

FINAL REPORT

of the external expertise hired within the EU-funded Project

QUALITY PUBLIC SERVICE FOR VULNERABLE PEOPLE

by Raffaella Greco Tonegutti

INTRODUCTION

The present report summarizes the outcomes of the EU-funded project **A quality public service for individuals in vulnerable situations** and conclusions. The project was promoted by the Belgian Federal Public Service Personnel and Organisation (P&O) as the chair of the European Public Administration Employers (EUPAE), in partnership with the Trade Union's National and European Delegation (TUNED), social partners of the Social Dialogue Committee for Central Government Administrations (SDC CGA).

The aim of the project was to help promote and implement at the national level the European Framework Agreement for a quality public service in the state sector adopted by the SDC CGA in 2012.

It consisted in assessing the knowledge of the Framework Agreement among managers, employees of three types of services dealing with groups of the population in a vulnerable situation- asylum-seekers, young unemployed and low income pensioners- and in proposing conclusions to help EU social partners define broader policy recommendations.

Both the Framework Agreement and the EU-funded project directly relate to ongoing discussions at national and EU levels regarding public administration reforms such as innovation, improving the image of public administration to the public, and increasing fairness and equity in the access to and quality of services. These are most relevant for most vulnerable groups of users for whom public services represent the opportunity to fully exert their citizens rights and are the wealth of the people who do not have any, as was said by French Minister for Public Administration and Decentralization, Ms Lebranchu at the final project conference.

The project was launched in January 2014 and ended in December 2014. It was led by a Steering Committee composed by members of both EUPAE and TUNED, as well as by the external expert commissioned to carry out the study (both survey and desk analysis), support the scientific organization of the Regional Seminars and final project Conference, organize focus group discussions, and produce the present report and key conclusions.

BACKGROUND

On 12 December 2012, the European Social Dialogue Committee for Central Government Administrations (SDC CGA), composed by trade unions (TUNED) and employers (EUPAE) representatives, signed a framework agreement for a quality public service in central government. . Although not a legally binding text, the European agreement lays down 20 commitments addressed to the national social partners to improve the quality of public services for citizens around **7 values as follows:**

- Respect of the **Rule of Law**;
- **Welcome**;
- **Equity**;
- **Integrity**;



- **Efficiency;**
- **Quality of Life at Work;** and
- **Communication and Transparency.**

The **Framework Agreement** re-states that serving the general interest is the core mission of all public services and that public authorities play a crucial role in providing, funding, implementing and organising public services in a way which meets users' needs, especially at times of crisis, when people in a vulnerable situation are particularly need protection from falling into poverty. It also underlines that to be effective public service values require sufficient resources, a good social dialogue and consultation of users.

As far as the social dialogue committee knows, it is the first time that both trade unions and the administrations have agreed a text on public service values and their practical implementation.

To give a concrete angle to the implementation of the Agreement, the SDC CGA decided that as part of the EU-funded project, the focus should be on public services geared towards people in a vulnerable situation and for which the quality of service is all the more critical.

Accordingly, the following three groups of people and three types of services were selected:

- Asylum seekers - services dealing with asylum seekers ;
- Young people at risk - employment services for young people at risk ;
- Retired persons on low income - pension services.

These groups have been the focus of the European employment and social policy as defined by the "Europe 2020" strategy, by the communication "*Moving youth into Employment*" (2012), by the White Paper "*an Agenda for Adequate, Safe and Sustainable Pensions*" (2012), and by the 2008 Policy Plan on Asylum "*An integrated approach to protection across the EU*".

Low income pensioners

As far as low income pensioners are concerned, figures from the "Eurostat - Europe 2020 indicators" 2014 dataset reveal that 17% of the population in the 28 EU Member States were at risk of poverty or social exclusion in 2012 after social security transfers¹, the highest levels being reported in Bulgaria (21.2%), Spain (22.2 %), Romania (22.6%) and Greece (23.1%).² On average, 12.8% of over 65s in OECD countries live in income poverty, defined as an income below half the national median.³ There is large variation between countries, from three with practically no old-age poverty to four with poverty rates double the OECD average. Poverty rates are higher for older people than for the population as whole, which averages 11.3%. One important factor that explains the varying incidence of old-age poverty is the level at which safety-net retirement benefits are set. In the early years of the 21st century, about 13 million elderly people are at risk of poverty in 25 EU Member States, amounting to as many as one in six of all 74 million elderly people living in the EU. Among the target countries of this project, Spain and the United Kingdom are identified as the countries with the highest poverty risk for the elderly population.⁴ In the majority of countries, the poverty risk is markedly higher for older women, and in particular for women aged 75 and more.⁵

Young unemployed

According to the 2012 Eurofound report "NEETs – Young people not in employment, education or training: Characteristics, costs and policy responses in Europe", in 2011 the share of young people in the NEET group (often referred to as NEETs and identifying a very heterogeneous population among which the largest subgroup tends to be those who are conventionally unemployed while other

¹ The indicator "after" (social transfers) can give us an overall picture of the real risk of poverty rate, whereas the indicator "before" (social transfers) better describes what would be the poverty rate if the states not intervene with its social protection measures. It is interesting to note that in countries like Italy "before" and "after" (social transfers) there are just small changes that do not make a big difference, while in other countries with a stronger welfare state, such as the Scandinavian countries, Belgium and the Netherlands, the difference between the two indicators is much more relevant.

² Europe 2020, Living conditions and social protection, Eurostat 2014, People at risk of poverty after social transfers.

³ OECD, Pensions at a Glance, 2013

⁴ The above findings should be viewed with an understanding that the poverty thresholds against which the poverty situation in a country is measured are derived from the value of the national median income (standardized so as to take account of household compositions).

⁵ FFERPA, Purchasing power of pensions in Europe, 2009.



vulnerable subgroups include the sick and disabled and young carers⁶) was 12.9% of the population of those aged 15 - 24 in the EU27⁷, which corresponds approximately to 7.5 million young people. For those aged 25 - 29, this figure stood at almost 20% in 2010, amounting to 6.5 million young people. There is considerable variation in the NEET rate between EU Member States, varying from below 7% (Luxembourg and the Netherlands) to over 17% (Bulgaria, Ireland, Italy and Spain).⁸ Certain groups, such as those with low qualification levels, are more adversely affected than others. In fact, there is widespread agreement on the positive link between educational attainment and employment outcomes. As far as gender is concerned, historically women have been more affected by unemployment than men, however when it comes down to youth unemployment, at the end of 2013 the male and the female rates were very close, respectively 10.6 % and 10.8 %.

Asylum-seekers

According to the last available data on asylum seekers, defined as person who is unable to seek protection in his/her country of citizenship and/or residence, in particular for fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion by the Geneva Convention, almost 435.000 asylum applicants were registered in the EU-28 in 2013⁹ (same as peak of 2001) with large national variations due to the different crisis that occurred in the last ten years in several countries / areas of the world.¹⁰ One out of four asylum applicants in the EU-28 was aged less than 18 while 1 out of 3 was a female. The main receiving Member States were Germany, France, Sweden, UK and Italy.¹¹ In 2013, the overall recognition rate at first instance at EU 28 level (including humanitarian protection) stood at 34.4%¹² whereas, at the end of 2013, more than 352 000 persons were awaiting a decision on their asylum application in the EU 28; the volume of pending applications therefore increased by +33% compared to the previous year (EASO¹³).

METHODOLOGY

The **project** covered 13 countries: **Belgium, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Romania, Slovakia, and Spain**, and it has been developed along three methodological lines:

(a) **literature review** of reports mainly issued by governments, EU institutions, international organisations, NGOs, Trade Unions, academic and research institutions from all sampled countries;

(b) non-statistical **collection of primary data** on the dissemination of information regarding the Framework Agreement among the three target services i.e. unemployment, refugee and pension services, and at having a first (non-exhaustive and by default non-statistic) overview of the quality of Services delivery in those services . The collection of data started in March 2014 and was closed at the end of August 2014. Overall, **551 questionnaires** have been filled in by **employers** (131, of which 61% of women and 39% of men), **employees** (311 of which the 62% of women and 38% of men), and **representatives of users** (109, of which 55% of

⁶ Eurofound, NEETs – Young people not in employment, education or training: Characteristics, costs and policy responses in Europe

⁷ Although, according to the European Value Scale (EVS), the NEET rate in Europe among those aged 15–24 years is 14.3% against the 12.8% recorded by Eurostat.

⁸ Eurofound, NEETs – Young people not in employment, education or training: Characteristics, costs and policy responses in Europe.

⁹ Eurostat "Asylum applicants and first instance decisions on asylum applications: 2013"

¹⁰ Although the overall number of asylum requests looks very much significant, it is still decidedly lower than the overall number of refugees and asylum seekers hosted in other regions / countries of the world.

¹¹ In France a total of 58645 (both positive - refugee status / subsidiary protection / humanitarian reasons – and negative – rejections) decisions made on asylum applications led to 15% refugee status recognition; in Sweden a total of 45005 (both positive - refugee status / subsidiary protection / humanitarian reasons – and negative – rejections) decisions made on asylum applications led to 15% refugee status recognition; In Italy a total of 25.245 (both positive - refugee status / subsidiary protection / humanitarian reasons – and negative – rejections) decisions made on asylum applications led to 12% refugee status recognition; in the UK a total of 22340 (both positive - refugee status / subsidiary protection / humanitarian reasons – and negative – rejections) decisions made on asylum applications led to 34% refugee status recognition; in Belgium a total of 19805 (both positive - refugee status / subsidiary protection / humanitarian reasons – and negative – rejections) decisions made on asylum applications led to 20% refugee status recognition. *Asylum applicants and first instance decisions on asylum applications: 2013*, Eurostat, 2014.

¹² This includes granting of refugee status to 49.710 persons, subsidiary protection to 45.535 persons and humanitarian protection to 17.665 persons.

¹³ European Asylum Support Office based in Malta.



women and 45% of men) from 43 targeted services in 12 sampled countries¹⁴. Indeed the survey didn't have the pretention of being complete nor to perfectly reproduce the reality of all services in all countries, but it has been very useful as through the direct distribution of questionnaires in the services, the project could awaken the attention and the debate on the commitments contained in the Framework Agreement, and their actual application in public services across Europe.

(c) three meetings including:

2 regional seminars that gathered representatives from employees, employers, and representatives of users to discuss the preliminary findings of both the literature review and the primary data collection, in order to assess and prioritize emerging issues and gather ideas for the elaboration of conclusions / recommendations to be presented and discussed in the final phase of the project itself.

The **1st Regional Seminar** was held in **Bucharest** (5-6 June 2014) with around 40 representatives from 6 countries: Czech Republic, Germany, Lithuania, Luxemburg, Romania and Slovakia.

The **2nd Regional Seminar** was held in **Rome** (3-4 July 2014) with around 40 representatives from 5 countries: Belgium, France, Greece, Italy, Malta, and Spain.

Alongside the regional seminars, **4 focus groups** were carried out in Bucharest, Rome, Brussels and Paris to deepen some of the most prominent issues that emerged during the seminars and through the data collection.

A final **Conference in Paris** (6-7 November 2014) brought together 90 participants, many of whom also attended the two regional seminars, to discuss the project's conclusions and first draft policy recommendations.

Below we present in more detail the different methodological phases of the projects and their immediate outcomes.

Literature Review

A **total of 120 documents have been analysed** either produced in or related to the following countries: Italy, France, Belgium, Spain, United Kingdom, Lithuania, Romania, Luxembourg, Greece, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Malta, Finland and Germany. A total of 11 documents is related to EU or OECD countries in general. Among the total of documents analysed, **57 related to asylum seekers, 33 to young job-seekers**, as well as **33 related to low income pensioners**.

As far as the documents targeting the quality service within central government administrations as regards the three vulnerable groups analysed through this project/report are concerned, the most relevant documents are listed in Annex 1.

Survey

The survey has been based on the distribution of questionnaires¹⁵ to a casual sample of employees, employers and service users from the 13 participating countries. The condition for each of the selected countries was to involve a minimum of 3 and a maximum of 9 services, being at least 1 and maximum 3 per each considered category (asylum seekers, young job-seekers, low income pensioners). In each sampled service, members of the SDC CGA of the countries concerned were responsible for distributing the questionnaire to a minimum of 9 persons, being 3 managers, 3 employees and, possibly, 3 representatives of users.

This requirement has been fulfilled by the majority of participating countries (i.e. 9 out of 13), whereas the remaining countries have participated with smaller sample than minimum requirements. In only one country, only a single questionnaire has been filled in and no participation to Regional Seminars / Final Conference has been ensured.

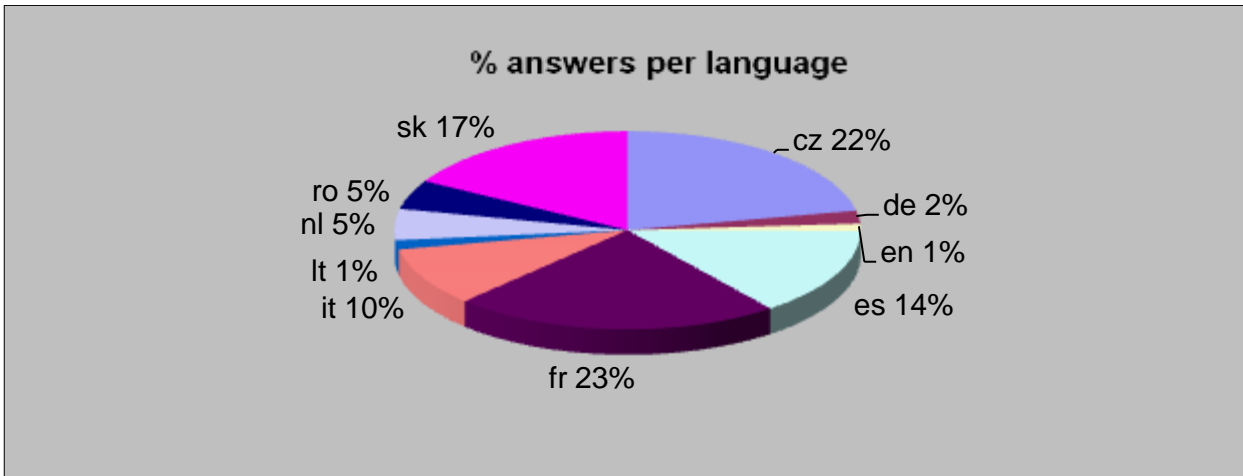
¹⁴ Finland and Malta participated through the submission of some questionnaires, and one representative of the Maltese administration attended the Regional Seminar in Rome.

