



Labour market policies (LMP) in the European Union in 2021

A statistical analysis

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1. Introduction

The EU labour market policy (LMP) database collects information about government actions to help people with a disadvantage in the labour market, primarily by facilitating and supporting transitions from unemployment or inactivity into employment. This can take the form of financial support – such as unemployment benefits – or practical support ranging from basic guidance services to the provision of training, work experience and other actions aimed at improving a persons' employability. It also includes incentives for employers to take on people from defined target groups. In the LMP database these actions are referred to as **interventions**.

The LMP data are collected annually by a network of national delegates from administrative sources in each country on the basis of a comprehensive methodology¹ that provides detailed guidelines on which interventions to cover; how to classify interventions by type of action; how to measure the expenditure associated with each intervention; and how to measure the number of participants.

The LMP data serve to inform analysts and policy makers about the labour market policies offered in the EU Member States and provide an evidence base for further development of policy. LMP data are used in routine monitoring and benchmarking frameworks adopted by the European Commission to identify key trends and challenges across the EU Member States and in analysis supporting a range of European policy initiatives.

This note presents an analysis of the latest available LMP statistics. It includes an overview of the key data available for 2021 and an analysis of the continued impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the provision of LMP in the Member States. Readers are recommended to refer to information on the characteristics of LMP statistics provided in Annex 1 to aid understanding of the data presented.

2. Key data

Data on expenditure and participants represent the core of the LMP statistics. This section provides an overview of key data for 2021. Much of the analysis utilises breakdowns of LMP interventions by type of action, of which there are 8 categories and three broad types. Definitions of these, as well as the more detailed classifications by type of action, are provided in Annex but, in short:

- **LMP services** covers job-search assistance, guidance and counselling and similar support;
- **LMP measures** refers to “active” measures that aim to improve employability (e.g. through training or work experience) or encourage employers to recruit disadvantaged groups;
- **LMP supports** covers financial assistance, primarily in the form of unemployment related benefits but also including early retirement benefits granted for labour market reasons.

¹ <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=8126&furtherPubs=yes>

Note that EU aggregates refer to the 2021 configuration of 27 Member States excluding Romania for which data are not available.

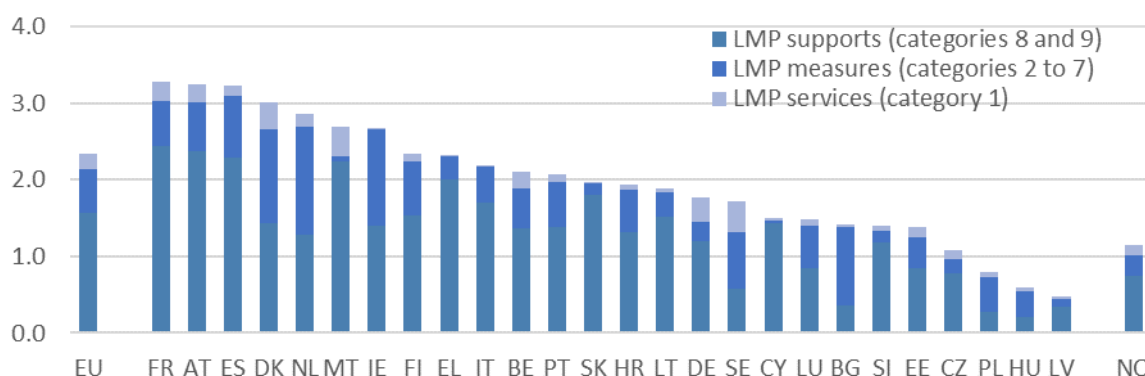
2.1. Expenditure

2.1.1. EU Member States spent 2.3% of their combined GDP on LMP in 2021

In 2021, the EU Member States (excluding Romania) spent EUR 333 billion on LMP interventions, corresponding to 2.3% of their combined gross domestic product (GDP) (see Figure 1). This is down 15.2% compared to 2020 but remains 48% above the average expenditure over the five years preceding the COVID-19 crisis (2015-2019), reflecting the continued cost of government interventions to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on national labour markets.

The level of expenditure and the breakdown between the different types of LMP intervention varied considerably between countries, reflecting the diverse characteristics of national labour markets, as well as the different policies of respective governments. France spent the most (3.3% of GDP), followed by Austria, Spain and Denmark (3.2%, 3.2% and 3.0% respectively), which were the only other Member States to spend more than 3% of GDP. In contrast, eight Member States spent less than 1.5% of GDP on LMP interventions (LU, BG, SI, EE, CZ, PL, HU and LV).

Figure 1: Public expenditure on labour market policy interventions, 2021 (% GDP)



Source: DG EMPL, LMP database

Notes: Data for EU are estimated and exclude RO. Data for DK, DE, EE, IE, EL, HR, IT, LT, LU, HU, NL, PL, SE and NO include estimates. Data for IT estimated by DG EMPL. Data for RO are not available.

Expenditure is at least in part related to the number of persons requiring assistance and price levels within a country, so a more pertinent comparison may be to consider expenditure on a per capita basis – using the population wanting to work (PWW)² as a proxy for the potential target population³ - and denominated in purchasing power standards (PPS) to eliminate price differentials (see Figure 2). On this basis, expenditure at EU level (excluding RO) in 2021 stood at 11 202 PPS per PWW, down 14.1% from

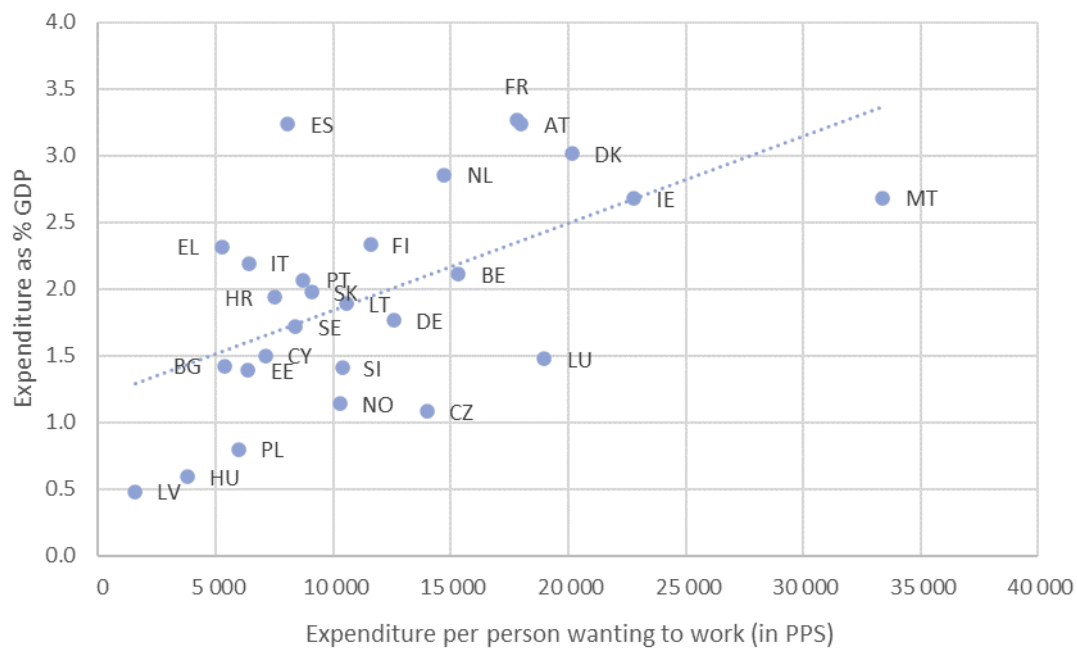
² Persons wanting to work refers to ILO unemployed plus the labour reserve. The unemployed according to the ILO definition are persons without work, currently available for work and actively seeking work. The labour reserve refers to inactive persons who want to work but are either not actively seeking work or are not immediately available for work, i.e. a subset of all inactive persons (persons neither employed nor unemployed).

³ In practice, LMP interventions can also support some people in employment (e.g. retraining of workers threatened by redundancy or partial unemployment benefits paid to maintain income of employees temporarily not working due to economic or climatic factors).

12 787 PPS per PWW in 2020. At national level, expenditure was highest in Malta (33 399 PPS/PWW), followed by Ireland (22 813) and then Denmark (20 166). These were the only Member States to spend more than 20 000 PPS/PWW and there were two countries that spent less than 5 000 PPS/PWW (LV and HU).

In general, there is a positive correlation between spending in relation to GDP and per capita (persons wanting to work), but there are some exceptions (Figure 2). For example, Spain (well above the trend line) spent noticeably less per capita than might be expected from the share of GDP, while Czechia and Luxembourg (both well below the trend line) spend more per capita than predicted from the share of GDP.

Figure 2: LMP expenditure as % GDP and in PPS per person wanting to work, 2021



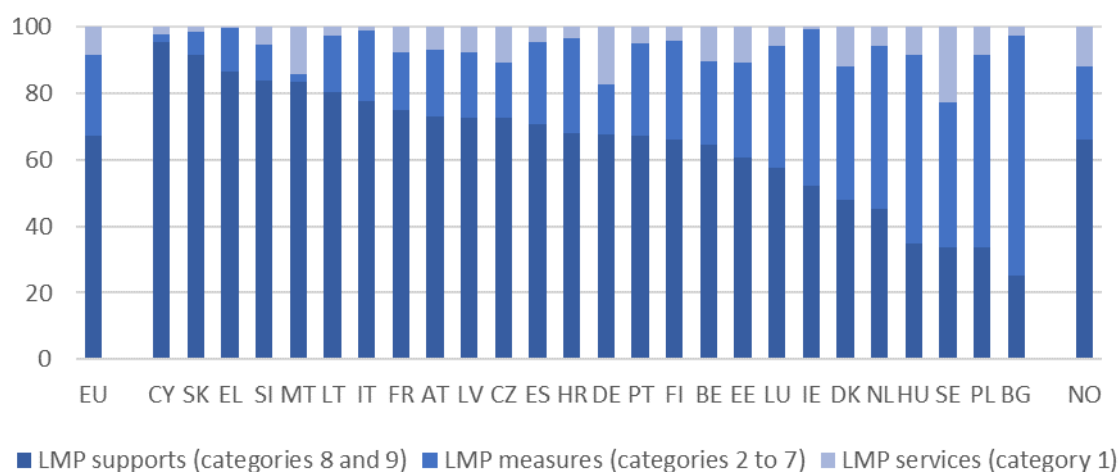
Source: DG EMPL, LMP database

Notes: Data for EU are estimated and exclude RO. Data for DK, DE, EL, HR, IT, NL, PL and SE include estimates. Data for IT estimated by DG EMPL. Data for RO are not available.

2.1.2. Active measures accounted for only a quarter of LMP spending in 2021

In 2021, just over two thirds (67.1%) of EU expenditure on LMP interventions was spent on financial supports (mostly unemployment benefits), just over a quarter (24.5%) on active measures and the remaining 8.4% on services (Figure 3). The distribution of expenditure is noticeably concentrated more on supports and less on services and measures than during the five preceding years (average of 63.4%, 25.0% and 11.6% respectively during 2015-2019).

At national level, just six countries – Bulgaria, Poland, Sweden, Hungary, the Netherlands and Denmark – spent more than half of LMP expenditure on proactive support in the form LMP services and LMP measures (74.7%, 66.4%, 66.4%, 54.2% and 52.2% respectively). In most countries over half of LMP expenditure was dedicated instead to passive assistance in the form of LMP supports. Cyprus, Slovakia and Greece spent the most on LMP supports (95.4%, 91.4% and 86.0% of total expenditure on LMP) or, conversely, the least on measures and services.).

Figure 3: Distribution of LMP expenditure by broad type of intervention, 2021 (%)

Source: DG EMPL, LMP database

Notes: Data for EU are estimated and exclude RO. Data for DK, DE, EE, IE, EL, HR, IT, LT, LU, HU, NL, PL, SE and NO include estimates. Data for IT estimated by DG EMPL. Data for RO are not available.

2.2. Participants

Across the EU (excluding Romania) there were, on average, just under 13.5 million people participating in LMP measures and 20.2 million benefiting from LMP supports at any point during 2021 (Table 1), down 7.3% and 25.5% compared to 2020 but still well above (+35% and +43%) the average numbers over the five preceding years (2015-2019). These numbers equate to just over 45% and just under 68% of persons wanting to work respectively. However, there are some considerable differences between countries.

Participants in LMP measures and LMP supports can include employed persons who are not counted among the population wanting to work – i.e. persons-at-risk of unemployment. In a normal year, the numbers concerned are usually relatively small, limited primarily to small numbers in receipt of a partial or a part-time unemployment benefit, partial early retirement benefit or employment maintenance incentives. In 2021, however, as in 2020, this was not the case as considerable numbers of people whose jobs were at risk because of the COVID-19 pandemic continued to be supported by LMP interventions. Indeed, the number of people benefitting from LMP measures exceeded the number of people wanting to work in Ireland and similarly for LMP supports in Belgium, France, Lithuania, and Malta.

Such cases may arise when numbers of unemployed and inactive wanting to work are relatively small while the numbers of people in work being supported by LMP interventions are relatively high. For example, in Malta, data from the Labour Force Survey showed 14 thousand people wanting to work in 2021 but 70 thousand workers being supported by a COVID wage supplement.

