects on their health (including without encouraging rapid development of occupational diseases).

A team of experts in assessing the potential of the work environment and human resources concluded that the employee does not need workplace adaptations, but specific means tailored specifically to the individual. For example, suitable work equipment (including work bench, ergonomic work chair, tools, etc.), individual solutions for maintaining health (including compression stockings, back corsets) or other technical and living improvements (including weight handling aids, silenced walls, additional wall partitions, etc.) and individual labour protection equipment (including hearing and respiratory protection equipment, protective clothing, protective gloves, etc.). It was also found that in order to perform direct work duties, employees do not need direct adaptations of the workplace, but improvements of the working environment are needed (installed auxiliary premises where the employee can relax more frequently, perform health-enhancing exercises, or distance himself or herself from the work area), which would help employees to continue their work in a qualitative manner.

It was concluded that, in some cases, support for improvements in the working environment would need to be aggregated if several employees work in the same workplace.[[4]](#footnote-4) Assessments have shown that there are often several employees working in the same workplace (for example, three or four employees work shifts in a particular workplace, and not all employees can work 8 hours, the maximum normal daily working hours. In order to ensure better and more qualitative adjustment of the specific workplace to all employees working therein and to provide support to employees and their employers in the most efficient and targeted manner, a proposal was developed which provided that if several but not more than four employees perform the work in one workplace, support (grant) for improvement of the working environment could be aggregated according to the number of employees and such approach would ensure more targeted utilisation of improvements to the working environment of the grant. Thus, it would be possible to sum the costs of improvements to the working environment per job according to how many employees of the target group are employed in the particular workplace and the costs of improvements to the working environment would be provided to all employees (who use, for example, the adjustment made, equipment and who need it) according to the individual needs of employees.

Such a change of approach would be an opportunity for the employer to receive support for the improvement of the working environment, which improves the working environment and working conditions for employees in the most efficient way, thus also improving the quality and productivity of the work of older workers. In general, extending support for improvements in the working environment would contribute to maintaining the employability and employment of workers aged 50 and over.

In the light of the experience described above, proposals for amendments to Cabinet Regulations 504 were submitted in the second half of 2019 for the improvement of the support measure “Adjustment of the workplace”, but were not implemented as the project was terminated in 2020.

* **Health improvement measures**

As part of health improvement measures, a person was provided with treatment services in the form of a course (e.g. physical exercise, physical medicine procedures, manual therapy, massages, classes with a physiotherapist, etc.).

During the assessment of the working environment and human resources potential, health improvement measures were imposed on almost all employees. The high number of employees in need of health measures implies that this type of support for people over 50 years is crucial.

*Table 3: Summary of health measures*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Health improvement measures | Number | Justification |
| Classes with physical therapist | 996 | After stressful working days and muscle tension, preventive health strengthening and maintenance is recommended.  Seated and low-moving work that negatively affects the overall health condition.  Leg and back health issues. |
| Physical exercise | 930 | After stressful working days and muscle tension, preventive health strengthening and maintenance is recommended.  Seated and low-moving work that negatively affects the overall health condition.  Back and leg health issues. |
| Massage therapy  (for different body areas) | 847 | After stressful working days and muscle tension, preventive health strengthening and maintenance is recommended.  Back health problems, seated and low-mobility work that negatively affects the overall health condition. |
| Water cure treatments | 484 | After stressful working days and muscle tension, preventive health strengthening and maintenance is recommended.  Back, shoulder and arm health issues.  Seated and low-moving work that negatively affects the overall health condition. |
| Physical medicine procedures | 448 | After stressful working days and muscle tension, preventive health strengthening and maintenance is recommended. |
| Water procedures (recommended swimming) | 50 | After stressful working days and muscle tension, preventive health strengthening and maintenance is recommended.  Back, shoulder and arm health issues.  Seated and low-moving work that negatively affects the overall health condition. |

*Data Source: SEA*

Of the 853 employees who entered into a contract to participate in support measures, including health improvement measures, 260 employees or 30% used them. Overall, EUR 55 044.22 was spent on health measures. The average amount used by one participant was EUR 211.71. More than half, or 155 project participants, submitted payment supporting documents for more than EUR 240, while the maximum amount of compensation for health improvement measures was used by 101 employees.

*Figure 7. Use of health services*

*Data Source: SEA*

### **Support measures for the unemployed**

**Activation measures for long-term unemployed persons**

**European information campaign “safe and healthy work at all ages”**

**Objective:** to promote the integration of the long-term unemployed into society and placement in suitable permanent employment, an appropriate training programme or one of the measures offered by the SEA.

**Target group:** unemployed persons who have been unemployed for at least 12 months (long-term unemployed persons), including unemployed persons with disability and predictable disability, as well as unemployed persons for whom addiction to alcohol, narcotic substances or psychotropic substances has been established or is possible.

