

4 Best practices in social inclusion across OECD countries: Ensuring adequate monetary support, active inclusion and co-ordinated services

This chapter presents several examples from OECD countries aimed at providing coherent approaches to social inclusion policies. It starts by looking at policies to reduce income poverty by ensuring access to adequate support through minimum income schemes. The chapter also analyses how countries promote active inclusion and facilitate co-ordinated services through co-ordination mechanisms across different policy areas and how they promote more and better service integration.

4.1. Introduction

The effectiveness of a country's social protection system depends not only on the type of services available but also on how these services interact with each other and with their intended beneficiaries. Social services – both cash and in-kind – are usually designed to address a specific need or vulnerability of the population they are intended to benefit. Benefits only work when individuals can easily access them. “Non-take-up” refers to the causes and remedies for individuals who, for any reason, do not access the benefits they are entitled to. Furthermore, services should not exist in isolation, as individuals face complex and multifaceted needs and vulnerabilities and often require multiple social interventions to ensure their well-being. The “co-ordination and integration of social inclusion services” aims to ensure that individuals can access the whole catalogue of interventions they may require. For this reason, this chapter aims to map best practices for improving the effectiveness of the delivery of social inclusion services, focusing on three main areas: 1) tackling non-take-up for established benefits; 2) improving adequacy and promoting active inclusion and/or work incentives; and 3) a better integration and co-ordination of existing services.

4.2. Ensuring comprehensive minimum income schemes in OECD countries

Most OECD countries operate comprehensive minimum income schemes (MIS) for working-age individuals and their families. These safety-net benefits aim to provide an acceptable standard of living for families unable to earn sufficient incomes from other sources. As measures to fight against poverty and social exclusion, MIS reduce income inequalities at the bottom of the income distribution and represent essential components of redistribution policies. This section presents the main purpose and characteristics of MIS from an international perspective. The design and provision of minimum income benefits have been a permanent and high-priority topic of interest for international organisations in the last decades, and even more so during the coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis (European Commission, 2023^[1]; Coady, 2021^[2]; Immervoll, 2010^[3]; OECD, 2020^[4]; OECD, 2021^[5]).

Cash transfers for working-age people provide a major income safety net in case of unemployment. The main goal of MIS is to provide financial support for low-income families to ensure an acceptable standard of living for people in need, but this is not their only objective. In most OECD countries, MIS also play an essential role in providing work incentives to the long-term unemployed and boosting the labour market and social integration through different policy tools (while keeping the cost of these non-contributory schemes affordable for central or local governments). Aspects like the eligibility rules, compatibility of the MIS with other cash support schemes in the country or with income from work means the level of allowances and duration of the benefit, work incentives, and conditionality can vary significantly across countries. These differences in the design of a scheme result in differences in the provision of it. The next section analyses the most important design aspects of MIS. See Immervoll (2010^[3]) for a more detailed discussion on MIS design elements. In addition, the OECD and the European Commission maintain well-documented databases, including descriptions of MIS in OECD and European countries, respectively.¹

4.2.1. Eligibility

The number of aspects that shape MIS is extensive. One of the reasons for this is that MIS (or, more generally, last-resort benefits) depend on a country's entire social protection architecture and must consider many social risks, including lack of income, material deprivation of children, social exclusion, homelessness and labour market inclusion. This section focuses on three relevant design aspects in this chapter: eligibility criteria, income adequacy, conditionality and other incentives to take up a job.

A large majority of minimum schemes in OECD countries share a number of basic principles regarding their field of application:

- The benefit is awarded to family units, including people living alone who constitute a one-member family unit.
- Any family member can claim the benefit, but income, assets and other eligibility conditions are assessed at the household level.
- The entitlement is determined considering household and single individual characteristics (for example, the basic allowance can be awarded to a household, and a top-up can be added to it because one household member is disabled).

Criteria like **nationality, residence or age** of claimants can also implicitly determine which population groups are included or excluded from the benefit.

Nationality and residence

Almost all European countries have no nationality requirements to receive minimum income benefits. However, several countries mention that non-nationals must hold a residency document. Since the residence condition is not applied to nationals, being a “legal”² resident in a country is the most widespread condition to access minimum income benefits,³ but with more or less stringent rules regarding the duration and type of residence. For example:

- In Austria, non-EU nationals are only entitled to guaranteed minimum resources/social benefits if they have lived legally in Austria for more than five years. In Italy, access to the *Reddito di Cittadinanza* requires at least ten years of legal residence, two of which on an ongoing basis. Luxembourg requires temporary or permanent residence for European Union/European Economic Area citizens and having resided in Luxembourg for at least 5 years during the last 20 years for other foreigners.
- In Denmark, any person lawfully residing in the country can access minimum income, but the support entitlement depends on time of residence and employment. In Portugal, access to the *Rendimento social de inserção* needs legal residence for at least one year for nationals of third countries. In Sweden, everyone with the right to stay in the country can access the social welfare system. No permanent residence is required.

Residence conditions do not necessarily exclude some categories like refugees and asylum seekers from public support. The most common approach to protect these populations are: 1) treat refugees or asylum seekers, officially recognised by country authorities or under the protection of international agreements, as resident, and hence consider them eligible for social welfare benefits; and 2) put in place specific benefits for these groups. In general, special provisions exist for these groups in all European countries. For example:

- In Germany, special provisions also apply to persons entitled to benefits under the *Asylum Seekers' Benefits Act (AsylbLG)*. These include asylum seekers, tolerated persons, persons with special humanitarian residence permits and foreigners whose deportation is enforceable.
- In Sweden, recognised refugees are entitled to social assistance on equal grounds as other residents as long as the residence permit is valid. In contrast, asylum seekers are not entitled to social assistance for livelihood support and housing (instead, they receive a different allowance from the State).

Age

Regarding the age of claimants, some general principles can also be identified. The **minimum age** of minimum income benefit claimants is generally set to 18 years, or civil majority if different from 18. However, many countries (Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia and Sweden) do not mention a lower age limit to receive the benefit. In Finland, there

is no lower limit for age, but, in practice, minimum income benefits are not directly awarded to minors because parents and responsible adults are obliged to support their children. In Denmark, the general minimum income benefit is awarded to individuals above 30 because a specific subsistence benefit exists for 18-29 year-olds (Educational assistance). A few countries establish a higher age to be eligible, either explicitly (Luxembourg at 25 years, Spain at 23) or because the eligibility rules implicitly exclude many individuals, like in France, where the Revenu de solidarité active [RSA] is awarded to people over 25 and to youth between 18 and 25 if they have worked at least 3 214 hours (i.e. the equivalent of two years of full-time work) during the last three years, which is very restrictive. Finally, exceptions exist in many countries when the claimant is a minor but lives alone, has children or lives with other minors without support from other adults.

Regarding the **maximum age**, the limit depends on whether a specific non-contributory or solidarity benefit for old-age individuals (like the system of non-contributory pensions in Spain) exists in a country. Since these benefits are generally linked to the statutory retirement age, the condition to claim the benefit is around 65 years old. There is no upper age limit in countries with no specific minimum income benefit for old-age individuals.

The existence of age limits does not prevent children or other individuals from receiving benefits when they belong to a household where an eligible person lives and can claim benefits. For example, a 90-year-old person who receives an old-age pension and lives with their working-age relatives does not prevent the household *per se* from claiming the benefit (but the old-age pension will be counted as part of the household income). Most problematic is the situation of poor youth living alone and who are not eligible for the minimum income benefit due to their age. This situation can lead to extreme poverty and severe material deprivation among youth, constituting a strong disincentive for poor, low-skilled youth to start an independent life.

Income and other assets assessment

The **means test** is probably the most important element in the design of minimum income benefits. It includes an assessment of a claimant's household income and, in most cases, financial and real estate assets (this is also the case of the Ingreso Mínimo Vital (IMV) and most regional minimum income benefits in Spain). How countries define household income and the assets included and excluded from the means test is highly variable. In fact, these definitions are a key element of the social protection system of the country (and of regions in federal and semi-federal countries). They can be linked with many other policies, such as the tax system, disability and long-term care benefits, housing policies, family and school and labour market policies. This is not surprising as minimum income benefits are the last resort of social protection and, hence, depend on the eligibility rules and the degree of protection of other, more specific policies. It is then extremely difficult to analyse the means test of minimum benefits in a country without a deeper understanding of large parts of its social protection system, which would be out of the scope of this report.

Most OECD countries refer to the whole family unit in their definitions of income and other assets. Even here, the definition of a family unit can vary across countries (for example, in Finland, in some cases, adults living together can apply for the minimum income benefit independently and consequently, income will also be assessed independently). Also, in a large majority of countries, income considered in the means test is net of taxes and social contributions. Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Hungary, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia and Sweden explicitly mention this. All countries include several deductions and items exempted from the calculation. As mentioned above, the rationale behind these exemptions lies in the design of each country's whole social protection system. Some examples of these deductions can be:

- Rent housing costs and interest mortgage payments.
- Heating, gas and electricity costs.

- Refundable tax credits.
- Income from specific social benefits, especially those related to care (long-term care or money to care for disabled children).
- In some countries, a fixed amount of money or a percentage is deducted from work income.

A similar situation exists regarding **real estate, financial and other assets**. The perimeter of items considered to assess eligibility for the minimum income benefit varies across countries. A few common principles can be identified, however. Among them (with many variants) are:

- Personal dwellings are not always considered as part of the assets:
 - Some countries include the main residence as part of the assets.
 - Others exclude the main residence from the assets.
 - Others consider the size or value of the dwelling.
- Properties other than the main residence, including those belonging to minors, are always considered part of the assets (and eventual rents they produce are part of the income). Again, some variants exist in the way countries evaluate these properties. In some cases, the administration uses the cadastral value, and in others, the market value.
- Regarding movable assets, savings and other financial instruments, those of every member of a household are considered assets but, in many cases, above some threshold (because it is considered that a reasonable amount of savings is necessary to the subsistence of a family and thus it would not be fair to consider it as an asset). Debts other than the interest mortgage payments for the main lodging are generally not considered negative assets, especially when the debt has been contracted recently. The rest of the movable assets, like jewellery, cars, ships and other valuables, are generally included among the assets test except for those objects that are reasonably needed for the normal running of the home (this can include the car, for example).
- Some administrations cross-check the declared assets and income with information from administrative sources and evaluate the consistency between a claimant's declarations and the estimated material status of the household.

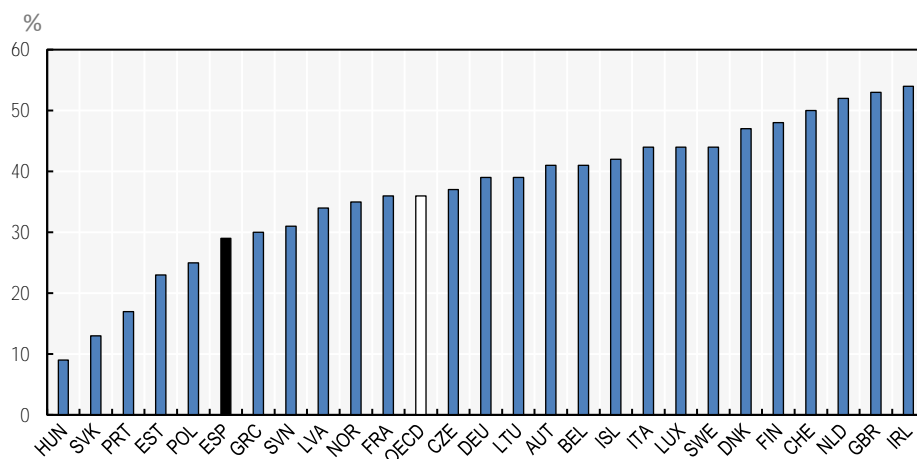
4.2.2. Generosity and coverage

A challenge that makes it difficult to meet the poverty reduction goal of MIS is the mismatch between the support provided by the benefit and a claimant's monetary needs. Income adequacy can be measured by comparing beneficiaries' entitlements with the poverty threshold in the country, by comparing them to the income of low-wage earners (for example, with the minimum wage), or, as is common in less developed countries, by comparing the income support with the value of a "basic needs basket". In many European countries, minimum income benefit levels are significantly below national poverty lines, ranging between 20% and 80% of the national poverty thresholds (European Commission, 2022^[6]). In 2018, only two EU countries (Ireland and the Netherlands) provided minimum income benefits above the poverty threshold for some types of households, which implied being above 60% of median household disposable income. In fact, minimum income benefits as a percentage of the poverty line decreased in almost all member states in 2019 (EAPN, 2020^[7]).⁴ It must be mentioned that in most OECD countries, the cash support provided by minimum income benefits is modulated by the presence (and sometimes age) of children and complemented by cash top-ups or in-kind benefits according to a family's needs (transport vouchers, heating supplements, tickets to buy food, etc.). In those cases, the actual support provided by the minimum income benefit can be significantly higher than the basic statutory amount suggests. However, the equivalent monetary effect of these supplements is difficult to analyse, particularly from a cross-country perspective.

According to the latest available figures (2022), the average amount of statutory minimum income benefits for OECD countries is 38% of the median disposable income, with 13 EU member states below this figure. The highest level of adequacy of provision is still found in Ireland, with 55%. The United Kingdom (53%), Italy (44%) and Germany (39%) are some other countries with higher adequacy than the average (see Figure 4.1). From a comparative perspective, the adequacy of minimum income benefit as a percentage of median disposable income in Spain is below the OECD average. Considering a household formed by a single recipient, the IMV would only cover 29% of the median disposable income, which is quite far from the national poverty line.