Table 1: Annual average stock of participants in LMP measures and supports, 2021

	LMP measures (categories 2-7)		LMP supports (categories 8-9)	
	Number	% Persons wanting to work	Number	% Persons wanting to work
EU*	13 457 323 e	45.2% e	20 206 145 e	67.9% e
BE	376 171	60.5%	660 975	106.2%
BG	176 719	51.9%	81 986	24.1%
CZ	:	:	:	:
DK	229 628 e	61.0% e	171 643 e	45.6% e
DE	755 904	16.7%	4 221 471	93.0%
EE	41 596	49.5%	49 796 e	59.2% e
IE	433 604	103.9%	406 825	97.5%
EL	81 299 u	8.4% u	:	:
ES	3 682 182	71.8%	2 712 312	52.9%
FR	1 733 920 e	41.0% e	5 556 277	131.4%
HR	20 211	8.8%	111 576 e	48.6% e
IT	3 102 067 u	49.5% u	2 839 754	45.3%
CY	2 383	4.3%	:	:
LV	7 540	5.6%	31 067	23.1%
LT	18 502 u	12.7% u	188 712	129.8%
LU	25 225	58.1%	29 388	67.7%
HU	268 310	72.5%	146 309	39.5%
MT	3 086	22.3%	70 825	512.6%
NL	1 033 007	72.4%	648 171 e	45.4% e
AT	189 282	29.5%	517 240	80.6%
PL	:	:	:	:
PT	368 042	62.0%	436 011	73.4%
RO	:	:	:	:
SI	13 665	16.4%	59 516	71.5%
SK	54 162	19.9%	:	:
FI	125 845	31.2%	303 695	75.2%
SE	214 017 e	25.1% e	:	:
NO	42 384	13.0%	123 427	37.9%

Source: DG EMPL, LMP database

Flags: : Not available; :n Not significant; - Not applicable or real zero or zero by default; e Estimated value; u Unreliable or uncertain data: participant data complete for interventions covering $\geq 80\%$ but $< 95\%$ of expenditure; p Provisional data; b Break in series.

Notes: Data for EU are estimated and exclude RO. Participants in LMP measures and LMP supports should not be added together because of a risk of double-counting.

2.3. Reference data on registered jobseekers

The LMP database collects administrative data on the numbers of jobseekers registered with the public employment services (PES) in each country as a point of reference for the data on expenditure and participants. Depending on national practices, there can be different categories of persons registered with the PES, including employed people looking to work more or to change jobs. In general, however, the primary targets of LMP interventions are those considered registered unemployed (according to national definitions).

Across the EU there were, on average during 2021, just over 29 million people registered as jobseekers with the PES, of whom just under 21 million (73%) were *registered unemployed*. The remaining 8 million *other registered jobseekers* cover different groups depending on national practices and the scope of the national concept of registered unemployment, for example: unemployed seeking only part-time or temporary work, part-time employed seeking additional work, people seeking but not immediately available for work.

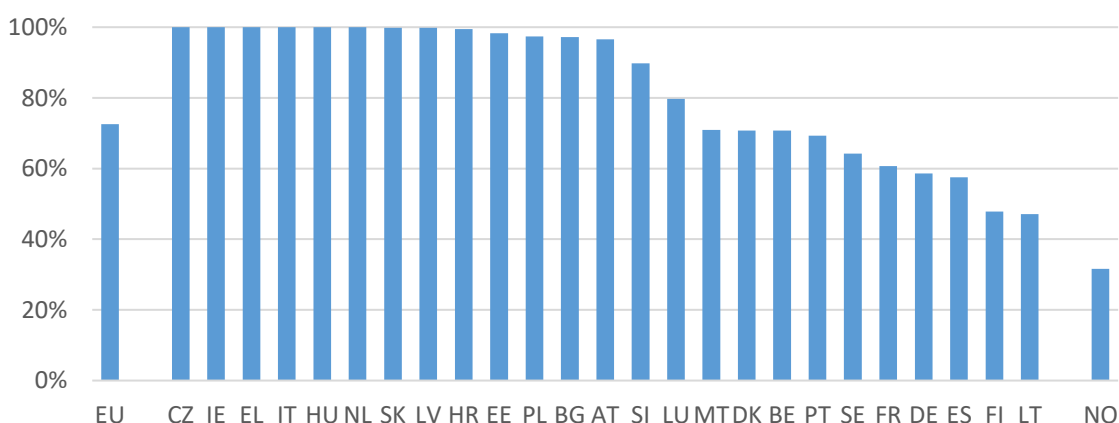
The criteria for being considered registered unemployed vary between countries. In some the definition coincides more or less with the three-pronged ILO definition of

unemployment, which requires people to be without work (not even one hour per week), available for work and actively seeking work. In others, however, the national definitions can both enlarge and restrict the scope. For example, many countries allow persons working in small part-time jobs (up to a certain threshold of hours or income) to register as unemployed, while in others only people that are seeking full-time work can be registered unemployed so that those seeking part-time or temporary work are excluded. Further, some countries do not apply a specific concept of registered unemployment and in such cases the data refer to recipients of the unemployment related benefits that (in the main) govern access to active labour market measures. This is the case, for example, in Ireland.

Figure 4 illustrates the extent to which those unable to meet criteria for registering as unemployed can register with the PES, demonstrating considerable differences between countries. Data indicate that in Czechia, Ireland, Greece, Italy, Hungary, and the Netherlands all registered jobseekers are registered unemployed and in Slovakia, Latvia, Croatia, Estonia, Poland, Bulgaria and Austria at least 95% are registered unemployed. In Ireland this result stems from the lack of a specific concept of registered unemployment and, more broadly, registered jobseeker. However, in others this implies that there are no or very limited circumstances in which people can register with PES if they do not meet criteria to be registered unemployed. Note, however, this does not necessarily imply that these people are unable to access LMP interventions provided by the PES.

In contrast, registered unemployed in Germany, Spain, Finland and Lithuania constitute less than 60% of all registered jobseekers indicating that there is a wider range of situations in which people can register as jobseekers with the PES outside the confines of registered unemployment. For example, in Finland other registered jobseekers constitute around half of all registered jobseekers and include people who are employed but benefitting from the support of an LMP intervention (subsidised work or subject to a reduced working week), people who are employed without support, and groups currently inactive but wanting to work. In France, registered jobseekers are split into three categories – A, B and C - based on whether they have been involved in an employment activity during the month and the extent of this activity. Category A is considered as *registered unemployed* and covers all persons with no activity. Categories B and C are then treated as *other registered jobseekers* and cover people with some activity, with the allocation to category B or C based on whether the activity exceeded 78 hours or not.

Figure 4: Registered unemployed as a share of all registered jobseekers, 2021 (%)



Source: DG EMPL, LMP database

Notes: EU excludes CY and RO for which data are not available.

Table 2 compares administrative data on the numbers of registered unemployed from the LMP database with the numbers of unemployed according to the EU Labour Force Survey (LFS). Differences between the two (which can be substantial in either direction) derive

from two main sources. Firstly, the differences between the ILO definition of unemployment used in the LFS and the criteria to be registered as unemployed in each country. And, secondly, the extent to which people who are unemployed register with the PES, which may be linked to their eligibility to benefits and general perceptions of the services on offer. Part of the difference could also derive from the age-groups covered – the LFS data cover 15-64 but national definitions may, for example, limit the registered unemployed to those over 18 or cover those aged up to the national retirement age. However, the impact of such differences is expected to be limited.

Across the EU, the number of LFS unemployed was 32% lower than the number of registered unemployed in 2021 suggesting that national definitions of unemployment tend to have a wider scope than the ILO definition. Indeed, at national level, the number of LFS unemployed is at least 30% lower than the number of registered unemployed in eleven countries (CZ, DE, EL, FR, IT, LT, HU, NL, PL, SI and FI) while the inverse is true in just two countries (DK and MT).

Table 2: Numbers of registered unemployed compared to LFS unemployed, 2021 (annual average stock)

	Admin data on registered unemployed (LMP)	Survey data on unemployed (LFS)	Ratio Unemployed / Registered (%)	Survey data on PWW (LFS)	Ratio PWW / Registered (%)
EU*	21 247 945	14 438 500	68.0	29 711 951	139.8
BE	329 068	322 900	98.1	622 164	189.1
BG	181 486	168 600	92.9	340 724	187.7
CZ	279 872	150 100	53.6	245 653	87.8
DK	102 037	151 900	148.9	376 455	368.9
DE	2 613 489	1 546 900	59.2	4 539 686	173.7
EE	49 796	42 600	85.5	84 094	168.9
IE	175 360	155 100	89.8	417 248	237.9
EL	1 053 880	668 800	63.5	972 032	92.2
ES	3 565 240	3 413 100	97.0	5 130 765	143.9
FR	3 580 988	2 346 200	65.5	4 228 426	118.1
HR	136 816	136 200	99.5	229 664	167.9
IT	5 322 200	2 348 300	44.1	6 270 175	117.8
CY	:	34 600	:	56 040	:
LV	65 293	70 200	107.5	134 578	206.1
LT	225 225	104 600	46.4	145 371	64.5
LU	17 138	17 000	99.2	43 397	253.2
HU	268 889	192 600	71.6	370 218	137.7
MT	1 795	10 200	568.2	13 816	769.7
NL	575 280	396 500	68.9	1 426 870	248.0
AT	331 741	283 000	85.3	641 341	193.3
PL	989 654	577 400	60.3	1 275 734	128.9
PT	386 570	338 600	87.6	593 735	153.6
RO	:	456 900	:	723 415	:
SI	74 317	47 900	64.5	83 194	111.9
SK	213 100	187 200	87.8	271 706	127.5
FI	298 612	209 500	70.2	403 837	135.2
SE	410 097	481 300	118.2	851 068	207.5
NO	88 862	126 100	141.9	325 909	366.8

Source: DG EMPL, LMP database; Eurostat; Eurostat, LFS ([lfsa_ugad](#))

Flags: : Not available.

Notes: EU excludes CY and RO for which data are not available. Survey data on unemployed (LFS) refer to those aged 15-64 while the LMP data on registered unemployed cover all those allowed to register as unemployed according to national regulations.

3. Continued impact of the COVID crisis on provision of LMP in the EU

In 2020, national governments within the EU made extensive use of existing and new policy measures to mitigate the impact of lockdowns and restrictions placed on business activities during the COVID-19 pandemic. A sub-set of these meet the definition of *labour market policies* applied in the EU-LMP database and the extent of their use can be observed in the LMP data not only for 2020 but also 2021.

In 2020 a total of 101 new LMP interventions were introduced across 19 Member States (see Table 3). While some of these may have no link to COVID-19, the number introduced was twice the average for 2016-2019 (average of 47 per year). Further, over half of the interventions introduced related to either *employment maintenance incentives* (LMP category 4.2) or *partial unemployment benefits* (LMP category 8.2), both of which serve to preserve employment of people at risk of job loss. Indeed, *employment maintenance incentives* were introduced in nine countries (BG, IE, IT, LT, HU, NL, PL, PT and SK) and *partial unemployment benefits* were introduced in seventeen countries (CZ, DK, EE, EL, FR, HR, IT, CY, LT, HU, MT, NL, PL, PT, SI, SK and SE). In 2021 a total of 40 new LMP interventions were introduced across 13 Member States, suggesting a return to the pre-crisis level of intervention creation, at least at EU level. In this case the most common type of intervention introduced was *recruitment incentives* (introduced in eight countries: BE, CZ, EE, EL, IT, PT, SI, SK), suggesting some shift in focus from measures aiming to prevent unemployment to those aiming to remedy it.

According to the available data, five countries (DE, ES, LU, AT, and FI) did not introduce any new LMP interventions in 2020 or 2021. In these cases, existing interventions are likely to have been used, possibly with some adaptation, to mitigate the impact of lockdowns and restrictions.

It is important to note that, the way in which interventions are organised at national level and thus reported in the LMP database can have an impact on the number of interventions introduced. For example, to adapt the offer of LMP to meet emerging needs some countries regularly replace short term interventions while others continuously adjust long standing interventions. To fully understand the impact of the COVID crisis on LMP provision, it is thus necessary to consider the roles played by all interventions.

The remainder of this chapter analyses how LMP provision has reacted to the challenges presented by the COVID crisis, with particular focus on the continued impact in 2021. It first considers the impact of COVID crisis on the population of unemployed, and then reflects on changes in the expenditure and participants associated with LMP interventions.

Table 3: Countries introducing new LMP interventions in 2020 and 2021 by type of action

Classification	2020	2021
Total	BG, CZ, DK, EE, IE, EL, FR, HR, IT, CY, LT, HU, MT, NL, PL, PT, SI, SK, SE (19)	BE, BG, CZ, EE, EL, FR, IT, CY, LV, LT, PL, PT, SI, SK (14)
LMP services (cat. 1)	EL, FR, NL (3)	EE, IT, LT (1)
LMP measures (cat. 2-7)	BG, IE, EL, FR, IT, CY, LT, HU, NL, PL, PT, SI, SK (13)	BE, BG, CZ, EE, EL, FR, IT, CY, LV, PT, SI, SK (12)
Training (cat. 2)	EL, IT, PT, SK (4)	FR, CY, LV, PT (4)
Employment incentives (cat. 4)	BG, IE, EL, FR, IT, CY, LT, HU, NL, PL, PT, SI, SK (13)	BE, BG, CZ, EE, EL, IT, PT, SI, SK (9)
Recruitment incentives (cat 4.1)	EL, FR, IT, CY, HU, PT, SI (7)	BE, CZ, EE, EL, IT, PT, SI, SK (8)
Employment maintenance incentives (cat. 4.2)	BG, IE, IT, LT, HU, NL, PL, PT, SK (9)	BG, PT (2)
Sheltered & supported employment and rehabilitation (cat. 5)	(0)	(0)
Direct job creation (cat. 6)	PT (1)	BE, BG, PT (3)
Start-up incentives (cat. 7)	EL, FR, LT, PT (4)	IT (1)
LMP supports (cat. 8-9)	CZ, DK, EE, IE, EL, FR, HR, IT, CY, LT, HU, MT, NL, PL, PT, SI, SK, SE (18)	EE, FR, PL (3)
Out-of-work income maintenance and support (cat. 8)	CZ, DK, EE, IE, EL, FR, HR, IT, CY, LT, HU, MT, NL, PL, PT, SI, SK, SE (18)	EE, FR, PL (3)
Partial unemployment benefits (cat. 8.2)	CZ, DK, EE, EL, FR, HR, IT, CY, LT, HU, MT, NL, PL, PT, SI, SK, SE (17)	EE, PL (2)
Early retirement (cat. 9)	(0)	(0)

Source: DG EMPL, LMP database.