**Responsible authority:** SEA.

The measures were implemented within the framework of the ESF project “support for the long-term unemployed”.

**Funding and sources:** 9.1.1. specific objective “Enhance integration of the disadvantaged unemployed persons in the labour market”

As part of the measure, the following activities have been implemented between 1 January 2019 and 31 December 2021:

* + **Health examinations**

Since 2016 the project activity “Health examinations” was implemented in the project “Support for the long-term unemployed”, the purpose of which was to provide in-depth health examinations to the unemployed of the target group, determining the suitability for the proposed work, as well as the active employment measures provided for in the individual job search plan, evaluating the conformity of the health condition with the labour environment factors harmful to health, which included examination of doctors specialists, laboratory and functional examinations in accordance with the appointment of a doctor of occupational diseases. The activity was ensured by attracting an outsourced service provider in accordance with the *Public Procurement Law*.

Of the 2,080 unemployed people in the target group who started participating, 2,079 were unique individuals (99%). Below is a summary of the eligibility of the unemployed in the target group for the proposed job from the start of the project (see Figure 8).

*Figure 8. Data on* *suitability for the proposed work from the start of the project until 30.12.2019.*

*Data Source: SEA*

When analysing the results of the health examinations, it was concluded that the involvement of occupational doctors in the assessment of the health status of the unemployed has not led to a significant improvement in work with the target group. Namely, according to SEA data, as of June 30, 2020 of the 2,060 unemployed persons 88 (4%) had settled within 4 weeks after completion of participation, while 252 (12%) – within 6 months after completion of the measure. A similar result could be achieved using a statement issued by the treating physician, which in accordance with Cabinet Regulations No. 75 of 25 January 2011[[5]](#footnote-5) has to be submitted to the SEA in order to inform regarding health problems, which may affect the determination of suitable work for the client.

Financing of EUR 73,738.26 has been used from the beginning of the project in order to ensure implementation of the operation. Similarly, a transport service was provided for the provision of that activity, namely the transport was provided to the unemployed person to take him/her from the SEA branch or the place of residence to the medical treatment institution and back, with the amount of EUR 45 611.06 being used, thereby the transport service significantly increased the financing of the project activity “Health examinations”.

In view of the above, with particular emphasis on the increase in operating costs for the provision of the service in order to make more efficient use of the funding earmarked for the support of the target group, it was proposed in 2019 to suspend the implementation of the “Health examinations” from 2020.

* + **Determination of vocational suitability**

Determination of vocationalsuitability for the long-term unemployed by providing recommendations regarding work suitable for the unemployed, as well as active employment measures related thereto.

Implementation of the project activity “Determination of vocationalsuitability” was launched in the 2nd quarter of 2017 after the coming into force of the amendments in the Law on Social Services and Social Assistance on 9 February 2017, delegating to the Social Integration State Agency (hereinafter - SISA) to perform determination of vocationalsuitability for long-term unemployed persons within the scope of the project, evaluating the previous knowledge, abilities and skills of the unemployed person, as well as the motivation to return to the labour market or to engage in appropriate active employment measures. Within the framework of that activity, the SISA provided transport services from the SEA branch or the place of residence of the unemployed person to the SISA and back to the SEA branch or the place of residence of the unemployed person, as well as accommodation.

The SISA performed the determination of vocationalsuitability for unemployed persons with disability or predictable disability, long-term unemployed persons with mental disorders or long-term unemployed persons who have received a recommendation from a doctor within the framework of the project activity “Health examinations”.

The experience of the SISA in providing vocationalsuitability services, the established infrastructure that is fully tailored to people with disabilities, including mobility difficulties and wheelchair mobility, as well as a team of competent and experienced specialists ensured effective determination of vocationalsuitability. During participation, a team of specialists, which included educators, psychologists, career counsellors, occupational therapists, social workers, etc., provided theoretical and practical lessons in order to ascertain the motivation of a person to enter the labour market and to study, carried out evaluation of previously acquired knowledge, identification of skills and abilities, assessment of health status and work ability, providing recommendations regarding work suitable for the unemployed person, as well as active employment measures related thereto, in conformity with the health condition of the unemployed person, including regarding involvement in the project “Subsidized workplaces for the disadvantaged unemployed”.

The implementation of the measure was launched in May 2017. Vocational suitability has been determined for 450 persons, of which 280 are aged 50 and over. During the implementation of the project, 726 unemployed persons of the target group started vocationalsuitability, namely 646 persons with disabilities, including 99 persons with mental disorders and 80 long-term unemployed persons who have received a recommendation from a doctor within the framework of the project activity “Health examinations”, to perform the determination of vocationalsuitability, 9 of which were suspended from participation in the activity (4 were due to a state of health; 4 were due to other reasons, while 1 was due to violations of the contract).