Figure 4.1. Gap between the poverty line and minimum income benefit levels in selected OECD countries, 2022

Percentage of median disposable income, single 40-year-olds without children



Note: This indicator measures the income of jobless families relying on guaranteed minimum income benefits as a percentage of the median disposable income in the country. Housing supplements are included, subject to relevant eligibility conditions.

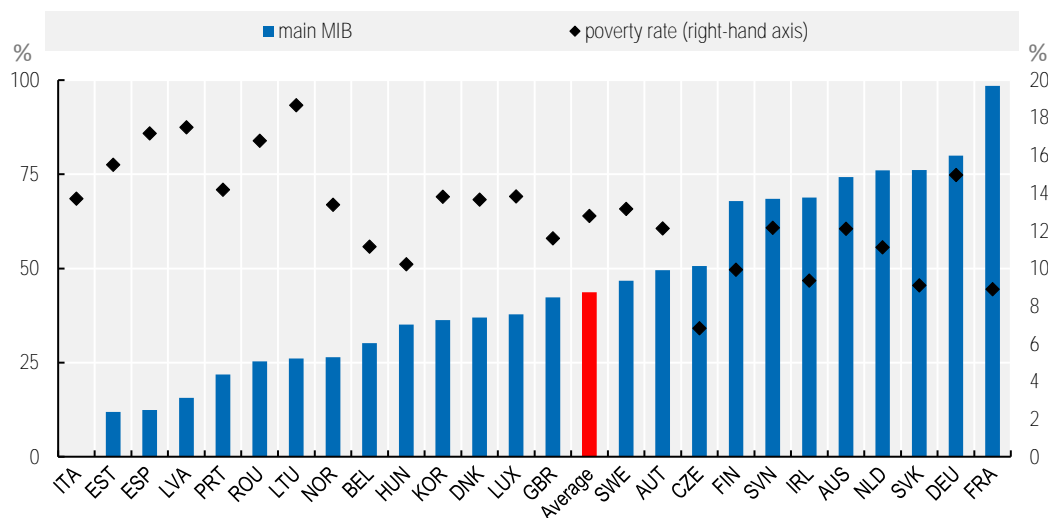
The adequacy of minimum income benefits can change depending on family composition. The example of a single person without children is taken for the sake of simplicity.

Source: OECD (2023^[9]), "Adequacy of minimum income benefits" (indicator), <https://doi.org/10.1787/dcb819cd-en>.

Adequate levels of MIS certainly help poor households *who receive the benefit* but do not guarantee a minimum living standard for all families in a country. Effective access to income support is analysed by Immervoll et al. (2022^[9]) and Hye (2020^[10]). On average, less than one-third of poor working-age households across OECD countries received support from MIS in recent years (see Figure 4.2). Recipient numbers in Australia, France, Germany, the Netherlands and the Slovak Republic are close to the estimated number of income-poor households (which does not necessarily reflect the number of households eligible for the benefit). In most other countries, the ratios are 50% or lower and below 20% in Estonia and Latvia. Since Spain introduced the IMV in June 2020, recipients of means-tested benefits in Spain in Figure 4.2 are mostly recipients of Rentas Míminas.

Figure 4.2. Share of minimum income scheme recipients in selected OECD countries, 2016

Percentage of income-poor working-age households



Note: "Income poor" refers to households with income below 50% of the national median. Recipient numbers refer to the "main" minimum income benefit (MIB) in each country plus specific lone-parent benefits (in Ireland and the United Kingdom) and non-contributory unemployment benefits (in Australia, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Spain and the United Kingdom). Comparable recipient data were not available for Greece and Poland. A national minimum-income programme was introduced in Italy in September 2016 and was extended subsequently. The denominator for Australia and Ireland is poor working-age individuals, as main MIBs are awarded at the individual level. The ratio of benefit recipients to income-poor households could, in principle, exceed 100% if recipients include large numbers of non-poor households. Lump-sum payments, grants, supplements and refundable tax credits are not included.

Source: OECD (2022^[11]), *Social Benefit Recipients (SOCR) Database*, <https://www.oecd.org/social/social-benefit-recipients-database.htm>; authors' calculations based in EU-SILC for poverty headcounts estimates; OECD (2022^[12]), *OECD Income Distribution Database (IDD)*, <https://www.oecd.org/social/income-distribution-database.htm>; taken from Hye et al. (2020^[10]), "How reliable are social safety nets?: Value and accessibility in situations of acute economic need", <https://doi.org/10.1787/65a269a3-en>.

Although MIS are targeted to low-income households, not all of them receive support. The reasons behind this "low coverage" are multiple. As mentioned above, being income-poor does not necessarily imply that a household is eligible for the MIS. Eligibility rules might, de facto, exclude some population categories; income thresholds used in the means test may not necessarily coincide with the poverty line (in general they are below it); income-poor households might not be eligible because they have financial or real estate assets; households that would be potentially eligible do not apply to the benefit (non-take-up is discussed below in the Spanish context); and finally, families who apply to the benefit do not receive it for administrative reasons (long delays, sanctions, etc.).

4.2.3. Conditionality in minimum income schemes

Minimum income support systems serve as a safety net of last resort in most developed welfare states. Minimum income benefits should not be seen as an isolated branch of social protection; in most countries, they are closely linked to contribution-financed social insurance schemes (unemployment insurance, contributory pensions) and to social and health services. Therefore, many European countries associate allocating minimum income benefits with behavioural conditions and work incentives. Indeed, to improve the effectiveness of MIS and social and labour inclusion, the European Commission recently launched a Proposal for a Council Recommendation on Adequate Minimum Income Ensuring Active Inclusion.

The type of conditions, how conditionality is implemented, and eventual sanctions if conditions are not fulfilled greatly differ across countries, as do the outcomes. Recent evidence shows that, in general, Nordic

and continental European welfare states with robust social protection systems and MIS show better outcomes in core socio-economic areas, such as poverty and social exclusion risks. However, labour market integration shows some dualisms in continental Europe. MIS are also quite strong in Anglo-Saxon liberal welfare states. In continental Europe and Nordic countries, MIS play an essential role in stabilising income and inclusion, although they are secondary to unemployment insurance systems. MIS are the crucial stabilisation mechanism in the liberal setting (e.g. the United Kingdom and Ireland in Europe, but also in Australia, Canada and, to a lesser extent, in the United States). At the same time, they are less strong in the southern European and post-socialist models (Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, 2023^[13]).

Across OECD countries, several common, or at least very frequent, conditions asked of beneficiaries of minimum income or non-contributory unemployment benefits include the following:

- For working-age unemployed people, the obligation of being registered in public employment services (PES) exists in most OECD European countries. This obligation is at least applied to the benefit claimant. One exception might be Belgium, where one of the conditions for being able to claim the right to social integration (*droit à l'intégration sociale*) is that the claimant must demonstrate his/her willingness to work (which is different from active job search) unless this is impossible for health or equity reasons. The rule can be more or less strict, for example, in Poland, where being registered in PES is a condition, but its application is not strict, and the final decision is left to the discretionary decision of the Social Assistance Centres.
- The obligation, intended as a requirement that might entail sanctions if not fulfilled, of participating in the active labour market programmes proposed by PES and taking up reasonable job offers is also applied in many countries, with differences in the definition of a reasonable job offer. This is the case in Austria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia and Sweden.
- Other conditions not directly related to labour market integration can be required depending on a claimant's characteristics and sometimes on the local context. For example, participation in social integration programmes is often proposed by social services, and since social services are provided at a local level, depending on the municipality or the region where the claimant lives, the availability of these programmes can change. For example, in Austria, a condition might be that the claimant participates in German language courses, but the duration of the course and the sanctions vary across *Länder*. In Belgium, the individual social integration plan is compulsory for persons under 25 years, when granting the right to social integration is subject to continuing studies. In Denmark, a MIS specifically targets youth (Educational Assistance), which is followed by an instruction to be engaged in education as soon as possible and, if not possible, to participate in social programmes aimed at improving the possibility of starting an education. In Latvia, some minimum income beneficiaries might be asked to participate in medical and social rehabilitation measures, among other activation conditions.

Of course, the exemption of active job searches and other conditions listed above exists in all countries and is applied after assessing a claimant's circumstances. The most common examples of exemptions, always subject to careful assessment by relevant authorities, are:

- **Age:** People very close to retirement age or very young.
- **Being engaged** in work, education or training programmes.
- **Health reasons:** In general, a health assessment determines if the person is totally or partially unable to work. Those unable to work are exempted from job-search-related conditions. For those partially unable to work, it depends on other circumstances. For example, in Germany, they are subject to job-search conditions as well.
- **Care reasons:** People who care for young children, sick or disabled adults or very old people are generally exempted from job-search activities.

In some countries, the minimum income benefit is designed as a package composed of a basic or general entitlement and a number of top-ups targeted at specific expenses or social risks. Beneficiaries of the MIS receive, as a minimum, the basic entitlement and, depending on the family's needs and conditions, one or more top-ups. The most widely used supplements are the housing supplement and the child supplement. This kind of design allows policy makers to associate behavioural conditions, which are seldom general, to specific top-ups, without questioning the eligibility for the basic benefit, by definition, of what the family needs to subsist. Two interesting examples of this kind of design are the minimum income benefits in the Slovak Republic and Switzerland (for a detailed description, consult the country policy descriptions of the OECD Benefits and Wages portal at <https://www.oecd.org/social/benefits-and-wages/benefits-and-wages-country-specific-information.htm>).

In the Slovak Republic, as of 2022, the Assistance in Material Need (Pomoc v hmotnej núdzi) has five components. The Benefit in Material Need (Dávka v hmotnej núdzi) corresponds to the basic entitlement awarded to all beneficiaries. There are four targeted supplements: the protection allowance (Ochranný príspevok), intended to ensure the personal expenditure of a household member who is not able to secure or increase his or her income by working; the activation allowance (Aktivačný príspevok), provided to support the acquisition, maintenance or increase of knowledge, professional skills and work habits for a career; the allowance for a dependent child (Príspevok na nezaopatrené dieťa), designed to support education, training and overall development of a child in the household; and the housing allowance (Príspevok na bývanie). For example, job search and activation conditions apply only to those who receive the activation allowance; also, the allowance for a dependent child is paid only if the child attends compulsory education between the ages of six and 16 years.

In Switzerland, as of 2022, the Guaranteed Minimum Income (Aide sociale, Zurich canton rules) is composed of a basic benefit, which corresponds to the minimum subsistence level for life in Switzerland that is consistent with human dignity and five specific supplements that are allowed that take into account expenses for basic needs as well as other needs depending on individual circumstances. They include housing costs, medical care costs, circumstantial costs (e.g. extra expenses due to an accident or serious illness), integration supplements for persons over 16 (i.e. the activation package), and integration benefits for those who cannot benefit from the integration supplement. In this context, specific conditions exist to access each supplement, and benefits can be reduced if the beneficiary refuses to co-operate or does not make sufficient efforts to integrate. However, the subsistence level remains guaranteed.

Conditionality is widely used to reinforce the effectiveness of social and labour market inclusion programmes linked to allocating minimum income benefits. However, the abuse of conditional benefits can be counterproductive, as excessive obligations and administrative burdens reduce take-up and increase the stigma effect. In addition, some beneficiaries experience more obstacles in fulfilling their obligations (i.e. due to health problems, caregiver responsibilities or lack of means of transport). In this sense, the examples of Germany and the United Kingdom have been selected as practices that encourage conditionality adapted to beneficiaries' circumstances, allowing for flexibility and change of requirements.

Germany: Sustainable integration in the new Co-operation Plan

From July 2023 on, the new Co-operation Plan (Kooperationsplan) of the Citizen's Income will reduce administrative burden, as the number of sheets and legal terms included in the plan has been reduced. Moreover, the conditions to be fulfilled are agreed upon in co-operation with the beneficiary, and the strictness of the conditions for accepting any kind of employment is reduced in favour of a more sustainable integration over time. The plan allows for more participation in the decision of the user's own labour activation measures.

The plan is drafted jointly by the recipient and the case manager or integration officer in job centres. The labour offers and activation measures are discussed in the framework of a participatory agreement, formulated in simple language and adapted to the personal case. The plan also includes a new arbitration

procedure to ensure that beneficiaries and job centres have a balanced level of decision. Thus, in the event of conflicts or disagreement in the drafting of the plan, arbitration allows beneficiaries to submit a claim for a new pact. In addition, the priority of placement has been suppressed. Up to now, the activation of benefit claimants capable of working has focused on active job search and entry into work without delay (or participation in active integration measures). In the new plan, vocational training and further training will be promoted as a higher priority to allow for sustainable integration over time (Hanesch, 2022^[14]).

Although the new scheme is far from unconditional, it favours greater user involvement in drafting the activities to be fulfilled. Regarding sanctions, once the co-operation agreement has been drafted, there is a “period of trust”, during which only the failure to attend appointments with the job centre will be sanctioned by reducing the entitlement up to a maximum of 10%.

United Kingdom: The Claimant Commitment and conditionality groups

In the United Kingdom, claimants eligible for the Universal Credit (UC) must sign a Claimant Commitment (CC), which sets up a personalised plan of activation measures. The system also establishes conditionality groups with different levels of requirements. This document is a personalised plan setting out the applicant’s responsibilities concerning their receipt of the UC. The conditions set out are highly adapted to the beneficiary’s situation, which increases the effectiveness of the intervention and makes it easier to fulfil the measures of labour and/or social insertion. For instance, the beneficiary must declare whether he/she is willing to perform job search activities and, if so, commit to a given number of hours of job search as well as the amount of salary and hours available per week to work. Thus, the real options of the beneficiary with his or her expectations for employment are captured in the CC.