¹⁵ An example of questionnaire in English is available in Annex 8 – Questionnaire. The questionnaires have been translated into 11 European languages and distributed across the participating countries.



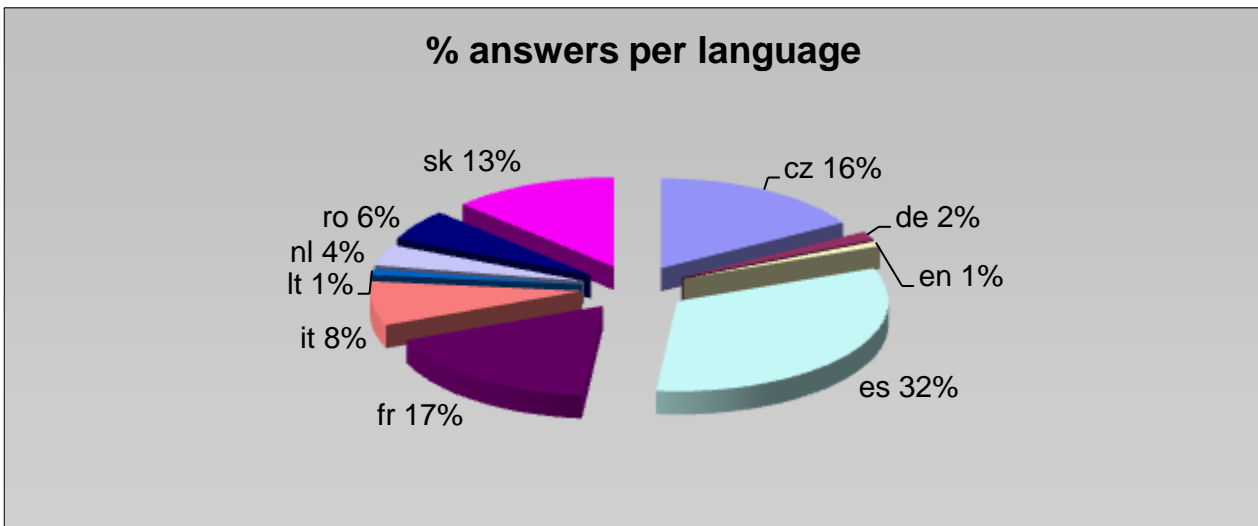
Overall, 551 questionnaires have been filled in, among which 442 questionnaires filled in by managers and employees, of which 331 by employees and 131 by employers, and 109 by representatives of users. The tables hereunder present the division per country with respect to employees and employers responding to the questionnaires:

EMPLOYEES



The majority of questionnaires have been distributed to employees of Young Job-Seekers' services (176 questionnaires) mainly originating from Czech Republic, Slovakia, Belgium and France; then to employees of Pension Services (95 questionnaires) also mainly originating from Czech Republic, Slovakia and Belgium; and to employees from asylum seeker services (40 questionnaires) mainly from Belgium, France, Spain, and Italy.

EMPLOYERS:

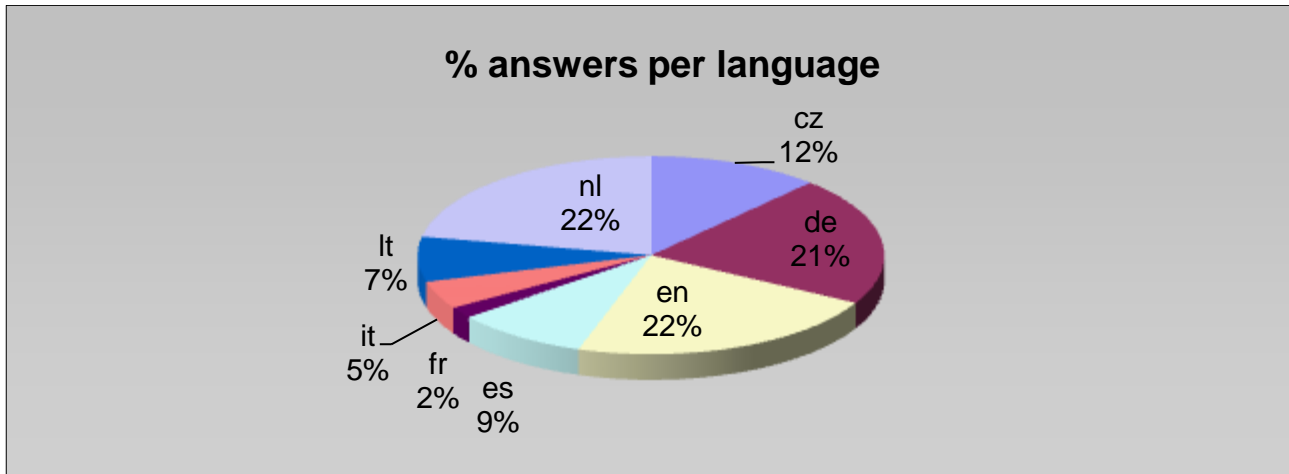


As for employees, the majority of questionnaires have been distributed to employers mainly originating from Czech Republic, Slovakia, Belgium and France managing Pension Services (60 questionnaires), Young Job-Seekers' services (60 questionnaires) and only a few managing Asylum Seekers' services (21) mainly in Spain, France, Belgium and Italy.

Considering managers and employees all together, the gender ratio equals 34% men and 66% women, of which 66% among employees and 34% among managers. Generally speaking, these percentages are equally valid for the three categories of services sampled.



REPRESENTATIVES OF USERS:



The majority of answers were registered among Belgian, Slovak and Czech respondents that were divided as follows: 21 from asylum seeker services; 36 from pension services; 52 from unemployed youth services.

Overall, the description of the sample shows the following features::

1. The majority of questionnaires have been filled in by pension service and youth unemployment service workers from Czech Republic and Slovakia, followed by Belgium and France;
2. Asylum seekers-related services have been the most complicated to involve, and the least respondent. This is possibly due to both the delicate task they carry out and the high pressure/stress that employees of these services suffer at their workplaces;
3. The majority of respondents were women, mostly among employees. This is possibly due to the fact that they represent the majority of workers actually employed in the sampled services. Among managers, the percentage of women is quite high as well, representing one third of the overall number of sampled employers;
4. Notwithstanding the initial request of having an equal representation of managers and employees in the sample, data show that the overall number of managers who actually filled in the questionnaire represents one third of the overall number of employees filling them in;
5. The average age of respondents, both among managers and employees, is in the range of 45 to 56 years.

Regional Seminars and Final Conference

Instead of the three initially planned regional seminars, two took place, in agreement with the EC, in order to ensure a wide participation of EUPAE and TUNED representatives from a variety of countries to each seminar.

The First Regional Seminar¹⁶ in Bucharest with representatives from 6 participating countries plus Hungary: Romania, Luxemburg, Germany, Czech Republic, Lithuania, and Slovakia. Main conclusions of the Seminar are summarized below:

- Very poor literature and contradictions among desk review, questionnaires answers (and questionnaire answers to general and specific questions), and witnesses gathered during the regional seminar. These lack of reliable information and abundance of contradiction show a lack of self-narrative (i.e. description and analysis from an internal perspective, shared among the different categories of workers involved: employers and employees, specifically addressing the quality of services delivered and the quality of existing working conditions in relation to the quality of services

¹⁶ The agenda of the Seminar and the list of presence are attached in the Annexes. Namely, Annex 2 – List of participants Bucharest; Annex 3 – Agenda Bucharest.



delivered) regarding public administration work-related issues that shall be addressed in order to better assess actual needs (of training, of working conditions, of workers' rights, of user-related nature) and improve the quality of services delivered at the same time as of working conditions within the services.

- Communication with users through various means should be substantially improved. Communication should also aim at informing users on what does the administration do (for them), in order to improve the trust and consideration toward the administration itself.
- Communication and information of users shall be improved also through a more user friendly approach by public administration (i.e. websites and information materials easier to access and multilingual; multilingual call centres for foreign users-related services; central information point/centre, etc.) as well as with a provision of multilingual service for foreign users-specific services (i.e. if mediators/translators services are too costly for administrations, other arrangements shall be made in order to allow a correct information sharing and access to the service by everyone who is entitled to).
- Training for all employees, both linked to career development and better exercise of one's tasks shall become a normal praxis in all public administration, with minimum loss in the daily efficiency of employees.

The Second Regional Seminar¹⁷ in Rome with representatives from 6 participating countries: Italy, France, Belgium, Greece, Malta, and Spain. Main conclusions of the Seminar are summarized below:

- Differences among selected countries are enormous and it is difficult to compare their situations and find common conclusion and recommendations. Their differences shall be considered in the analysis of data collected through the questionnaires;
- Main problems that are (more or less) to all selected countries relate to: shortage in staff in public services dealing with vulnerable public (most of all young unemployment and migrants/asylum seekers services), increase of the workload, the responsibilities and tasks and decrease of salaries, salaries not adapted to competencies, workload, responsibilities; fixed-term contracts for functions that should be carried out by employees/staff members; lack of clear objective and mission of each service and of specific tasks given to each employee/worker with consequent training and refreshment possibilities; problems related to the stress and low level of satisfaction of users that turns out into increase of stress for workers that are not in the position to satisfy the needs of users; lack of involvement of the users in the assessment and planning of the services; tension between efficiency and quality of the service, between quality of the service delivered and productivity.
- Need for clear, transparent and shared definition of productivity and evaluation transparent and equal of employees performances.
- Need for a reprise of the importance of the Social Dialogue (to be clearly intended and considered by both Administrations and Unions).
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- Training for all employees, both linked to career development and better exercise of one's tasks shall become a normal praxis in all public administration, with minimum loss in the daily efficiency of employees.
- Public Administrations should not limit the human and fundamental rights of users. They shall apply and respect the rules and laws, but this does not mean that they have to apply them in a restrictive and disrespectful way for users.

¹⁷ The agenda of the Seminar and the list of presence are attached in the Annexes. Namely, Annex 4 – List of participants Rome; Annex 5 – Agenda Rome.



TUNED spokes person also underlined how it is very much needed to make the Framework Agreement (FA) live through final recommendations, to be shared among administrations, unions and representative of users. Aspects that shall be remembered are the specificity of public services open to the public, the importance of complementarities of public administrations with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs), the need for structural reforms.

Also, the EUPAE spokes person highlighted and concluded that the project aimed at disseminating the existence of the FA and its commitments, also promoting its implementation. It did not aim at a scrupulous evaluation of the quality of functioning of public services in selected countries. Recommendations shall be as practical as possible!

The Final Conference in Paris¹⁸ put together the main findings of the study (see section below) and the discussion of conclusions presented by the external consultant. The chairs of the Social Dialogue Committee presented the first draft of a set of policy recommendations based on the study findings and conclusions allowing for an exchange that goes beyond the usual members of the Committee (including the views of service users).

MAIN FINDINGS

As a **general remark**, the literature review, the three focus groups held in Bucharest, Rome and Bruxelles¹⁹, and finally the discussions with country representatives during the two Regional Seminars in Bucharest and Rome showed that very **little information** is **available** on the:

- (1) Level of **dissemination and implementation of the Framework Agreement among EU public services**,
- (2) **Quality of Public Services**, both from users and from administration perspective (no information on integrity),
- (3) **Quality of Life at Work** in the three target public services.

Furthermore, the review highlighted that there is no common understanding on what criteria define "Quality Public Services", which is what the European Framework Agreement attempts to provide.

However, main findings from literature review, primary data collection and discussions in Bucharest and Rome highlighted some common features. Target countries need to find ways to better adapt their systems to contemporary societies and to better tackle structural problems affecting the quality of public services delivered to the targeted categories of users, such as:

- Pressure on resources as a consequence of state budget cuts;
- Shortages in staff;
- Fragmentation of services and poor co-ordination among different structures/administrations dealing with the same vulnerable groups.

In particular, existing literature regarding the quality of services delivered to **Unemployed youth** mostly focuses on policies to be adopted in the upcoming years and EU projects assessing policies and practices to fight youth unemployment underlining the importance to provide a more tailor-made, individualised response to the needs of the young people, offering easier opportunities to get access to agencies and information about work placement programmes in proximity to their area of residence, and the provision of innovative programmes to ensure a good-quality offer of employment, continued education, learning or traineeship.

Nonetheless, it is hard to find any document referring to the actual quality of existing services nor to the satisfaction of users regarding the services delivered by Job Services and Desks for Youth Unemployment, apart from a series of documents on the quality of working conditions in job placement

¹⁸ The agenda of the Seminar and the list of presence are attached in the Annexes. Namely, Annex 6 – List of participants Paris; Annex 7 – Agenda Paris.

¹⁹ The three focus groups gathered an average of 8 participants each, among employers, employees and representatives of users that discussed more in depth the main points raised through the questionnaires, i.e. the spread of the Framework Agreement; the actual working conditions and delivery quality of services within sampled services; the correspondence of Framework Agreement's commitments with the reality of life within public services delivering services to the three target vulnerable groups; etc..



services, with focus on youth-related services issued by EPSU and the European foundation for the improvement of living and working conditions²⁰.