*Table 4. Data on participants from the start of the project until 30.06.2020.*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Title of action | Number of unemployed persons completed \* | Placement within 4 weeks of completion of the measure, number of unemployed \* | Placement within 6 months of completion of the measure, number of unemployed \* |
| Determination of vocationalsuitability | 717 | 9 (1%) | 66 (9%) |

*Data Source: SEA*

142 persons had started participation in the vocationalsuitability measure during the period from 1 January 2020 to 31 December 2021.

* + **Motivation programme for job search and social mentoring services**

The measure took place in two successive stages:

* Motivation programme for job search (group classes), which includes motivation measures, support and counselling for solving individual social problems, 20 working days, every working day.

Within the framework of the motivation programme, a material and technical base, catering service (once a day) was ensured, as well as transport service for transportation from the place of residence of the unemployed person to the place of implementation of the measure and back to the place of residence of the unemployed person.

Participation in the motivation scheme could be combined with participation in the active employment measure “Paid temporary public works”.

* Mentoring services (personal counselling), which in turn helped the unemployed person to settle into permanent employment after completion of the motivation programme, providing psychological and practical support in matters of placement. The mentor's service did not exceed 3 months or less if the long-term unemployed person settled into a permanent job.

Involvement of persons in the measure was launched in June 2017. In implementing this measure, in 2019, the project faced a significant reduction in the number of applications for participation in the motivation programme, where the abovementioned reduction was related both to the commencement of seasonal work and to the willingness of the unemployed to participate in measures where financial support (scholarship) is possible, taking into account the amendments of 4 December 2018 to Cabinet Regulations No. 468 of 11 August 2015[[6]](#footnote-6),

However, despite the decrease in the number of applications, 8 069 long-term unemployed persons (8 058 (99.9%) unique persons) were involved during the project implementation, 637 (8%) unemployed persons discontinued participation, mainly due to violations of contract - 285 and 202 - due to health condition (see Table 5).

*Table 5. Reasons for suspending the measure (2017-2020).*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Reason for suspension** | **Number** | **%** |
| Started to work | 84 | 13% |
| Violations of contract | 285 | 45% |
| Due to state of health | 202 | 32% |
| Other reasons | 66 | 10% |
| **Total** | **637** | **100%** |

*Data Source: SEA*

* + **Motivation programme for job search and social mentoring services for the long-term unemployed with disabilities**

The implementation of the measure took place in two successive stages:

* 1. Motivation programme for job search (lasting up to 3 months) – includes lessons aimed at providing psychological support, solving individual social problems, developing and developing personality and social skills, improving domestic skills, strengthening motivation and preparing for the work process. The programme shall be implemented individually or in a group of up to 12 persons. If the motivation programme is implemented in a group involving persons with mental disorders, it shall be implemented in the composition of not more than 6 persons.
  2. Social mentor service (lasting up to 7 months, starting from the commencement of the motivation programme until the end of the specified probationary period), which includes psychological and practical support, counselling and recommendations on placement issues, helping the long-term unemployed to settle into permanent employment. One social mentor shall simultaneously provide the service to not more than 12 unemployed persons with disability or not more than six unemployed persons with disability, if the social mentor provides the service simultaneously to at least three unemployed persons with mental disorders.

Within the scope of the measure, unemployed persons shall be ensured:

- psychological assistance (individual and group), interprofessional meetings, motivation measures, support and counselling for solving individual social problems;

- catering and, if necessary, transport to and from the place of implementation of the motivation programme, as well as accommodation;

- the service of a language interpreter;

- services of other specialists whose support is necessary for participation of unemployed persons with disabilities in the motivation programme. The costs of specialists per unemployed person during the period of implementation of the motivation programme shall not exceed EUR 150*.*

Since 2018, 388 long-term unemployed persons with disabilities were enrolled whose motivation, preventative support and placement in appropriate, permanent employment, self-employment or appropriate training (appropriate education) was provided by four providers, reducing the risk of social exclusion.

A significant number of suspensions were observed, i.e. 201 (52%) or more than half of the unemployed with disabilities. The main reason for the suspension of participation in the motivation programme (generally) was the state of health, noted by 123 persons (see Table 6). As a result, nearly 80% of unemployed people who started participating discontinued it due health problems or other reasons.