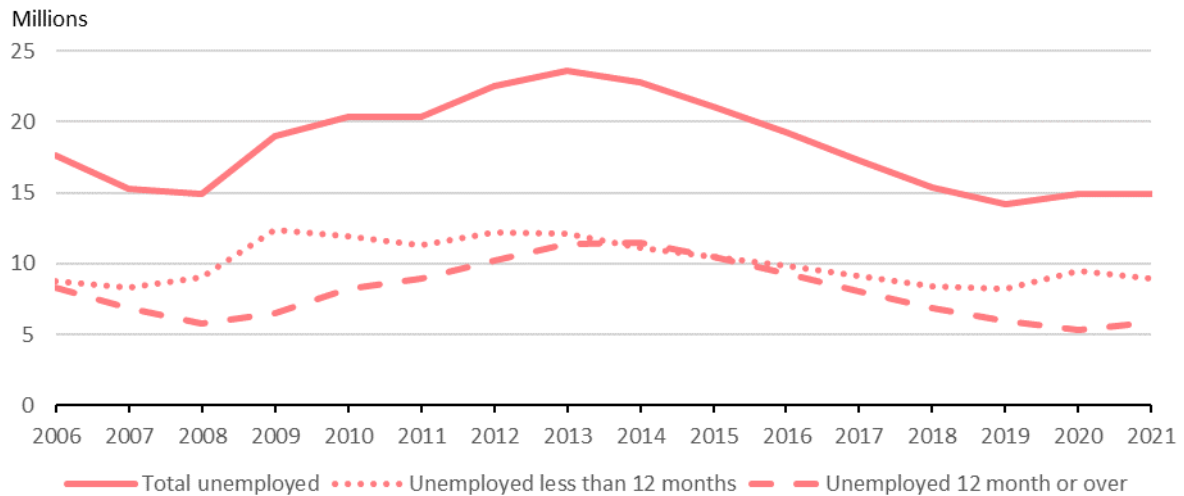
Note: RO data appear to miss COVID-19 related interventions introduced in 2020 and data are not available for 2021⁴.

3.1. Numbers of unemployed unchanged in 2021

The unemployed represent the primary targets for most LMP interventions. Indeed, registration as unemployed and the associated duration of the unemployment spell often play a role in the eligibility criteria of LMP interventions, albeit in different ways for different types of intervention. The impact of the COVID crisis on the population of unemployed and its composition thus provides important context to the impact on the provision of LMP.

In 2021, the number of unemployed according to the Labour Force Survey (LFS) stood at just under 15 million. As shown in Figure 5, this is almost unchanged compared to 2020 (+0.2%) so there was no reversal of the 4.7% rise seen in 2020 and no resumption in the steady decline between 2013 and 2019 (numbers declined from a peak of just under 24 million to just over 14 million). Despite this, the number of unemployed remain low in historical terms.

⁴ Clear guidance was provided to countries on the inclusion of new COVID-19 related interventions during the collection of LMP data for 2020. RO is the only country which failed to take these into account. Information available in the EU Policy Watch database suggest LMP data for RO miss several COVID-related interventions, introduced in 2020. These include "Indemnity for technical unemployment", "Support to employers in keeping the workplaces", "Benefits for employees" and "Kurzarbeit: New short working time adopted". Further information can be found here: <https://static.eurofound.europa.eu/covid19db/countries/RO.html>.

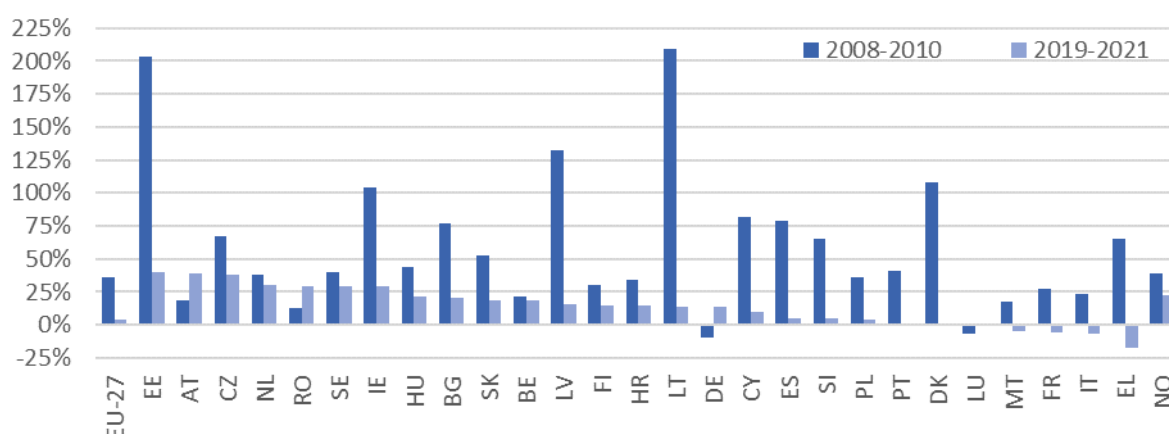
Figure 5: Number of unemployed aged 15-64 by duration, EU-27, 2006-2021

Source: Eurostat, LFS ([lfsa ugad](#))

Notes: Data on unemployed include a break in the series in 2021.

Overall, numbers of unemployed in 2021 were 4.9%, or 691 thousand, higher than in 2019. This is relatively small change compared to the 5.4 million increase (+35.8%) between 2008 and 2010 as a result of the economic and financial crisis of 2009. This may be attributed to differences in both the economic impact of the crises and the corresponding responses by public authorities. Indeed, the economic impact of the COVID crisis, unlike the crisis in 2009, was characterised by a widespread temporary suspension of economic activity rather than a collapse of specific sectors of the economy, thus allowing room for pre-emptive efforts to preserve jobs. However, it is also possible that temporary suspension (by individuals) of efforts to actively seek work, supported by the relaxation of requirements to do so by PES and/or benefit authorities, may have contributed to keeping down increases in unemployment when measured using the strict ILO criteria.

Figure 6 shows that the extent of changes in the numbers of unemployed between 2019 and 2021 varied considerably across the Member States. Numbers remain more than 35% higher than in 2019 in Estonia (+39.7%), Austria (+38.7%) and Czechia (+38.5%) and by more than 25% in Ireland, the Netherlands, Romania and Sweden while numbers are now lower than in 2019 in Luxembourg, Malta, France, Italy and Greece. The changes were less severe than those experienced between 2008 and 2010 in all but four Member States (DE, AT, LU and RO), confirming that the COVID crisis had considerably less impact on numbers of unemployed than the financial crisis of 2009.

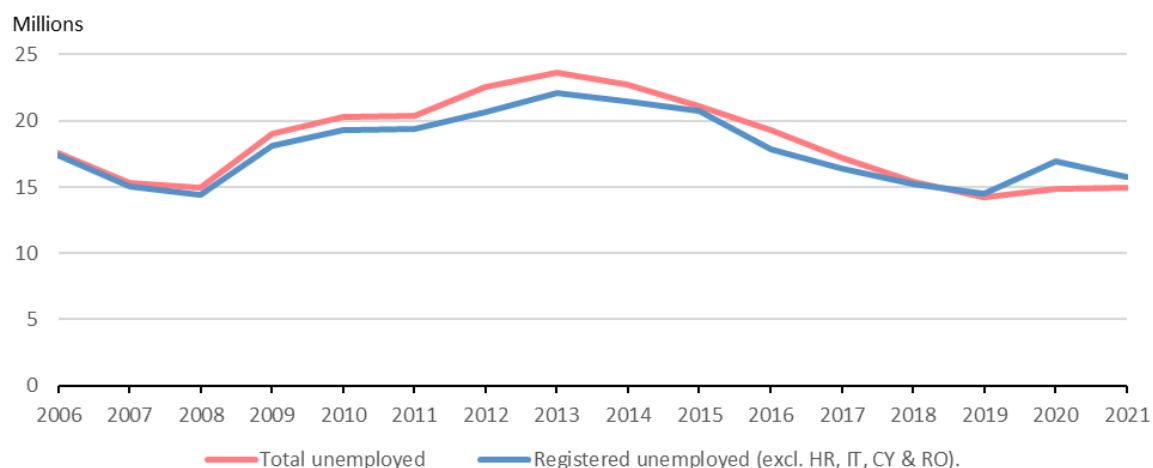
Figure 6: Changes in the number of unemployed aged 15-64, 2008-2010 and 2019-2021 (%)


Source: Eurostat, LFS ([ifsa_uqad](#))

Notes: Data on unemployed include a break in the series in data for EL, CY and LU in 2009, for BG, DE, PL and RO in 2010, for DE in 2020 and for all countries in 2021.

Initially, job losses derived from reduced economic activity saw the numbers of short-term unemployed (those unemployed for less than 12 months) increase by 15.8% between 2019 and 2020. This rise was, however, partially offset by a 10.5% decline in numbers of long-term unemployed (those unemployed 12 months or more), sustaining the continuous decline in their numbers that has taken place since the peak in 2014 (Figure 5). Given the difficult labour market conditions in 2020 and rising numbers of short-term unemployed, it is possible that this stems from long-term unemployed opting, at least temporarily, to cease actively seeking work and becoming inactive rather than unemployed. In 2021, however, numbers of short-term unemployed reduced 5.8% but this was offset by the number of long-term unemployed rising 9.6% as some those who became unemployed in 2020 remained out of work and became long-term unemployed (12 months or more).

Administrative data on the numbers of registered unemployed are, however, more indicative of the numbers of people potentially eligible for support from LMP interventions. Figure 7 shows that data on numbers of registered unemployed covering all Member States except Croatia, Italy, Cyprus, and Romania follow a similar trend to data on the number of unemployed recorded by the LFS for all countries between 2006 and 2021, despite differences in coverage.

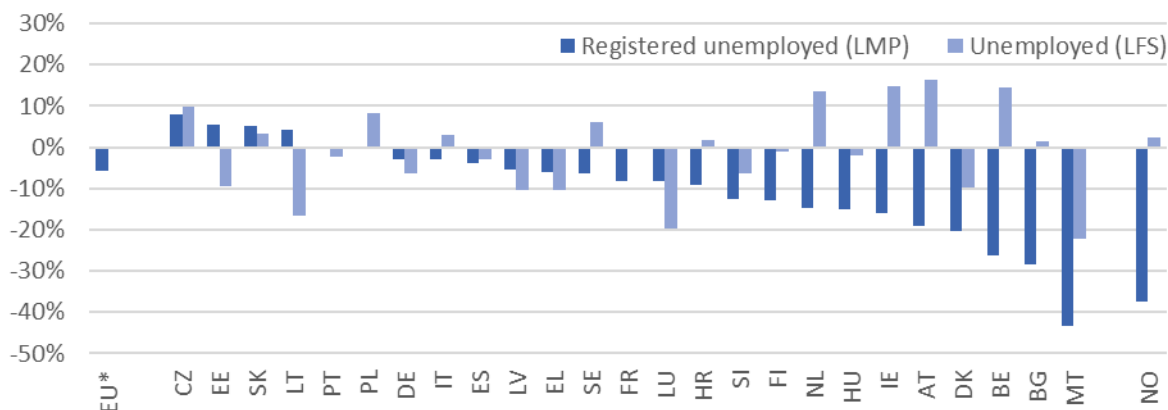
Figure 7: Number of LFS unemployed aged 15-64 and number of registered unemployed, EU*, 2006-2021


Source: DG EMPL, LMP database. Eurostat, LFS ([ifsa_uqad](#)).

Notes: Data on registered unemployed exclude HR, IT, CY and RO. Data on unemployed include a break in the series in 2021.

Focusing on the most recent changes, data covering all Member States except Cyprus and Romania show that the number of registered unemployed fell 5.8% in 2021 while LFS unemployed for the same countries remained unchanged (+0.1%). Figure 8 shows that numbers of registered unemployed fell in all but six Member States for which the data is available (exceptions include CZ, EE, SK, LT, PT and PL) and that the decline exceeded the change in numbers of LFS unemployed in around two thirds of Member States.

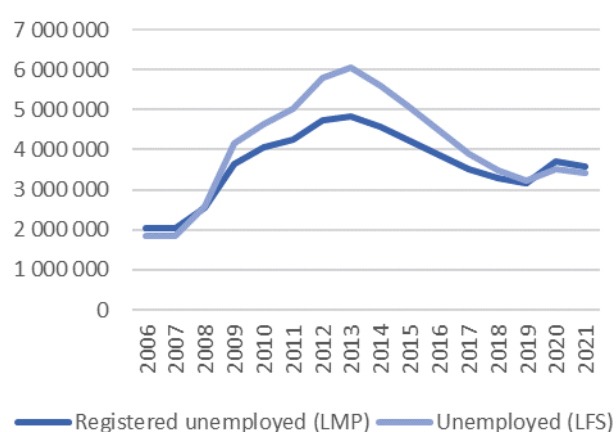
Figure 8: Changes in the numbers of LFS unemployed and registered unemployed, 2020-2021



Source: DG EMPL, LMP database. Eurostat, LFS ([lfsa_ugad](#)).