The analysis on **asylum seekers** in EU countries, whose needs refer to the development of **specific and adequate services**, particularly for those people who have limited or no resources, could count on a number of documents specifically devoted to the quality of services delivered to the users and it highlighted a number of standards considered as basis for an adequate and specific service for asylum seekers, which are common to almost all the sampled countries.

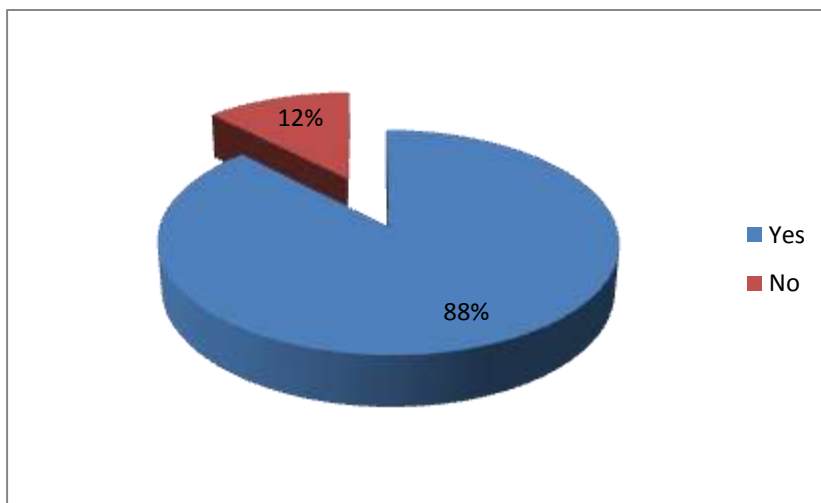
These general remarks are further confirmed by the result of the non-statistical questionnaire submitted to a casual sample of workers, managers and representative of users of a selection of asylum seekers, pensions and youth unemployment services in the fourteen target EU countries.

As a consequence, in the following section “Description of the sample”, we will give brief indication on the constitution of our survey’s sample. We will then analyse the main outcomes of the project, aggregating information collected through the survey, the desk review, the seminars and final conference, and the three focus group discussions.

Main findings: Welcome - Commitments 3 to 6 of the Framework Agreement

The overall assessment of the quality of welcome of users by employers, employees and representative of users is generally positive, even though there are many variables to be considered whose assessment by the three categories of stakeholders interviewed differ significantly. In particular, variable considered to assess the assessment regarding the quality of welcome / first contact services include services accessibility, and in particular to vulnerable users (including flexible opening hours, presence of qualified staff, presence of enough staff in order to ensure the service, etc.), the quality of services delivered – most of all for first contacts and desk procedures, and the waiting time needed to access the first contact by users.

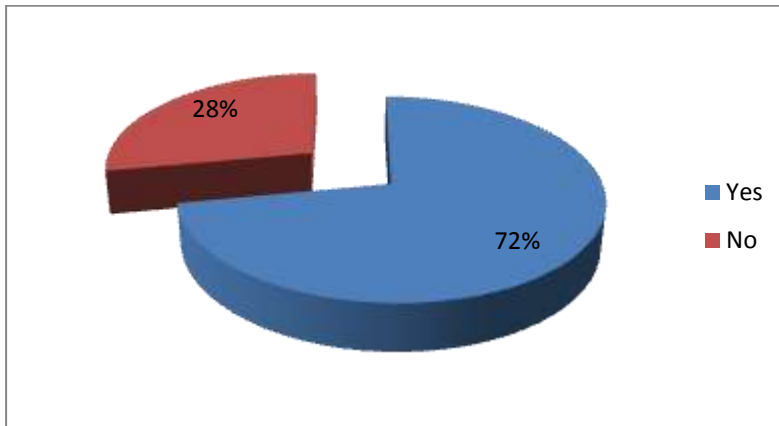
A. Assessment of Services accessibility (Managers)



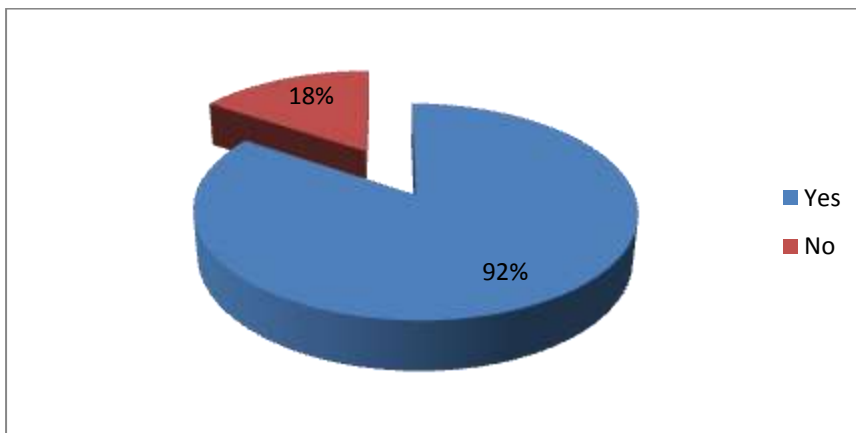
²⁰ EPSU report on “Training, jobs and decent work for young people in the public sector”, European foundation for the improvement of living and working conditions report “Quality of life in Europe: quality of society and public services” (2013).



B. Assessment of Services accessibility (Employees)

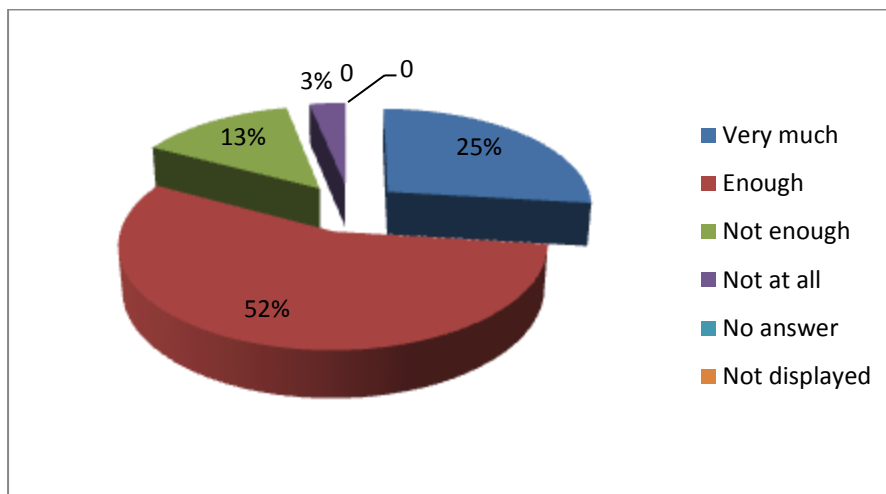


C. Assessment of Services accessibility (Users)

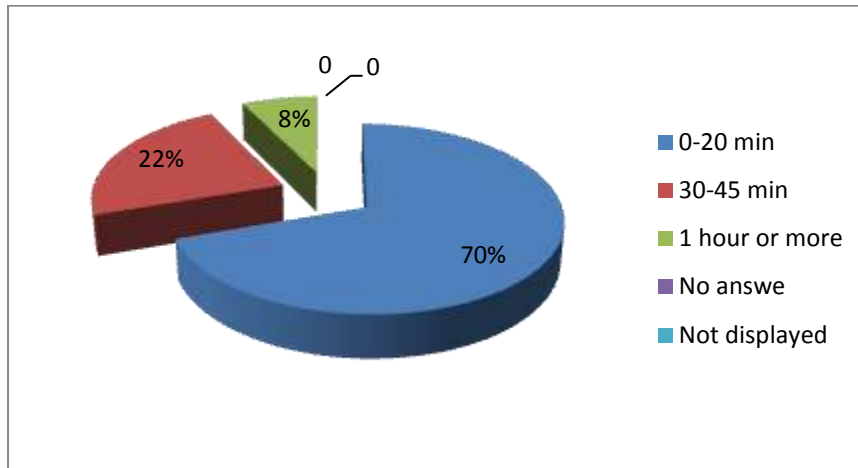


Hereunder, a summary of answers to questions related to other variables are listed, presenting particularly the view users' representatives.

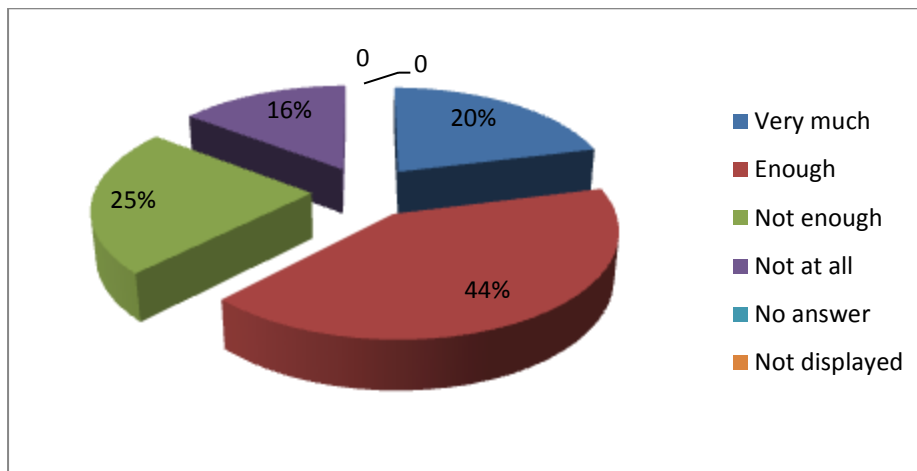
A. Level of staff competencies (Users)



B. Assessment of waiting times (Users)



C. Level of linguistic competencies of services' staff (Users)



In order to complement these information and to focus on specificity of the three targeted services, the results of the desk analysis, the seminars and the focus groups will help to have a closer view to the main critical issues emerged as far as the three specific target groups are concerned.

1. Pension services

- Location of services not easily accessible to elderly, chronically ill, or disabled people;
- Lack of cultural and linguistic mediators who are more and more needed by health and social care assistance personnel for elderly, chronically ill, or disabled people, and by users of foreign origins;
- Lack of office facilities ensuring privacy when accessing desks (e.g. older people generally need to receive information loud enough to be well heard/understood);
- Excessive waiting times;
- Poor infrastructure, long waiting time and low privacy conditions (e.g. elderly generally need to receive information loud enough to be well heard/understood);
- Services often not equipped for deaf, hearing-impaired or speech-impaired persons;
- Services do not provide for active-search of non-users that are equally entitled to services / benefits, leaving them out of the system.

2. Young Unemployed

- Accessibility and equal quality of information provided often not guaranteed;



- Lack of active-search initiatives to attract potential young users, most of all the marginalized ones and school drop outs that do not access services but who would be entitled to the benefits delivered;
- Scarce quality of reception services and of first contact for new users;
- Lack of advice desk able to orient young users and support in the understanding of service-related mechanisms;
- Diversification of support to young users through the use of new technologies is not equally developed in all target countries.

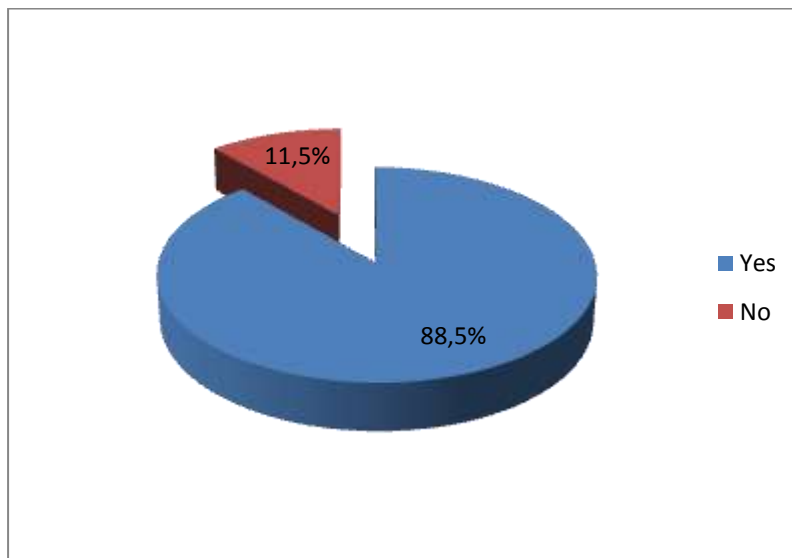
3. Asylum seeker services

- Lack of linguistic mediators or staff able to express themselves in one or more migrant languages;
- Lack of sufficiently flexible hours in services open to the public;
- Scarce use of appointments (even for first comers) instead of having long waiting queues at the desks;
- Scarce knowledge of foreign languages by employees dealing with the public **AND/OR** lack of cultural and linguistic mediators (these professions are more and more needed by health and social care assistance personnel accompanying elderly or disabled users) **AND/OR** lack of authorization to multilingual employees to address users in whatever language other than the official language of the office itself (e.g. French, English, Italian, etc.) by public administrations
- Low privacy and confidentiality conditions due to inadequate infrastructures.

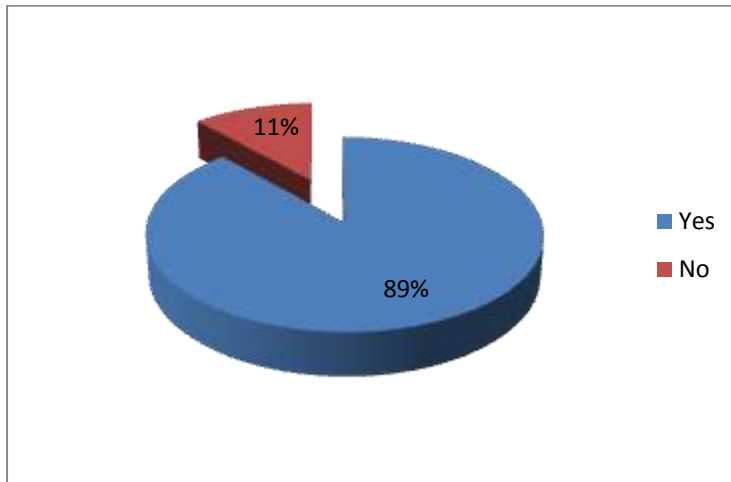
Main findings: Equity - Commitments 7 and 8 of the Framework Agreement

As they originally intended when planning the survey, questions regarding equity were supposed to address the issue of equity and fairness of treatment of foreigners workers, or women employed in sampled services. However, the answers, both closed and open question leaving room to specific comments, focused more on diversity, accounting for presence / absence of foreign workers and woman workers in sampled services. As a consequence, the table below relates more to the issue of diversity rather than equality or equity concerns.