Table 6. Reasons for suspending the event (2018-2020)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Reason for suspension** | **Number** | **%** |
| Due to state of health | 123 | 61% |
| Started to work | 28 | 14% |
| Violations of contract | 8 | 4% |
| Death | 4 | 2% |
| Started training in SEA courses | 2 | 1% |
| Other reasons | 36 | 18% |
| **Total** | **201** | **100%** |

*Data Source: SEA*

By the end of June 2020, 187 unemployed persons with disabilities had completed participation in the activity “Motivation programme for job search and social mentor services for long-term unemployed persons with disabilities”. The project, analysing activity satisfaction questionnaires after completion of participation, assessed the importance of activity in raising motivation of unemployed persons with disabilities, providing psychological support and counselling for solving individual social problems, which is evidenced by the satisfaction of the unemployed, namely by random performance regarding the satisfaction of activities, of all unemployed persons surveyed, 24 or 37% recognised the motivation programme (for persons with disabilities) and the knowledge acquired therein as very good, 35 or 54% - as good, while 6 or 9% indicated that the motivation programme (for persons with disability), including the acquired knowledge was satisfactory. A better assessment can be seen by compiling an assessment of the social mentor's services and acquired knowledge, skills and skills, namely 38 or 58% of respondents rated it as very good, 21 or 32% marked it as good, 6% marked the social mentor's service and the knowledge, skills and skills acquired therein as satisfactory, while only 2 or 3% indicated it as unsatisfactory. Five unemployed people did not give an opinion to the social mentor service, given that they did not participate in the measure because they discontinued taking part because of their state of health.

During preparation of an evaluation of its activities, in spring 2019 the SEA project encouraged the suspension of the motivation programme (in general) from 2020, while including the motivation programme for persons with disabilities as one of the activities of the subsidised employment project as of January 2020. As part of the subsidised employment project, 145 unemployed persons were involved in the measure during the period from 1 January 2020 to 31 December 2021. The average cost of the measure per unemployed person was EUR 1 477.34*.* When assessing the results of placement, they should be assessed as low (see Table 7).

*Table 7. Data on participants from the start of the project until 30.06.2020.*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Title of action | Number of unemployed persons completed | Placement within 4 weeks of completion of the measure, number of unemployed persons | Placement within 6 months after completion of the measure, number of unemployed persons |
| Motivation programme (general round) | 7 432 | 132 (2%) | 703 (9%) |
| Motivation programme (for persons with disabilities) | 187 | 15 (8%) | 24 (13%) |

*Data Source: SEA*

* + **Measures for raising public awareness** regarding measures for activating the long-term unemployed:

In order to promote co-operation between the SEA and co-operation partners – employers, social services and NGOs, seminars for employers, employees of social services and NGOs, as well as vacancy trade fair events from January 2020 were included as one of the activities of the employment project subsidised by the SEA. Two face-to-face events for employers and 9 meetings on the Zoom platform for representatives of social services and NGOs were organised during the period from 1 January 2020 to 31 December 2021 within the framework of the subsidised employment project.

The organisation of the information campaign opened in August 2018 was continued (two campaign sessions took place in 2018). The third campaign session (7.01.2019.-27.01.2019) provided information and a call for specialist advice (advice from psychologists, psychotherapists), as well as for support to treat addictions. In February 2019, the sea was instructed to assess the activities of the project, their effectiveness and to make proposals for its development. As a result of the evaluation, it was decided to suspend the implementation of the project.

**Training opportunities**

**Objective:** to promote the competitiveness of the older unemployed in the labour market through training, thus adapting to changing labour market demand and promoting integration into the labour market.

**Target group:** unemployed and jobseekers whose skills do not meet changing labour market requirements or are insufficient.

**Planned activities:** to provide training opportunities for older unemployed persons within the framework of SEA training activities.

**Responsible Authority:** SEA.

**Financing and sources:** 7.1.1 specific objective “Increase the qualification and skills of unemployed persons according to labour market demand”.

As part of the **measure**, the following activities have been implemented between 1 January 2019 and 31 December 2021:

* Vocational training, re-training, raising of qualifications and assessment of professional competence acquired outside the formal education system, which includes: the acquisition of vocational further education programmes, which enables an unemployed person to acquire professional qualification and the acquisition of vocational improvement education programmes, which enables unemployed persons to improve their professional mastery and acquire systematically organised professional knowledge and skills compliant to changing labour market requirements;
* Acquisition of non-formal education programmes, which include acquisition of systemised basic social and professional skills compliant to changing labour market requirements, organisation of final examinations, including examinations of the fluency of the official language;
* Training of drivers of vehicles and tractor machinery, which includes organisation of final examinations, taking of examinations for acquisition of qualification of drivers of vehicles and tractor machinery and receipt of a driving licence;
* Training with an employer organised for the practical training of the required employee in the defined profession.

Currently, in the labour market, demand is for flexible and adaptable employees, who also possess one of the basic competencies in addition to the knowledge necessary for the profession, therefore the SEA offers to acquire programmes that promote the acquisition of Latvian language, foreign language and computer science courses in the framework of non-formal education.

In order to ensure accessibility of the referred measures, unemployed persons have the possibility to receive financial compensation up to EUR 150 per month in support of regional mobility for the covering of transport expenses from the declared place of residence to the place of implementation of the training and back or compensation for rental or service hotel expenses of the living space. Specific services are provided to unemployed persons with disabilities according to their needs – services of a language interpreter, occupational therapist and specialised transport, as well as the possibility to organise training in flexible form is evaluated.

