



Working abroad

Report for EUFASA conference, Berlin May 2007

Introduction

- "Working Abroad" is a very important topic in the agenda of EUFASA*. Offering information and guidance in this area increasingly becomes a key factor in the decision as to whether families go on an accompanied posting, or whether the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) employee goes unaccompanied, or even decides to leave the MFA career, so that both partners can follow their careers.
- Overall purpose of this report is to support EUFASA, its associations and any interested MFA in improving the situation of accompanying spouses interested to be working abroad. The report consists of four separate parts.
 1. Introduction to "**Working Abroad**" (this document): Key trends, situation, and measures to improve the situation
 2. "**Job Databases**": Assessment of potential database providers
 3. "**Pensions Benefits**": Results of EUFASA-wide survey
 4. "**Unemployment Benefits**": Results of EUFASA-wide survey } see separate workshop documents
- Members of the working group were Finland, Sweden, UK, Spain, Netherlands, Italy, Ireland, France, Cyprus and Switzerland (chair). The working group started in January 2007. Key parts of the report were driven by Sweden (pensions benefits), Finland (unemployment benefits) and Switzerland (job platform and introduction). The other working group members contributed feedbacks on drafts, completed questionnaires and guided the work with their experience. Both EUFASA charts (as of March) and the results from several previous EUFASA conferences were considered. An appendix with additional information is available on request.

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Overview



Introduction and key trends

Current situation within EUFASA

Measures to improve the situation

Conclusions and recommendations

For accompanying spouses, „working abroad“ is only one option when being posted abroad



There are several good reasons for a MFA* officer's spouse for deciding not to work abroad.

- Fulfillment through supporting the MFA officer and representing home country
- Spend more time with family/children
- Take welcome break from career
- Fulfillment through voluntary work

- Skills not enabling an attractive job in host country
- Too low salary, unfavourable employment conditions and/or fewer holidays

- Keep immunity and diplomatic status, especially in insecure countries
- Avoid potential conflicts of interest with home country

However, an increasing number of spouses of MFA* officers express the wish to follow her/his own career.

- Work and fulfillment in an attractive job
- Continue own career, as important part of life

- Develop skills and maintain “employability”
- Get second income, to increase financial flexibility and security, and also to finance own pension

- Remain independent

This report focuses on the situation, trends and potential measures to improve the situation of those spouses willing to be working abroad.

Awareness on „working abroad“ is rising



Selected quotes from renowned media and institutions



“Most trailing spouses now have careers but most governments don’t realise this yet”

(Financial Times, Always beginning again, November 06)

Economist

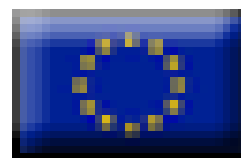
„A wife's private-sector earnings, once pocket-money, are now a vital part of the family budget.“

(The Economist: Trials of trailing spouses, March 07)



“Several international surveys show that dual career issues are the most important reason why staff turn down an international assignment.”

(Permits Foundation)



„The difficulty of finding employment for spouses (...) has become generally recognised as one of the major obstacles for occupational and geographic mobility“ (EU Commission working paper 2005)



“European MFAs are only getting a fraction of the applicants to a posting that they might otherwise have to choose from” (EUFASA survey 2006)