A. Ratio Nationals / Foreign-born working at front-desk in the views of sampled managers



B. Ratio Nationals / Foreign-born working at front-desk in the views of sampled employees



Regarding the employment of foreign born in public administration services, all EU sampled countries have very strict rules regulating the possibility of access to full term contracts. However, most of all for what concerns asylum seekers and pension services, way shall be found to employ foreign born officials able to deal with foreign users who do not fully speak the language of the host country, or that need some mediation when approaching the services. Furthermore, when specifically considering asylum seeker services it is highly needed to equip the services with trained staff able to deal with often traumatized users who need to be listened carefully and might also need to have a longer time in good privacy conditions devoted to their dossiers.

These conditions do not seem to have been met in any of the services sampled in the several EU participating countries, and the desk review confirms the difficulties registered both by users and employees due to the lack of specialized and language-proficient staff members able to deal with delicate and often complex situations and dossiers by asylum seekers.

Main findings: Integrity - Commitments 9 and 10 of the Framework Agreement

Through the desk analysis and the survey (where questions have been often left in blank) it has been extremely difficult to collect information regarding this specific commitment of the FA, for the three category of services sampled.

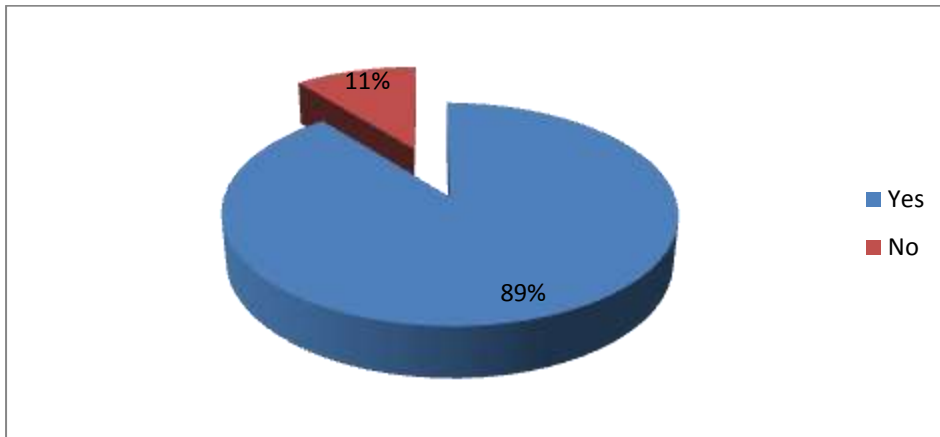
Therefore, no information could be collected on existing mechanisms to keep track of wrongdoings and to avoid conflicts of interest and corruption (defined by the UN as " any form of abuse for private gain). This should be a cause of concern.

Main findings: Efficiency - Commitment 11 of the Framework Agreement

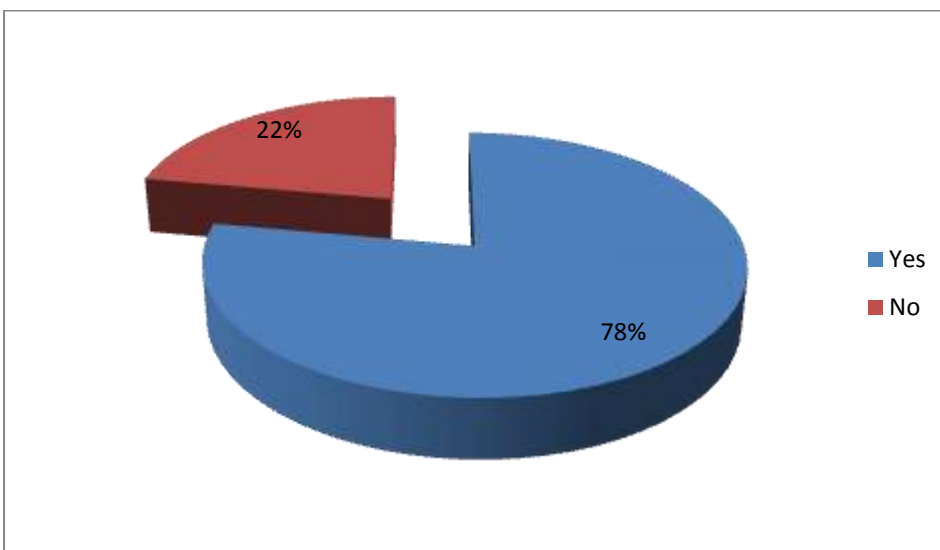
The overall assessment of the efficiency of the sampled services reported by employers, employees and representative of users is generally positive, even though there are many variables to be considered whose assessment by the three categories of stakeholders interviewed differ significantly.



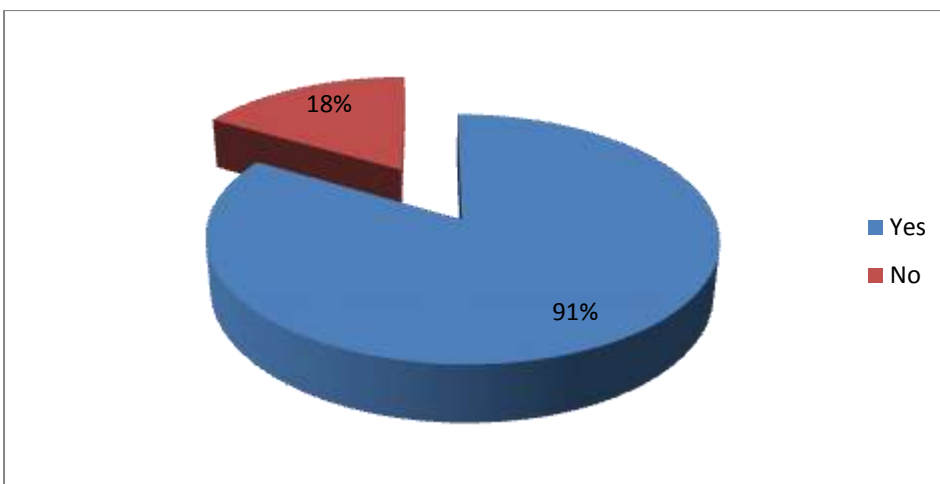
A. Overall assessment of (sufficient) service quality by managers



B. Overall assessment of (sufficient) service quality by employees



C. Overall assessment of (sufficient) service quality by representatives of users



This overall positive assessment generated some discussions during the Regional Seminars and the Final Conference in Paris, where both representatives of employees and of users questioned the value of an analysis based on a very reduced casual sample, as they couldn't confirm the outcomes of the questionnaires. As mentioned above, the survey has been mainly used as a tool to draw the attention of managers and employees to the existence of and need for application of the Framework



Agreement. Furthermore, the desk review also contributed to better focus on the existing problems related to the efficiency of services, most of all in the light of the difficulty to get to an agreement among social partners on the concept of efficiency itself, i.e. how it shall be defined and what elements shall it include, given that everyone agreed on the need to overcome the equation efficiency of services = mere productivity in the execution of tasks without evaluating the quality of tasks accomplished and services delivered/conditions made available by the employers in order to carry out those tasks, and how to include qualitative elements in its definition.

As far as the specific experiences in the sampled services addressing the needs of particularly vulnerable groups, a set of lacks prove to be against the overall positive assessment arose through the survey. Below we list a series of lacks that respondents considered as hampering the good efficiency of sampled services, presented by category:

1. Pension services

- Lack of administrative support to comply with standards required to access pension schemes for those people whose applications have been refused or who have limited or no resources to afford minimum standard of living (and specifically cover their healthcare needs).

2. Youth Unemployment

- Scarcity of career guidance services;
- Scarce use of counselling services;
- Difficulties in the approach to young users, most of in the case of school drops out or marginalized youth with very low degree of formal education.

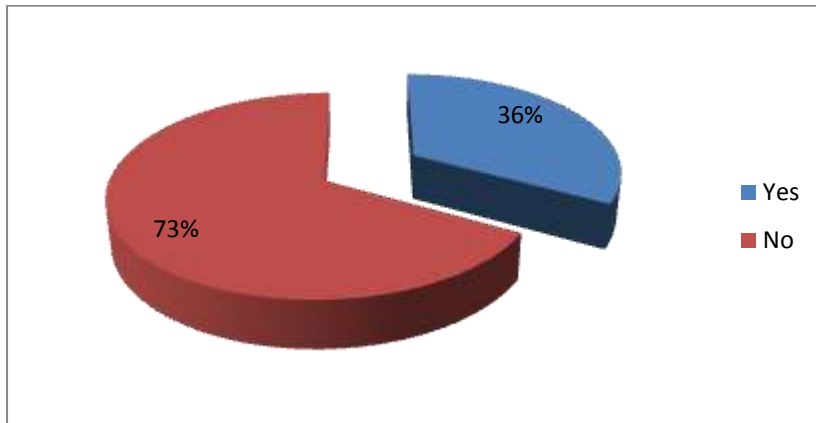
3. Asylum seekers

- Scarce capacity of staff to deal with particular needs likely to be more evident in the refugee community, such as mental health disorders;
- Absence of *ad hoc* services for particularly vulnerable migrants (e.g. mental health problems associated with trauma) and need to develop ability to deal with particularly vulnerable categories;
- Scarce ability by migration and asylum-related staff to deal with particularly vulnerable categories;
- Scarce knowledge of administrative requirements / documents requirements in migrants' origin countries (and of differences among documents requirements in host countries) by the majority of migration-related staff;
- Scarce ability of staff to give advice and deal with documents' preparation possible in migrants' first languages;
- Shortage in staff and elimination of some essential services;
- Shortages in staff also in immigration authorities in the prefectures.
- Excessive length of procedures often resulting in delays for appealing against institutional decision;
- Lack of resources for housing in the reception system for asylum seekers;
- Disproportionate length of procedures for international protection to be dealt with and an inefficient outflow of applicants from facilities once decisions have been reached;
- Inefficient management of temporary reception facilities.

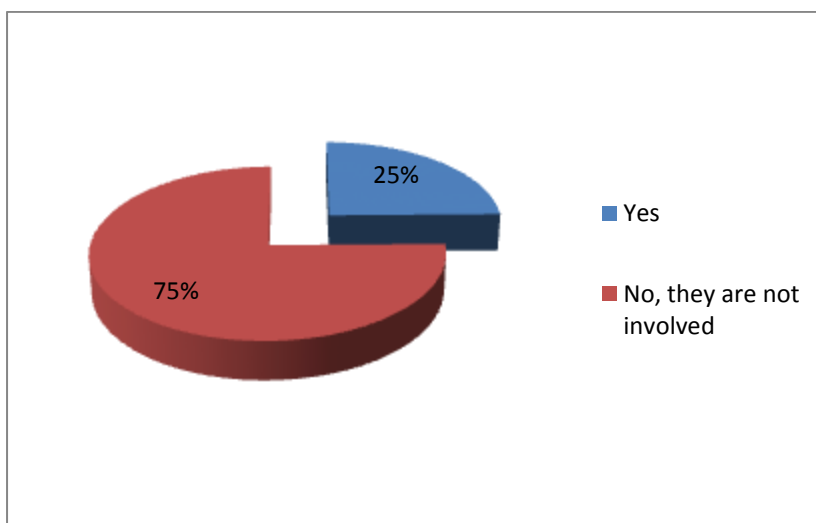
If the very fruitful discussions in Bucharest, Rome and Paris, as well as the desk review highlighted the many limits in the overall efficiency of pensions, employment and asylum seekers services, serving as a complement to survey's results, the surveys tried to focus on potential quality elements that can help defining the quality of services' efficiency, such as the involvement of users in the planning and assessment of the quality of services. These two dimensions are considered important as a mean of assessing what can be a qualitative element for measuring efficiency intended as a complex concept entailing both quantitative and quality-related aspects. Results to these two questions are shown in the tables below.