Notes: EU excludes IT and CY. Data on unemployed include a break in the series for all countries in 2021. Definitions differ for data on unemployed in 2021 for ES and FR.

A possible explanation for this difference is a temporary rise in the propensity to register, or remain registered, with the PES in 2020. In 2020 governments took steps to facilitate access to financial support for those unemployed during the crisis (e.g. by relaxing eligibility criteria and increasing the length of time for which benefits are payable) and relaxed conditions associated with maintaining the status of registered unemployed (e.g. suspension of status checks and introduction of automatic renewal) but these temporary adjustments began to be withdrawn in 2021. For example, in Spain the criteria to be registered as unemployed roughly correspond with the ILO definitions used in the LFS but the number of registered unemployed (LMP) has often sat below the number of LFS unemployed (see Figure 9). Between 2020 and 2021, the number of registered unemployed rose by 561 thousand, double the rise in the number of LFS unemployed during the same period (+281 thousand). This implies an increased propensity for people without work to register or remain registered with the PES as unemployed, a change that coincided with the introduction of automatic renewal of unemployment status in 2020. Consequently, between 2020 and 2021, as automatic renewal was phased out, the number of registered unemployed declined by 145 thousand, 40% more than the reduction in the number of LFS unemployed during the same period (+104 thousand).

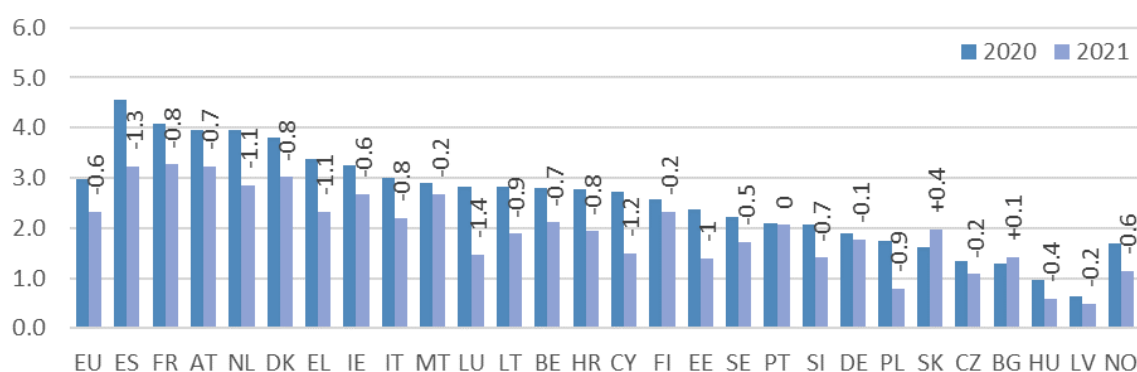
Figure 9: Numbers of LFS unemployed and registered unemployed, Spain, 2006-2021


Source: DG EMPL, LMP database. Eurostat, LFS ([lfsa_ugad](#))
 Notes: Data on unemployed include a break in the series in 2021.

3.2. Expenditure on LMP interventions reduced by 15.2%

Between 2020 and 2021, EU spending on LMP interventions (excluding Romania) declined from 3.0% to 2.3% of the combined gross domestic product (GDP) (see Figure 10). This decline was driven by a 15.2% contraction in spending on LMP as interventions adopted by governments in 2020 to minimise the impact of the pandemic on workers were phased out or used less. Spending, however, remained well above levels seen prior to the pandemic (1.7% of GDP in 2019).

LMP expenditure as a share of GDP reduced in all but four countries in 2021, with particularly large reductions in Poland (-49.7%), Luxembourg (-41.9%), Cyprus (-39.4%), Estonia (-32.9%), and Hungary (-31.8%). Exceptionally, expenditure rose in Slovakia (+31.4%), Bulgaria (+27.9%), Portugal (+6.1%) and Malta (+5.1%). Despite reduced spending in most countries, expenditure on LMP interventions in 2021 remained above 2019 levels in all Member States except Hungary and Latvia.

Figure 10: LMP expenditure as a share of GDP, 2020 and 2021 (%)


Source: DG EMPL, LMP database.

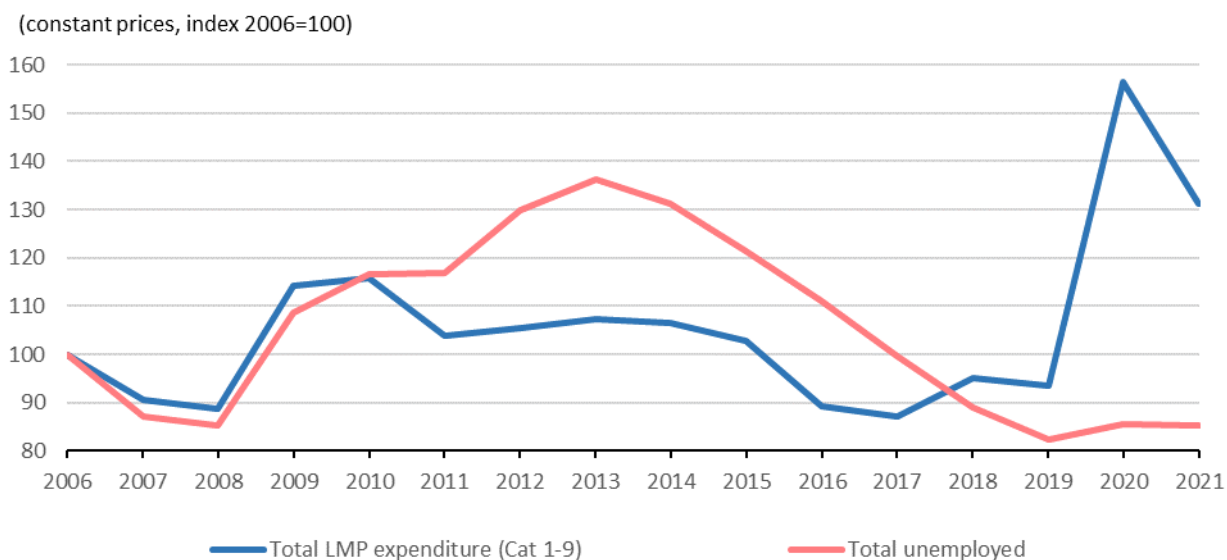
Notes: Data for EU are estimated and exclude RO. Data for DK, DE, EL, HR (2021), IT (2021), HU (2019), NL (2021), PL and SE include estimates. Data for NL (2020) include provisional values. Data for RO are not available.

Figure 11 shows that, in the EU as a whole, the direction - but not necessarily the magnitude - of changes in LMP expenditure (in constant prices) have historically followed changes in the underlying numbers of unemployed, largely because of the high weight of unemployment benefits in the overall expenditure.

The period 2006 to 2008 was characterised by strong economic growth across the European Union, which led to a significant decrease (14.7%) in the number of unemployed (aged 15-64). Over this period, EU expenditure on LMP declined by 11.3% in real terms. From 2008 to 2010, the economic and financial crisis caused an increase of 36.7% in the number of unemployed, which was matched by a 30.5% increase in expenditure on LMP. This surge halted in 2011, when unemployment rose by just 0.3% and LMP expenditure fell by 10.3%. Relief was short-lived, however, as economic growth stalled such that from 2011 to 2013 the numbers of unemployed increased by 16.6% and LMP expenditure by 3.3%. Subsequent economic recovery resulted in a 39.6% drop in unemployment between 2013 and 2019 and a 12.9% reduction in LMP expenditure.

In 2020, however, the numbers of unemployed rose 4.1% but LMP expenditure jumped by 69.6%. This sudden disconnect reflects the shift in focus from the treatment of unemployment to its prevention as countries invested heavily in preserving jobs put at risk by the pandemic. This disconnect continued in 2021 as the number of unemployed remained unchanged (+0.1%) while LMP expenditure reduced by 17.3%, reflecting a partial winding down of the support actions introduced in 2020.

Figure 11 - LMP expenditure in constant prices compared to the number of unemployed, EU*, 2006-2021 (index 2006=100)

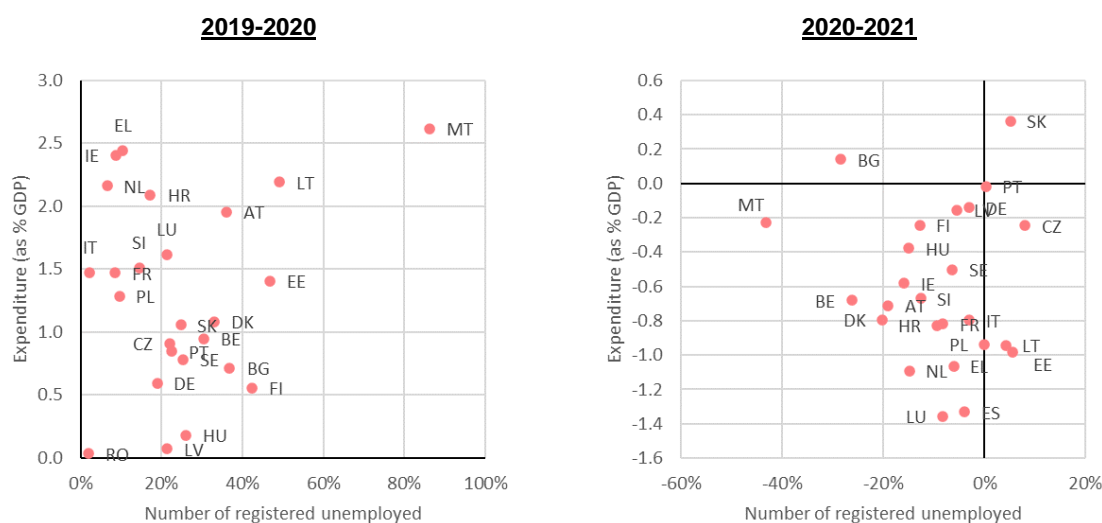


Source: DG EMPL, LMP database. Eurostat, LFS ([lfsa_ugad](#))

Notes: Data for EU are estimated and exclude RO. Data on unemployed include a break in the series in 2021.

Figure 12 further illustrates this disconnect at national level, showing that, across the Member States, there is no clear correlation between the changes in the numbers of registered unemployed and in LMP expenditure as a percentage of GDP in either 2020 or 2021. This confirms that changes in LMP expenditure in 2020 and 2021, were driven by factors other than the level of unemployment.

Figure 12: Changes in LMP expenditure as % of GDP compared to changes in the numbers of registered unemployed, 2019-2020 & 2020-2021.



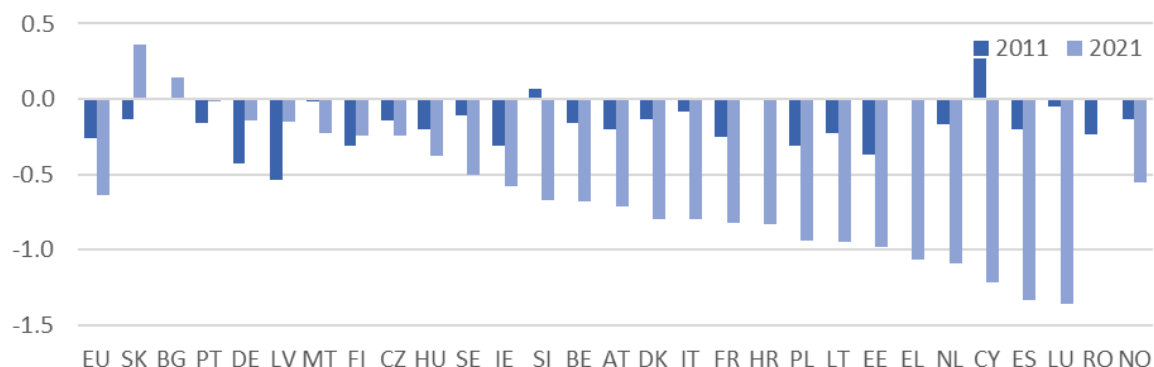
Source: DG EMPL, LMP database. Eurostat, LFS ([lfsa_ugad](#))

Notes: Data on expenditure for DK, DE, EL, HR, IT, HU, NL, PL, RO and SE include estimates. Data on expenditure for NL include provisional values. Expenditure data for RO are not available for 2021. Data on unemployed include a break in the series for all countries in 2021. Definitions differ for 2021 data on unemployed for ES and FR.

The decline in LMP expenditure in 2021 indicates that expenditure has reduced sooner and more strongly post COVID compared to the economic and financial crisis of 2009. Indeed, expenditure has started to fall just one year after COVID instead of two years after the 2009 crisis and the reduction has been twice as large, in terms of both actual expenditure (-15.2% vs -7.4%) and as a proportion of GDP (-0.6 pp vs -0.3 pp), despite almost no change in numbers of unemployed in both cases (+0.1% vs +0.3%).

Figure 13 shows that at national level, the reductions in LMP expenditure arising in 2021 were greater than those in 2011 in all but seven Member States (SK, BG, PT, DE, LV and FI). The extent of the difference between the changes in 2011 and in 2021 varies considerably. On the one hand, there were similar reductions in both years in Finland, Czechia and Hungary but considerably larger decreases in 2021 than in 2011 in the Netherlands, Cyprus, Spain and Luxembourg (>0.8 pp of GDP). These differences may be attributed to numerous factors, but it is important to note that the effect of financial crisis in 2009 and its subsequent recovery in 2011 was unevenly distributed across Member States both in terms of its timing and the extent of its impact, while actions to limit the spread of COVID-19 with the aid of lockdowns and restrictions were more universally applied across countries despite some differences in the approaches of the national authorities.