In the training activities in 2019-2021 there were involved 13,862 unemployed people aged 50 and over. By type of education, 1530 persons were involved in the acquisition of further vocational training, of whom 1144 qualified immediately after participation in training and 395 persons entered employment six months after the end of the activity. 847 persons were involved in the acquisition of professional development programmes, of whom 802 persons completed it (a certificate for vocational development was obtained), while 255 clients of the SEA were employed within six months. 10 457 unemployed persons aged 50 + completed the acquisition of non-formal education, of whom 2 642 unemployed persons and jobseekers settled in the work within six months after the acquisition of the education certificate.

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, training of digital skills for the unemployed and the availability of online platform courses for the unemployed and employed, aimed at promoting the acquisition and upgrading of new skills in line with new labour market requirements, were expanded when the need for digital services (including training) and remote working has increased.

**Objective:** to promote small business start-ups and self-employment for the older unemployed.

**Measures for launching commercial activity or self-employment**

**Target group:** older unemployed persons with prior readiness and direction in commercial activities.

**Responsible authority:** SEA.

**Financing and sources:** state budget. Total financing for measures for launching commercial activity or self-employment in 2016 – EUR 374 808, in 2017 - EUR 423 191.09, in 2018 - EUR 543 905.37, in 2019 - EUR 578 229, in 2020 - EUR 712 753.27, in 2021 - EUR 561 487.06.

Within the framework of the measure, support is provided to unemployed persons with prior readiness and direction in the performance of commercial activities, with the aim of promoting the commencement of self-employment or commercial activity of unemployed persons (consultations in preparation of the business plan, grant to developers of the most successful business plans up to EUR 5000, grant for monthly income (in the amount of the minimum wage, but with 2022 in the amount of EUR 750) for the first 6 months of operation).

From January 1, 2016 to December 31, 2021, 172 unemployed persons aged 50 or older are involved in the measure, or 16% of the total number of participants involved.

**Objective:** to help unemployed people understand labour market requirements by employing them in state co-financed workplaces, and to promote integration of the unemployed into society and placement in permanent work.

**Measures for certain groups of persons (subsidised employment)**

**Target group:** unemployed persons with disabilities, long-term unemployed persons, unemployed persons aged 55 and over.

**Responsible authority:** sea.

**Financing and sources:** sub-paragraph 9.1.1.1. “Subsidised jobs for disadvantaged unemployed persons” of 9.1.1. specific objective “Enhance integration of the disadvantaged unemployed persons in the labour market”.

A total of 5,827 unemployed persons (of which 2,846 or 49% aged 50+), incl. 2271 unemployed persons with disability (of which 1,239 or 55% aged 50 or over) are involved in the measure until December 31, 2021. 955 jobs adapted for the unemployed with disabilities according to the opinion of the occupational therapist as a result of the workplace assessment.

The project also supports regional mobility, with 343 unemployed people involved in this activity between October 28, 2015 and December 31, 2021.

**Objective:** to promote the maintenance and acquisition of skills through job of social benefit.

**Paid temporary public works**

**Target group:** unemployed people who do not receive unemployment benefit and want to maintain their job skills.

**Responsible institution:** SEA in co-operation with local governments.

**Financing and sources:** total financing of the state budget for paid temporary public works in 2016 – EUR 4 710 410, EUR 5 729 155 in 2017, EUR 5 268 189 in 2018, EUR 5 255 973 in 2019, EUR 5 642 264 in 2020, EUR 7 818 091 in 2021, including ESF funding of EUR 4 093 691. Within the scope of the measure, employment of unemployed persons in temporary work in local governments, associations or foundations shall be performed in order to promote acquisition and maintenance of work skills. Participation in an event in a 12-month period shall be up to 4 months, the amount of monthly remuneration shall be 250 euros.

From 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2021, 42,598 unemployed persons aged 50 + are involved in paid temporary public works.

Of the total unemployed involved in the measure, 63% were unemployed aged 50 +, indicating that many people at this age no longer choose to acquire new skills or retrain and use participation in paid temporary public works as a measure closer to the place of residence, which does not require to travel and allows real income to be obtained to cover everyday needs.

**Objective:** to promote the integration of the unemployed into society and placement in suitable permanent employment or appropriate training, reducing the risks of social exclusion.

**Support measures for the unemployed with addiction problems**

**Target group:** unemployed people with alcohol, narcotic or psychotropic addiction.

**Responsible authority:** SEA.

**Financing and sources:** 9.1.1. specific objective “Enhance integration of the disadvantaged unemployed persons in the labour market”.

3 measures are proposed:

* Minnesota's 12-step program provides for active communication and co-participation in the treatment process.

The measure is by:

* Ltd. “AKRONA 12” in Riga (treatment duration 30 days);
* Ltd. “Hospital Gintermuiža” in Jelgava (treatment duration 28 days).