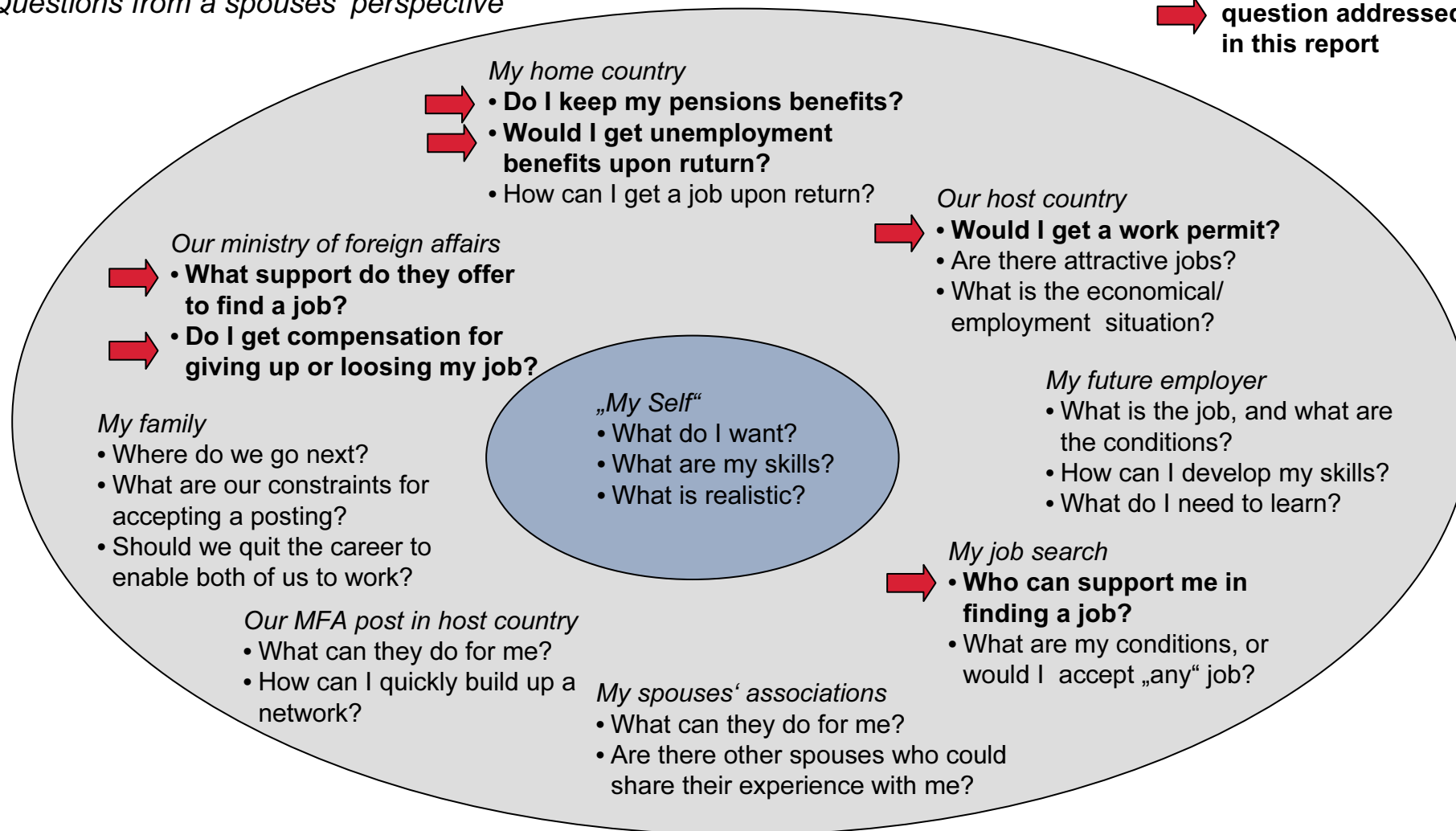


„The dual-career issue is on the top of the list when refusing an assignment abroad beyond financial aspects“ (Coopers & Lybrand, 1997, Netexpat.com)