Figure 13: Change in LMP expenditure as % of GDP compared to the previous year, 2011 & 2021 (percentage points)



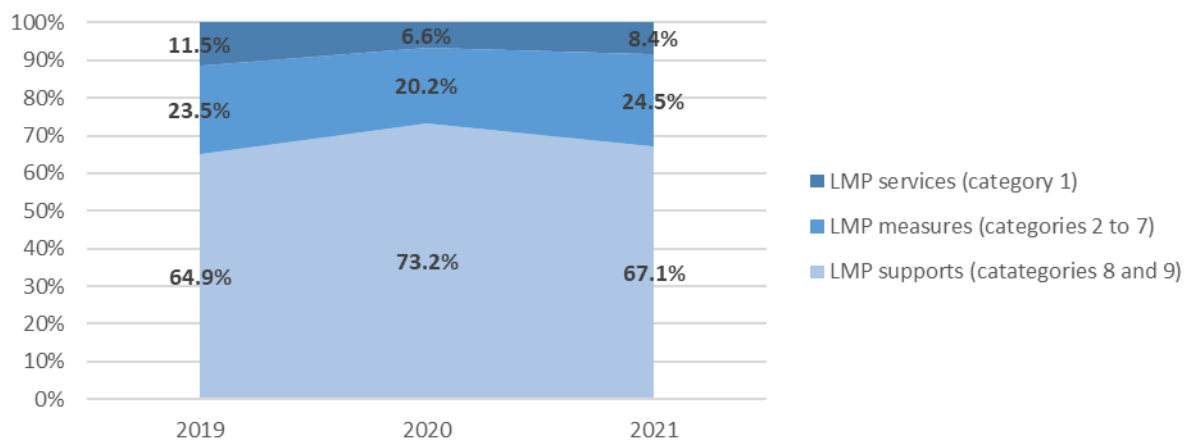
Source: DG EMPL, LMP database.

Notes: Data for EU are estimated and exclude RO. Data not available for HR (2011 only), EL (2011 only) and RO (2021 only). Data on include estimates for DK, DE, EL (2021 only), HR (2021 only), IT (2021 only), HU (2011 only), MT (2011 only), NL, PL (2021 only), RO (2011 only) and SE. Data are provisional for NL (2021 only) are provisional.

3.2.1. Declining expenditure driven by LMP supports

The reduction in LMP expenditure in 2021 was not evenly spread between the three main types of intervention. At EU level, the entirety of the decrease derived from lower expenditure on LMP supports (-22.3%), which was only partially offset by rises in expenditure on LMP measures (+3.0%) and LMP services (+8.0%). Figure 14 shows that this resulted in a shift in the composition of LMP expenditure by broad type of intervention, with the contribution of LMP *supports* declining from 73.2% to 67.1% while the contributions of LMP *measures* and LMP *services* both rose (from 20.2% to 24.5% and from 6.6% to 8.4%), reversing some of the shift towards LMP supports in 2020 as efforts to combat the impact of the pandemic were at their peak. Expenditure on LMP supports and LMP measures in 2021 was still 50% higher than in 2019 while that on LMP services is 5.2% higher.

Figure 14: Distribution of LMP expenditure by broad type of intervention, EU, 2019-2021 (%)



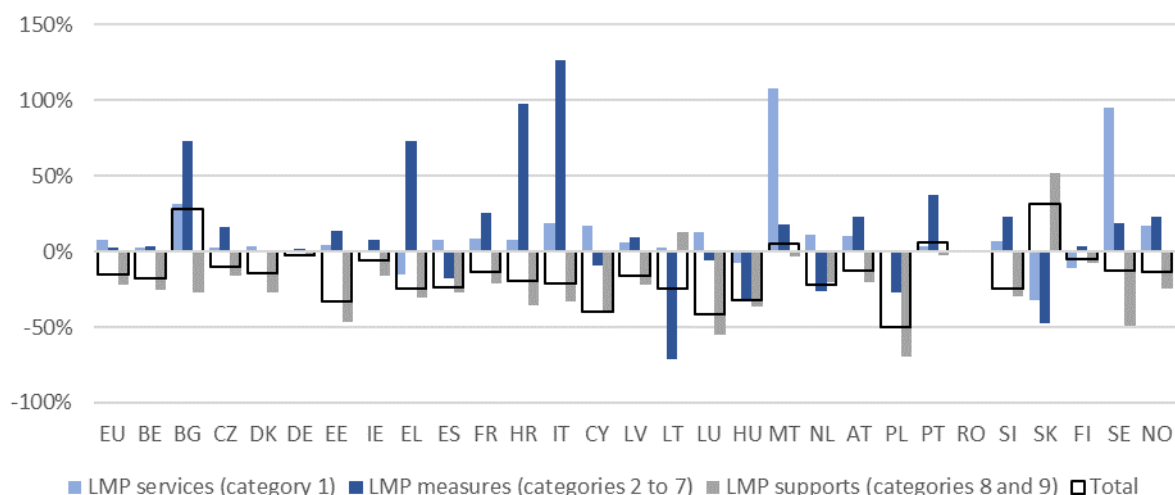
Source: DG EMPL, LMP database.

Notes: Data for EU are estimated and exclude RO.

At national level, all but two countries saw a reduction in expenditure on LMP *supports* in 2021 with decreases exceeding 40% in Poland (-69.7%), Luxembourg (-55.0%), Sweden (-49.4%), Estonia (-46.7%), and Cyprus (-40.6%) (see Figure 15). The only exceptions were Lithuania and Slovakia, with the latter experiencing a notable 51.6% increase in

such spending. This was driven by increased use of a partial unemployment benefit (“*First Aid / Prvá pomoc*”) originally introduced as a COVID response in March 2020. The rise in expenditure in 2021 is likely linked to an amendment in October 2020 which increased the level of support and widened the scope for eligibility. At least two thirds of countries experienced a rise in expenditures on LMP *measures* (18) and on LMP *services* (21). Exceptionally, in Bulgaria, Malta, and Portugal, the increased expenditure on LMP *services* and LMP *measures* exceeded the decline in expenditure on LMP *supports* resulting in an overall increase in LMP expenditure. In all other cases, the decline in LMP supports was higher so that there was a net decline in spending.

Figure 15: Change in LMP expenditure by broad type of intervention, 2020-2021 (%)



Source: DG EMPL, LMP database.

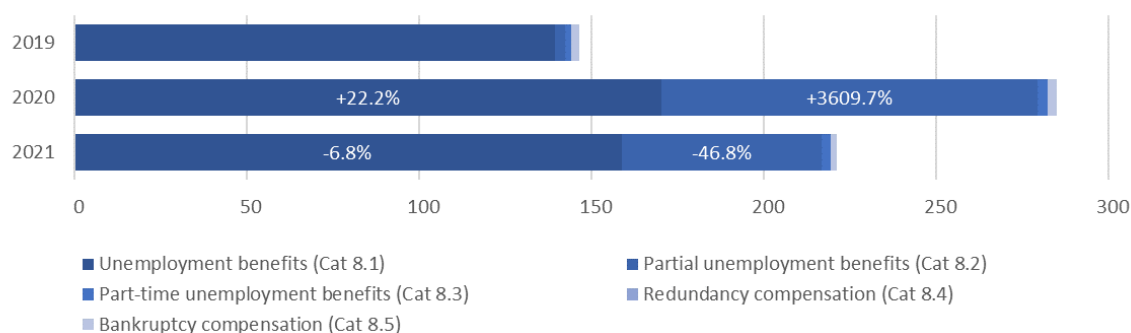
Notes: Data for EU are estimated and exclude RO. Data for DK, DE, EL, HR (2021), IT (2021), HU (2019), NL (2021), PL and SE include estimates. Data for NL (2020) include provisional values. Data for RO are not available.

3.2.2. LMP supports: Contracting use of partial unemployment benefits

Almost all expenditure on LMP *supports* (99%) relates to *out-of-work income maintenance and support* (LMP category 8), while very little is spent on *early retirement* (LMP category 9) in line with EU policy to encourage older workers to remain active. Accordingly, declining expenditure on LMP supports stems from the former in all countries.

Across the EU (excluding Romania), expenditure on LMP category 8 declined 22.4% in 2021 but remained just over 50% above the pre-COVID level seen in 2019. At national level, the extent of declines in 2021 exceeded 45% in Estonia (-46.7%), Sweden (-49.4%), Luxembourg (-59.9%) and Poland (-72.2%) and there were only two increases – Lithuania (+12.7%) and Slovakia (+55.9%). A reduction in this type of expenditure is of little surprise given the diminishing impact of the pandemic and the fact it covers *unemployment benefits* (sub-category 8.1), *partial unemployment benefits* (sub-category 8.2), which are paid to employed persons to compensate them for loss of earnings in case of short-time working or temporary lay-off, *part-time unemployment benefits* (sub-category 8.3) and *redundancy and bankruptcy compensation* (sub-categories 8.4 and 8.5), which are one-off payments related respectively to the loss of a job or to wages not paid by an employer, neither of which are directly linked to the current employment status of the individual. Figure 16 illustrates how expenditure on the different sub-categories of has evolved since 2019.

Figure 16: Expenditure on out-of-work income maintenance and support (LMP category 8), EU, 2019-2021 (Euro billions)

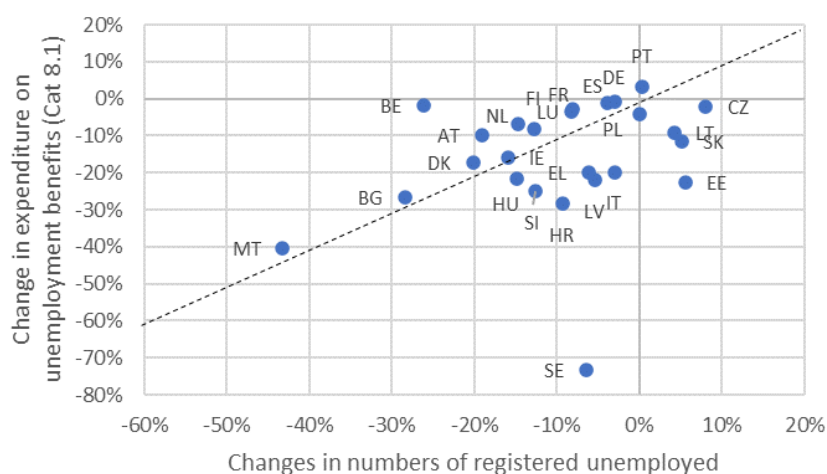


Source: DG EMPL, LMP database.

Notes: Data for EU are estimated and exclude RO.

Between 2020 and 2021, expenditure on *unemployment benefits* reduced by 6.8% but remains 13.9% above levels seen in 2019. The recent reduction is in line with the decrease in numbers of unemployed registered with the PES (-5.8%)⁵. Indeed, Figure 17 shows a positive correlation between changes in expenditure on *unemployment benefits* and changes in numbers of registered unemployed at national level but with some exceptions. For instance, in Belgium, the number of registered unemployed reduced by a quarter but expenditure on unemployment benefits reduced by just 1.8%. Also, in Sweden registered unemployed reduced by 6.4% but expenditure by 73.3%. The latter discrepancy, however, can be attributed to a break in the series in 2021 associated with the treatment of activity support, specifically that paid to unemployed persons taking part in individual case-management services (category 1.1.2). Until 2020, expenditure on such support was estimated and split off from expenditure on the associated services so that it could be recorded (in line with the LMP methodology) as a form of unemployment benefit. However, in the 2021 data such an estimation was not possible so that the relevant expenditure remains under category 1. Excluding activity support from the Swedish data also for 2020 results in expenditure on unemployment benefits falling by 12.9%, much more in line with the 6.4% decline in the number of registered unemployed.

Figure 17: Change in expenditure on unemployment benefits (sub-category 8.1) and in numbers of registered unemployed, 2020-2021 (%)



Source: DG EMPL, LMP database.

⁵ Note that the figure for registered unemployed covers all Member States with the exception of CY and RO for which data is not available for either 2020 or 2021.

Notes: Data on expenditure include estimates for DK, DE, IT, HU, NL, PL, and SE. Data not available for CY and RO.

Expenditure on *partial unemployment benefits* fell by 46.8% in 2021, reversing just under half of the massive increase seen in 2020 (+3 609.7%) but was still more than 18 times higher than in 2019. Partial unemployment benefits are a crucial policy intervention during times of economic crisis. Pre-COVID, in 2019, such spending amounted to just 2.0% of expenditure on LMP supports and 1.3% of total LMP expenditure but jumped to 38.3% and 27.8% respectively in 2020 before falling back to 26.2% and 17.4% in 2021. Further reductions are likely to be seen in the data for 2022. Notably, the additional expenditure on *partial unemployment benefits* in 2020 relative to 2019 was more than three and half times larger than that on *unemployment benefits*. This reflects the widespread use of this type of action to prevent unemployment by compensating for the loss of wages or salaries while people were placed on formal short time working arrangements and/or intermittent work schedules. As a result, *partial unemployment benefits* accounted for over three quarters (76.9%) of the rise in expenditure on LMP supports in 2020 while *unemployment benefits* accounted for just over a fifth (22.4%). Accordingly, the diminishing impact of the crisis in 2021 led to a reduction in expenditure on *partial unemployment benefits* in 2021 that was just over four times larger than that on *unemployment benefits*.