Moreover, when applying for UC, applicants are classified into one of four work-related activity groups, more commonly known as conditionality groups, depending on their personal circumstances and barriers to work. In this way, the extent to which beneficiaries must look for work is individualised, and as circumstances change, applicants can also move from one level of conditionality to another. The four categories are the following:

- **All work-related requirements:** The beneficiary actively searches for a job or to increase his/her earnings. This includes looking for jobs, applying for jobs and going to interviews.
- **Work-focused interview and work preparation requirements:** In this scenario, the beneficiary should maintain regular contact with the work counsellor and engage in activities to prepare for work. This includes things like preparing a CV and attending training or gaining work experience.
- **Work-focused interview requirements:** Regular meetings with the work counsellor.
- **No work-related activity requirements:** There is no work-related condition.

In addition, linked to these conditionality groups, applicants may take up one of the six labour market schemes for which UC offers different services (see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1. Groups of conditionality and their labour regimes in the UK Universal Credit

All work-related requirements	Work-focused interview and work preparation requirements	Work-focused interview requirements	No work-related activity requirements
Scheme 1 – Intensive job search: For those able to work but not working or working but earning low incomes. They are expected to take intensive measures to find work or increase their income. Regular job-focused interviews, job search reviews (at least every	Scheme 3 – Work preparation: For individuals who cannot work immediately. Applicants whose capacity for work has been assessed as limited or who are responsible for a child of three or four years of age. They must regularly attend work-focused interviews and undertake work	Scheme 4 – Work-focused interview: For people who expect to work in the future but are currently over-committed to their childcare responsibilities. This includes people who are the primary caregiver for one or more children aged one or two. Only required to attend work-focused	Scheme 5 – No work requirement: For those who are not currently going to work. This includes people with limited capacity to work, those over state pension age, the primary carer for a child under one year old, or a severely disabled person for 35 hours a week or more.

All work-related requirements	Work-focused interview and work preparation requirements	Work-focused interview requirements	No work-related activity requirements
two weeks) and other work-related activities are set up.	preparation activities.	interviews.	
Scheme 2 – Light touch: For those whose income exceeds the administrative threshold of insufficient income. They must commit to getting a better or higher-paid job, but the requirements are less frequent and strict.			Scheme 6 – Working enough: For those earning over the individual threshold or self-employed with a minimum floor income. This means that there may be some out-of-work claimants in this regime. They are not expected to attend work-focused interviews or undertake any work-related requirements.

Source: Department for Work and Pensions (2023^[15]), *Universal Credit – Conditionality group and labour market regime policy*, <https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/366996/response/904624/attach/5/2%20Conditionality%20and%20regime%20Overview.pdf>.

4.2.4. Work incentives

Participation tax rates when moving from minimum income benefits to work

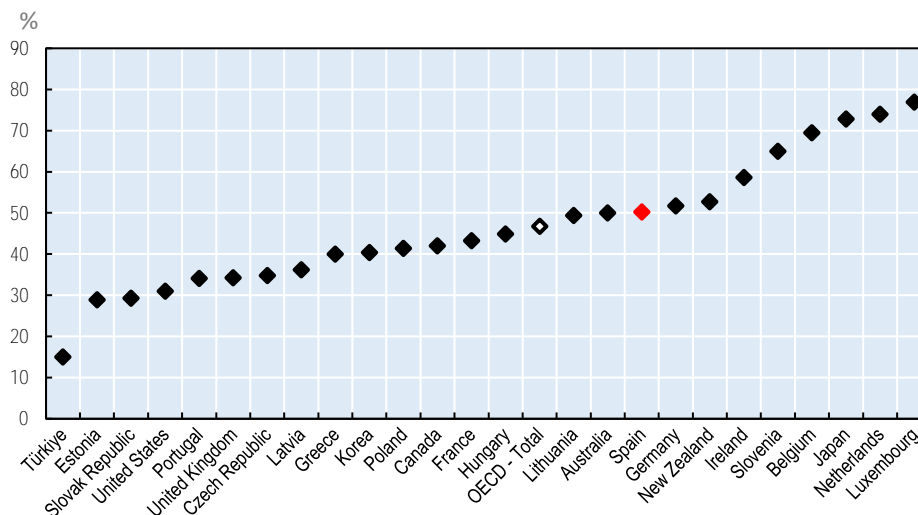
The fight against poverty is not the only objective of last-resort income support schemes. As mentioned, MIS are also aimed at preventing people from social and labour market exclusion. Under the generally accepted assumption that passive benefits constitute a negative (or, at least, not positive) incentive for people to seek and accept work, in recent years, most countries have made access to MIS conditional on job-search activities and participation in active labour market programmes.⁵ Therefore, in the design of MIS, there is an underlying conflict between providing adequate income support and ensuring that recipients have sufficient incentives to work. Since most minimum income benefits are reduced or withdrawn completely as someone in receipt takes up a paid job, it is interesting to quantify the extent to which such a move increases the net income of a household.

One of the most widely used indicators to quantify this is the participation tax rate (PTR). The PTR is an indicator of financial work incentives that measures the fraction of gross earnings that a family loses to higher taxes, higher social contributions and/or lower benefits when a family member makes a transition from one employment status to another; for example, from out-of-work to in-work or increasing working hours (e.g. from part-time to full-time work). Higher PTR values mean higher financial disincentives; in other terms, the lower the PTR, the greater the financial incentive to work.

To end this contextual section, Figure 4.3 shows PTRs in 2022 in OECD countries when a person who is in receipt of the minimum income benefit takes a full-time job paid at the statutory minimum wage in the country, that is, at the bottom end of the wage distribution. To simplify the comparison, the figure shows PTRs for a single person without children. Many countries, including Spain, have PTRs between 35% and 55%. In four countries (Belgium, Japan, Luxembourg and the Netherlands), more than 70% of the additional earnings from a new job are lost due to higher taxes and lower benefits.⁶ An opposite case is Türkiye, where only 15% of the additional earnings are taxed away.

Figure 4.3. Share of additional gross earnings lost to either higher taxes or lower benefits when a jobless person takes up employment in selected OECD countries, 2022

Single 40-year-old without children



Note: Results correspond to a single 40-year-old person without children who moves from receiving the minimum income benefit to a full-time job paid at the minimum wage. Eventual in-to-work benefits and housing supplements are excluded. The figure shows countries with a national minimum income scheme and a national statutory minimum wage.

Source: OECD (2022^[16]), *OECD Tax-benefit Data Portal*, <https://www.oecd.org/els/soc/benefits-and-wages/data/>.

Income disregards

Including a work incentive component in designing minimum income benefits rather than introducing job search requirements as an absolute condition to receive the benefit is a strategy employed in some countries. This can be done through specific income disregards in the calculation of the available income of claimants or through the implementation of specific work incentive modules, like in the example of modular design found in Switzerland and the Slovak Republic. Modular design allows for the delivery of the basic benefit (which, by definition, must be provided to those who need it to subsist) to be separated from possible supplements that may be conditioned to some specific behaviours or situations.

Another example of income disregard can be found in Estonia in the Subsistence Benefit. This benefit is an aid the government grants to people in need, which the local government pays. The subsistence level is based on minimum expenses for food, clothing and other goods and services covering basic needs. Since 2018, to motivate employment, a proportion of the household's income is temporarily disregarded when calculating the benefit. The income disregard is up to six months, being 100% disregarded during the first two months and 50% the following four months (Ward et al., 2023^[17]).

In-work benefits

In-work benefits are another strategy that raises the financial return to working for individuals. Such a strategy consists of benefits paid as a lump sum or for a limited period when the recipient takes up a job. Introducing time limits to the provision of in-work benefits (also known as an into-work benefit) may help attenuate some of the system's drawbacks in terms of possible financial disincentives to move up the wage scale. Moreover, time limits tend to lower the cost of an in-work benefit in contrast to more open-ended benefit schemes (OECD, 2005^[18]).

Therefore, the in-work benefit is only awarded if the potential beneficiary takes-up a job. Examples of different ways of implementing in-work benefits include:

- In Italy, for the recipients of the *Reddito di Cittadinanza* who take up a job, 20% of earnings are disregarded when calculating benefit entitlements. The duration of these disregards applies after the first months of employment until the new household economic condition has been incorporated in the next annual ISEE (Equivalent Economic Situation Indicator) declaration, i.e. within a maximum of 12 months from the in-work transition.
- In France, the *Employment Bonus (Prime d'activité)* is an into-work benefit targeted at low-income individuals. It is granted to supplement the earnings of people aged 18 and over who work.
- In Lithuania, if the recipient of the minimum income benefit takes up employment, he/she is entitled to an additional benefit (called in-work social benefit). The benefit amount depends on the duration of the payment received: between 1 and 3 months, the new benefit is 100% of the average social assistance received during the last 6 months; between 4 and 6 months, the new benefit is 80% of said average; and between 7 and 12 months, it is 50% of said average.
- In-work benefits can also be provided through the tax system by using non-refundable tax credits. The most emblematic example of this type is the *Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)* in the United States. The EITC is a federal tax credit for working people with low and moderate incomes. It boosts the incomes of low-wage workers while offsetting federal payroll and income taxes.

Support to geographical mobility

Support to geographical mobility can often represent a good alternative for jobseekers willing to commute or move to a job in a different city. Measures combining the promotion of labour mobility within a country and assisting jobseekers during the process have been available in some countries to increase the chances of unemployed people finding a job. Relocation assistance and mobility subsidies are some policy instruments that can be employed in this regard (Immervoll and Knotz, 2018_[19]).

For instance, the Australian Government introduced in 2014 the *Relocation Assistance to Take Up a Job Program (RATTUAJ)* to assist eligible participants in relocating to take up an offer of employment. The programme covers the expenses associated with relocating for employment opportunities, including apprenticeships. RATTUAJ can provide up to AUS 9 000 (Australian dollars) to assist the jobseeker with moving and offer practical assistance during the relocation. The payments typically work as reimbursement of justified expenses to the jobseeker. Many jobseekers in the RATTUAJ successfully remained off income support payments or reported earnings 12 months after entering into their relocation agreement. Specifically, 58% of participants under *Job Services Australia (JSA)* and 63% under *Jobactive* (the job service substituting JSA in 2015) were no longer reliant on income support (Government of Australia, 2016_[20]).

In Romania, the *Mobility Package* implemented in 2016 aimed at promoting the mobility of unemployed individuals by granting mobility subsidies to those who reside or establish a new residence in areas covered by the package. If someone works more than 15 km away from their home, they receive a monthly bonus for 12 months to cover commuting expenses. Unemployed individuals who found a job more than 50 km away from their original residence and required a change in residence or relocation to neighbouring areas could receive a non-taxable installation bonus. This bonus covers living expenses in the new home and/or family reunification and is provided in two instalments. The new mobility package also supports the relocation of the entire family by providing a supplement if the family members also change their residence (Cerkez et al., 2018_[21]).

4.3. Addressing the non-take-up of minimum income

The gap between the number of individuals actually receiving a benefit and the number of individuals fulfilling the statutory eligibility requirements – often called non-take-up of social benefits - undermines a benefit's effectiveness by both limiting its overall reach and by often excluding the most marginal individuals from coverage (Ko and Moffitt, 2022^[22]).

Individuals not claiming benefits they are entitled to is a significant problem in social policy making as high rates of non-take-up undermine a benefit's intended effect of poverty reduction and providing a minimum income floor for individuals. It also prevents individuals from connecting to other services often linked with benefit receipt, such as accessing active labour market policies for unemployment insurance beneficiaries. Individuals who do not receive the benefits they need can fall into destitution, become marginalised in society, or suffer from declining health. Lastly, non-take-up can have non-negligible long-term costs. All these factors do not only impose high burdens on individuals but also create additional costs for the health and social systems.

There are many reasons behind non-take-up, which are discussed in more detail in Chapter 3. Most importantly, complex and arduous application and compliance procedures discourage otherwise eligible individuals from claiming a benefit. Other factors include incomplete information on eligibility, stigma associated with benefit receipt, low actual or perceived benefit amounts that make applying for benefits not worthwhile, and low administrative capacity resulting in eligible applicants incorrectly deemed non-eligible (Frey and Richardson, 2013^[23]; Ko and Moffitt, 2022^[22]). Moreover, there is evidence that reasons for non-take-up differ by both programme type and the characteristics of potential beneficiaries, with, e.g. non-take-up for universally eligible programmes being more often due to lack of information than stigma.

4.3.1. Facilitating the application process for benefits

While online applications, and digitalisation in general, have been utilised more during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, the digital gap and digital barriers can still make it too difficult for certain claimants to submit their applications online. Obstacles in this area may include the lack of a regular Internet connection, electronic devices or knowledge of how to navigate online forms. Providing alternatives to claimants, such as in-person or telephone applications, is key to facing these barriers. The more application channels available for citizens, the easier it is to reach all populations that could potentially benefit from minimum income and social inclusion processes. The extra cost an administration bears can be compensated as the overall process becomes more fluid and transparent for the whole population, notably by reducing the number of consultations and complaints that have a cost for an administration.