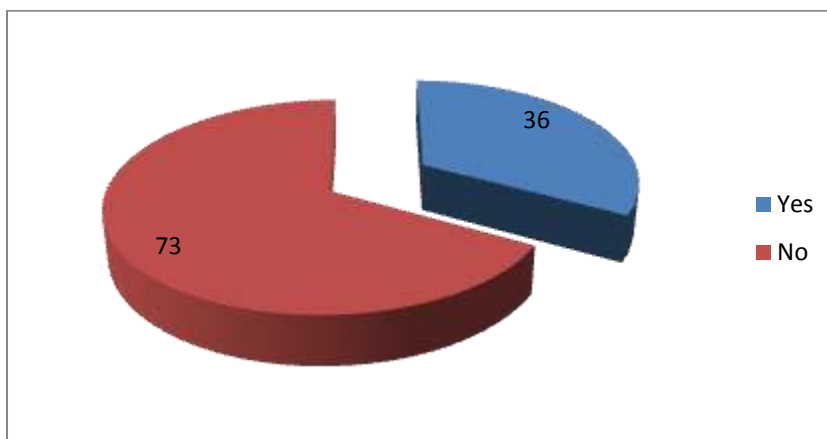
A. Involvement of users in the analysis of needs in the view of services' managers



B. Involvement of users in the analysis of needs in the views of services' employees



C. Involvement of users in the analysis of needs in the views of representatives of users



Substantially, the involvement of users in the planning of services, taking into account specific needs when organizing delivery of provisions and services themselves, is quite reduced in the sampled services. This outcome is equally shared in all countries and in the three targeted services, pointing at a general habit of administration to not fully take into consideration requests and expectations of users. An interesting exception has been discussed during the Regional Seminar in Bucharest, where Mr. Camille Weydert and Mrs. Vera Weisgerber, representatives from Luxemburg social services, presented and discussed the functioning of youth-employment related services and their constant re-

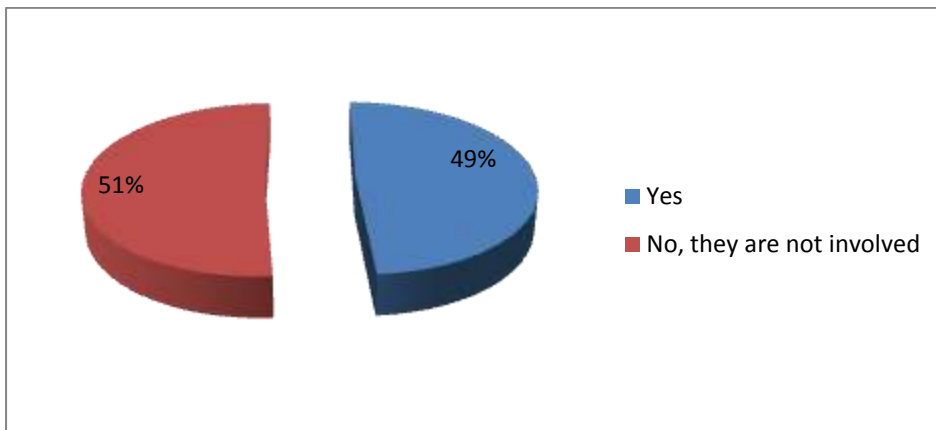


adjustment based on the feedbacks from the users themselves²¹. The same has occurred during the Regional Seminar in Rome when Mr. Roberto Innarella, representative of Servizi per l'Impiego of the Provincia di Torino (IT), presented the importance of the feedback from users and projects' beneficiaries within the normal functioning of the employment centre, as a mean to also further involve target youth, connecting with them through their same communicating tool such as social network, whatsapp, etc..

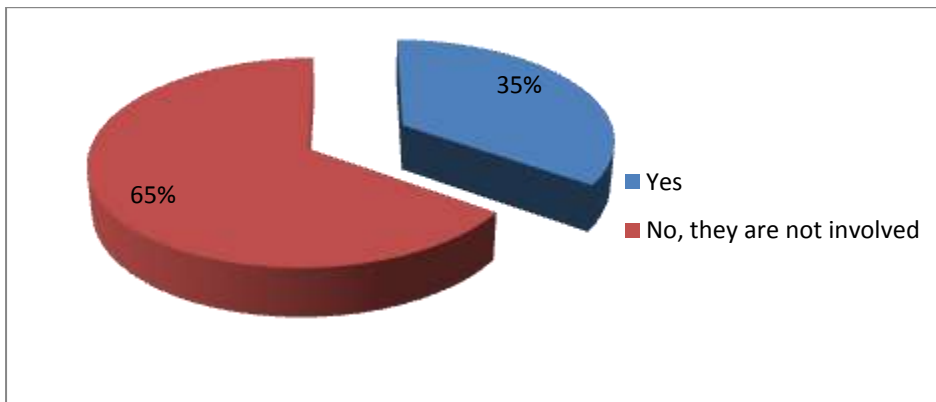
As far as asylum services are concerned, the analysis (survey, desk review and seminars/focus groups) has shown that in almost all countries where employers and employees from these services filled in questionnaires²², users (and their representatives) are almost not involved in the planning and assessment of the quality of services specifically devoted to them.

The following table focus on the involvement of users in the assessment of services received through customer satisfaction analysis or other kind of quality and satisfaction assessments. As the table shows, results were quite similar to the ones regarding the previous planning, but they were further discussed during the Regional Seminars, the focus groups and the Final Conference. Customer satisfaction surveys appear to be a wider practice than shown in the tables. However, even when effectively carried out, they are rarely used as a basis for future planning and as a mean for discussion within the administration on how to make services more efficient, user-friendly and accessible.

A. Involvement of users in the assessment of outcomes of the services in the view of services' managers



B. Involvement of users in the assessment of outcomes of the services in the view of services' employees

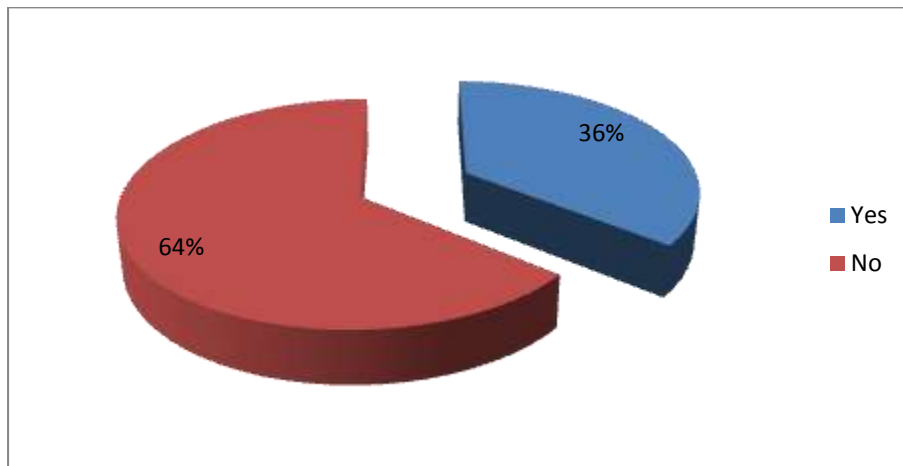


²¹ The Steering Committee disposes of all materials presented during the Regional Seminars and the Final Conference, including power point presentations. In case of interest, they can be shared with the Task Manager in charge of the project at the EC/DG Employment.

²² It is to be noted that only in 9 out of the total of 13 respondent countries, questionnaires have also been filled in by managers and employees from Asylum seekers-related services. Furthermore, in some of the countries where questionnaires have been filled in the issue of asylum seekers is not as pressing as in others where questionnaires have not been filled in, both in terms of numbers of arrivals per year, and in terms of capacity of existing structures (also in terms of human resources) to deal with the flow of asylum seekers themselves.



C. Involvement of users in the assessment of outcomes of the services in the view of representatives of users



The scarce involvement of users in the planning and assessment of services' quality has been also confirmed by study cases presented both in Rome and at the final conference in Paris by representatives of the Belgian Coordination et Initiatives pour Réfugiés et Etrangers (CIRE') and the Italian Centro Astalli, both dealing with the support to migrants and asylum seekers facing European administration in order to have their asylum requests processed. As we will further comment in the section devoted to Communication and Transparency, representatives of asylum seekers-support associations/organizations also claim an improved involvement of users in the definition of tools and practices to ensure the respect of national laws as well as human rights conventions.

Main findings: Quality of Life at Work - Commitments 13 to 16 of the Framework Agreement

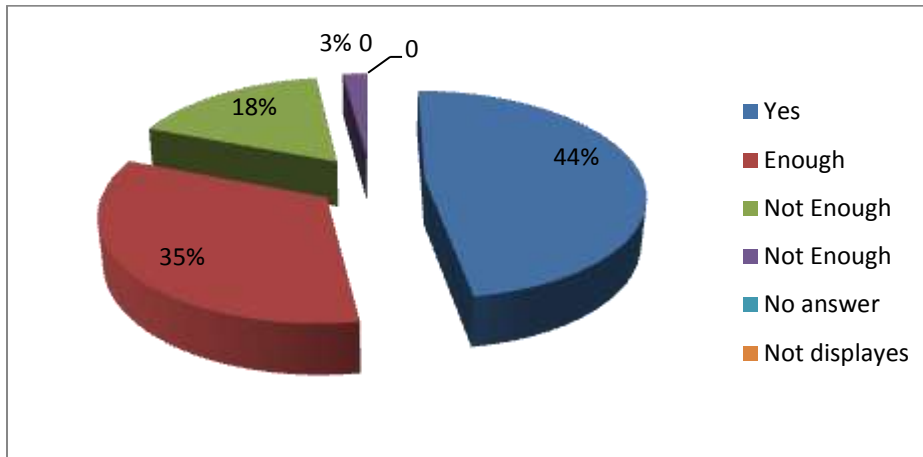
As it has been recalled several times during the course of the project, assessing the quality of life at work of employees mainly working in direct contact with the public is as important as assessing the quality of services they deliver to the users and their efficiency at work, since these are all fundamental components of the quality of public services²³. For this reason, the assessment of workers' quality of life at work in the three categories of sampled services has been defined along several lines, including: clarity of definition of one's tasks and service's mission; competence development and career opportunities; possibility to attend trainings and refreshment courses; remuneration level and possibility to have decent life conditions thanks to one's salary; working premises conditions; health and safety at work; work-life balance and, finally, job security conditions.

Definition of this range of variables/dimensions has not been easy due to significant differences existing among participating countries and categories of sampled services; yet it is surely not comprehensive enough. Conscious of the limited reach of the survey, data presented hereafter shall be read in the light of other information collected through the desk review and, most of all, the Regional Seminars and the focus groups with a reduced number of stakeholders' representatives.

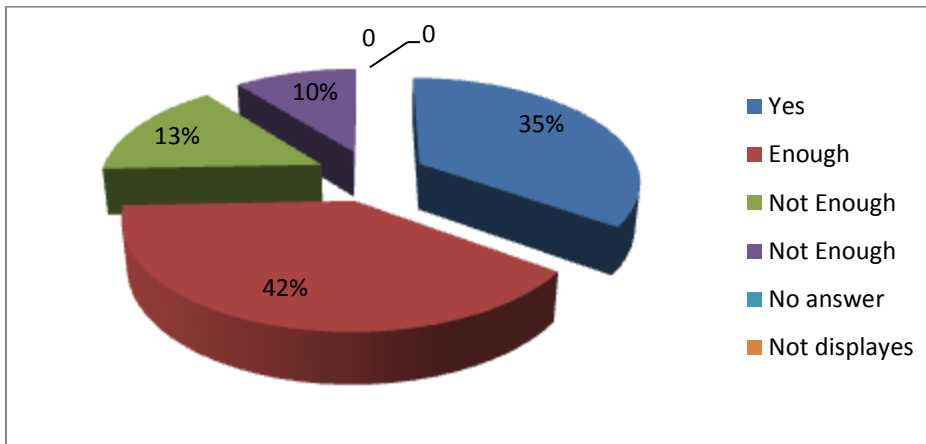
²³ As we will discuss in the conclusions, the definition of Quality Public Services is less obvious than expected and it seems that it is not shared among social parties as one would expect. As a consequence, defining its component and stressing their relevance and interdependency is both complicate and of utmost importance.



A. Objectives of the services clearly defined by the management (view of managers)



B. Objectives of the services clearly defined by the management in the view of employees

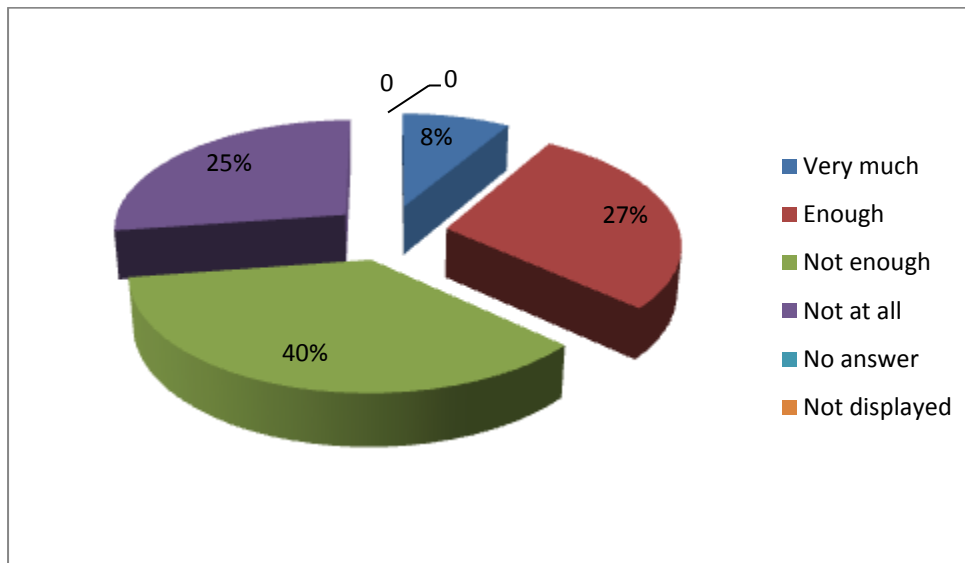


Surprisingly enough, the perception of managers is less positive than the one of employees as far as the capacity of the administration to clearly state what are both the mission of the service and the tasks to be carried out by the employees in order to comply with it and cooperate to the full reach of services' mission. Generally speaking, the desk review did not show any specific evidence on the capacity of administration to motivate employees through clear statement of services' missions (including by stressing the nature of services meant to satisfy public interests and ensure the full enjoyment of users' rights to provisions/services). The discussions held during the Seminars and focus groups, on the contrary, shown a significant non satisfaction by employees with respect to the lack of shared vision and understanding regarding the mission of the services and the sometimes contradictory information/communication from the management to the employees themselves.

