UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights - Call for Inputs

Report to the UN on 'Welfare and Control'

DISCLAIMER

The views expressed in this document reflect the opinions of the author

- Comments, observations and examples of good practices
- Unemployment benefit conditionalities

Issues, Evidence, Possible Way Forward

- **Eligibility Restrictions / Portability** - in the case of an EU national e.g. from Portugal who worked in another EU Member State ie Belgium and does not meet the administrative requirements (ONEM 2025 / EU 2024) s/he is not only not entitled to benefits but also is not provided the possibility of providing feedback on the service provided or information on available redress mechanisms including complaints (e.g. ombudsperson). Such feedback and/or complaints could contribute to improvements to the overall system if and when subject to an independent review.

- **Belgium / Outdated Legislation, Limited Capacities and Innovation** - as pointed out by the Ombudsperson in its latest report. Need to update the legislation which could introduce a regular review clause that makes use of inter alia the feedback/complaints received, as well as to strengthen capacities, and invest in innovation.

- **Job Search / Geographical Restrictions** - upon registration with the local employment services and without further support for relocation to regions other than the remote countryside (Portuguese employment services IEFP) the unemployed in Portugal are expected to search for a job at their place of residence. This does not constitute an enabling environment for suitable job search for candidates with careers in international civil service, very limited support to relocation within the country and to another EU Member State (EURES 2025). This limits the freedom of movement within the EU which could be conducive to finding suitable employment as appropriate to one's studies, skills and professional experience. Germany's mobility allowance (Vermittlungsbudget) as a good practice in this area.

- Substantial **gender** gaps in global legal and effective coverage. Only 33.8 per cent of the working-age population are legally covered by comprehensive social security systems, and within this category 39.3 per cent are men and 28.2 per cent women – an 11.1 percentage point difference (ILO 2024).

- The **unemployed** have **historically** been **left behind** and continue to be so - 16.7 per cent of unemployed people receive unemployment cash benefits in the event of job loss (2015-2023, ILO 2024). Need for a more preventative approach

Good Practices

- Canada, Germany (BA 2025, SGB 2024) and Japan's unemployment insurance schemes include an occupational or mobility allowance to encourage jobseekers to take new employment in other regions and countries or participate in retraining programmes (Carter, Bédard and Peyron Bista 2013 in ILO 2024)

Further Possible Way Forward

- Social protection systems more gender-responsive as part of a larger set of policies to address inequalities in labour markets, employment and society (ILO 2024).

- Integration of policies and measures to enhance working conditions and wages for more effective interventions and holistic approaches that do not overrely on unemployment insurance schemes (ILO 2024)

- Expanding legal scope and relaxing eligibility criteria for unemployment benefits (ILO 2024) within the framework of a more comprehensive approach to just transitions going beyond digital and environmental transitions to take into consideration inter alia the triple planetary crisis and its health related impacts (e.g. microplastics and nanoplastics in human bloodstream, Nature Medicine 2024)

- Unemployment protection schemes that facilitate access to geographical relocation (ILO 2024) within the framework of a wider and more integrated concept of just transition again going beyond a single transition type or sector e.g. energy

- Unemployment benefits that do not only sustain consumption (ILO 2024) in general but also sustainable consumption with positive effects both direct and indirect on beneficiaries and those from whom they buy goods and services e.g. fairtrade and organic food producers (multiplier effect)

- Future-proof social protection in light of the ongoing AI and robots revolutions (WEF 2025)

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