This is the case of the basic income for jobseekers in Germany, known as SGB II. The process to apply for the SGBII has been digitalised since the beginning of 2023. Previously, the only option was physically applying for the benefit in person at employment offices.⁷ However, to ensure that digital barriers do not prevent claimants from applying, in-person applications with paper forms are still possible at job centres. Combining the physical and online modes streamlines the process for those claimants who have access to electronic devices and/or have impediments to travelling in person to make a claim.

UC in the United Kingdom also provides different alternatives for applicants who may face issues related to digital barriers. UC claimants can apply either online, by creating an online account to apply and manage their application, or via phone in some instances, such as lack of Internet access.

Another example is the case of Luxembourg. Depending on their personal circumstances, claimants can apply for the minimum income (Revenu d'inclusion social, REVIS) in person or by telephone. The standard procedure takes place in person at the Fond National de Solidarité (FNS) offices with the required documents and paper application forms. The application form can be found on the website of both the FNS

and the REVIS page. Claimants can decide whether to fill in the form on line and submit it in paper in person or ask for the paper format at the FNS offices and start the application there. Claimants can be supported in the filling of the form by their assigned counsellor or by an FNS staff member.

A key element common to these examples is the possibility of providing support to claimants, especially those with digital barriers. Enabling the possibility of in-person or phone interactions, where applicants are supported by a professional in the process, can help ensure that applicants are not lost along the way due to administrative complications and burdens.

The readability of application forms is another key element of the process. Clear and simple questionnaires help the user understand the process and be able to complete it promptly. At the European level, the European Council adopted a recommendation on adequate minimum income in January 2023.⁸ Among other considerations, the Council recommends member states: 1) put in place transparent and non-discriminatory eligibility criteria to allow all people in need, and especially young adults and women, to access minimum income support; 2) accelerate the treatment of submissions with the objective of issuing a reply on a minimum income application within 30 days of the submission date; and 3) ensure access to user-friendly information on minimum income support, while proactively reaching out to people without sufficient resources to encourage take-up. Research on facilitating the online experience of users has identified a series of elements that can empower online users to navigate a webpage or form (The Behavioural Insights Team, 2020_[24]):

- the use of plain, simple language,
- useful guidance through choice settings,
- ease of navigation, and
- personalised content.

All these elements can be found in the online submission form for the UC in the United Kingdom, which provides ease of navigation and useful guidance throughout the process. The online questionnaire also produces personalised content; indeed, as applicants provide information about their work status, health, caring responsibilities or housing situation, the system generates supplementary questions to tailor the form. For instance, if the beneficiary has children, the platform will guide them through further questions about their children. This personalised and guided way of completing an application not only implies better data collection (more complete and individualised) but also avoids users having to read lengthy forms with questions that do not apply to their personal situations. In addition, the form uses simple and plain language, as questions are designed to be readable by anyone. These may include simple questions such as “Do you have children?” or “Do you pay for your housing?”.

Another example of the use of plain and simple language can be found in Luxembourg. The form for the REVIS benefit is only two pages long, with a supplementary annex of the same length for each adult household member. The main form mostly gathers personal data on the claimant and the family unit, while the annex covers supplementary information. Questions in the annex are drafted in simple language, only use “yes” or “no” responses and occupy a maximum of one line in the document. Examples of questions include “Are you registered as a jobseeker?” or “Do you receive unemployment income?”.

Another vital element is the extent to which the comprehensiveness of information gathered in submission forms can facilitate the assessment of claimants’ needs, as well as their later referral to the most relevant administration (most commonly, employment or social services). First, the automatic gathering of information in different areas (employment, education, housing, health) can facilitate the later assessment of needs, reducing the burden of frontline professionals. Second, the information gathered in these areas can allow for automatic referral in cases where vulnerable situations (such as persons with disabilities or victims of gender-based violence) are detected in the submission forms.

The UC form in the United Kingdom is an example of gathering information on a comprehensive set of areas automatically while using plain and simple language. In the UC online application, the applicant’s

needs are thoroughly and comprehensively assessed, including areas such as housing, work, education, family ties and health status. After the submission of the form, professionals verify the collected information by co-ordinating efforts with other relevant authorities. For instance, a professional can contact local authorities to verify the applicant's housing status or health services providers. The income is verified through automated data exchange with other departments of the administration. This verification process is conducted by the case manager or work coach, depending on the area. Consequently, for every applicant, information is gathered on their specific areas of need, allowing for a person-centred approach in subsequent interventions that addresses the specific barriers a given individual faces.

4.3.2. Automatic enrolment – a tool to be considered

Another possible route for improving take-up is to actively look for individuals potentially eligible for a specific benefit and, when possible, to enrol them automatically. Automatic enrolment should not be confounded with the provision of universal benefits. In the latter, the benefit is given to all individuals without conditions, whereas in the former, eligible individuals are identified by an administration and automatically enrolled to receive the benefit.

Automatic enrolment is more frequent for benefits considered as basic by country administrations. This is the case with access to healthcare (for example, in the United Kingdom, all residents are automatically enrolled in the National Health Service) and child allowances (for example, eligibility for the Allocations Familiales in France is quasi-automatic, and the application process is straightforward and can be done online). This section briefly illustrates this kind of mechanism through some concrete examples regarding other types of benefits.

In Belgium, a 2014 law required health insurance providers to actively reach out to individuals potentially eligible for government subsidy for their out-of-pocket expenditures. Belgium operates a means-tested increased reimbursement scheme that covers a share of out-of-pocket healthcare expenditure for low-income individuals. Eligibility for the scheme is determined either through automatic enrolment when receiving other social protection benefits or through direct application at the local health insurance office. However, the scheme had historically had low take-up rates. Prior to the reform, individuals were only referred to the scheme by social workers or by caseworkers at the health insurance office. From 2014, the reform required health insurance providers to actively reach out to potential beneficiaries and invite them to apply, and enabled health insurers to receive data from the tax authority to assess eligibility. An evaluation of the effect of this active outreach on one of Belgium's largest health insurance providers (the National Alliance of Christian Mutualities) found that the intervention increased take-up by up to 15 percentage points. The strongest effects emerged from an intervention combining both outreach by mail and phone calls to households (Van Gestel et al., 2022^[25]).

The French Chèque Énergie is an annual means-tested energy voucher that ranges from EUR 48 to EUR 277 (depending on household income and composition) and is earmarked to pay for energy bills or home improvement works that increase energy efficiency. The voucher is sent out in April with the means-test applying to the income in the preceding calendar year. The tax authority automatically assesses eligibility for the benefit. Individuals declaring an annual income below the means-test threshold (EUR 11 000 for a one-person household) automatically receive the voucher by mail and can subsequently redeem the voucher online directly with their energy provider. Households receiving the voucher over multiple years can also have it automatically sent and redeemed with their energy provider, obviating the need for manual transmission each year.

Recent examples of automatic benefit payments include the Austrian Energiekostenausgleich (energy cost compensation) and the German Energiepreispauschale (energy price allowance). Both benefits aim to assist households in dealing with unexpectedly high-energy prices in 2022. Even though both countries have partially automated the payment process, there are some substantial differences between the two benefits.

The Austrian *Energiekostenausgleich* takes the form of a voucher worth EUR 150 that can be redeemed with a household's electricity provider to directly pay for the household's utility bills. All Austrian households with an annual income below EUR 55 000/90 000 (for single individuals/multiple-person households) are eligible for the voucher. Voucher forms are directly sent to households whose address is registered in the Central Population Register. After that, the potential beneficiary must complete the form with the required information and submit the application electronically or by mail. After verification, the authority administering the benefit forwards the voucher to the household's electricity provider, who credits the household's account with EUR 150.⁹

The German *Energiepreispauschale* is a lump-sum transfer of EUR 300, also intended to assist individuals in coping with higher energy prices. In contrast to the Austrian benefit, eligibility is limited to pensioners and working individuals who pay taxes. Working-age individuals not in the labour market and those earning too little to pay income tax are not eligible. For dependent employees, the benefit is administered through the employer, whom the government can subsequently reimburse. Pensioners receive an automatic top-up to their pension. Self-employed individuals can claim the benefit *ex post* through their tax returns. Although no formal means test to determine eligibility exists, the benefit is taxable, allowing for the benefit to be administered easily as well as having a progressive distributional impact.

While the Austrian energy payment benefits all households and reaches the most vulnerable members of society, its income test is effectively not enforceable and relies on individuals complying voluntarily. In contrast, the German benefit has an inbuilt element of progressivity but excludes some of the most vulnerable members of society, such as the unemployed or discouraged workers.

Regarding the situation of the IMV in Spain, coverage is better for families with dependent children. Among the possible reasons is the automatic transfer to IMV that was undertaken by the Instituto Nacional de la Seguridad Social (INSS) for families previously receiving the "Benefit for dependent children" (AIREF, 2022_[26]). Such an automatic process included the transfer of 113 000 households in 2020 after verification that they complied with eligibility requirements. The conversion of beneficiaries of regional MIS by application of the regional government and the conversion of IMV beneficiaries to IMV+API (child complement) when eligible is also worth mentioning. However, these examples correspond to a point-in-time automatic conversion campaign following the creation of a benefit (IMV and the child complement, respectively) and not to a permanent automatic enrolment procedure.

Another administrative provision to spur the IMV enrolment process was the creation of mediator registers in 2021, which enables some non-governmental organisations (NGOs) like the Spanish Red Cross and the Spanish Caritas to join in the process. This tool allows NGOs to take over some of the certification and documentation checks needed for the IMV application. For example, NGOs can verify an individual's address or absence thereof for homeless individuals, the presence of children in the household, etc. This allows for streamlining the application process and lowers the barriers for vulnerable individuals to apply.

4.4. Mechanisms and policy interventions for service co-ordination

This section discusses how countries promote co-ordination in the areas of social inclusion. The first subsection highlights some selected examples of assessment and referral, which are the first steps in offering the right services.

4.4.1. *Appropriate assessment of needs and referral to services*

This subsection covers best practices in assessment in Germany, Lithuania, Luxembourg and the United Kingdom. Employment agencies and PES are commonly the first contact points for minimum income beneficiaries. This means that employment departments are the ones in charge of performing a first assessment and developing individual inclusion itineraries in most cases:

- In Germany, the first contact takes place at job centres. There, the first person in contact with the beneficiary is the personal contact partner in the job placement section (also known as the integration officer). The integration officer interviews the user and verifies the information provided in the application (i.e. level of education, reason for unemployment, barriers hindering the job search). This professional decides if the claimant will be only under his or her responsibility.
- In Lithuania, a pilot for a new comprehensive and co-ordinated approach was tested in 44 municipalities between 2020 and 2022 (it is expected that by 2023, all municipalities in the country will have adopted it). The Model of Employment Promotion and Motivation Services for the Unemployed and Social Assistance Recipients (hereafter, the “Model”) aims to increase the social integration of unemployed persons with multiple problems and to restore and increase their social independence and work capacity. The goal is to create sustainable employment, where a person is kept in the labour market for at least six months within 12 months of completing participation in the project. The main entry point to the Model is the local offices of the PES, as beneficiaries should be enrolled as jobseekers. Participants might be referred to the Model by professionals in other administrations (i.e. social workers in municipalities or third-sector entities). This implies that the initial assessment can be performed by employment specialists at employment offices and practitioners in municipalities or NGOs that might detect that a participant fulfils the criteria. The first interview to access the Model is therefore conducted by the professional closest to users. These professionals are also responsible for referring them to the Model; once the user is already a participant in the project, the employment counsellors perform the first assessment in a personal interview. The case managers, who are usually social workers, assess the needs and capabilities and organise a case team to study the case.
- In Luxembourg, the first entry point for REVIS beneficiaries is local employment service offices (Agence pour le développement de l’emploi, ADEM), where a specific desk is allocated to conduct the first interview with beneficiaries. An employment officer performs an evaluation in ADEM following an online application tool for assessment.
- Employment offices are equally relevant as the first point of contact with beneficiaries in the United Kingdom. Receiving the UC benefit entails regular face-to-face interviews in the job centre. During the first one, the user and work coach professional develop a CC, as mentioned above. The professionals involved in the intervention with users have different profiles.

After the claim, beneficiaries are automatically contacted by the administration once they are considered eligible for the benefit. In the first interview, the professional initially assesses the recipient’s personal case. This is the case in Germany, Luxembourg and Lithuania, where professionals contact the beneficiaries to conduct the first in-person meeting:

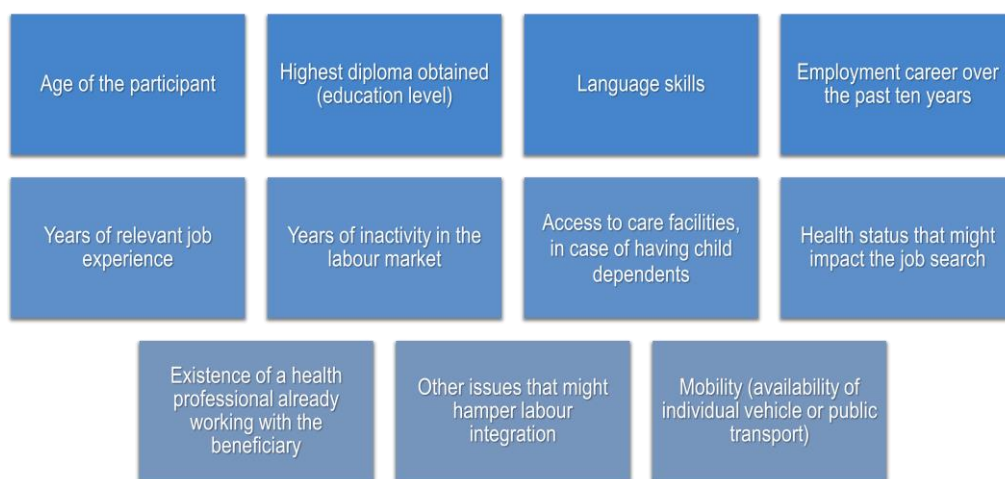
- In Germany, once the application for the German SGB II is checked and the information verified, the job centre invites the person for a meeting to discuss his/her personal situation and preliminary activation decisions within two weeks from acceptance of the benefit. This invitation is automatically sent with the time and date for the first meeting through a postal mail notification.
- In Luxembourg, citizens need to claim the minimum income at the FNS, where an assessment is made concerning an individual’s eligibility to receive the REVIS. If they are accepted as potential beneficiaries, they will automatically receive a letter by postal mail with the details of an appointment at a specific REVIS counter at the employment offices.
- Similarly, in Lithuania, case managers are in charge of contacting beneficiaries via the Model. In this way, beneficiaries are contacted directly by the case manager to set the first interview and assess the personal situation and specific barriers hampering integration in the labour market.