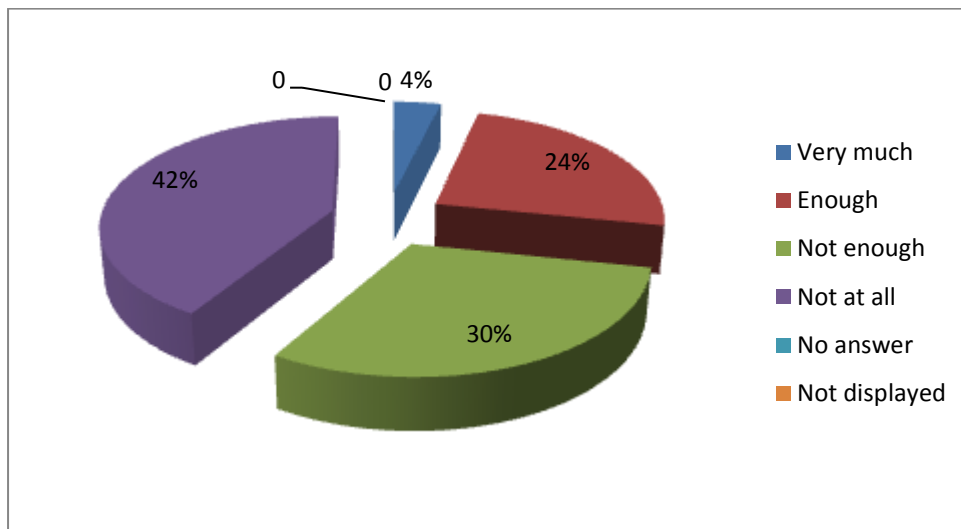
The tables below show the assessment of both managers and employees on the existing possibilities to increase one's competencies through on-the job and off-the job trainings and courses, as a mean of also measuring the investment that administration does on its own staff. This time, both managers and employees agree on the insufficient attention paid by administration in training (including entry into service trainings) and refreshments opportunities for employees, being the perception of employees themselves more critical than the one of managers.



A. Assessment of competence development opportunities in the views of managers



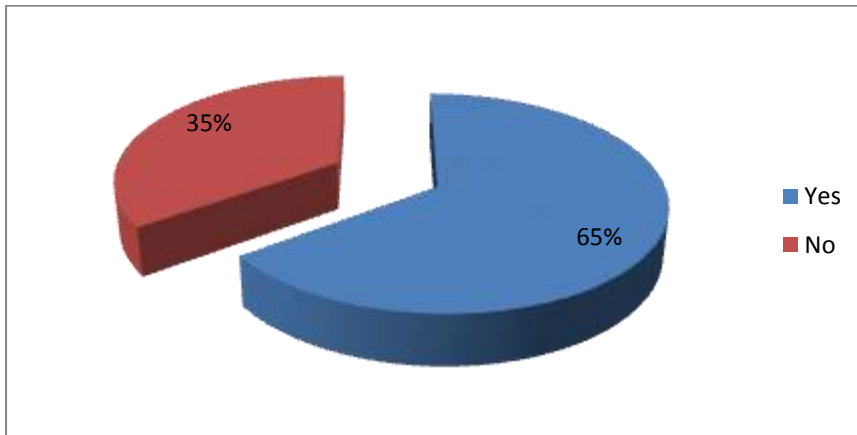
B. Assessment of competence development opportunities in the views of employees



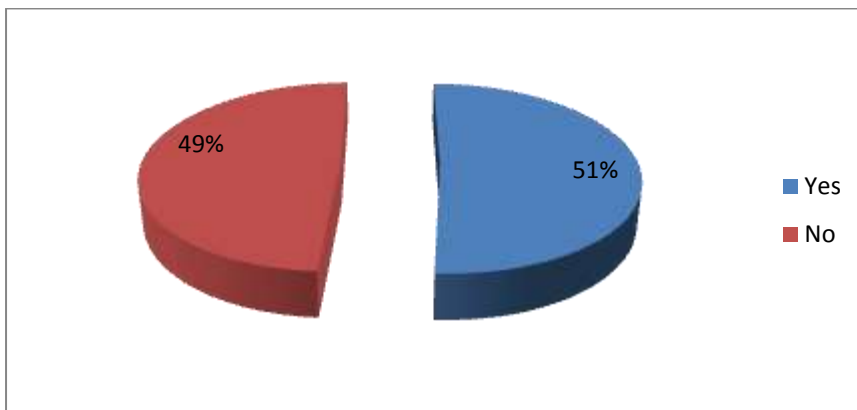
The opposite is true as far as the assessment of the possibility to develop one's career path is concerned: while managers express a rather positive assessment regarding the opportunities that the administrations give employees to grow in their careers during their employment period, and the clarity in the communication of steps to be made in order to improve one's career position.



A. Development of career path (Managers)



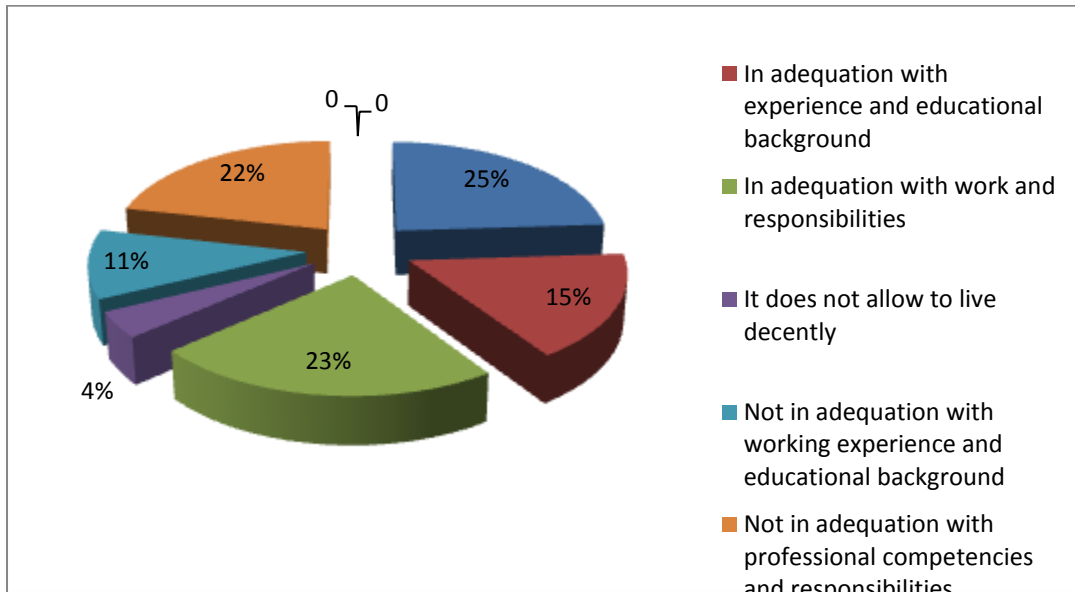
B. Development of career path (Employees)



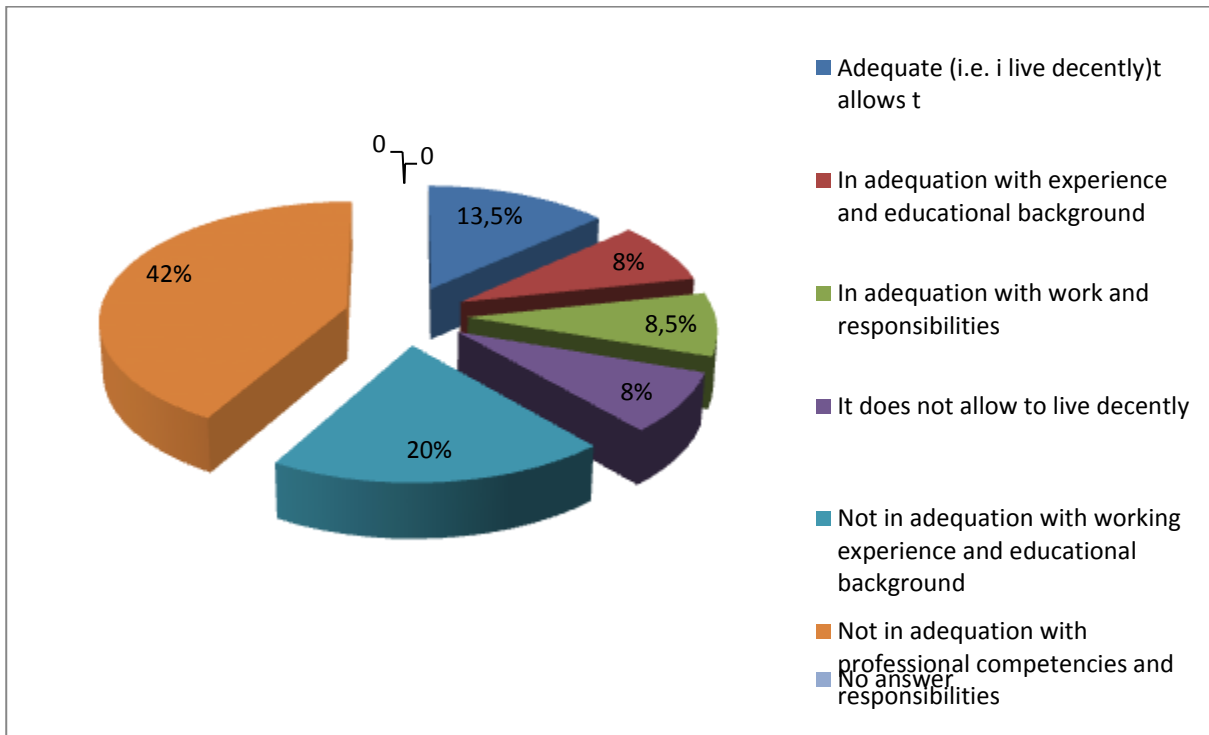
The next two tables relate to the assessment of remuneration conditions by managers and employees of sampled services. Here, again, views of managers and employees differ: while managers look generally satisfied of their salaries (most of all as far as managers from Eastern Europe countries are concerned, with negative picks measured in questionnaires filled in by managers from Southern European countries), employees are generally less satisfied. In some cases, employees assessed that their remuneration is not only inadequate to their work, responsibilities and their background, but also that it does not allow living a decent life.



A. Assessment of remuneration level in the services (Managers)



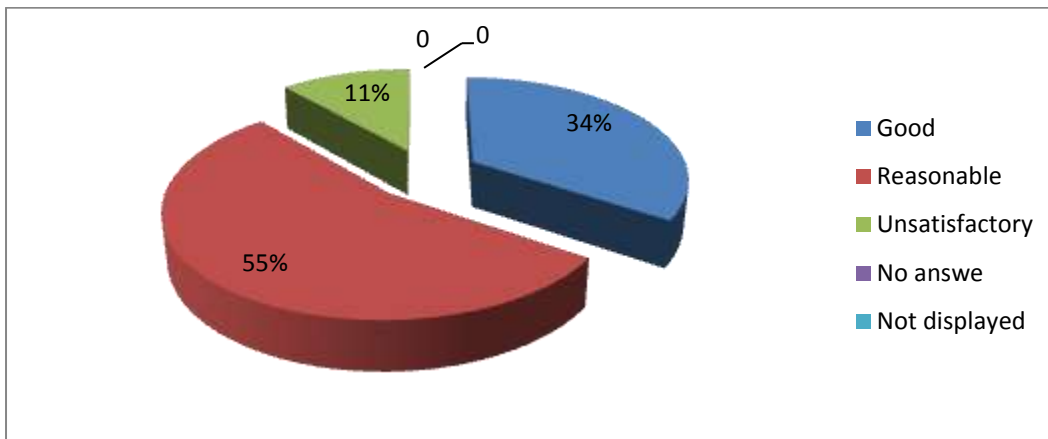
B. Assessment of remuneration level in the services (Employees)



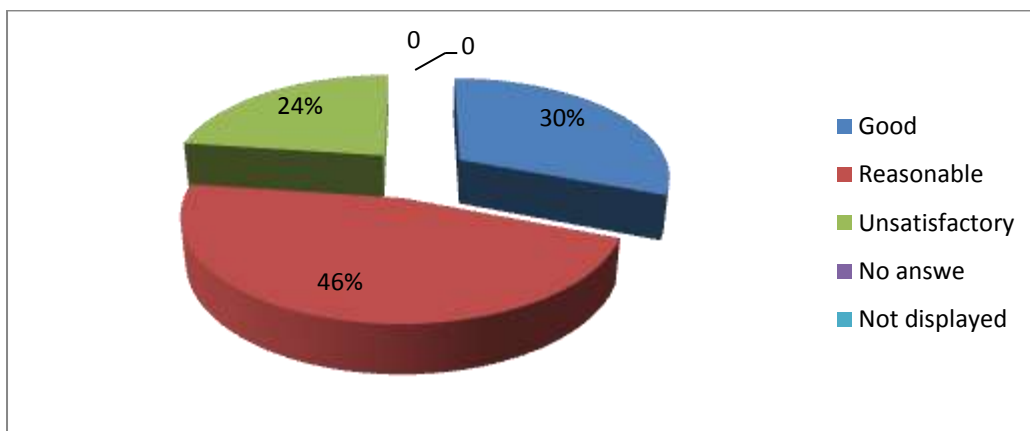
The last two tables we will present as far as the variables defining quality of life at work are concerned relate to the equilibrium between work and life, the so called work-life balance.



A. Work-life balance (Managers)



B. Work-life balance (Employees)



As far as specificities of the three targeted categories of services are concerned, hereafter we will present some of the features emerged through the literature review and the experiences of services represented during the Regional Seminars and the focus groups.

1. Pension services

- Scarcity of specific information regarding the quality of life at work;
- Overall satisfaction among employers and employees on the quality of the services provided to users but not on the conditions under which these services are provided;
- Shortage in personnel most of all for front services dealing with vulnerable public in need for special assistance;
- Lack of specific on-the-job training programmes for staff involved in direct assistance to elderly, chronically ill, or disabled people assessing their needs and psychological support;
- Increasing distance of employees from their workplace often situated within the city perimeters, due to the low salaries and high housing prices;
- Diminishing respect of workers' rights and social dialogue practice since the beginning of the economic crisis.