Engagement in “Minnesota's 12-step program” began in February 2016.

* Emotional stress therapy (coding) includes consultation from a physician's narcologist, including the use of psychotherapeutic methods, superior therapy and sensitizing drug therapy.

The measure is implemented by Ltd. “Rīga Psychiatry and Narcology Centre”.

Implementation of the support measure “Emotional stress therapy (coding)” was launched in May 2017.

* Obtaining the opinion of a narcologist.

Unemployed persons who may be addicted to alcohol, narcotic drugs or psychotropic substances shall receive the support measure, but an opinion of the narcologist has not been received.

The measure shall be implemented by:

* Ltd. “AKRONA 12” in Riga;
* Ltd. “Medical Centre of Ludza” in Ludza.

In order to ensure accessibility of support measures for unemployed persons with addiction problems, a transport service is ensured for getting customers to a medical treatment institution and back.

Project activities (“Minnesota's 12-step program” and “Emotional stress therapy (coding)”), which contributed to solving addiction problems, were among the most effective within the project in evaluating placement results (see Table 8), using a total of EUR 462,685.56 for implementation of “Minnesota's 12-step program”, EUR 18,000 for provision of “Emotional stress therapy (coding)”, EUR 16,693.50 - for the possibility of obtaining a narcologist's opinion, EUR 209,213.49 - for provision of transport service.

*Table 8. Data on participants from the start of the project until 30.06.2020.*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Title of action | Number of unemployed persons completed | Placement within 4 weeks of completion of the measure, number of unemployed persons | Placement within 6 months after completion of the measure, number of unemployed persons |
| Minnesota's 12-step program | 906 | 54 (6%) | 263 (29%) |
| Emotional stress therapy (coding) | 225 | 15 (7%) | 53 (24%) |

*Data Source: SEA*

In view of the above, it can be concluded that the receipt of these measures for the treatment of addictions is essential support for job placement, so that the “Minnesota 12 Step Programme”, “Emotional stress therapy (coding)” and “Receipt of narcologist opinion” are included as subsidised employment project activities as of January 2020.

The subsidised employment project for the period from 1 January 2020 to 31 December 2021 involves the following number of unemployed persons in addiction reduction measures: 242 in the Minnesota program, of which 62 are aged 50 +; In emotional stress therapy (coding) 170, of which 54 are aged 50 +; 340 persons have received a narcologist's opinion, of which 110 persons aged 50 +.

**Objective:** to promote regional mobility of employed persons.

**Promoting regional mobility**

**Target group:** unemployed persons entering into employment legal relationships**.**

**Responsible authority:** SEA.

**Financing and sources:** state budget financing in 2016 - EUR 49,559, in 2017 - EUR 79,262, in 2018 - EUR 84,957, in 2019 EUR - 108,843, in 2020 - EUR 64,302, in 2021- EUR 73,793.

Due to the differences in labour supply and demand in the labour market – enterprises have job vacancies in one region, while unemployment and the available unemployed workforce are in other regions, it is proposed to benefit from regional mobility support. Mobility support is also possible within one region.

Within the framework of the measure, financial compensation shall be ensured for covering the costs of transport and rental of residential space for the first four months after commencement of employment legal relations.

In order to promote participation in measures to support regional mobility, the conditions for granting the support are regularly reviewed and improved. The financial compensation shall be disbursed for each month of employment legal relationship, not exceeding EUR 150 per month for covering the rental costs of the residential space or EUR 7 per day for covering transport expenses.

For the period from 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2021, a total of 1298 unemployed persons were supported, of which 411 (32%) aged 50 +. It should be noted that registered unemployed persons participating in training activities (see description of the measure “Training opportunities”) and subsidised employment measures may also receive regional mobility support (see description of the measure “Measures for certain groups of persons (subsidised employment)”).

**Support for social entrepreneurship**

**Financing and sources:** 9.1.1. specific objective “Enhance integration of the disadvantaged unemployed persons in the labour market” 9.1.1.3 “Support for social entrepreneurship” (total financing: EUR 17 083 768, incl. ESF financing – EUR 14 521 202, state budget financing – EUR 2 562 566).

The ESF project **“Support for social entrepreneurship”** is implemented until 2023 (including) and the total funding thereof is EUR 17 083 768, which is intended for grants for social entrepreneurs, consultations of social entrepreneurs, informing of the public, etc. activities.