The topic is complex and raises many questions

Questions from a spouses' perspective

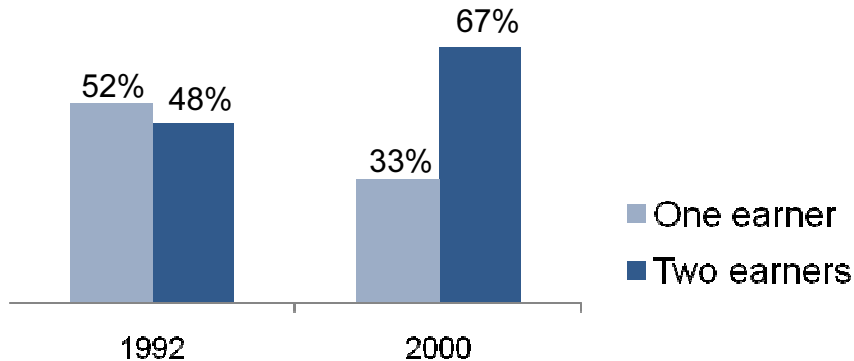
→ question addressed in this report



Only a few of the many questions are being addressed in this report

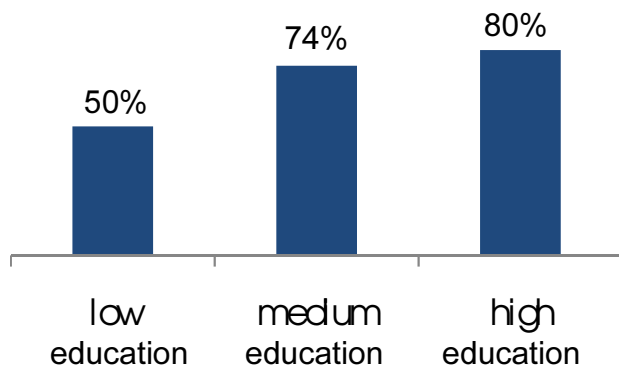
Both partners going to work is becoming the norm within EU societies

Share of 1-earner and 2-earner households (Example Netherlands)



- Strong increases of dual income households since early nineties, in all EU countries
- The trend towards two-earners households is driven by the willingness to work of both partners, but also by “financial” factors, e.g. changes in taxation, increasing importance of individual pensions savings, increasing public child care, etc.

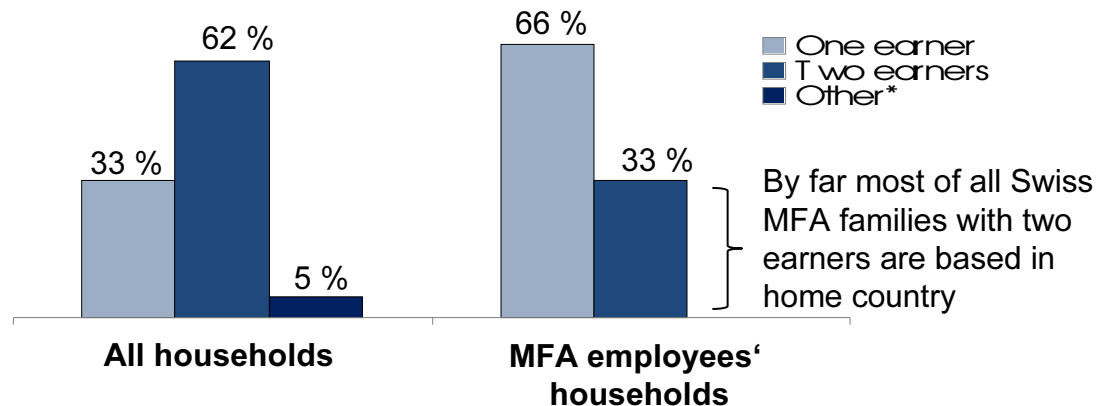
Education of female partner in 2-earner households (2000, Example Netherlands)



- The higher the education of the female partner, the more two-earners households. This trend applies for all EU countries
- This trend has to be seen in the context that more than 70% of MFA spouses hold a university degree (according to the EUFASA survey on „Changing Role of the Spouse“ from 2006)
- Increasing number of female spouses

The share of „MFA families“ with dual income is much lower, especially when posted abroad

Shares of „average“ and „MFA“ households with one and two incomes, (Example Switzerland)