At national level, the LMP data show that sixteen Member States spent nothing on *partial unemployment benefits* in 2019 but only four in 2020. In reality, this should be just two (BG and LV) as the relevant expenditure is reported elsewhere in the LMP data in Ireland and is missing for Romania⁶. Effectively, therefore, fourteen Member States started using *partial unemployment benefits* as a direct response to the impact of COVID. Moreover, all of the eleven Member States that were already using such benefits in 2019 saw expenditure increase more than eight-fold in 2020. As a result, absolute increases in spending on *partial unemployment benefits* exceeded those on *unemployment benefits* in all but one country where both types of benefits are provided. In the exceptional case of Finland, the larger absolute increase in spending on *unemployment benefits* can be attributed to the fact that the rules associated with such benefits were temporarily adjusted in the period March to December 2020 to allow those temporarily laid off from work to claim *unemployment benefits*. Consequently, in 2021, all but two countries with expenditure on *partial unemployment benefits* in 2020 (LT and SK) experienced a decrease in this spending in 2021 and this decrease exceeded the decrease in spending on *unemployment benefits* in absolute terms in all but two cases (IE and FI). Exceptionally, Lithuania and Slovakia experienced a rise in such expenditure in 2021 (+44.3% and +85.0% respectively). In both cases, this appears to be driven by a combination of the support (or part of it) being provided via reimbursements to employers and expenditure data being reported on a cash basis (instead of accrual). The implication being that some of the expenditure reported under 2021 is associated with periods of partial unemployment which took place in 2020. Expenditure on *partial unemployment benefits* remains above levels seen in 2019 in all cases except Hungary where such benefits were only provided during 2020. Broadly, therefore, there was only a partial reduction in their use in 2021.

Spending on *part-time unemployment benefits* and *bankruptcy compensation* also increased by meaningful amounts between 2019 and 2020 (+55.7% and +21.4% respectively) while that on *redundancy compensation* declined (-3.9%) but their contribution to expenditure on LMP supports and total LMP expenditure is considerably more limited (<2%). Spending on both *part-time unemployment benefits* and *bankruptcy compensation* contracted in 2021 (-7.2% and -36.3%) alongside a further reduction in spending on *redundancy compensation* (-41.5%). It is worth noting that of these three

⁶ BG, IE, LV, and RO reported no spending in 2020 but for IE and RO this is not actually the case. The relevant expenditure appears to have been reported as part of interventions with other classifications (unemployment benefits in IE) or is missing from the database due to a lack of data (RO).

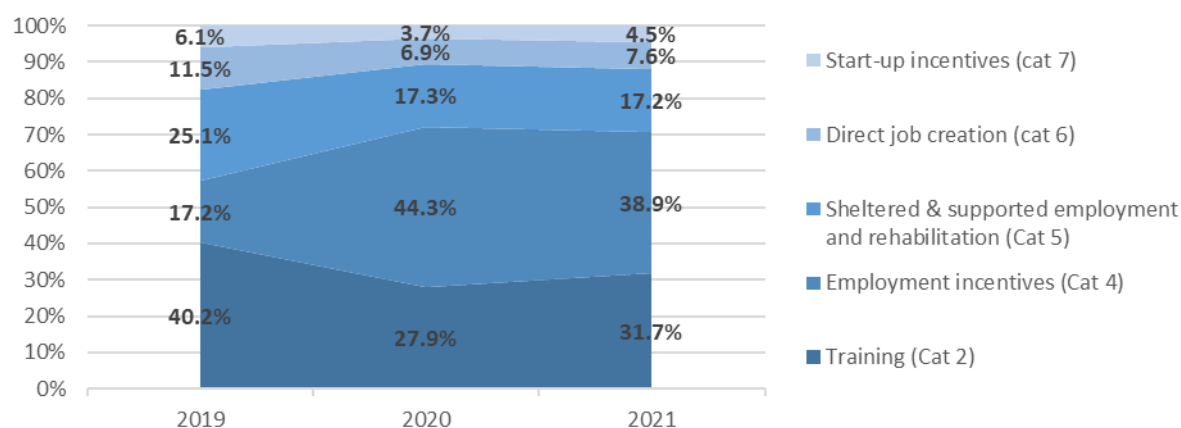
types of support, only spending on *part-time unemployment benefits* remains above the level seen in 2019 (44.5% higher). Note, however, that only six countries report expenditure for this type of assistance (BE, BG, DE, PT, FI and SE) while others are unable to separately identify such expenditure from unemployment benefits more generally either due to data constraints (e.g. DK) or due to the underlying design of unemployment benefits (e.g. IE).

3.2.3. LMP measures: Changing role of employment incentives

Expenditure on LMP *measures* in 2021 rose 3% in 2021 and is now 50% higher than in 2019. This change conceals changing use of different types of measures. Indeed, the rise was mostly (66.2%) associated with increased expenditure on *training* (+17%) but rises in expenditure on *direct job creation* (+14.6%), *start-up incentives* (+26.1%) and *sheltered and supported employment and rehabilitation* (+2.7%) also contributed (14.0%, 13.3% and 6.5% respectively). These increases more than offset a 9.5% reduction in expenditure on *employment incentives*. This is particularly notable as the 46.5% rise in expenditure on LMP measures in 2020 was almost entirely driven by a rising expenditure on such incentives (+277.5% in 2020), notably the sub-category of these related to *employment maintaining incentives* (+3 740.8%). Figure 18 shows that the recent changes have resulted in a shift in the composition of expenditure on LMP measures by type of action, with the contribution of *employment incentives* reducing from 44.3% in 2020 to 38.9% in 2021 while the contributions of other types of measures have risen. This represents a partial reversal of the shift in the opposite direction which took place in 2020. Measures other than *employment incentives* all continue to contribute a smaller share to expenditure on measures than in 2019.

At national level, total expenditure on LMP measures rose in all but eight Member States. Due to the key role played by *employment incentives* in 2020, changes in total expenditure align, for the most part, with changes in expenditure on *employment incentives*. Indeed, expenditure on *employment incentives* declined in nine Member States (by more than 15% in all cases), including all eight where expenditure on LMP measures reduced (ES, CY, LT, LU, HU, NL, PL and SK) plus Denmark. In Denmark, expenditure on LMP measures rose as increased expenditure on *training* (+6.6%) and *sheltered and supported employment and rehabilitation* (+2.5%) more than compensated for the reduction associated with *employment incentives* (-19.1%).

Figure 18: Distribution of expenditure on LMP measures (categories 2-7) by type of measure, EU, 2019-2021 (%)



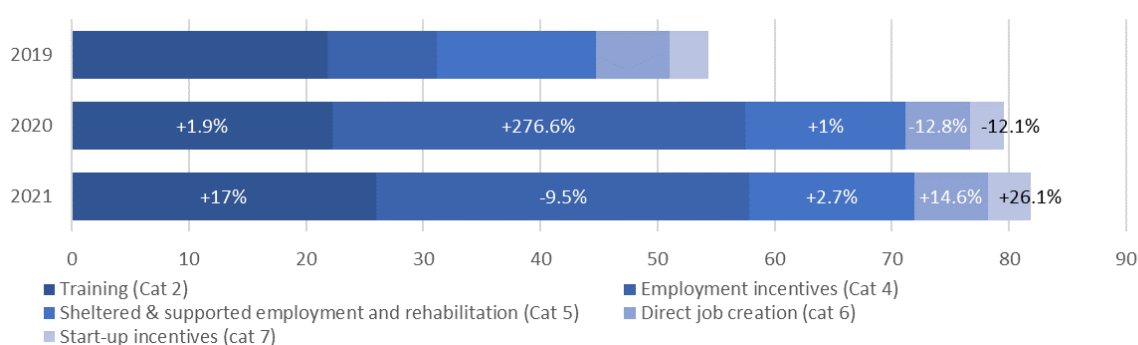
Source: DG EMPL, LMP database.

Notes: Data for EU are estimated and exclude RO.

Figure 19 illustrates how expenditure on the different categories of LMP measure has evolved since 2019. Expenditure on all categories except *direct job creation* was higher in

2021 than in 2019, particularly so for *employment incentives* (+241.8%) and to a much lesser extent for *training* (+19.2%), *sheltered and supported employment and rehabilitation* (+3.7%) and *start-up incentives* (+10.8%). The rise in expenditure on *employment incentives* was concentrated in 2020 while the rise in expenditure on other types of measure was concentrated in 2021. This can be explained by the nature of the crisis and the evolving response to it. Indeed, in 2020, the policy response placed a big emphasis on the prevention rather than the treatment of unemployment while restrictions on face-to-face contact hampered delivery of certain types of measure (e.g. in-person training programmes). Accordingly, focus was placed on use of *employment maintenance incentives*, a specific sub-category of *employment incentives* (sub-category 4.2). Their use is examined in greater detail below. In contrast, in 2021, restrictions on face-to-face contacts were relaxed, temporary preventative measures began to be withdrawn, and there was a renewed focus on treatment of unemployment.

Figure 19: Expenditure on LMP measures (categories 2-7), EU, 2019-2021 (Euro billions)



Source: DG EMPL, LMP database.

Notes: Data for EU are estimated and exclude RO.

Employment incentives (LMP category 4) covers three types of action, *recruitment incentives* (sub-category 4.1), which promote the creation and take-up of new jobs, *employment maintenance incentives* (sub-category 4.2), which support the continued employment of persons at risk of involuntary job loss due to restructuring or other economic difficulties, and *job rotation and job sharing* (sub-category 4.3), which facilitate the insertion of unemployed and other target groups into a work placement by substituting hours worked by an existing employee. Very little was spent on *job rotation and job sharing* during 2019-2021 (at most 2.5% of expenditure on *employment incentives*). Accordingly, evolving expenditure on *employment incentives* derives from the former two categories.

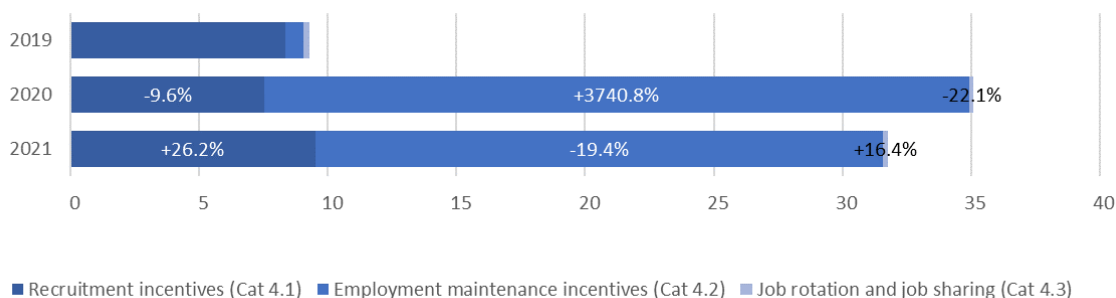
Between 2020 and 2021, expenditure on *employment maintenance incentives* reduced by a fifth (19.4%) reversing just over a fifth of the 37-fold increase seen in the previous year (+3 740.8%). Such expenditure therefore remained high in 2021, just under 31 times higher than in 2019. The changes in expenditure on *employment maintenance incentives* can, as in the case for *partial unemployment benefits*, be attributed to the fact that such interventions are most relevant in times of crisis. Indeed, pre-pandemic, in 2019, they were used only in four countries (BE, ES, LU, and HU) and accounted for just 1.3% of EU level expenditure on LMP measures and 0.3% of total LMP expenditure. In 2020, however, *employment maintenance incentives* were used in twelve countries (additional countries include BG, IE, IT, LT, NL, PL, PT, and SK) and the spending levels had increased to 35.0% and 7.4% respectively as governments intervened to support part of the wages of workers whose jobs were at risk because of the COVID-19 crisis. Accordingly, as the crisis abated in 2021, these dropped to 27.0% and 6.6% respectively. Their use is subsiding and expected to reduce further in future.

It should be noted that *partial unemployment benefits* and *employment maintenance incentives* both share the same basic objective to keep people in employment. The key difference between the two is that *employment maintenance incentives* support people in

continuing to work during difficult periods while *partial unemployment benefits* compensate for the loss of working time (i.e. provide a wage compensation during temporary lay-off). Indeed, two of the countries (BG and IE) which did not have spending on *partial unemployment benefits* in 2020 had spending on *employment maintenance incentives* which are likely to have played a similar role in enabling employees to stay in work during lockdowns⁷. Together these two categories accounted for 81.8% of the rise in LMP expenditure across all countries in 2020 and 94.3% of the subsequent decline in 2021. However, the use of *partial unemployment benefits* was more prominent than the use of *employment maintenance incentives*, with the increase in spending on the former being almost 4 times higher in absolute terms. There were just four countries (BG, LT and NL) where spending on *employment maintenance incentives* was higher in 2020.

In 2021, expenditure on *recruitment incentives* increased by just over a quarter (26.2%), completely reversing the 9.6% decrease increase seen in the previous year so that associated expenditure is now 14.0% above that in 2019. This is similar to what has been observed for other categories of LMP *measure* and likely to reflect the relaxation of restrictions on face-to-face contacts which are liable to have posed some challenges for recruitment processes, including those associated with subsidised employment.

Figure 20: Expenditure on employment incentives (LMP category 4), EU, 2019-2021 (Euro billions)



Source: DG EMPL, LMP database.

Notes: Data for EU are estimated and exclude RO.

3.3. Participants in LMP measures and supports declined 7.3% and 25.5% respectively

The broad picture provided by data on the stock of participants in LMP interventions shares some similarities with that provided by the data on expenditure but there are some key differences.

Between 2020 and 2021, participants in LMP *measures* and in LMP *supports* reduced 7.3% and 25.5% respectively, partially reversing the 55.0% and 89.7% rises seen in the previous year (20.5% and 54.0% of the increase has been respectively). While the change in the former mirrors that in related expenditure (-22.3%), the reduction in participants in LMP *measures* occurred while associated expenditure continued to rise (+3.0%).