Ministry of Welfare is responsible for the implementation of the Social Enterprise Law and, in co-operation with the financial development institution “ALTUM”, implements the ESF project “support for Social Entrepreneurship”, which supports social entrepreneurs

Since the Social Enterprise Law came into force on April 1, 2018, the status of a social enterprise was granted to 220 companies until December 31, 2021, of which 193 social enterprises are active, while 27 companies have had their status revoked or withdrawn for various reasons. Among social enterprises, the most popular area of activity is the provision of services to target groups or to groups of society determined by the merchant himself, the life of which is affected by problems relevant to society. 105 enterprises or 54% of social enterprises, operate in this area. 53 enterprises (28%) are active in the field of labour integration, 35 enterprises (18%) are active in the field of societal challenges. Among the most popular areas are education: education and pre-primary education institutions, which implement an inclusive education approach using alternative and innovative methods, as well as companies organising informative educational events and programmes. 20 companies have a significant social impact in medicine and health promotion by providing treatment for children and adults with rare diseases, providing treatment and social services to oncology patients, promoting the recovery and reintegration of stroke survivors into society through the latest technologies, providing state-of-the-art, science-based psycho-social rehabilitation for children and adolescents, promoting the introduction of healthy dietary habits and providing physical activity-related services. A large proportion of enterprises active in the field of building civil society and ensuring cultural diversity through the creation of artistic and documentary films, broadcasts, reports and other materials that reflect socially relevant issues and events, by developing public electronic participatory tools to initiate major changes and bring together public opinion, contribute to the revival and development of different musical genres and musical theatre traditions. Importantly, a large proportion of social enterprises (13%) put services at the forefront in order to ensure that they are accessible to disadvantaged persons, people with special needs, families with children with special needs, addressing social exclusion. Thanks to social enterprises, more attention is paid to environmental issues, which is a very important problem worldwide. 19 undertakings which were granted social enterprise status involve unemployed persons with dependants, unemployed persons over the age of 54 and long-term unemployed persons.

As of 31 December 2021, out of 142 persons at risk of social exclusion[[7]](#footnote-7), 81 persons had reached the age of 50 (including 50 women and 31 men); 67 persons or 83% of persons aged 50 + were persons with disability, 10 persons or 13% were disadvantaged unemployed persons - unemployed persons over 54 years of age.

However, until the coming into force of the Social Enterprise Law on 1 April 2018, 98 social entrepreneurs were registered in the pilot project implemented by the ESF project “Support for social entrepreneurship”, of which 48 were limited liability companies and 50 were NGOs (associations or foundations). Of the 98 people involved in the pilot project, integration in the labour market was the most popular area of activity (26%); inclusive civil society and cultural diversity being the second most popular (20%), and sport, health promotion and medicine being the third. Other social entrepreneurs are active in areas such as supporting the needy and the low-oncome people, education, social services, social inclusion of children and the protection of animals or the environment. In 2019/2020, 22 participants in the event have acquired social enterprise status.

In 2018, it was possible for social entrepreneurs and merchants who have acquired the status of a social enterprise to submit business plans to the financial institution ALTUM for implementation of the social idea and to apply for a grant of up to EUR 200 thousand. As of 31 December 2021, 269 applications were submitted to ALTUM and 145 contracts were concluded for a total amount of EUR 9.2 million. Of all approved applications, ALTUM had disbursed the requested grant funding worth EUR 6.7 million. 78 grant applications were rejected by ALTUM, while 21 applicant had refused.

Ministry of Welfare actively co-operates with the Latvian Social Business Association, which was established in autumn 2015, the purpose of which is to promote the development of social entrepreneurship in Latvia and which brings together more than 100 members throughout Latvia.

### **Support measures for seniors**

**Career counselling**

**Objective:** to provide support in solving issues of vocational suitability, retraining and career planning.

**Target group:** unemployed persons, jobseekers and other persons at risk of unemployment.

**Responsible institution:** SEA and in co-operation with the State Education Development Agency (hereinafter - SEDA).

**Financing and sources:** state budget financing (within the framework of the financing of the SEA basic budget for administrative expenses).

Within the framework of the event, SEA shall provide career consultations to unemployed persons, jobseekers and other persons, helping them to orient themselves on issues of vocational suitability, as well as retraining. To provide effective support to customers aged 50 +, a “Methodology in work with customers aged 50 plus” was developed. Like customers of other aging groups, people over 50 years can receive individual and group consultations to find the best solution to a particular life situation through a career counsellor, according to their professional interests, abilities, educational attainment, health status and other factors.

In 2018, an inter-departmental agreement was concluded between SEA and SEDA on co-operation in the implementation of the ESF project “Improvement of professional competence of employed persons”. Persons employed within the framework of this project from the age of 25 years (advantages in admission – for persons over 50 years who have received a recommendation for the acquisition of vocational further education, professional improvement or non-formal education programme in the SEA ESF project “Support for longer working life”) receive career consultations and information regarding the possibility to apply for SEDA training programmes and assessment of professional competence acquired outside the formal education system. Information regarding the training organised by SEDA is available within framework of measure “Adult education for employed residents”.

In 2019, career counseling had a total membership of 87 094, of them aged over 50 years – 33 713; in 2020 – 54 223 and 18 482; in 2021 – 57 588 and 18 042.