- As in other countries, in most Swiss households both partners do work
- However, only in one third of the Swiss MFA families both partners do work. Most of those are based in the home country.
- Reasons for rather working in home country than abroad are both the skills/ability as well as the financial need to work.
- In MFA careers with permanent postings outside the home country (e.g. consularic services), there is an even lower share of two-earner households.
- Differences between average and European families have increased in the last decades

Today, MFA families have a considerable backlog in adapting to developments in society

* Other includes e.g. households with female partner working and male partner not working
 Source: Swiss Bundesamt für Statistik 2000, rough estimates for Swiss MFA Working abroad

Much more difficult to work outside EU and North America



European Union, other Western European countries, North America	Asia, South American and other developed countries	Developing countries („hardship postings“)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally good opportunities to find an attractive job and to work * 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities to work very dependent on spouse's skills and host country 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very limited opportunities to work
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working permits for spouses are being granted („Personenfreizügigkeit“) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficult or impossible to get work permit, e.g. if no bilateral agreements exist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very hard to get permits, also as postings tend to be short
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed economies, high salaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed economies, low local salaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emerging economies, very low local salaries
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Similar cultures and languages make it easier to work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficult to work for local organisations and companies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mostly very different culture and languages make it more difficult to work
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relatively cheap to commute within EU 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Few expensive possibilities to commute 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No possibilities to commute

MFA families need COMPENSATION for giving up spouses' career

MFA families need SUPPORT for finding a new job for the spouse

* However, non-EU spouses have problems getting permits in certain EU countries
 NB: for all countries, also the current economic situation (e.g. GDP growth, unemployment rate) plays a key role for finding a job
 Working abroad

Multinational companies offer significant services and support packages to expatriates' spouses



Nokia (K. Ahlstedt, 20.3.)

UBS (C. Gumy, 14.3)

Credit Suisse (S. Gross, 19.3.)

	Nokia (K. Ahlstedt, 20.3.)	UBS (C. Gumy, 14.3)	Credit Suisse (S. Gross, 19.3.)
Importance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "It is very important to also give support to spouses. Spouses are a very important factor when talking about overall satisfaction of our assignees" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • „UBS is supporting the relocation not only of our employees but also of the family members. We believe that the fact that the family receives assistance to face the challenges of an assignment is one of the key success factors of an assignment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • „Is an important topic. A policy has been in place for more than 5 years now.
Benefits to spouses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services via external subcontractor, helping the whole family to find suitable environment to live in • We also try to help them to find their interest areas, like hobby possibilities here in Finland. • We think that it is important that the whole family settles down better to Finland, so that our assignees and their families could get best possible experience during their stay. • E.g. 24 h help line service to help all kind of issues, help to find clubs, hobbies, support for language training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • House hunting trip to the host location prior to the relocation • Cultural training if needed • Assistance with housing and schooling search • Language course budget to learn the language spoken in the host location • Buddy system (new) • Spouse career support for job search (new) • assistance through an external provider for settling in, creating a network (new, Zurich only) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fixed amount of CHF 7'500.- to cover all expenses in relation with working abroad. Spouses has to confirm with a document that she/he has been working so far • Contacts to Firms who offer specialised services, e.g. Netexpat (services to be covered by fixed amount) • Language courses • House hunting trip (together with expat) • Cultural awareness training (where necessary) • Invitations to pre-assignment meetings
Way forward	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We could invest more to it, if we would be shown enough good concept, eg. social network building etc. • It is always interesting to hear more experiences and way how to improve this process." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will continue our efforts to ensure that the relocation and settling in process is as smooth as possible. • UBS is interested to share more information and hear from other experiences on this topic." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recently, the policy was reviewed and it was decided not to make big changes to it • We would be interested and could provide more information if there is interest."

Multinational companies consider spouses support as one key success factor of assignments, and have decided to offer significant benefits to the expatriates' spouses.