At national level, all but two countries for which the data is available (EE and MT) saw a decline in the number of beneficiaries of LMP *supports*, with reductions exceeding 40% in five countries (HR, LT, LU, HU, and SI) and 25% in seven others (BE, BG, DK, FR, IT, NL,

⁷ Note that in the case of Ireland such expenditure is reported as part of an intervention classified as an *unemployment benefit* (cat 8.1). Such cases arise because of difficulties to split the expenditure associated with multiple types of action (e.g. limitations in source data). Continued efforts will be made to improve breakdowns.

and AT). In just under three quarters of cases for which participant data for *partial unemployment benefits* is reported, these declines derived more from recipients of *partial unemployment benefits* than *unemployment benefits*⁸. Meanwhile, three quarters (18 out of 24 Member States) saw a rise in participants in LMP *measures* with the increase exceeding 100% in one country (EL) and ranging between 20% and 40% in three others (BG, HU, and MT). Almost all of the decline observed at EU level can be attributed to large changes in Spain and Netherlands. Both experienced declines exceeding 600 thousand participants in 2021 resulting in 14.2% and 37.8% reductions in participants in LMP *measures* respectively, primarily linked to falling use of *employment maintenance incentives*.

3.3.1. LMP supports: Reduced number of unemployed driving reduced use of unemployment benefits

Almost all participants in LMP *supports* (99%) relate to *out-of-work income maintenance and support* (LMP category 8), while very few benefit from support categorised as *early retirement* (LMP category 9). Consequently, although the reduced numbers of people benefitting from LMP *supports* in 2021 derives almost entirely from the different types of benefit covered by LMP category 8, recipients of *early retirement* benefits also declined in seven of the ten countries where such support is available. This is not unexpected as this type of benefit is out of line with EU policy objectives, which focus on encouraging older workers to remain active in the labour market rather than supporting their early withdrawal. Recipients of early retirement benefits have been in steady decline over the last fifteen years, reducing by an average of 8.7% per year.

Participants in LMP category 8 reduced 25.6% between 2020 and 2021 reversing half of the 91.6% rise which took place between 2019 and 2020. At national level, there were declines in all but two Member States for which the data is available (EE and MT), with reductions over 40% in five countries - Hungary (-59.4%), Croatia (-53.1%), Slovenia (-45.6%), Lithuania (-41.6%), and Luxembourg (-42.9%). For the most part, this aligns with the 22.4% reduction in associated expenditure. Indeed, there were just three cases where expenditure and participants moved in different directions (EE, LT, and MT). However, these cases can be attributed either to limitations in underlying data (e.g. some expenditures being reported on cash basis in LT or incomplete participant data in EE) or to differences in changing use of different types of benefits within category 8 (MT).

Recipients of *Unemployment benefits* (sub-category 8.1) account for the largest share of participants in *out-of-work income maintenance and support* (LMP category 8). These reduced 10.0% in 2021, slightly more than the reduction in the associated expenditure (-6.8%). At national level, however, some differences are apparent. Figure 21 shows that the decreases in the numbers of participants and in expenditure differed by no more than 15 percentage points in most countries (23). In many of these cases (17), the reduction in expenditure exceeded the rise in participants. This can be attributed to two possible factors. Firstly, a rising share of longer-term claimants who are potentially, on average, eligible for lower amounts of benefit than existing unemployed (*unemployment benefits* tend to reduce with duration of unemployment). Secondly, public authorities having begun to withdraw temporary increases the amounts payable which were introduced as part of efforts to tackle the impact of the pandemic.

The three exceptions where changes in participants and in expenditure diverged much more significantly (in either direction) were Estonia, Lithuania and Sweden. Lithuania and Sweden were among the three counties with the largest reductions in participants in

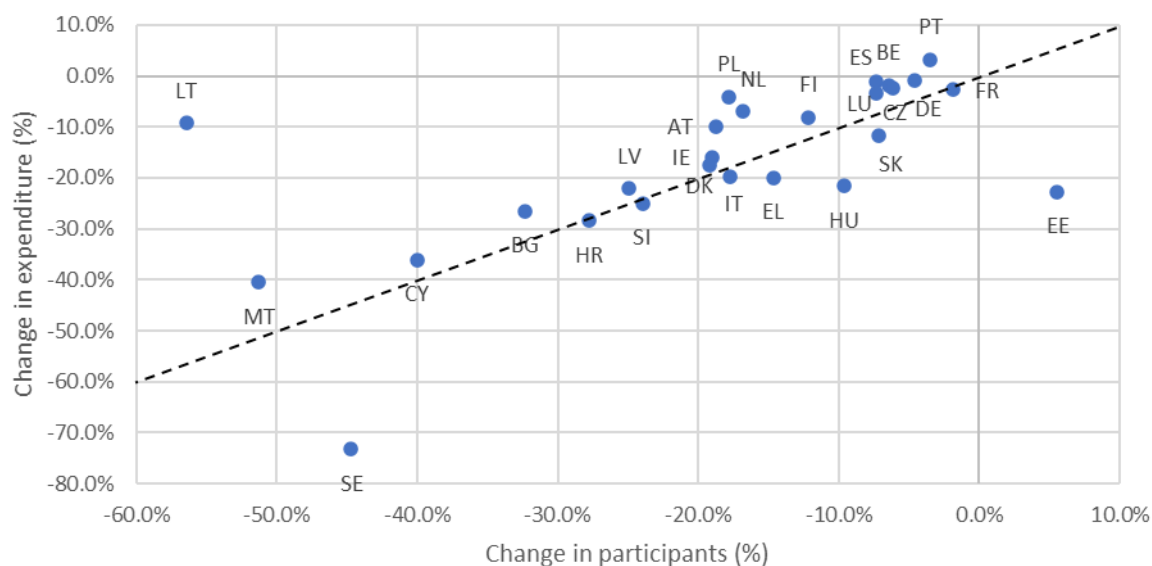
⁸ Note that in the case of Ireland expenditure on *partial unemployment benefits* is reported under *unemployment benefit* (cat 8.1).

unemployment benefits. Lithuania experienced the largest decrease in 2021 (-56.4%) at the same time as a relatively muted decrease in expenditure (-10.0%). This is due new *unemployment assistance benefits* having been introduced in 2020 (*Job search allowance*) extending the coverage of out-of-work support to persons who lost their jobs due to COVID and were unable to access existing support. These were less generous than those already available⁹, leading to a particularly large rise in participants in 2020 (+413.3%) but less dramatic rise in expenditure (+114.2%). In 2021, these new benefits came to an end.

Sweden experienced the third largest decrease participants in 2021 (-44.7%) but a much larger decrease in expenditure (-73.3%). This is due to a break in the series with regards to the treatment of participants and expenditure associated with unemployment benefits (specifically *Activity support*) paid to participants in LMP services. Until 2020 the relevant expenditure and participants were estimated and excluded from the relevant interventions in LMP category 1 so that it could be included in LMP category 8.1. However, such an estimate is no longer available in the data for 2021.

Exceptionally, Estonia experienced a rise in participants in the sub-category of *Unemployment benefits* (+5.6%) while expenditure reduced by more than a fifth (-22.3%). In Estonia, three types of unemployment benefits are provided: (1) unemployment insurance benefit, (2) unemployment assistance benefits and (3) social tax compensation for persons not in receipt of unemployment insurance or assistance. The rise in participants conceals the fact that reduced recipients of unemployment insurance benefits were more than offset by rises in recipients of the other two benefits, both of which are less generous. Consequently, expenditure declined despite a moderate rise in participants. Part of this dynamic is liable to be explained by unemployment insurance benefits being time limited and some of those who became unemployed during 2020 reaching this limit in 2021 and switching to the other benefits.

Figure 21: Changes in participants in and expenditure on unemployment benefits (sub-category 8.1) between 2020 and 2021 (%)



Source: DG EMPL, LMP database.

Notes: Data on expenditure include estimates for DK, DE, EL, HR, NL, PL and SE. Data on participants include estimates for DK, EE, EL, HR, IT, CY, NL, PL, and SE. Data include a break in the series for SE. Data not available for either participants or expenditure for RO.

⁹ In Lithuania, the maximum rate for pre-existing unemployment insurance in 2020 stood at EUR 760-807 per month while the newly introduced Job search allowance acted as a top-up of EUR 42.49 per month for those already receiving unemployment insurance and as a standalone benefit of EUR 200 per month in other cases. See [link](#).

3.3.2. LMP supports: partial unemployment benefits used less as COVID support phased out

Partial unemployment benefits played a key role in the responding to the pandemic and preventing unemployment. This is also apparent in the data on participants. The average number of people in receipt of a *partial unemployment benefit* at any point the year was nearly thirty times higher in 2020 (+2 796.5%) than in 2019. Indeed, in 2019, partial unemployment benefits accounted for just 2.6% of participants in LMP supports but in 2020 this jumped to 39.5%. Furthermore, the additional participants in *partial unemployment benefits* in 2020 relative to 2019 was more than three and half times larger than that on *unemployment benefits* (+10.3 million vs +3.0 million). The use of *partial unemployment benefits* started to recede in 2021 as the number of recipients halved (-48.9%) compared to 2020, similar to the reduction in corresponding expenditure (-49.8%). This reduced their contribution to 27.0% of participants in LMP supports, still some way above the level seen pre-pandemic, suggesting further reductions are expected in future.

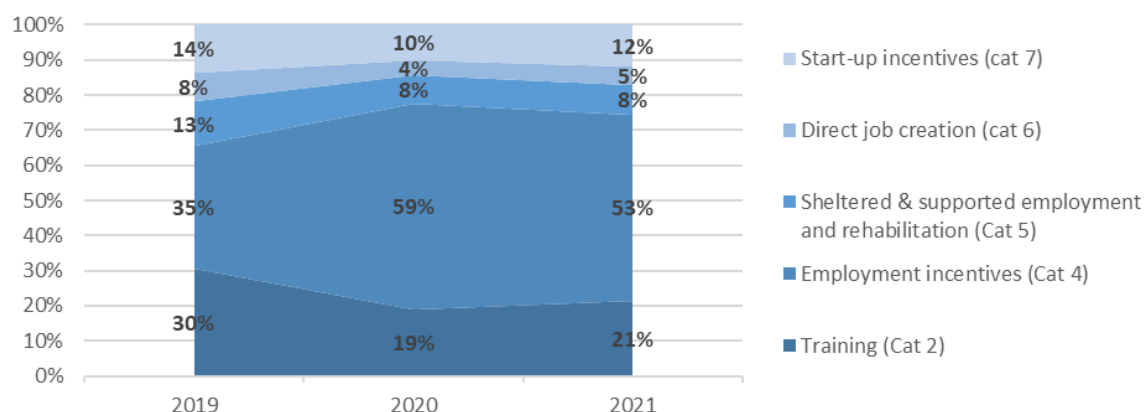
At national level, participants in *partial unemployment benefits* reduced by more than a quarter in all Member States for which the data is available in 2021 (17) with just one exception (MT). In the case of Malta, participants rose 11.7% despite a slight decline in corresponding expenditure (-2.8%). These changes relate directly to the *Covid Wage Supplement* introduced by Malta in 2020 to ensure employees in disrupted sectors subjected to temporary suspension of work because of the pandemic could receive a basic wage during the disruption. In 2021 the supplement was adjusted to allow for tapering as COVID restrictions were removed, resulting in a lower average amount of benefit per recipient.

The number of recipients of *part-time unemployment benefits* also reduced 6.0% between 2020 and 2021 but they make only a small contribution to LMP supports overall (<1%). The numbers of people benefitting from *bankruptcy compensation* and *redundancy compensation* cannot be measured using stock data because they are a one-off compensation without any duration. Data on entrants, however, show that number of claims declined by 36.3% and 41.5% respectively.

3.3.3. LMP measures: Rising costs of provision

Data on participants provide a similar picture to that provided by LMP expenditure in terms of the changing use of different types of measures post-crisis. The lower number of participants in LMP measures in 2021 conceals the fact that it derives almost entirely from the category of *employment incentives* (-16.4%), or more precisely the sub-category of *employment maintenance incentives* (-29.7%), which supported employed people during the pandemic. Indeed, numbers of participants in *training*, *direct job creation* and *start-up incentives*, for which there were notable increases in expenditure in 2021 (+17%, +14.6% and +26.1%), increased, albeit less so than the related expenditure (+5.5%, +10.6% and +9.0%), while the numbers in *sheltered and supported employment and rehabilitation* hardly changed (-0.8%).

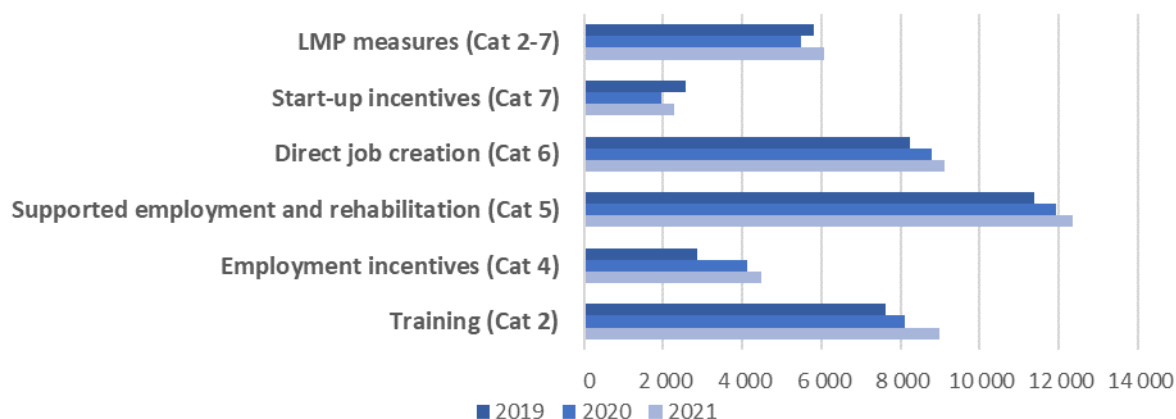
The recent changes have resulted in a shift in the distribution of participants in LMP measures by type of action (Figure 22), with the contribution of *employment incentives* reducing from 59% to 53%, allowing the contributions of most other types of measures to rise slightly. As for expenditure, this represents a partial reversal of the shift in 2020 when the contribution of the *employment incentives* category jumped from 35% to 59% as many jobs were supported through the use of *employment maintenance incentives*. Accordingly, all other categories of LMP measure continue to contribute a smaller share of participants than in 2019 and their contributions are expected to rise again in future.