**Objective:** to promote competitiveness in the labour market by enabling the acquisition of key skills and competences needed in the labour market.

**Measures to increase competitiveness**

**Target group:** unemployed persons, jobseekers and other persons at risk of unemployment.

**Responsible authority:** SEA.

**Financing and sources:** 7.1.1 “Increase the qualification and skills of unemployed persons according to labour market demand”.

Measures to increase competitiveness include group classes (courses, seminars, lectures) for the acquisition of job search methods, psychological support and acquisition of basic skills and skills necessary for the labour market. Skills such as communication skills, entrepreneurial skills, digital skills, social and civic skills are offered.

In 2019-2021, 6903 persons (number of participations) were involved in measures to increase competitiveness (courses seminars, lectures, except informative days), of which 3131 (45%) were over 50 years of age.

During the informative days organised by the sea, 15543 persons (number of participations) were involved in the provision of basic information to unemployed persons, jobseekers and persons subject to unemployment risk in 2019-2021, of which 6177 (40%) are over 50 years of age.

The SEA has developed and provides three e-learning modules to clients with the aim of promoting the competitiveness of unemployed persons, job seekers and other interested persons in the labour market, providing support for increasing competitiveness without an on-site visit of the SEA, realizing its possibilities in electronic environment and flexible form for the acquisition and improvement of job search methods:

* the e-learning module “My money today and tomorrow. Financial literacy” has been developed with the aim of raising awareness and responsibility of Latvian residents for the formation of family budgets and personal financial management, the importance of taxes and their impact on the possibilities for receiving social guarantees. This service is offered to all SEA customers with the aim of strengthening each customer's individual financial literacy. A total of 10,723 people have completed the e-learning module “My money today and tomorrow. Financial literacy” in 2019-2021, 1,663 of them unemployed over 50 years;
* the e-learning module “How to build an effective job search strategy” offers methods for not getting confused in an unemployment situation and successfully finding work by structuring steps to be taken, setting your priorities and developing job search action plans. A total of 3,040 people, 448 unemployed over the age of 50, have completed the e-learning module “How to build an effective job search strategy” in 2019-2021;
* the e-learning module “preparing a motivational letter and preparing for a job interview” allows remote support for the content and technical preparation of the motivational letter, as well as support to prepare for a job interview. A total of 3,139 people have mastered the e-learning module “Preparing a motivational letter and preparing for a job interview” in 2019-2021, 442 of them unemployed over the age of 50.

**Volunteering**

**Objective:** to promote volunteering and to promote public participation in volunteering.

**Target group:** persons aged 13 and over.

**Financing and sources**: state budget financing.

Within **the framework of the event**, persons have the opportunity to register on the website www.brivpratigie.lv (administrated by SEA) as a potential volunteer and to apply for implementation of various volunteer activities and to engage in socially important activities on the basis of good will without remuneration, acquisition of new knowledge and skills, application of their skills and socialisation.

From 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2021, 375 persons aged 50 + have made use of this option.

1. <http://www.nva.gov.lv/index.php?cid=2&mid=511&txt=4645> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. One of the employers declined to participate in the measure because it concluded, after assessing all the conditions, that this would be an excessive administrative burden for employees, as well as there might be limited opportunities for employees in the region to benefit from the support measures offered. Two of the employers had initially applied for just a few employees, but wanted to apply for more when they closed. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. 3.1.1. non-conformity of the state of health with the work to be performed or signs of occupational diseases has been determined for the person in the mandatory health examination or the person has been sent to an extraordinary mandatory health examination, or the person has been in a long-term absence due to incapacity for work (during the last year incapacity for work for at least one month continuously or two months with interruptions), or the illness with an occupational disease has been determined for the person, or in performing an assessment of the potential of the work environment and human resources (hereinafter - assessment), non-conformity of the state of health with the work to be performed or signs of occupational diseases has been determined, which were not previously determined in the mandatory health examination. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Cabinet Regulations No. 504 provided that a lump-sum grant to an employer for the adjustment of the workplace of an employee has to be granted to one workplace (Cabinet Regulations No. 504, Sub-paragraph 18.2.2). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Regulations Regarding the Procedures for Organising and Financing of Active Employment Measures and Preventative Measures for Unemployment Reduction and Principles for Selection of Implementers of Measures [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Regulations for implementation of the measure 9.1.1.2. “Activation measures for long-term unemployed” of the specific objective 9.1.1 “Enhance integration of the disadvantaged unemployed persons in the labour market” of the Operational programme “Growth and Employment” which provided for the suspension of the disbursement of scholarship costs for unemployed persons who participated in the measure after 28 December 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. In accordance with Cabinet Regulations No. 173 of 27 March 2018, *Regulations Regarding the Population Groups at Risk of Social Exclusion Risk and Procedures for Granting, Registration and Supervision of the Status of a Social Enterprise* [↑](#footnote-ref-7)