Summary of key trends: higher importance for the spouse to be working abroad



Society

- Further declining share of „traditional“ households
- Second income essential for lifestyle compatible with contemporaries (e.g. peers from university)
- More diverse career paths
- Increasing number of divorces
- Job and own career becomes an important part of identity and life also for the partner

Regulation

- Double income households standard for taxation and pensions systems
- Much more difficult to work outside EU and N.America
- Still highly different regulations between countries. Only slow harmonisation even within EU
- Set up of Bi-lateral agreements for working permits remains a slow process

Economy and Technology

- Internationalisation/Globalisation leading to overall improving opportunities for working abroad
- Multinational companies offer significant and increasing benefits to expatriates' spouses
- Internet-based, cheap communication means enable telecommuting jobs, cheaper ways of travel especially within Europe
- Necessity to continuously learn and develop professional skills

Conclusions

- **Increasing importance for the spouse to work, both at home and abroad**
- **However significant hurdles for working abroad do persist, especially outside Europe**
- **Several MFA show increasing concern for the topic**

Ministries of foreign affairs

- Number of rejected postings and leaves due to spouses careers increasing
- Declining number of European locations (where finding jobs is relatively easy)
- Increasing share of female MFA officers with working spouses
- Growth in unaccompanied postings, and short-term postings
- Some MFA recognise importance of topic, and work towards solutions

Families of MFA officers

- Growing share of (younger?) couples following traditional careers
- Families increasingly stay behind in home country, especially if post is within Europe
- Increasing awareness of young officers about the importance of a professional career of wives/husbands.
- Increasing number of separations (up to 70%), more foreign born spouses

Overview



Introduction and key trends

Current situation within EUFASA

Measures to improve the situation

Conclusions and recommendations

For EUFASA, working abroad already is a significant topic of interest



„Working abroad“ related results from EUFASA survey 2006 “The Changing Role of the Spouse“

- **The main reason for going out on a posting is to be with their partner, the MFA officer.** Although this may be interesting, challenging and a positive personal experience, it isn't particularly beneficial.
- **The possibility of work for the spouse is an important requirement for going out on a posting** (only topped by safety and security, and followed good schooling for the children). Considerations about employment opportunities abroad are essential for the decision to go out on a posting.
- **71% of spouses said that they had a job before leaving for their last or current posting.** This is not a particularly good employment statistic. Only 23% overall said it was possible to take a formal leave of absence, which would allow them to come back to their job upon return, i.e. less than a quarter can go back to their old job.
- **70% said that it had not been possible to have a steady career path.** There is also a big difference between a steady employment at home and abroad, and being able to follow a career path.
- **European MFAs are only getting a fraction of the applicants to a posting that they might otherwise have to choose from** Saying no to a posting seems to be a decision taken at home 'behind the scenes' before the MFA officer seriously applies for a post. Over a third of respondents have said no to a posting at some point, in which case, 80% of their officers have not gone out alone.
- **There is a clear concern of having a lower standard of living upon retirement in comparison to the peer group at home.**
- **Most important to the spouse was working at a posting. Nevertheless, we thought it was the least important to both the host government and to our own government.** I.e we do think it is important, but it is not given any consideration by anyone else.
- **The underlying wish of the spouses is a better Family Policy on the part of the MFA**

The diversity among EUFASA's individual members is very high and increasing, ...



I come from...	AT	BE	CH	DE	ES	FR	GR	HU					
I live in....	EU, North America			Developed market outside EU				Emerging/developing market outside EU								
I work for....	Local mission of home country etc.*		International organisations/schools		Host country firm/organisation		Home country firm		Self employed							
I got my job	Via embassy		Personal contacts			Found job myself			Advertisement/employment agency							
I earn	„I earn less than at home“			„I earn about the same “				„I earn more than at home“								
I have	Academical career+degree		University degree			Other degree			Working experience							
I am	Female							Male								
I wouldbe flexible and ready to take almost any job				... have expectations on job, compensation etc.				... would not be allowed or able to work in other job							

There are few commonalities among all spouses – and no „average“ job situation

* Internal work, or specific working contract for MFA spouses to contribute to specific tasks (e.g. public relations)

Sources: Eufasa surveys 2001 and 2006

... but there might be some generic success factors for finding a job



Prepare yourself early.