2. Youth employment services

- Excessive workload;
- Absence of breaks;
- Increasing distance of employees from their workplace often situated within the city perimeters, due to the low salaries and high housing prices or rents;
- No entry training for a new employee nor clear indication on what specific tasks a new entry public servants shall carry out;



- Diminishing respect of workers' rights and social dialogue practice since the beginning of the economic crisis.

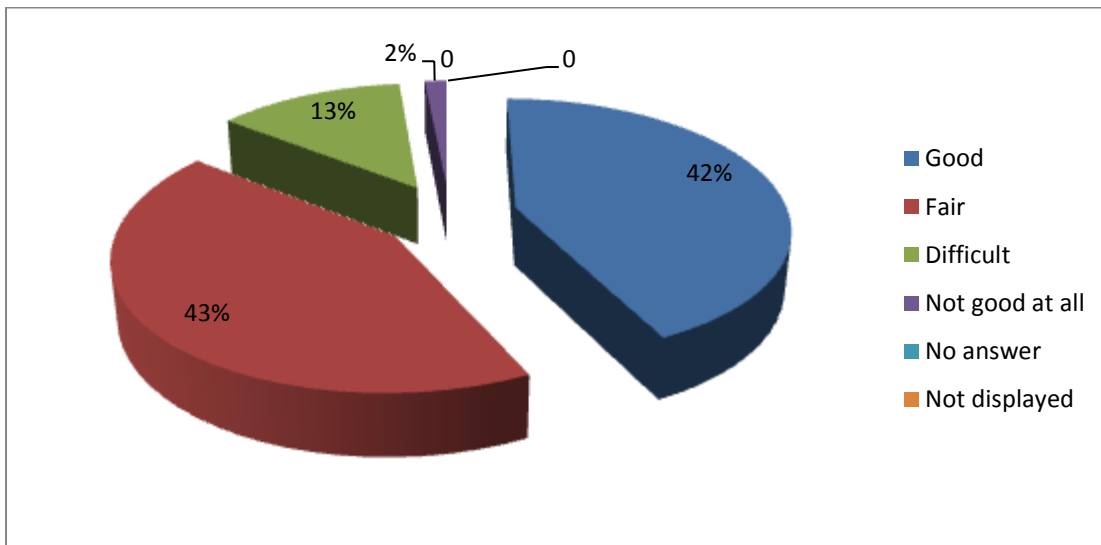
3. Refugee/asylum services

- Poor health and safety material conditions in the work premises;
- Difficulties with the public that is often distressed and react aggressively with staff of services that have poor means to defend themselves and suffer from important consequences for stress-related matters;
- Too short time to fill in documents / procedures (most of all in asylum seekers-related services) that are extremely time consuming, with consequent mistakes or extra-time devoted to work not recognized by the administration;
- Excessive workload;
- Salaries are low while responsibilities and tasks (without specific trainings and refreshments) increase;
- No entry training for a new employee nor clear indication on what specific tasks a new entry public servants shall carry out
- No refreshment / life-long learning trainings;
- Diminishing respect of workers' rights and social dialogue practice since the beginning of the economic crisis.

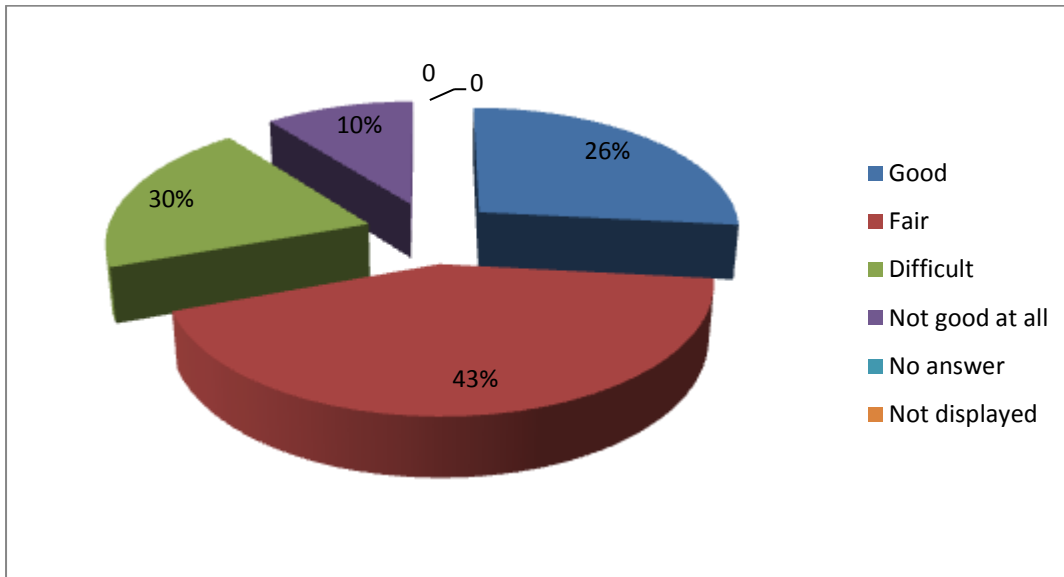
Before presenting the last block of commitments and the information gathered on them throughout the project, we will devote the last segment of this section to data concerning **Social Dialogue** and **Industrial Action**.

If the literature review gave very little information regarding the quality of social dialogue and respect of trade union's rights within public services (and, specifically, within the three categories of services analyzed), both the survey and the debates (Regional Seminars and Focus Groups) have been useful tools to assess what is the perception of managers and employees in sampled services.

A. Quality of social dialogue (in the views of managers)



B. Quality of social dialogue (in the views of employees)

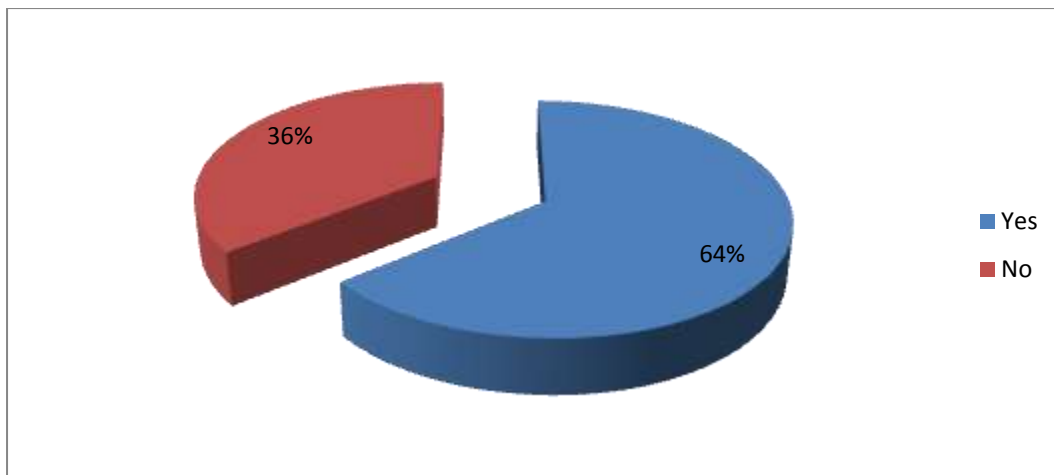


Notwithstanding the apparent similarity in the results among employers and employees obtained through the survey, the discussions shown that common understanding regarding Social Dialogue is still to be reached among social partners. As a consequence, during the final conference in Paris, its three essential components, information, consultation, and negotiation, have been recalled and discussed. In particular, if the component of information is generally considered as existing, very little consciousness exists on the need to also proceed to consultation and negotiation on decision to be taken as far as the organization of public administration are concerned.

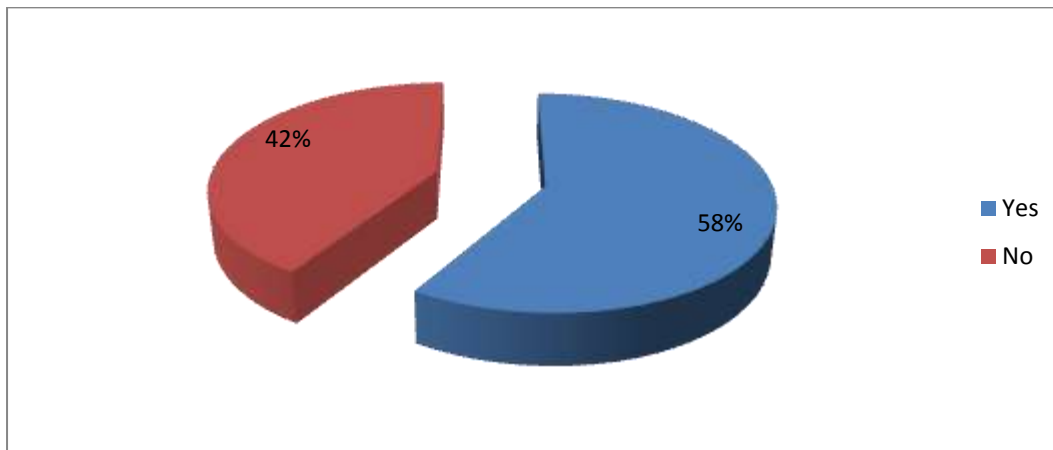
Main findings: Communication and Transparency - Commitments 17 to 19 of the Framework Agreement

Although commitments linked to these two important aspects widely cover the internal and external communication and transparency policies and procedures of public services, the discussion mainly focused on the quality of information given to users by administrations and, more directly, by first-contact / information point-employed workers.

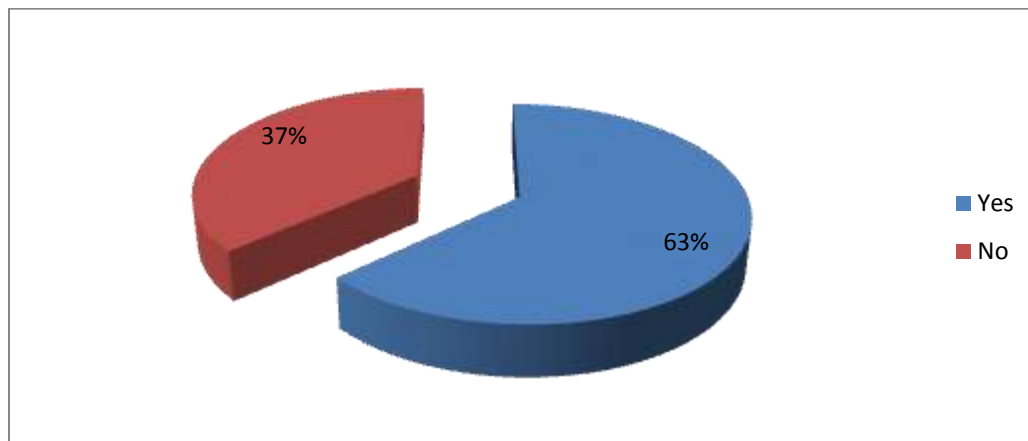
A. Availability of information on services delivered and modalities in the views of services' managers



B. Availability of information on services delivered and modalities in the views of services' employees



C. Availability of information on services delivered and modalities in the view of representatives of users



In particular, discussions held during the Regional Seminars, the focus groups and the Final Conference focused on the quality of information delivered through externalized services (i.e. mainly outsourced call-centres). Most of the comments gathered converge on the lack of control by public administration on the quality of information given by outsourced services to users, and the poor coherence with actual practices of related services, with serious consequences both for users and employees that are then approached by misinformed users. Concerns have been raised on the scarce level of control exerted by Administrations on the compliance not only with quantitative indicators set (number of calls answered, number of answers given, etc.), but with the compliance with qualitative indicators to be developed in collaboration with users themselves and employees working in related services.

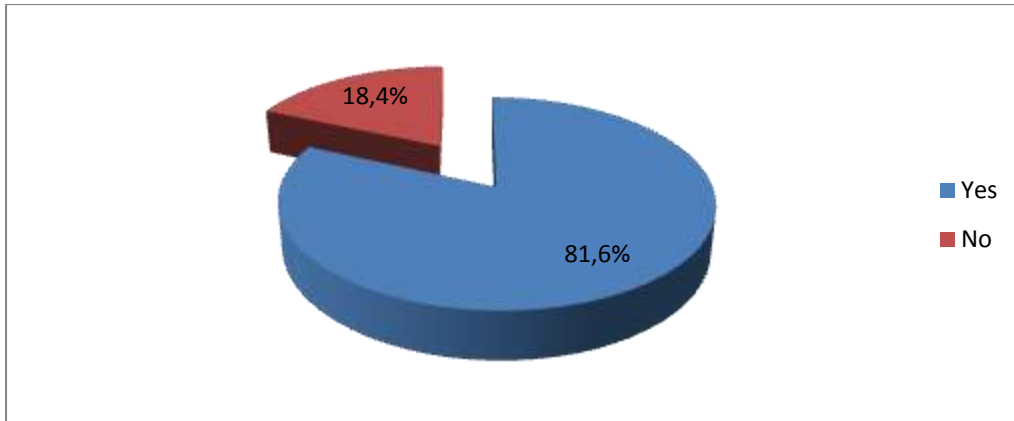
Furthermore, issues have been raised regarding the need to better integrate channels of information (web, phone, info points, etc.) in order to reach all users in the most efficient way. In this sense, efforts to improve the quality of websites in order to make them more users-friendly, and accessible also for non native speakers, seemed essential to offer a better quality service to users themselves and to relieve employees making sure that users can properly inform themselves also before addressing the services.