During the first interviews that beneficiaries have with the administration, a needs assessment is commonly conducted to evaluate each beneficiary’s situation. If the assessment is conducted in a comprehensive and tailored manner, the information gathered will improve the subsequent referral of the beneficiary to the

services that best address his or her circumstances (i.e. employment, social services, or joint action of both services plus others). Systematised assessment practices can be found in Luxembourg, whereas in Germany, Lithuania and the United Kingdom, interviews are the tools used to assess the needs of beneficiaries, with professionals having discretion in deciding on the next steps to take without using a particular assessment tool.

In Luxembourg, all REVIS applicants under 65 years of age and able to work are interviewed by the national PES, ADEM. This interview allows ADEM to decide on the applicant's ability to enter the ordinary labour market. The system for evaluating whether the beneficiary needs social and employment inclusion support consists of an online application that ADEM professionals complete with the beneficiary. Figure 4.4 displays the dimensions covered to decide whether to begin the referral.

Figure 4.4. Dimensions covered in the assessment to refer a claimant for social and employment inclusion support in Luxembourg



Note: Relevant experience directly relates to the job sought or the job the user will most likely find.

Source: OECD interviews (2023).

Referral of minimum income beneficiaries takes place in different ways, as demonstrated in the following selected best practice examples. In Luxembourg, depending on the results of the needs assessment, REVIS recipients either stay at the employment services or are automatically referred to regional social inclusion offices. In contrast, in Germany, Lithuania and the United Kingdom, beneficiaries keep a reference person in the employment services, who are their entry points, and referral to other services is done on a case-by-case basis depending on the needs of individuals.

Focusing on automatic referral, in Luxembourg, REVIS beneficiaries can follow two paths:

- Those who are considered capable of entering the labour market (around 53% of recipients), are registered with ADEM and follow the path of jobseekers.
- Those who are not considered employable are automatically invited to an information meeting at the National Office for Social Inclusion (ONIS), where a declaration of co-operation is signed. ONIS automatically receives information on beneficiaries from the employment services. Afterwards, REVIS beneficiaries are automatically referred to regional social inclusion offices (Agents régionaux d'inclusion sociale, ARIS). During the first meeting with ARIS, an activation plan is established with the beneficiary, defining a social and professional project, specific commitments and the services offered to support the beneficiary. Inclusion pathways are intended to promote

the social inclusion of beneficiaries who are not employable in the first place and work to improve their future chances of integration into the labour market.

For those cases where referral is organised on a case-by-case basis, different processes can be found in Germany, Lithuania and the United Kingdom. All of them are characterised by having a person-centred approach that puts the beneficiary at the centre of the intervention while helping them navigate the specific services or programmes they may require.

- In Germany, after the assessment interview with the integration officer, the following steps might entail the referral of the beneficiary to a case manager. Case managers are the professionals who help beneficiaries navigate the system and provide support with different personal situations (substance addictions, health status, etc.). They are responsible for finding specific support for the beneficiaries, in co-ordination with municipalities, acting as a nexus with local entities. To do so, there is close co-operation between case managers and other service providers: youth offices and youth welfare institutions, childcare institutions, migration advisory centres, debt counselling centres and addiction counselling centres.
- During interviews in the context of this project, Lithuanian officials provided information about a pilot project deployed since 2020 that has had good results and has been progressively extended to most municipalities in the country. However, it has not been fully deployed nationwide yet (see above). After a case manager conducts an assessment and profiling of a beneficiary, a case team is organised to study the case. This case team makes suggestions on the choice, scope and sequence of services to be provided for the recipient. The professionals involved in the case teams in Lithuania vary across municipalities. An example of its composition would be a deputy director of the municipality; workers from the social and employment services, as well as from the social welfare department; a consultant from employment services; a director of the public health office; a local activity group professional; a psychiatrist; and social work organisers from the town. Information they have access to includes information on barriers detected by employment services, information on jobseekers' cards and municipal information on social services and social assistance or participation in NGOs. Considering all this information, the case manager and the team can make a decision on which services and itinerary to follow with the participant. Case managers are then responsible for following up on the participation status, contacting service providers and deciding when the integration agreement should end.
- Finally, in the United Kingdom, work coaches are the professionals in charge of conducting the first interview with UC beneficiaries and planning, together with the recipient, the CC of the UC. If an individual is unemployed, the commitment would imply actively searching for a job (i.e. writing a CV, signing up for job alerts, etc.). The CC is adapted to the personal situation, as it can imply also staying in touch with previous areas of work or interest if the user has health issues and cannot work as usual. Depending on an individual's specific needs, other professionals may be involved, such as a work coach, who ensures that beneficiaries are taking action to return to work, specialists in self-employment or specialists in disability situations.

4.4.2. Co-ordination mechanisms and tools for the integration of social inclusion services

Co-ordination mechanisms across thematic areas/sectors (horizontal co-ordination) and between government levels (vertical co-ordination) are crucial in an area as multidimensional as social inclusion. Horizontal co-ordination across areas is necessary for a comprehensive approach to social inclusion interventions that tackles individuals' different needs and barriers. In turn, vertical co-ordination is key for ensuring the coherence of programmes across government levels and identifying possible coverage gaps or duplicities.

Horizontal co-ordination mechanisms

Given the multidimensional nature of social exclusion and the multiple actors involved in social inclusion policies, adequate horizontal co-ordination mechanisms can be crucial to ensure the co-ordination of measures and avoid potential issues, such as duplicities or lack of coverage. Despite this, interministerial bodies on the specific area of social inclusion are still scarce and only present in seven of the 19 countries in the sample. Moreover, the existence of diverse actors in these bodies does not necessarily entail their direct involvement in the provision of inclusion services. Most of them develop planning and co-ordination functions to ensure the provision of services from other providers (i.e. local entities, NGOs). Co-ordination in the seven countries is as follows:

- In the Czech Republic, strategic planning in social inclusion entails the collaboration of different actors at the national level. More concretely, the current Social Inclusion Strategy was jointly designed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the Office of the government (Agency for Social Inclusion/Government Committee for Persons with Disabilities) and the Ministry of Interior (in charge of crime prevention programmes).
- In Greece, the General Secretariat for Social Solidarity and Combating Poverty works to strengthen and develop co-operation and networking between the public and private sectors. For this purpose, the Secretariat established five working groups that meet regularly to discuss topics such as the social protection of children and their families, the integration of disabled people or the protection of persons experiencing homelessness. The working groups aim to improve and guarantee access to benefits and services. The policy axes are: access to cash benefits and income support; health services; education and training services; labour market; affordable housing; and social life within the community. Regarding the participants, actors from the ministries, public entities (such as PES, social welfare centres or the Central Union of Municipalities), and non-profit organisations participate in the working groups.
- In Hungary, a Social Inclusion Interministerial Committee was established in 2010 to co-ordinate governmental activities to improve living conditions and social situations and promote the social inclusion of deprived individuals, with a specific focus on the Roma population. The committee meets at least twice a year, is chaired by the State Secretary for Care Policy within the Ministry of Interior (in charge of social inclusion in Hungary), and is composed of representatives of relevant ministries, the Hungarian Central Statistical Office and the government Commissioner for the Development of Modern Settlements. In addition, the President of the National Roma Self-Government and the Roma National Advocate of the National Assembly have a consultative role. Furthermore, this committee has working groups for specific issues, including one to support the implementation of the National Social Inclusion Strategy and its action plan.
- In Latvia, there is a Council of Three Ministers on Employment, with the participation of the Minister for Economics, the Minister for Education and Science, and the Minister for Welfare. This council meets regularly to ensure the implementation of balanced and mutually agreed policies in the economic, welfare, employment, education and science fields.
- In Luxembourg, a Social Policy Observatory was created in 2019 with representatives from the Ministry of Family and Integration, the Ministry of Work, Employment and Social and Solidary Economy, the Ministry of Social Security and the Ministry of Housing. The objectives of this observatory include the elaboration of research studies in the area of social policy, the development of actions for evaluating social policies and the establishment of international comparisons.
- In Portugal, the Social Services and Facilities Network was set up to facilitate co-operation between the Ministry of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health to integrate a set of facilities and services designed to support children and young people, children at risk, older adults and people with disabilities, reliant on long-term care and/or experiencing mental health problems. Portugal also has an inter-ministerial body in the specific

area of integrating health and social support. The National Continuous Care Network entails a partnership between the Ministry of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security and the Ministry of Health in this area.

- In Switzerland, the Institution of Interinstitutional Co-operation (IIZ) is in charge of a co-ordinated approach in the area of social inclusion, thereby bringing together institutions from the areas of social security, integration and training. The IIZ aims to combat labour market and social exclusion among particularly vulnerable groups.

In addition to inter-ministerial bodies to co-ordinate measures, another critical element of horizontal co-ordination in the area of social inclusion relates to the co-ordination of the financing and budget process. In particular, co-ordination regarding programmes that may tackle similar beneficiaries can be key for an optimal allocation of resources. Most countries, however, do not present specific co-ordination mechanisms in this area, with social inclusion falling under the standard budgeting process in Australia, Colombia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia and Türkiye. This means that, despite social inclusion being a multidimensional issue, financing decisions are commonly taken in isolation by the different ministries.

Examples of budget co-ordination can be found in Costa Rica, Denmark, Luxembourg and Portugal. In Costa Rica, as part of the annual budget process, a Social Presidential Council brings together the ministers in charge of areas such as social inclusion, social services or minimum income benefits to ensure co-ordination. In a similar line, in Denmark, there is an annual agreement on the implementation of the reserve for social, health and labour market measures (SSA-Reserven). While Luxembourg applies the standard budget cycle to the rest of social inclusion policies, it has inter-ministerial collaboration in relation to the European Social Fund (ESF), with an inter-ministerial composition of the selection committee and monitoring committee. Finally, in Portugal, there is budget co-ordination in the context of the Social Services and Facilities Network and the National Continuous Care Network between the Ministry of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health.

A final element of horizontal co-ordination in social inclusion relates to data sharing between relevant ministries. This practice can be crucial to maximising the information available on common issues and challenges, as well as to making informed decisions and performing adequate diagnostics. While most countries rely on national departments of statistics or national statistics institutes for specific data requests, good practice in data sharing at the national level can be found in Costa Rica. It implemented a National System of Information and Unique Registry of Beneficiaries (SINIRUBE) to reduce the fragmentation of its social programmes. The functions of SINIRUBE include the following:

- creation of an updated database of people who require help and the social assistance programmes of the different public institutions
- creation of an institutional network that allows for a better distribution of benefits
- systematic control of resources mobilised by public institutions to implement programmes aimed at eradicating poverty
- identification of the possible beneficiaries of social aid.

Vertical co-ordination between the national and subnational levels

In addition to horizontal co-ordination, the existence of mechanisms to co-ordinate different administrative levels is also crucial for ensuring the coherence of programmes across government levels, as well as for identifying possible coverage gaps or duplicities. This subsection looks at vertical co-ordination mechanisms, focusing on co-ordination between the national and the closest subnational levels. Table 4.2 presents an overview of vertical co-ordination mechanisms between the national and subnational levels, including the existence of national-regional co-ordination bodies in the area of social inclusion, the

presence of protocols or guidelines from national to subnational levels and the presence of data exchange mechanisms between national and subnational levels.

Table 4.2. Vertical co-ordination mechanisms between national and subnational levels in the area of social inclusion in selected OECD countries, 2022

	Existence of national-regional co-ordination bodies	Protocols or guidelines from national to subnational levels	Data exchange mechanisms between national and subnational levels
Australia		✓	
Canada	✓	✓	
Colombia			
Costa Rica	✓	✓	
Czech Republic		✓	
Denmark			✓
Greece	✓	✓	✓
Hungary	✓	✓	
Latvia	✓	✓	
Lithuania			✓
Luxembourg	✓		✓
Mexico	✓	✓	
Netherlands			
Portugal			
Slovak Republic		✓	
Sweden		✓	
Switzerland			
Türkiye		✓	✓
United States		✓	

Note: The table only includes information concerning bodies, protocols and data sharing across government levels; thus, specific co-ordination mechanisms with third-sector entities are not included.

Source: OECD questionnaires on Service Integration (2022).