Learn about work permits and other employment issues at your destination. It will help if you make as many arrangements as you can while you're still on home soil. Use the Internet to locate other expatriates in your new city who can answer your questions. Research schools, climate, housing and medical care.

Do the homework for finding any job.

Send your resumé to potentially interested companies and organisations. Consider telecommuting options. Think of ways to stay current in your field. Determine if working at any job is more important to you than not working at all. Consider meaningful volunteer work as a temporary, career-maintaining alternative. Keep as many options open for your return as you can, such as taking leave without pay rather than resigning.

Start networking.

Talk to everyone you can before and after you arrive: other expats, your hotel manager, your spouse's secretary, a newsstand clerk. If you don't speak the language, find people who want to practice yours. You're on a treasure hunt, and information about living in your new city is the gold. Nearly every resident of that city has information you can use, even if it's just how to operate a parking meter or finding the best place to buy food.

Ask for help.

Sometimes it's a good idea to ask your spouse's employer for "help on the ground." In some cases, this can be a local employee, or someone who acts as a facilitator, such as a bilingual native who helps you with everything from finding housing to getting your shipments through customs. If that's not an option, perhaps another expatriate can help you get oriented.

Talk it out.

The top reason for failed international assignments are "spouse/family adjustment difficulties." Many couples realize too late that they assessed the assignment through rose-colored glasses. Sit down with your partner before accepting the assignment and discuss what you know about the culture, living conditions, educational system and cost of living. Talk about how this will affect ambitions, feelings, including your fears and expectations.

Stay active and healthy.

Exercise regularly in daylight, a remedy for jet lag and mild depression. Seek out contact with people, whether they're neighbors or shopkeepers. Just one pleasant conversation each day can make a huge difference.

Only a few spouses believe that the benefits of working abroad outweigh the significant hurdles and obstacles



Career related benefits and opportunities from working abroad *

- Live and work in a multicultural, international environment
- Gain knowledge and experience of foreign cultures
- Improve professional language skills
- Develop social adaptability and tolerance
- Open new career possibilities through voluntary work abroad
- Do consulting or charity work, without money pressure
- Acquire a network of professional contacts that may lead to future opportunities

Several hurdles and obstacles while posted abroad, and when returning home

- Not possible to get work permit, or not allowed by host country to work, and/or inflexible employment market
- Insufficient language skills, or cultural barriers
- Lack of required qualifications, diplomas, or licences
- Lack of contacts and networks
- Uncertainty about length of posting makes employers hesitate
- Not possible to maintain diplomatic visa if working
- Lack of continuity of working experience. Too many career disruptions in CV
- It may be considered improper to compete with locals for employment, if unemployment rate is high, especially in third world countries.
- Difficult to re-enter the home labour market after a long absence, especially after a certain age

**EUFASA survey 2006: 70% said that it had not been possible to have a steady career path.
EUFASA survey 2001: Only 22% of spouses consider time abroad a merit that helped advancing career**

In several countries except the UK, there are also some financial incentives NOT to work abroad, as some of the allowances are lost when working**

* (Italy: all allowance for spouse is lost when working abroad, Germany, Finland, Hungary, Sweden, Switzerland: loss of some allowances if earning more than a threshold, NL: Only a minor loss of allowances when working, UK: No allowances are lost when working)

There are lots of reasons and concerns why MFA show reluctance to increase support to spouses, ...



„Our ministry would like to support spouses more, but....