Figure 22: Distribution of participants in LMP measures by type of action (%), EU, 2019-2021


Source: DG EMPL, LMP database.

Notes: Data for EU are estimated and exclude RO.

The unit cost of *employment incentives*, measured using expenditure per person year (PPY)¹⁰, tends to be lower than other types of LMP *measure*, with the exception of *start-up incentives* (see Figure 23). For example, in 2021, unit costs for *employment incentives* were half those of *training* and *direct job creation* (4 500 EUR/PPY vs 9 000 and 9 100 respectively) and only just over a third of the cost of *sheltered and supported employment and rehabilitation* (12 300). A shift in the distribution of participants towards higher cost types of measure in 2021 partly explains why expenditure on LMP *measures* went up 3.0% in 2021 despite a 7.3% decline in participants. However, the rise in the average unit cost of all LMP *measures* (EUR 5.5 thousand PPY in 2020, to 6.0 in 2021) was also driven, at least in part, by unit costs rising across all types of LMP *measure* in 2021.

Figure 23: Unit costs of LMP measures by type of action, EU, 2019-2021 (Euro per person year)


Source: DG EMPL, LMP database.

Notes: Data for EU are estimated and exclude RO.

Excluding the impact of inflation, which started to creep up in the EU in 2020 (average of 2.9% in 2021 compared to 0.7% in 2020)¹¹, this increase could derive from increased costs of existing interventions, potentially due to further changes in implementation needed to continue to adapt to the changing situation (e.g. adapting to restrictions being

¹⁰ Comparing the costs of LMP interventions is difficult not only because of the inherently different types of assistance/support that can be provided but also because the duration of this support varies considerably – both by design and in practice. Data on the annual average stock of participants can be interpreted as a volume measurement since the value also represents the number of person-years of participation. Consequently, dividing expenditure by annual average stock provides a form of unit cost for LMP interventions, measured as expenditure per person-year, that can be used for comparison of costs independent of duration. It should be clear, however, that expenditure per person-year does not (as a rule) reflect the actual cost per participant of an intervention or groups of intervention, but the cost of providing the relevant assistance/support to one person for a year.

¹¹ Source: Eurostat, [prc_hicp_manr](#)

removed by switching back to delivering training in-person rather than online or moving toward utilising both delivery methods) or a shift towards the use of new and more expensive interventions.

4. Main results

- In 2021, the number of unemployed according to the EU Labour Force Survey stood at just under 15 million, almost unchanged (+0.2%) compared to 2020, indicating no reversal of the 4.7% rise seen in 2020 and no resumption in the steady decline in the number of unemployed seen between 2013 and 2019 (-42.6%). However, administrative data show that the numbers of people registered as unemployed with national public employment services (PES) in the EU (excluding CY and RO) fell 5.8% in 2021. This could reflect reduced propensity to register, or remain registered, with the PES as temporary steps taken by governments during the crisis in 2020 to facilitate access to financial support and to relax requirements to maintain unemployed status were phased out.
- In 2021, the EU Member States (excluding RO) spent EUR 333 billion on LMP interventions, corresponding to 2.3% of their combined GDP, down 15.2% compared to 2020 but still 48% above the average expenditure over the five years preceding the COVID crisis (2015-2019), reflecting the cost of government interventions in the labour market to mitigate the continued impact of the COVID crisis. The reduction in expenditure was much greater than that in the numbers of registered unemployed (-5.8%) and occurred despite almost no change in the numbers of unemployed accordingly to the EU Labour Force Survey. This reflects the exceptional focus that was placed on actions to support employed persons by preserving jobs and preventing unemployment during the pandemic and the subsequent partial phasing out of this support in 2021.
- The reduction in expenditure in 2021 was not evenly spread between the three broad types of LMP intervention. Indeed, the decrease derived entirely from lower spending on LMP *supports* (-22.3%), which was partially offset by rises in expenditure on LMP *measures* (+3.0%) and LMP *services* (+8.0%).
- The reduced expenditure on LMP *supports* derived primarily from two sources. Expenditure on *unemployment benefits* reduced by 6.8%, more or less in line with the decrease in the number of people registered as unemployed with the national public employment services (-5.8%). While expenditure on *partial unemployment benefits* reduced by half (-46.8%), with the reduced spending being more than four times larger than that on *unemployment benefits*. This reflects the partial winding down of efforts in 2020 to prevent unemployment by compensating workers for the loss of income while employers were forced to temporarily close or reduce working hours during the pandemic.
- Increased expenditure on LMP *measures* in 2021 derived mainly from higher spending on *training* (+17%) but rises in expenditure on *direct job creation* (+14.6%), *start-up incentives* (+26.1%) and *sheltered and supported employment and rehabilitation* (+2.7%) also contributed. Together these rises offset a reduction in expenditure on *employment incentives* (-9.5%), which derived from reduced use of the specific sub-category of *employment maintenance incentives*, which were heavily used in 2020 to allow certain categories of worker to keep working during the pandemic.

- During 2021 an average of 13.5 million people were participating in LMP *measures* and 20.2 million benefiting from LMP *supports* across the EU Member States (excluding RO), respectively 7.3% and 25.5% fewer than in 2020. As with expenditure, the latter decrease derives from recipients of *unemployment benefits* (-10.0%) and *partial unemployment benefits* (-48.9%). The lower numbers participating in LMP measures, however, was accompanied by a rise in associated expenditure (+3.0%) as there was a shift from lower cost types of measure such as *employment incentives* towards higher cost types of measure such as *training*, *direct job creation* and *start-up incentives*.
- In most countries, expenditure on *unemployment benefits* reduced more than the corresponding number of participants. This may reflect, firstly, a rising share of longer-term claimants who are potentially eligible for lower average amounts of benefit than existing unemployed (unemployment benefits tend to reduce with duration of unemployment). And, secondly, withdrawal of temporary increases in the amounts payable as part of efforts to tackle the impact of the pandemic.
- Unit costs of all types of LMP *measure* were higher in 2021 than in 2020. Excluding the impact of inflation, which had started to rise in the EU in 2020 (average of 2.9% in 2021 compared to 0.7% in 2020), this could be a result of higher implementation costs for existing interventions arising from the need to adapt to the changing situation, and/or a shift towards the use of new and more expensive interventions.

A.1 List of abbreviations

EU	European Union
GDP	Gross domestic product
ILO	International Labour Organisation
JAF	Joint assessment framework
LFS	Labour Force Survey
LMP	Labour market policies
LTU	Long-term unemployment (12+ months)
PPS	Purchasing power standards
PWW	Persons wanting to work
STU	Short-term unemployment (<12 months)

A.2 Presentation of the LMP statistics

LMP statistics cover labour market interventions which are public interventions in the labour market aimed at reaching its efficient functioning and correcting disequilibria. LMP interventions are distinguished from other general employment policy interventions in that they explicitly target groups with difficulties in the labour market.

This delimits the scope of the statistics to actions taken by general government which involve expenditure, either in the form of actual disbursements or of foregone revenue (reductions in taxes, social contributions, or other charges normally payable) which act to favour the unemployed, those employed but at risk of involuntary job loss and people who are currently inactive in the labour market but would like to work.

LMP statistics collect data for labour market interventions. As a statistical unit, the concept of labour market intervention is purposefully flexible to allow countries to provide a representative picture of the system of labour market policies at national level.

In LMP each intervention is classified by type of action. They fall within three broad types of action:

- LMP services cover all services and activities of the Public Employment Services (PES) together with any other publicly funded services for jobseekers. Services include the provision of information and guidance about jobs, training and other opportunities that are available and advice on how to get a job (e.g. assistance with preparing CVs, interview techniques, etc.). Participation in these types of intervention does not usually result in a change of labour market status (e.g. unemployed remain unemployed).
- LMP measures cover interventions that aim to provide people with new skills or experience of work in order to improve their employability or that encourage employers to create new jobs and take on unemployed people and other target groups. Measures include various forms of intervention that "activate" the unemployed and other groups by obliging them to participate in some form of activity in addition to basic job search, with the aim of improving their chances of finding regular employment afterwards. They are mostly short-term and temporary actions but on-going support for jobs that would otherwise not be sustained in the regular labour market is also covered.

- **LMP supports** cover financial assistance that aims to compensate individuals for loss of wage or salary and to support them during job-search (i.e. mostly unemployment benefits) or which facilitates early retirement for labour market reasons.

These three broad types of action are sub-divided into 8 categories of intervention which can in turn be sub-divided. The full classification scheme is shown in Box 1 and the definitions of each category can be found in the LMP methodology.

Box 1 - Classification of interventions by type of action in LMP

<p>1. Labour market services</p> <p>1.1. Client services</p> <p>1.1.1. Information services</p> <p>1.1.2. Individual case management</p> <p>1.2. Other activities of the PES</p> <p>1.2.1. Administration of LMP measures</p> <p>1.2.2. Administration of LMP supports</p> <p>1.2.3. Other services / activities</p> <p>2. Training</p> <p>2.1. Institutional training</p> <p>2.2. Workplace training</p> <p>2.3. Alternate training</p> <p>2.4. Special support for apprenticeship</p> <p>3. Job rotation and job sharing (Not used anymore – included in category 4)</p> <p>4. Employment incentives</p> <p>4.1. Recruitment incentives</p> <p>4.1.1. Permanent</p> <p>4.1.2. Temporary</p> <p>4.2. Employment maintenance incentives</p> <p>4.3. Job rotation and job sharing</p> <p>4.3.1. Job rotation</p> <p>4.3.2. Job sharing</p>	<p>5. Sheltered and supported employment and rehabilitation</p> <p>5.1. Sheltered and supported employment</p> <p>5.2. Rehabilitation</p> <p>6. Direct job creation</p> <p>7. Start-up incentives</p> <p>8. Out-of-work income maintenance and support</p> <p>8.1. Unemployment benefits</p> <p>8.1.1. Unemployment insurance</p> <p>8.1.2. Unemployment assistance</p> <p>8.2. Partial unemployment benefits</p> <p>8.3. Part-time unemployment benefits</p> <p>8.4. Redundancy compensation</p> <p>8.5. Bankruptcy compensation</p> <p>9. Early retirement</p> <p>9.1. Conditional</p> <p>9.1.1. Full</p> <p>9.1.2. Partial</p> <p>9.2. Unconditional</p> <p>9.2.1. Full</p> <p>9.2.2. Partial</p>
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For each LMP intervention, the LMP statistics include annual data on the following:

- **Expenditure:** Expenditure data is reported on an accruals basis. The data includes total expenditure as well as breakdowns which distinguishes firstly the direct recipient of the transfers (e.g. Individuals, Employers, Services provider) and then, where relevant, the type of expenditure (e.g. Periodic cash payments, Lump-sum payments, Reimbursements, Reduced social contributions, Reduced taxes).
- **Participants:** Participant data is reported for three main variables – Stock, Entrants and Exits. For each of these the data includes a total as well as breakdowns by sex, age and duration of unemployment. Further, data on entrants are broken down by previous status (immediately before joining the intervention) and data on exits are broken down by destination (situation after exit from the intervention).
- Stock is the most useful among the available observations for evaluating the level of participation in LMP interventions in a given year as it reflects the number of persons participating in an intervention at a given moment. In LMP stock data refers to the annual average stock which is usually calculated as an average of the stock at the end of each month. Note, however, that a stock observation is only relevant for LMP interventions which have a duration. It is not relevant for interventions which are one-off in nature, such as is typically the case for redundancy compensation.
- **Qualitative information:** In addition to the data on expenditure and participants, the LMP database collects comprehensive qualitative information to complement, and put into context, the quantitative data and which allows users of the database to

understand the aims, targets and implementation methods of each intervention. This includes separate items for the intervention name, a detailed description, the classification by type of action, the type of expenditure, the operational and detailed target groups, the impact of participation on unemployment registration, the receipt of benefits, the planned duration, the area of application, the source of finance, the responsible institution and the time period of implementation of intervention. Much of this information is used to cross-validate the classification of the intervention and the quantitative data.

In order to be able to put the data reported for each LMP intervention into context, the LMP statistics also provide reference data on numbers of persons registered with the public employment services as jobseekers, unemployed or other registered jobseekers and numbers of persons with an individual action plan (IAP). This information effectively describes the target group for support through services and measures.

The LMP methodology requires, as a minimum, that expenditure data are complete for all interventions. Participant data are more difficult, and some flexibility is allowed on the completion of data, though every effort is made to encourage countries to complete the participant data where possible.

However, despite best efforts some countries remain unable to provide comprehensive data on participants. In order to avoid missing data in cases where participant data are almost complete, the dissemination process allows aggregates of participant data to be published so long as data are complete for at least 80% of the related expenditure and flags any cases of aggregates with less than 100% coverage as unreliable.

Further, the measurement of aggregate levels of participation in LMP interventions belonging to a specific category or group of categories is complicated by the issue of double counting. Double counting may occur legitimately when a person participates in more than one intervention at the same time. All known cases of double counting within a category of intervention are, where possible taken into account by appropriate adjustments. However, there is currently no method to handle cases of double-counting between interventions belonging to different broad classifications. For this reason, the following aggregations should not be made:

- Participants in category 8 should never be added to those in categories 2-7.
- Participants in category 1 should never be added with any other category.

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