While most countries have some kind of standard procedure to co-ordinate the communication between national and subnational levels, the presence of a specific body in the area of inclusion can be vital in ensuring the presence of bilateral communication and the creation of an exchange forum that can enhance co-ordination and lead to a more efficient provision of services. Of the 19 countries for which information is available, six have introduced this kind of body, including:

- In Canada, co-ordination with the province of Ontario takes place through the Service Delivery Consultation Committees (SDCCs). The Ontario Region has three SDCCs in place, that count with the presence of the Ministry of Children, Communities, and Social Services and the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training, and Skills Development. SDCCs represent a mechanism of both horizontal and vertical co-ordination in the area of inclusion.
- For the specific target group of minimum income recipients, Luxembourg has a National Office for Social Inclusion (ONIS), created in 2019 and tasked with the co-ordination of the work of regional social inclusion agents on the task of activating those minimum income recipients furthest away from the labour market. Within this framework, regional social inclusion offices called ARIS are in daily exchange with the national office for individual casework supervision and contribute to the work of ONIS in several thematic workgroups. The main tasks of ONIS include the centralised reception of claimants, the supervision of the work of ARIS and the guidance, financing and

evaluation with organisations that ensure intensive and high-quality care for a particularly vulnerable population in the form of activation measures. Activation plans for users are developed at the regional level with guidance from the national level. The social inclusion plan for beneficiaries is designed at the first ONIS meeting with the beneficiary after the first needs assessment. The assessment is shared with the regional social worker so that he/she is aware of the necessary prior information. The individual social inclusion plan is created and validated by ONIS in a common information technology (IT) system. In this way, ONIS directly carries out administrative procedures, enabling social practitioners to focus on direct intervention with beneficiaries in their social inclusion measures.

Another key element of vertical co-ordination relates to establishing common standards from the national to subnational levels. This can take the form of specific protocols on how co-ordination of inclusion services should occur at the regional/local level and minimum standards or softer guidelines. Eleven of the countries analysed have protocols or guidelines that can be considered best practices for the Spanish case. Protocols are present in the Czech Republic, most notably in the form of methodological procedures for the performance of social work (for example, in socially excluded localities) and methodological procedures and quality standards for social services. These methodological procedures are applicable in all levels of intervention and activities performed by social workers. In a similar line, in Latvia, there are basic requirements set in the national regulation (Law on Social Services and Social Assistance and Support for Unemployed Persons and Persons Seeking Employment Law and subsequent regulation) that include the responsibilities, procedures and co-operation mechanisms in the area of social inclusion. Greece has guidelines from the national to the local level in labour inclusion and housing. These guidelines include an Implementation Guide, Frequently Asked Questions, detailed instructions and information material – all of which are drawn up and updated by the Directorate for the Fight against Poverty of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. Finally, for the specific case of children, the Department of Social Legal Protection of Children and Social Guardianship (SPODaSK) in the Slovak Republic has internal standards set by the Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family that include an internal standard-regulating, case-based social work or the procedure of the body for the social protection of children and social guardianship when conducting case-based social work.

A last key element of vertical co-ordination concerns the sharing of data between national and subnational levels, which can enhance adequate policy design and help identify users' needs. Vertical data-sharing systems are still underdeveloped in most countries, but the case of Luxembourg represents a best practice that could be relevant for Spain. In this country, a fully integrated software platform accessible by national and regional bodies was developed in 2018. This platform allows casework by all regional agents (ARIS) and their supervisors (ONIS) in a shared environment for all minimum income recipients considered unable to integrate the labour market without additional support measures, as assessed by the PES (including the first appointment at ONIS, activation plans, activation measures, exchanges with PES, exchanges with the National Solidarity fund, electronic document management, etc.). The internal documentation for this platform, developed by ONIS, contributes to fair and identical treatment in the casework by all regional agents on that platform.

4.4.3. Integrating different policy areas for a multidimensional approach to inclusion

Minimum income beneficiaries

People living in social exclusion often face multiple obstacles that prevent them from reaching a minimum standard of overall well-being. In particular, MIS recipients tend to find difficulties when accessing the labour market due to a lack of skills, lack of years of job experience, or care duties, among others. In this context, service integration can act as an important framework for MIS beneficiaries, offering a broad set of services to cover the multiple barriers recipients face. Fostering integration can also facilitate outreach efforts by creating several referral channels between different contact points. Follow-up efforts are also

made easier, thanks to the effective co-ordination of different service providers. However, in many cases, a reform to develop such a framework would entail the joint work of separate ministries (e.g. employment and social services) and the co-ordination of a great variety of institutions operating at different levels of governance within a country (Scharle, 2018^[27]).

In this context, several countries have developed inclusion itineraries combining different policy areas to tackle the multiplicity of barriers faced by minimum income recipients, with the goal of achieving social inclusion for beneficiaries:

- In Portugal, the Social Integration Income (RSI) is a policy measure designed to protect individuals and families. It consists of two components: a cash benefit to ensure the satisfaction of basic needs and an insertion programme that includes a contract (set of actions established in accordance with the characteristics and conditions of a benefit applicant's household) aimed at a progressive social, labour and community integration of individuals and/or members of households. The areas covered by this social integration contract include a range of measures within the scope of social inclusion and labour market services, namely: education, health, social action, daycare for children, housing, employment and professional training.
- In Luxembourg, recipients of the Revenu d'inclusion sociale (REVIS) can go through two different inclusion pathways. For those assessed by the PES as capable of joining the labour market, they follow the same labour inclusion path as other jobseekers. For recipients with specific social and professional activation needs, ONIS refers them to the regional social inclusion office (ARIS), where an activation plan is defined. Activation measures may include stabilisation activities, public works, courses and training sessions, therapeutic programmes, treatments, or other recovery or rehabilitation measures. Inclusion pathways are intended to promote the social inclusion of beneficiaries and, where appropriate, improve their employability to increase their chances of integration into the labour market.
- In Germany, the basic income support for jobseekers (SGB II) acts as a last resort safety net for unemployed individuals over 15 years old with income and assets below the subsistence level. The SGB II is designed to provide monetary support to ensure a minimum subsistence level and as an activation programme to promote the recipient's entry into the labour market. Activation benefits might include a back-to-work allowance, specific subsidies or work opportunities. In addition, complementary services can be offered at the municipal level, including childcare, debt counselling or psychosocial support, providing a comprehensive approach to the social integration of this group.
- Within Spain, the Comunidad Foral de Navarra has implemented the AUNA project, in which workers from social services and the regional PES work together to provide an inclusion pathway for minimum income recipients (both for the regional MIS and the IMV). This programme includes creating a Personalised Plan for Social Inclusion that may include tutoring, designing a personal insertion plan, training or employment opportunities according to specific needs. These actions are performed following an individualised accompaniment of the users, which implies having in-depth knowledge of their context, respecting their change processes and supporting them throughout the intervention process.

Long-term unemployed

Activation of those furthest away from the labour market is a key objective for social inclusion, as participation in the workforce can improve the economic situation of the persons at risk of exclusion and enhance their participation in society, preventing isolation. Still, the activation and inclusion of this collective typically require complementary services on top of existing labour market programmes (e.g. counselling, psychosocial support, health and housing services).

Relevant practices concerning the integration of services for all vulnerable jobseekers include the cases of Australia and Lithuania, while Latvia shows an integrated approach for the specific case of persons with alcohol dependence issues:

- In Australia, employment services such as Workforce Australia (administered by the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations), Disability Employment Services (administered by the Department of Social Services) and the Community Development Program (administered by the National Indigenous Australians Agency) aim to connect jobseekers to employment and help participants overcome barriers to work. A core part of the work of these employment services consists of referring disadvantaged jobseekers to local services as required, including housing, drug and alcohol support, mental health and transport. Many providers also deliver services in-house, such as counselling and psychological support.
- In Lithuania, starting in 2023, a model of employment promotion and motivation services for the unemployed and those receiving social assistance will be implemented in all municipalities in order to increase employment outcomes of people belonging to vulnerable groups to ensure coherence between active labour market policies and social assistance by integrating long-term unemployed into the labour market. The model aims to increase the social integration of unemployed people facing many social problems by restoring and increasing social independence and working capacity, professional competence and the ability to participate in the labour market. At the same time, the model aims to ensure coherence between active labour market policies (ALMP) and social support, to increase the effectiveness of co-operation between institutions and to facilitate the transition of a person from unemployment towards the labour market. This shall be achieved through the provision of individualised assistance, rendered possible through the deployment of case managers and the establishment of case teams composed of representatives of various institutions.
- In Latvia, ALMPs for vulnerable groups among the unemployed are complemented by specific support programmes for persons with alcohol dependence issues, including consultations with psychologists and career counselling.

A last best practice example in this area can be found in the Netherlands, involving the integration of PES and social and mental health services. The Netherlands started an innovative project in 2013 to improve the institutional response for LTU. Aware of the many labour market obstacles faced by this target group, the Dutch PES, along with the social and mental health services, launched a pilot project called “Fit-4-Work”. Five municipalities joined efforts to better co-ordinate services across sectors for clients with multiple psychosocial problems (OECD, 2014_[28]). The project aimed to support recipients of unemployment, disability or similar benefits whose multiple psychosocial problems excluded them from the labour market. The project’s desired outcome was to find a sustainable job for the participants and improve their health status. In order to create synergies among professionals from different sectors (health workers, coaches, social workers, case managers, etc.), teams met weekly to discuss the cases and progress of the participants, with each professional having a specific function in the intervention. For instance, case managers focused on employment-related obstacles. They were responsible, for example, for co-ordinating individual work plans. At the same time, life coaches were social workers aiming to tackle social difficulties (e.g. debt), and employment specialists were responsible for identifying suitable work opportunities in line with participants’ abilities. Health professionals (particularly from the mental health sector) were involved at different stages of the programme and co-ordinated their actions with the other coaches/co-ordinators. The programme consisted of four steps:

- **The selection and intake process.** To be eligible, participants needed to be aged 50 or younger, receive any form of benefits, have mental or psychosocial problems and face at least two of a long list of problematic situations (e.g. finances, everyday activities, drug addiction, etc.).

- **The interdisciplinary team works to design a plan, implement it and monitor progress.** In this process, professionals from different fields worked together to provide an integrated response to the participants' multiple obstacles. To do so, Fit-4-Work relied on interdisciplinary consultations (IDCs), which gathered at least four professionals with different specialities: client manager (either the Dutch PES or municipalities), case manager from the re-integration company, employer specialists, mental health expert and sometimes a life coach. The IDC designed an individualised plan in line with the strengths and challenges of each individual, addressing the person's problems holistically.
- **Work experience placement (WEPs) for participants.** This was introduced in the early stages of the programme as a means to alleviate the multiple barriers experienced by the long-term unemployed by creating a routine and supporting the acquisition of general and professional competencies.
- **Constant support during the work placement.** During these WEPs, which lasted three months, coaches (and partly health workers) provided continued support to participants. Job coaches remained in contact with participants throughout their placement, accompanied them to the initial meetings with employers and could also organise coaching during the first working days.

4.4.4. Integration of services on the ground

Strategies for integrating different services vary widely across policy areas and targeted groups. Baxter et al. (Baxter, 2018^[29]) declare that existing integration models typically encompass multiple elements aimed at improving integration within and between systems. Elements such as working practices and the role of professionals, the organisation of the agency providing the service, or the design of the intervention model are factors that some countries have modified to incorporate a more comprehensive and integrated approach to social inclusion provision.

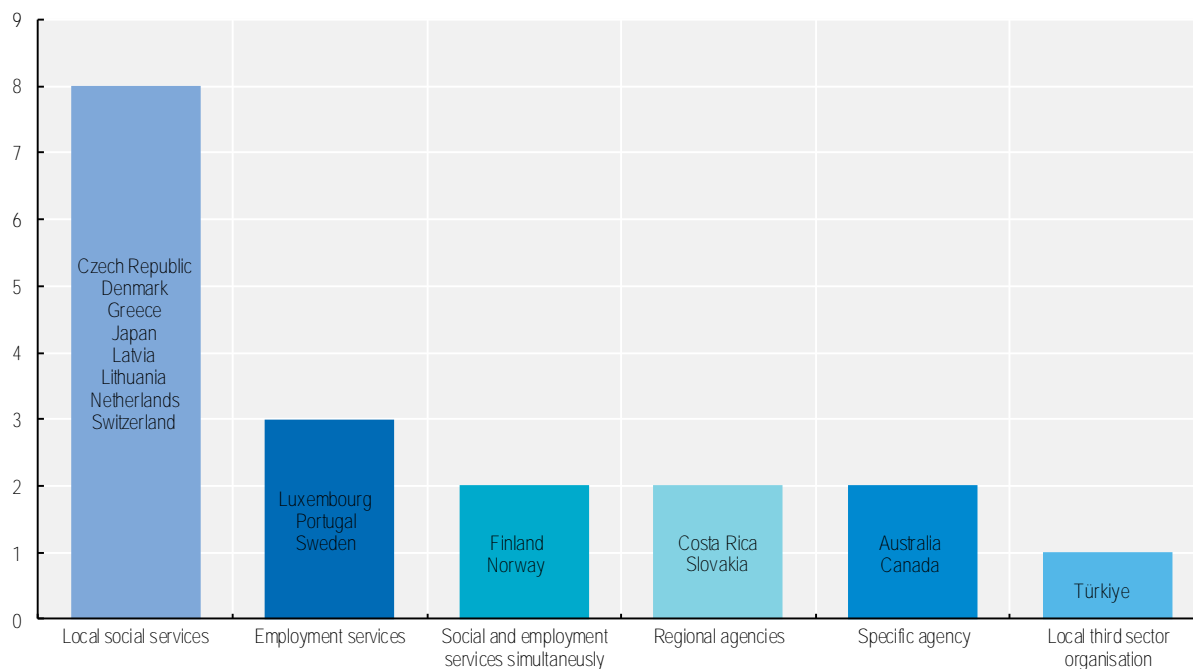
At the same time, some studies (OECD, 2015^[30]) highlight the existence of different degrees and levels at which integration can be accomplished. The highest degree of integration happens when different sectors join forces to merge organisational and financial resources. Resources are pooled within a specific structure or through joint programmes with shared objectives between the different parties. Pooled funding has many benefits to finance integrated care. In a pooled funding scheme, each body involved in service delivery contributes to a common fund to be spent on pooled functions or agreed services. Pooling existing funds into one well-defined budget can improve transparency and facilitate the distribution of existing funds in a more effective and efficient manner (OECD, 2015^[30]). It can help reduce unnecessary activities, overuse of services, duplication of effort and cost-shifting. A lesser degree of integration entails only co-ordination between different service providers to create mechanisms or strategies to facilitate service delivery (e.g. case management procedures or data-sharing channels). The micro level discussed in this section focuses on co-ordination on the ground, where delivery of services occurs. Therefore, it refers to different professionals collaborating to support and provide care for users (OECD, 2015^[30]). This section outlines the entry points for people with social inclusion needs, the different mechanisms and tools for integrating services, the composition and co-ordination of professional teams and the channels for data sharing.

