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Analysis of the labour market : instruments, use and precautions

Part I : “ Labour market observatories ”

There are labour market observatories nowadays in most EU member states. They can be concerned with national labour markets as well as regional ones.

As its name indicates, the labour market observatory has as its main activity the observation of the functioning of the labour market. Its missions can be stated as follows:

- Follow up the evolution of labour and unemployment
- Establish and keep up to date the whole of indicators that characterise the functioning of the labour market;
- Carry out a preliminary analysis that allows to anticipate the needs in workforce and types of qualifications;
- Carry out thematic analyses regarding change and transformations of the economy and the industry
- Assure a permanent spreading of information and of obtained results
- Evaluate or order an evaluation of the measures taken in labour policies

To achieve its missions, the labour market observatory has developed tools and methods. The production of statistics and indicators allows in this way to x-ray the labour market in the most complete way. The use of a standardised methodology allows regional, national and European comparisons.

Explanatory and comprehensive studies of the labour market are worked out in order to try and understand and explain the behaviour of the different actors (employers, employees and job seekers) in the different states of the labour market and during transitions between those states. Other studies deal with the problems of quantitative and qualitative adjustment between supply and demand in the labour market.

The section ‘anticipation’ is supplied with the putting into place and the exploitation of forecasting and prospecting tools related to the dynamics of labour. The organisation of a

monitoring process on qualifications and training is carried out through co-operation with networks of existing observatories in order to identify the needs related to new technologies and new ways of organisation of labour.

The observatory is also in charge of the evaluation of existing systems and labour policies; it evaluates the coherence of the methodological framework of intervention. At certain points, it is good to do longitudinal research on the reintegration on the labour market of people leaving the educational system in order to know the sectors of activities of diploma holders.

The main results of studies and research are given in publications focused on the public and the sectors give and complete the tools of the observatory .