The following tables show the perception of employers, employees and representatives of users regarding the level of adaptation of information materials to the specific audience of different services, focusing in particular on the three categories of services sampled. The majority of quite positive answers reported in the tables below have been collected in young job-seekers-related services, while asylum seeker services are among those that gave most negative answers. As a consequence, we

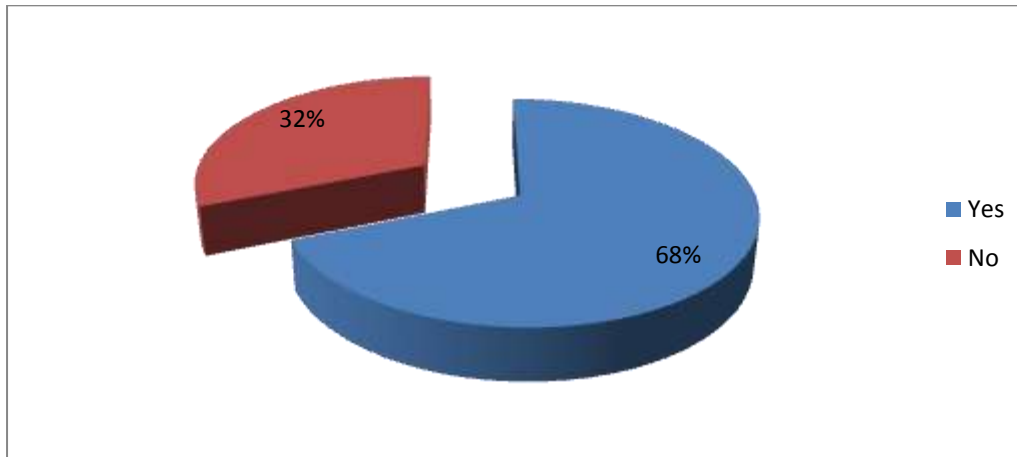


can deduce that linguistic problems are particularly present, as well as specific information regarding aspects of life more linked to the need of migrants. Answers collected in pension services are more equilibrated between positive and negative responses, with a prevalence of negative answers in Western and Southern European countries, and positive answers collected in Northern and Eastern European services sampled. Surprisingly enough, the perception of employees is the more negative among the three, whereas the perception of representative of users is the more positive. Discussion has then focused on low expectations that users seem to have with respect on the capacity of the administration and its workers to properly inform and ensure the coherence between information given and actual reality of the procedures / processes to be followed, with a tendency of considering very positive any basic (non misleading) information, as reported in pen questions registered through the survey and focus group interviews.

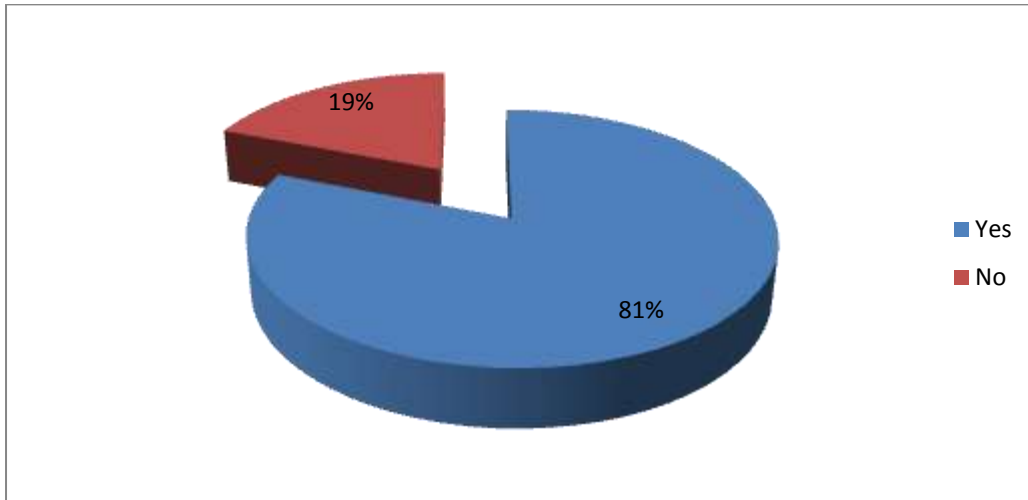
A. Information adapted to sensitive and vulnerable users in the views of managers



B. Information adapted to sensitive and vulnerable users in the views of employees



C. Information adapted to sensitive and vulnerable users in the view of representatives of users



As far as communication is concerned, hereafter we will present the specific list of comments related to the three categories of services emerged through desk review and Regional Seminars discussions.

1. Pension services

- Scarcity of specific office desks for disability pension separate from retirement and other categories (including specifically-trained staff) instead of comprehensive desks dealing with different procedures (disability benefits, retirement, ...);
- Lack of targeted and user-friendly information regarding the possibility to access pension schemes in different moment rather than the expected retirement age (that might occur for various different reasons, such as changes in health, personal financial circumstances, and attitudes towards retirement as it draws closer, management discretion over the retirement process, and scarce information on retirement provisions);
- Internet-based delivery of social health care-related information and services such as booking an appointment in advance presents little benefits to older people as they are generally not used to new technologies and, in any case, advanced booking through internet pages can limit access to elderly, chronically ill, or disabled people.

2. Youth employment services

- Difficult language used in the websites and information materials, and scarce quality of information delivered by call centers and contained in websites;
- Lack / Scarcity of information desks able to orient first-comers.

3. Refugee/asylum services

- Lack of multi-language information materials;
- Lack of / or poor quality of targeted publications, poor quality of information obtained through call-centres and difficult access to online information regarding asylum seeking procedures often only available in national languages /not translated into asylum-seekers' most spoken languages, and full of difficult information to be dealt with by non-nationals;
- Lack of transparency as regards the management of detention centres and possibility for detainees to be informed about existing services to protect their rights.

As far as transparency is concerned, during the discussions held in Rome, Brussels and Paris, representatives of asylum seekers/users highlighted the need to increase transparency in the management of detention centres for migrants (where the presence of potential asylum seekers is more and more registered in many EU countries). This need refers particularly to the possibility to claim the respect for procedures and human rights often neglected in such centres, as reported by witnesses of asylum seekers' representatives.



CONCLUSION

The study as well as the discussions held through seminars, focus groups and the final conference, have been fruitful opportunities to test the level of dissemination of the Framework Agreement among Public Administrations across Europe. It has also been useful to highlight the need to improve the understanding - a common and shared understanding - among social partners of fundamental issues such as social dialogue, quality of public services and involvement of users as actors of the services and not only passive recipients of provisions. Moreover, the project has been a useful to further stress the need to consider the quality of services delivered to users and the quality of life at work as integral parts of the concept of Quality Public Services.

Notwithstanding the reach debates in Bucharest, Rome and Paris, some questions remained open to further study and in-depth discussion.

They are summarized and listed below:

1. Growing tension between the increasing pressure over productivity (quantitative) and the quality of services delivered, also in detriment of efficiency.
2. Tension between efficiency and equity of treatment (e.g. Individualized vs Impersonal approach to users).
3. Growing tension between the need to reduce costs, while ensuring efficient and quality information delivered to the users (e.g. Use of externalized call centres for information and appointments).
4. Tension between ensuring transparency of procedures and reliability of information, while keeping the services efficient and quick in the delivery.

As a conclusion, we will report the main conclusions presented by the external expert to the Steering Committee of the project, all members of the Social Dialogue Committee itself. The conclusions were meant to feed the drafting of Policy Recommendations to be presented and discussed in working groups during the Final Conference in Paris by all participants, and refined during the last Steering Committee meeting in Brussels (November 21, 2014).

These further refined recommendations have been presented and discussed during the last meeting of the Social Dialogue Committee itself, held in Brussels on November 25, 2014 and shall be approved and endorsed during the first session of the Social Dialogue Committee in 2015.

General Conclusion

§ **Managers of public services more aware of the existence of the Framework Agreement than employees.** Need to increase internal communication in public administrations and improve the capacity of trade unions to inform the workers.

§ **Little literature and primary data available.** Need to produce a common and shared understanding on the quality of services organized/delivered by administrations and employees.

§ **Unclear definition of quality of the services.** Need for clear criteria (qualitative and quantitative) defining the quality of services delivered in order to produce a common understanding among employers, employees and users referring to Quality Public Services.

§ **Unclear and non-shared definition of efficiency.** Need for clear, transparent and shared definition of productivity and transparent and fair evaluation of employees performances;

§ **Unclear definition of Social Dialogue.** Need for a common understanding on what are the dimensions encompassed in Social Dialogue (information, consultation, and negotiation) in order to improve the collaboration between Trade Unions and Public Administration with a view to improving the quality of services delivered to the users.



§ Use of administrative rules to restrict **human rights of users**. Need for an application and respect of rules and laws, without applying them in such a way that result in the restriction of fundamental rights of users.

§ Lack of **active-search for potential users** not accessing the services. Need to develop a system of automatic delivery of benefits / services for marginalized non-users who are potentially entitled to benefits and services.

Value-specific conclusions

§ **Poor conditions of service delivery** (from infrastructure to organization of the time and service delivery itself, to the lack of cultural and linguistic mediators). Need for improvement of welcome quality and for more tailor-made and public-specific service delivery, also through the development of Guidelines for Administrations on how to deal with public in vulnerable situation.

§ **Scarce involvement of users** in the planning and evaluation of the services delivered. Need for a higher effort to involve users and their representatives in the assessment of services and planning on delivery-modalities as well as timing, in order to expand (instead of reduce) the range of human rights of users through administrative measures.

§ **Limited efficiency** due to shortages in staff dealing with increasing public in vulnerable situation (most of all unemployed youth and migrants/asylum seekers-related services), subsequent increase of workload and responsibilities under salaries not adapted to competencies / tasks.

§ **Efficiency threatened** due to the high number of staff with fixed-term contracts for functions that should be carried out by employees/staff members.

§ **Poor coordination among different administrations** dealing with the same public, with subsequent loss in efficiency and in quality of service provided to the users.

§ Inefficient **cooperation among stakeholders**. Need to strengthen the link between, and better defining the roles of different stakeholders for a better functioning of the services (particularly, Civil Society Organizations, Trade Unions, NGOs, research institutions and public administrations, with clearer division of tasks/roles/responsibilities).

§ Poor attention paid to the **meaning of work**. Need for clear information from the management to the employees on the aim of the service and of the specific tasks the employees are asked for, avoiding stressful and psychologically dangerous condition for employees in the development of their tasks, as well as information on the rules for developing one's career and competencies.

§ Scarce opportunities for **competence development**. Need for ensuring the access to relevant training to all employees, including entry training, both linked to career development and better exercise of one's tasks shall become a normal praxis in all public administration, as a mean to increase the efficiency of employees.

§ Difficult **access to quality information**. Need to substantially improve the communication with users and identify efficient and quality channel through which information for users on services and procedures shall be circulated (i.e. websites and information materials easier to access and multilingual; multilingual call-centers for foreign users-related services; central information points / centers, etc.), avoiding loss of time and fragmented information. Communication should also aim at informing users on what does the administration do (for them), in order to improve the trust and consideration toward the administration itself.

§ Lack of **transparency** in the provision of services. Need to make clear to users how their procedures are being followed up and what will be the precise time to get an answer to their requests.

§ **Poor diffusion of the Framework Agreement** among administrations and their employees. Need for serious dissemination of the negotiated principles and to translate them into service-specific and concrete actions to be monitored over time (e.g. Belgian Chart for Administration in touch with their users²⁴).

²⁴ Charte pour une administration à l'écoute des usagers.



Services-specific conclusions

Services dealing with low income pensioners

- Need to increase accessibility of services for elderly, chronically ill, and disabled people;
- Need to provide services with cultural and linguistic mediators;
- Need to ensure privacy conditions for users when accessing the desks;
- Need for administrative support to comply with standard required to access pension schemes;
- Need to directly involve elderly and disabled people in service development and planning whenever possible;
- Need for provision of targeted and user-friendly information regarding the possibility to access pension schemes in different moment rather than the expected retirement age;
- Need to ensure that brochures are always available in Braille;
- Need to develop specific on-the-job training programmes for staff involved in direct assistance to elderly, chronically ill, or disabled people assessing their needs and psychological support.

Services dealing with Unemployed youth

- Need for development of career guidance services;
- Need for provision of individualised counselling services;
- Need to simplify the language of information materials (websites, information materials, and call centers) that is too complicated for the majority of the users, and to increase the number of information desk / advise desk able to orient first-comers, ensuring quality contacts from the first visit;
- Need for integration of different modalities of access and information, ensuring accessibility as well as equal quality of information provided;
- Need to spread rules and code of conduct for the courtesy in the approach to users;
- Need to place job centres in proximity to young people aggregation areas and promote active search initiative to attract users;
- Need to develop active cooperation with schools and training centers (for informal education) in order to early identify at risk youngsters that can benefit from specific services.

Services dealing with asylum seekers

- Need to ensure that staff has the ability to deal with particularly vulnerable categories such as unaccompanied minors;
- Need to ensure fluency in languages spoken by migrant groups (at least a certain proportion of staff speaking and writing Arabic);
- Need to institutionalize and better manage the cooperation with NGOs and CSOs supporting asylum seekers in their application procedures in such a way that they are not left alone without cultural and linguistic mediators when in contact with public administrations;
- Need to increase the number of single contact points for users;
- Need to ensure that users have enough privacy conditions to express themselves, enough time to expose their problems/needs and decent infrastructure where wait for their turn;
- Need to ensure a minimum number of staff devoted to migration and asylum-related services in order to avoid humiliating and very long waiting time before reaching the desks and before the delivery of services / benefits / answers;
- Need for psychological support most of all for workers dealing with victims of traumas and, broadly, with fragile categories of users (mostly asylum seekers);
- Need for the provision of clear indication on what specific tasks a new entry public servants shall carry out;
- Need to ensure entry training for new employees dealing with migration and asylum-related matters and constant refreshment / life-long learning trainings;
- Need for clear indication on how to proceed in the career path and increase one's competence level;
- Need for the services to be flexible and adaptable to the changing circumstances and crisis in the EU neighboring countries, in order to quickly adapt to the need of the public;
- Need to foresee decent welcome and first contact conditions for users, possibly avoiding long queues and waiting hours, through fast screening at info points and provision of individualized appointments for detailed and focused follow-up of users' procedures.