Moving towards single entry points

Social services at the municipal level commonly serve as the main entry point for citizens with different social inclusion demands. In turn, social workers are also the main professional profile responsible for managing user cases and initiating referral processes when the user needs more integrated and comprehensive support. Figure 4.5 shows users' most common entry points in the countries interviewed. In most of them, the main entry point to welfare services is the local centre of social services. This is particularly the case in the Czech Republic, Denmark, Greece, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands

and Switzerland, where the municipal level plays a vital role in access to social inclusion provision. In second place, Luxembourg, Portugal and Sweden mention employment services as the main entry point for citizens with social demands.

Figure 4.5. Most common entry point for users with social inclusion needs in selected OECD countries, 2022



Note: These are the main entry points according to the countries interviewed, but users access social inclusion services through the other channels mentioned as well. Notably, in all countries, the third sector plays a very relevant role as an entry pathway for citizens needing welfare services.

Source: OECD questionnaires on Service Integration (2022).

Regarding Switzerland and the department in charge of the initial diagnosis, the country differentiates different actors as entry points. For social assistance beneficiaries striving towards social inclusion, the first actor to prepare the initial diagnosis is social services at the communal level. For unemployed users registered at the PES, it is the unemployment insurance branch at the regional level. For people with disabilities striving towards social and/or labour market inclusion, it is the disability insurance at the cantonal level. Lastly, for migrants, the responsible actor is the migration authority at the communal level.

In the Czech Republic, the usual entry points are the local municipality's social services or social department. If the user's case requires further support, social workers contact other welfare services and transfer the important case information to initiate the referral. At the same municipal level, in Greece, the usual entry point for users with social inclusion needs is the Community Centres. These networks of centres are formed by multidisciplinary teams (including social workers, psychologists, educators, mediators, etc.), co-ordinating efforts to provide advice on government allowances and help citizens access a wide range of social support services. Services such as the Guaranteed Minimum Income (GMI), housing benefits, financial and assistance aid for people with disabilities, or the Housing and Work for the Homeless programme can be accessed through these centres.

In some countries, different services are provided by the same agency. Finland and Norway share the same location for social and employment services, and citizens have access to both services

simultaneously. This cohabitation of services makes it easier to access both services at the same time, most crucially during a first appointment. In Norway, the most common contact point for users with social inclusion needs is the Norwegian Employment and Welfare Service agency. This agency merges the PES, the national insurance and the municipal social services by integrating their work and placing these actors under the same location. NAV offices provide information, guidance, and counselling. These services are also delivered in Finland in the one-stop-shop centre, Ohjaamo. It is a service designed for all people under 30 years of age, where different services are brought together under the same roof. Ohjaamo centres support users with finding employment or their study paths, as well as in matters related to everyday life and general well-being.

Australia and Canada operate agencies that act as single-entry points and are responsible for assisting, guiding and supporting the user at the beginning of the intervention. These agencies initiate referrals to other services once the user's situation has been assessed. The service delivery agency Services Australia is a pivotal point of contact for people experiencing vulnerability. This agency provides both face-to-face and remote support for people to access benefits and social programmes across the country. To do so, they offer support in processing benefits either by providing the technological means for users to do it themselves in the office or with the guided assistance of a professional. Also, once they have assessed the user's situation, they refer them to the appropriate services so that the person receives the most tailored and comprehensive care response. For instance, users seeking jobs are first assessed in the agency and then referred to Workforce Australia, where services typically include support for job search or training programmes to improve employability.

Similarly, in Canada, Service Canada provides citizens with a single point of access to a wide range of government programmes, services and benefits. They deliver general information about application procedures and refer citizens to municipal, provincial and territorial services. Through the Reaching All Canadians Community Partnership, multiple service providers can refer clients directly to Service Canada for personalised assistance. These organisations help Service Canada connect with hard-to-reach groups.

Finally, some countries have some specificities in the point of access. In Türkiye, the role of third-sector associations as the closest agents in providing services is highly relevant. Therefore, they act as the first gateway to the social inclusion system. In addition, Greek NGOs providing healthcare services to vulnerable groups also act as an additional entry point for users with social inclusion needs. The role of the third sector as a gateway to social programmes is also noteworthy in Portugal. In Türkiye, the usual entry point for beneficiaries of social assistance programmes are the Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundations.

In some countries, some agencies play an essential role as entry points at the regional level. In Costa Rica, the Mixed Institute of Social Assistance stands out as the primary entry point for different social assistance programmes. Similarly, in the Slovak Republic, the Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family is the entry point for social support and counselling. The case manager is most frequently a social worker who develops an intervention plan in co-operation with NGOs and other municipal services.

Additionally, some countries have specific entry points depending on the target group of the programme:

- In Türkiye, users with disabilities and elderly citizens can directly access social assistance in nursing homes, social service centres and Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundations.
- In Luxembourg, the entry point to access a social inclusion plan for minimum income beneficiaries is found within the reception service of ONIS. The employment agency profiles every applicant under the age of 65 and able to work. If the applicant fulfils the requirements, the employment agency informs ONIS to invite the MIS applicant for an informative meeting. There, every participant is referred to the regional social inclusion officer to jointly draft an activation plan. The caseload of social workers is a maximum of 100 persons, the average being around 80 users per individual regional officer.

- In Greece, refugees and migrants have specific entries to the social support system. These entries are the Migrant Integration Centres, which function as branches of the Community Centres in the municipalities, as previously mentioned. They provide information, services and counselling and can also refer people to other competent bodies. The working team also comprises several specialities (e.g. intercultural mediators, social workers, psychologists, etc.).

Different approaches to an integrated provision of services

When such reforms are implemented, both service users and providers stand to benefit from overcoming the fragmentation of welfare services. Available literature indicates that applying integrated models of service provision can lead to cost-effectiveness and cost savings and can increase accessibility and the quality of services (OECD, 2015^[30]). Table 4.3 shows the mechanisms commonly employed in some countries to co-ordinate the integration of services.

Table 4.3. Co-ordination of multiple services on the ground in the area of social inclusion in selected OECD countries, 2022

	Cohabitation of services	Presence of multidisciplinary teams	Existence of a case manager
Australia	✓	✓	✓
Canada	✓	✓	✓
Colombia		✓	
Costa Rica			✓
Czech Republic	✓	✓	✓
Denmark		✓	✓
Finland	✓	✓	✓
Greece	✓	✓	✓
Hungary		✓	✓
Japan		✓	✓
Latvia		✓	✓
Lithuania	✓	✓	✓
Luxembourg		✓	✓
Mexico	✓	✓	✓
Netherlands		✓	✓
Norway	✓	✓	✓
Portugal	✓		✓
Slovak Republic			✓
Sweden	✓	✓	
Switzerland	✓	✓	✓
Türkiye	✓	✓	✓
United States	✓	✓	✓

Source: OECD questionnaires on Service Integration (2022).

One-stop-shops

Recently, several countries have pursued the establishment of one-stop-shops as a centralised access point for users to overcome the fragmentation of services. These offices allow for the co-location of service providers, making it easier for users to make multiple demands in one place without having to contact a number of different agencies. One-stop-shops can entail different degrees of service integration. A more informal approach to integration occurs when one-stop-shops are limited to the co-habitation of professionals working in independent systems. This case facilitates access to benefits and services for the user but does not entail an integrated perspective on service delivery. A more holistic approach happens

when team members in the one-stop-shop design joint interventions under a co-designed care plan. This kind of intervention makes it possible to approach the barriers to social exclusion more effectively.

An example of a one-stop-shop that only centralises access to various services is the case of the Public Service Offices (Statens servicecenter) in Sweden. This office provides administrative information and guidance on government services to individuals in one central location. Some national organisations that co-operate with these offices are, for example, the Swedish Pension Agency (Pensionsmyndigheten), the Public Employment Service (Arbetsförmedlingen), the Social Insurance Agency (Försäkringskassan) and the Tax Agency (Skatteverket). Besides co-operation with national agencies, the Statens servicecenter also partners with some municipalities. An example is the city of Malmö, where individuals can receive support regarding e-services, forms and applications, and information about their ongoing process with the mentioned agencies.

Examples of best practices in the implementation of one-stop-shops include the following:

- Co-operation between PES and social services providers has increased across countries, sometimes taking the form of one-stop-shops. One successful initiative is the Ohjaamo centres in Finland, acting as one-stop-shops for young people experiencing vulnerable situations. They constitute single entry points for providing a broad range of services, such as housing support, social services, employment and training. These centres simplify social assistance services for young people while also avoiding duplicities in the provision of services. The goal was to reduce unemployment among people under 30 and foster their integration into society, education and the workforce. Some particularities of the team composition are the direct involvement of youth and employment counsellors from PES, social workers from municipalities, psychologists, nurses and specific outreach workers to engage with the target group (OECD, 2021^[31]).
- In Norway, a similar practice can be highlighted. In order to provide a comprehensive service to overcome labour-market integration obstacles, the Norwegian Employment and Welfare Service (NAV) agency, as mentioned above, was created. This agency merges the PES, the national insurance and the municipal social services by integrating their work and placing these actors under the same location. The NAV consists of a “state arm” (the Labour and Welfare Service), which acts as the provider of social insurance benefits and employment services to registered jobseekers and the “municipal arm”, providing means-tested social assistance and general social support, such as advice and guidance, temporary emergency accommodation if required and other social services. The responsibility for delivering and funding services remains formally separated between the state (employment services) and the municipalities (social services). NAV users will, in most cases, not be aware of whether they are dealing with a municipal or state employee, and a single manager heads most NAV offices. In this way, the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration acts as a one-stop-shop for employment and social support but functions more broadly for a range of other municipal services, including support for migrants, housing services, healthcare and support for older people (Løgreid, 2014^[32]).

Multidisciplinary teams

To move toward service integration, adopting multidisciplinary teams in intervention models is a common approach across sectors like health and employment. For instance, in primary healthcare, some OECD countries have encouraged the practice of fully integrated interprofessional teams (IPT) to tailor care plans to the specific needs of complex care patients. In IPTs, the emphasis is placed on time for open communication with participative safety, through which the most appropriate skill mix for the best patient care can be respectfully negotiated at the level of a practice/organisation or network.

In most countries where information is available, teams of different professionals operate to address problems from a multidimensional perspective. These teams are constituted by professionals with expertise in different practice fields, and individuals may receive services in areas as diverse as physical

and mental health, employment, housing or even legal support. Best practices in this area include the following:

- In Finland, the Work Ability Programme has developed and implemented work ability support teams across the social and health services. This co-operation allows for the exchange of experience and expertise of the different professionals to provide the most complete support to users. The members working on these teams meet regularly to agree on the progress of the users and the elaboration and implementation of the joint care plan. Employment, health and social care professionals work together to boost the labour activity of users with partial work ability or the long-term unemployed. The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment is responsible for implementing the work capability programme in co-operation with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. In particular, the Ministry of Economic Affairs focuses on addressing barriers to employment for people with partial capacity to work and increasing their employability. Measures taken in the administrative branch of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health develop support services to improve people's ability to work.
- In Norway, service delivery in local welfare offices is organised in different ways depending on the local needs and challenges. Some offices follow a model where the caseworkers are responsible for a broad spectrum of tasks, while other social services offices have multidisciplinary teams with more defined shared responsibilities. These teams might be formed by professionals from healthcare, social work, child welfare and/or the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration.
- In Mexico, Integral Residential Care provides specialised care for children and adolescents. Multidisciplinary teams provide comprehensive care to children and young people who are socially disadvantaged due to vulnerable situations. The teams are made up of professionals in psychology, pedagogy, social work, medicine, education and training, as well as legal representatives.
- In Türkiye, the Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundations at the local level develop intervention plans with multidisciplinary teams of social workers, psychologists, sociologists and child experts.

Case managers

Integrated care requires the establishment of new professional roles, in particular, case managers. Case managers are responsible for co-ordinating professionals, the client and the family. Case management has become somewhat of an umbrella term for a wide range of practices based on the simple principle that a case manager – or case managers – takes a comprehensive and individualised approach to assessing and addressing citizens' needs. Case managers are typically responsible for assessing the needs of citizens, developing a care plan, ensuring that the care plan is executed and maintaining contact with the citizen. Case management models typically aim to improve outcomes, maintain engagement with services and reduce overall costs (Dieterich, 2010^[33]).

An example of particular practices of case management for labour market integration can be found in Switzerland. Case managers act as guiding professionals in the transition between school and an apprenticeship or vocational education in the Swiss Service Centre for Vocational Education and Training. Also, for jobseekers, case managers are assigned through the IIZ in the canton of Zurich. The network IIZ is based on co-operation between institutions in social security, integration and education. The Office for Economy and Labour, the Social Insurance Institution, the Cantonal Social Welfare Office, the Office for Youth and Career Guidance and the social services of the municipalities co-ordinate their services. The co-ordination is carried out by the office IIZ, and case managers from the IIZ are placed on these agencies to ensure that jobseekers gain access to the labour market.

In Lithuania, case managers are in constant communication with employment services, social services and other entities such as NGOs. Thanks to this co-ordination with the network of municipal services, the case manager can take an informed decision on which services and itineraries are best adapted to each case.

The case manager first interviews participants to collect information regarding their needs. A meeting is organised with the case team, after which a joint decision is made on the services best tailored to the user's needs. In addition, case managers also contact the service providers and prepare and sign the agreement for labour market integration with the beneficiaries, deciding when the agreement should be finalised. The agreement might include social services, legal or health services, etc. Regarding data sharing, most information is available for the case managers through the public employment database. The next step in this project is to work on the collection and transfer of data between the municipalities participating in the model. There is currently no system in place for automatic exchange of data between different participants.

A similar practice can be found in Germany. Beneficiaries in Germany with major barriers are assigned to a case manager who helps them navigate the assistance system and the intervention process. Case managers in the job centres assist with labour market integration and social integration services in case of need. Integration services might include childcare, long-term care, debt counselling and psychosocial counselling (Hanesch, 2015^[34]). In this way, they are responsible for finding specific support for beneficiaries in co-ordination with the municipalities acting as a link between users and local authorities. For instance, for health problems, the case manager would put them in contact with a doctor or health centre for treatment and follow-up. As mentioned in previous sections, the benefit in Germany is jointly funded by the federal state and the municipalities. To facilitate co-ordination and data exchange between the centres, a shared basic structure for all employment offices allows for basic compatibility and comparability of crucial data. This allows for some basic data sharing between municipal and mixed job centres, between municipal job centres, and full compatibility between all mixed job centres (Scharle et al., 2018^[35]). However, case managers only have access to the information of the users in the application forms and the personal information in the interview with the beneficiary.

Data-sharing mechanisms emerging across countries

Another area that facilitates service integration is data sharing between different pillars and actors of welfare systems. The European Union highlights the benefits of having a unified information system (for example, in the 2013 Social Investment package), which requires all entities to “speak the same language” (European Commission, 2017^[36]). The EU Commission Peer Review on Social Protection Information provides examples of overcoming potential emerging issues. Indeed, the information-sharing system must comply with data protection regulations, for which legal frameworks might need to be adapted.

While many countries have co-ordination mechanisms, data-sharing practices are scarcer. In almost all EU member states, reforms to improve the integration of employment services have been promoted and have highlighted that data sharing and interoperability platforms play a crucial role (Red de Inclusión Social, 2019^[37]). Many public authorities are looking further at integrating health and social care data and social services and employment. Yet, often the data are held in silos by the organisations collecting them, and many OECD countries lack a co-ordinated public policy framework to guide data use and sharing practices, so as to protect privacy, enable efficiencies, promote quality and foster innovative research. In addition, different areas of social services tend to use different operational tools, and IT infrastructure lacks possibilities to exchange data with other systems.

Of the 22 OECD countries that replied to the Questionnaire on Service Integration in 2022, fewer than half (10 countries) had formal channels for data sharing across policy areas (see Table 4.4).

Table 4.4. Practices on data sharing mechanisms in OECD countries, 2022

	Formal channels of data sharing between policy areas	Formal channels of data sharing only in specific programmes	Case-by-case informal data sharing	Formal channels of data sharing between public and third-sector entities
Australia	✓			✓
Canada		✓		
Colombia		✓		
Costa Rica	✓			
Czech Republic			✓	
Denmark	✓			
Finland	✓			
Greece	✓			✓
Hungary			✓	
Japan		✓		
Latvia				
Lithuania		✓		✓
Luxembourg		✓		
Mexico	✓			
Netherlands	✓			
Norway				
Portugal	✓			✓
Slovak Republic		✓		✓
Sweden	✓			
Switzerland			✓	
Türkiye	✓			
United States		✓		

Note: The first "formal channels" column shows the countries with a mechanism for sharing data between several departments. The second shows countries with data-sharing mechanisms only in specific projects or target groups (i.e. families, minimum income beneficiaries, violence victims, etc.). Source: OECD questionnaires on Service Integration (2022).

There are several relevant examples of registries gathering data from different services or departments:

- In Finland, Kanta is an entity of digital services that brings benefits to citizens, pharmacies and the social welfare and healthcare sectors. From 2023, the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL) will collect key social welfare client and service data into a new register for monitoring social welfare (Sosdata). The data will also be used to monitor social welfare data to improve service quality. The government also proposes to reform the regulation on the processing of client data in healthcare and social welfare and to enact a new Act on the Electronic Processing of Client Data in Healthcare and Social Welfare for this purpose. The act is due to enter into force on 1 January 2024. The long-term objective is to gradually dismantle overlapping and separate data collections, automate the work stages of data production and utilise common practices.
- In Australia, a Memoranda of Understanding can be used to support data-sharing arrangements between different departments. Services Australia has established partnerships with key federal and state government departments, which include bilateral agreements that support the exchange of data (both ingesting and releasing) to improve customer experiences and outcomes. The agency has dedicated business areas that provide a consistent and centralised entry point for external requestors seeking data on Services Australia's Centrelink, Medicare and/or Child Support programmes for business improvement, policy or research purposes. Robust policies are in place to manage risks around the release of information and to ensure compliance with appropriate legislative requirements and adherence to government policies relating to the safe use and

disclosure of agency data. In addition, the Multi-Agency Data Integration Project (MADIP) is a partnership between Australian Government agencies to combine information on Australians to create a resource for cross-sectional policy analysis and research. MADIP integrates data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the Australian Taxation Office, the Department of Education, Skills and Employment, the Department of Health, the Department of Social Services, and Services Australia.

- In Greece, there is a data-sharing mechanism referred to as the National Mechanisms' IT platform (Law 4445/2016), which is composed of three distinct registries: beneficiaries, entities and programmes. The beneficiaries' registry includes details of the beneficiaries of non-contributory social benefits, such as AMKA (social security number), value-added tax (VAT) number, surname, name and gender, date of birth, demographic data, type and amount of welfare benefit. The Private Entities registry includes the data of private bodies that provide social care services. The Public Entities registry includes data on public bodies (Social Welfare Centres and their branches) that provide social care services and information about their establishment, organisation and operation, employee data and financial data. The programme's registry includes information about actions and welfare programmes implemented at national and local levels and financed by national and European resources. In addition, for the GMI, there are data-sharing mechanisms and the PES platform. Available data on GMI beneficiaries include the number of registered unemployed, time/duration of registration as unemployed, the drawing-up or renewal of an Individualised Action Plan with an Employment Counsellor and the number of GMI beneficiaries participating in employment programmes.

Beyond integrated registries, countries can also have co-operation agreements between different agencies, allowing associated institutions to access each other's files easily, implying a harmonisation of their IT systems. One positive example is the German Jobcentres, which use systems that can output comparable and compatible data, allowing for a shared monitoring system by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. Another positive example is the modification of the IT systems of the Austrian social welfare agencies and federal employment services that allows a once-monthly data synchronisation and the use of an online portal for direct access to the data from the social security system, the PES and the population and property registries, allowing social workers to easily access necessary information. In Norway, integrated services and data-sharing channels are being created for life events such as having a child, bereavement, death and inheritance, seriously ill children, etc. Users will automatically gain access to the services they need based on their situations thanks to the co-ordination of digital tools.

Only three countries report having case-by-case informal data sharing. In Switzerland, for instance, data can be exchanged with the consent of the persons concerned and on a case-by-case basis between the social partners involved in cantonal projects, such as, for example, in the canton of Argovia (<https://www.kooperation-arbeitsmarkt.ch/de/home>), in the canton of Solothurn (<https://so.ch/verwaltung/departement-des-innern/amt-fuer-gesellschaft-und-soziales/interinstitutionelle-zusammenarbeit-iz/mitteilungen/>) or in the canton of Vaud (<https://www.lausanne.ch/vie-pratique/travail/aide-demandeurs-emploi/unite-commune-orp-csr.html>). In Hungary, because multi-professional teams are involved in social inclusion, all necessary data are made known to other professionals, but there are no special protocols. Another interesting example is the Electronic Social Record, implemented by the Lombardy region, in Italy (see Box 4.1).

Data-sharing provisions with the third sector appear uncommon across OECD countries since only five reported such practices. Portugal does not have a specific tool for data sharing with the third sector, but co-ordination with the third sector is regulated through the Permanent Committee for the Social and Solidarity Sector (Comissão Permanente do Sector Social e Solidário) under Decree Law No. 120/2015, which establishes the type of contracts or protocols that can be made. Other countries, like the Slovak Republic, have regulations for the submission of statistical reports from third-sector providers, similar to what is done in Spain. In Australia, organisations receiving programme funding are contractually

required to report de-identified client data on a monthly basis. As an example, the Department of Social Services (DSS) uses the Data Exchange (DEX) platform and funding Arrangement Managers (who manage DSS grants) use DEX to monitor and assess performance reporting in funding agreements. Over 200 active data exchanges supporting Centrelink programmes are third-party organisations, such as financial institutions. The majority of providers in Workforce Australia are not-for-profit agencies. Quality assurance and contract monitoring require them to report their activities with jobseekers on a quarterly basis. Similarly, the impact of any referrals made by providers to third parties needs to be reported.

Box 4.1. Cartella Sociale Informatizzata (Electronic Social Record) in Italy's Lombardy region

In order to harmonise processes and facilitate data sharing, the Lombardy region in Italy implemented an operational instrument known as Cartella Sociale Informatizzata (CSI) or Electronic Social Record. The CSI is an IT solution capable of providing functions at the professional level to social workers and the administrative-managerial level to the agencies planning and co-ordinating social interventions. This IT tool is useful for establishing shared protocols where all procedures and actors involved are clearly defined. To facilitate the spread of the tool across local agencies, some guidelines were created to achieve a uniform development of the Electronic Social Record. The shared guidelines enabled more homogenous and efficient management of social services and simplified both the production and the transfer of data between different authorities.

The process underlying the implementation of the CSI in service delivery has five phases: access and orientation, assessment of need, intervention design, service delivery and final evaluation. Within each phase, the activities, the required documents and data to be managed by the CSI are described in detail.

In this way, the Electronic Social Record allows user information to be collected in the dataset. Thus, the record contains the user's personal data, including his or her family history and even the characteristics of the neighbourhood or context where the individual lives. Moreover, it enables all professionals to document each phase and event of the social assistance itinerary in which the social service is being delivered. At the same time, access to the Minimum Social Income is also integrated into the workflow of this instrument as it follows the same procedure as the user's demand for other social care services.

All in all, the Electronic Social Record enables the:

- automation of unified procedures
- management of information at the level of care delivery and across the network of services
- collaboration between different actors through the integration of professionals
- interchange of data with external stakeholders
- analysis of data to analyse the outcome of its implementation and draft reports to improve service delivery and the governance system.

Source: Azienda Regionale per l'Innovazione e gli Acquisti (2019^[38]), *Linee Guida: Cartella Sociale Informatizzata*.

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Notes

1. See the OECD Tax-Benefit Portal at <http://oe.cd/TaxBEN> and the European Commission MISSOC database at <https://www.oecd.org/social/benefits-and-wages/benefits-and-wages-country-specific-information.htm>.
2. The term “legal” refers to the situation in which the person holds an official document allowing him/her to live in the country, permanently or for a limited period.
3. In many countries, nationality and residence conditions to access minimum income benefits derive from general conditions in place to access to the welfare system.
4. Which is not, per se, a bad sign. In general, minimum income statutory amounts do not decrease in nominal value and the ration minimum income amount to poverty line decreases because the poverty line moves up (in nominal terms). Since the poverty line is a parameter that depends on the income distribution, the interpretation of this ratio should carefully analyse the changes in the income distribution, in particular in lower deciles, changes in real wages and inflation, especially the one of low- and very low-income consumption profiles.

5. Unlike contributory unemployment benefits, several exceptions to this conditionality can exist, notably for those who are not able to work or have justified reasons (e.g. care) to not to take up a job.

6. This may suggest that, in these countries, taking a minimum-wage job does not pay a lot. However, these countries also have a dynamic labour market, and many jobs pay wages higher than the minimum wage.

7. As for the new scheme, the Citizen's Income, the process has not yet been digitised, so citizens must go to local job centres to submit their applications.

8. See <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2023/01/30/council-adopts-recommendation-on-adequate-minimum-income/> for more information.

9. Interestingly, the government does not formally verify the income test requirements. Instead, the voucher application form asks households to only declare if their income falls below the stated thresholds. While the tax authorities would theoretically be able to cross-check application forms with administrative records on individual incomes, there are no explicit plans to do so.



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