- „We expect that spouse has to invest time and support the MFA, e.g. maintenance of residences“
- „ MFA/Mission Heads are not always very keen on having spouses of MFA officers working “
- „Not possible to also consider spouses‘ needs, in addition to already complex professional criteria to put the right people to right places“
- „If spouses needs are considered for postings, this is a disadvantage for „single“ diplomats“
- „Legal issues, as there are no contractual relation with spouses, especially if unmarried“
- „Our spouses do already get a lot of benefits, services and support from MFA“
- „Support for spouses is too expensive for MFA. We have no money“
- „Some good services for supporting working are being offered, but only rarely being used by spouses“
- „Role of diplomats and diplomatic careers are changing – we cannot do anything more for spouses“
- „No MFA does it yet“
- „MFA officers have to accept the situation, as there are enough applications“
- „Those people in our ministry finally deciding on these issues do not yet recognise the urgency.“

Way forward: prepare answers to address the concerns – some countries already have dealt with them.

... but - we think - several „better“ reasons and benefits for MFA to increase support for spouses



Supporting spouses can be beneficial for MFA, as this leads to ...

- ... **less rejected postings (or more applications also for „hardship postings“)**, due to better working possibilities for spouses at postings
-**improved recruiting and higher retention of MFA officers**, due to higher attractiveness of career
- ... **less leaves of MFA officers**, as MFA career gets more attractive also for working couples
- ... **lower costs for MFA through fewer failed assignments**, e.g. due to improved family satisfaction in those cases where spouse wants to follow career.
- ... **better performance of MFA officers**, due to higher satisfaction in a key area of concern for MFA couples
- ... **better competitiveness** versus private companies and organisations
- ... **higher attractiveness for female candidates**, due to addressing the dual career issue
- ... **Image benefits for MFA**, through higher recognition of situation of spouses

The working group tried to get facts from various MFA to support arguments (e.g. on leaves due to spouses' careers). This however turned out to be impossible. One conclusion is that MFA will have to themselves “discover” these benefits, and that spouses associations could help them to do so.

Overview



Introduction and key trends

Current situation within EUFASA

Measures to improve the situation

Conclusions and recommendations

EUFASA member countries with significantly different starting points regarding support



preliminary

Measures/Benefits supporting spouses to work abroad
(criteria based on EUFASA Charts)

Country	Allowances	Courses	Family officer	Welfare Office	Work on Mission	Lias on Officers	Bilateral agreements	Job database	"S core"
FRANCE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	voluntary	many	yes	8
NETHERLANDS	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	volunteers,	many	yes	8
GERMANY	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	90	few	yes	7
UNITED KINGDOM	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	90 LO	many	no	6
SWEDEN	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	officer at	some	no	5
AUSTRIA	yes	yes	n.a.	yes	yes, difficult	17	no	yes	4
NORWAY	yes	yes	n.a.	no	yes	yes	few	yes	4
COMMISSION	yes	yes	n.a.	yes	yes, difficult	number	no	yes	3
FINLAND	yes	yes	yes	no	yes	officer at	few	no	3
HUNGARY	yes	yes	yes	no	yes	n.a.	many	no	3
IRELAND	yes	yes	n.a.	yes	yes	None (yet)	few	no	3
POLAND	missing	yes	yes	n.a.	yes	n.a.	few	n.a.	3
BELGIUM	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	no	no	2
SWITZERLAND	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	yes	no	no	2
CZECH	yes	yes	n.a.	no	yes	some	n.a.	no	1
LUXEMBOURG	yes	yes	n.a.	no	n.a.	no	n.a.	n.a.	0
SPAIN	yes	no	yes	n.a.	no	no	many	n.a.	0
PORTUGAL	yes	no	n.a.	no	n.a.	no	some	yes	-1
GREECE	yes	yes	n.a.	no	no	no	some	no	-2
ITALY	no	no	n.a.	yes	yes, difficult	voluntary	few	no	-2
ICELAND	yes	yes	n.a.	no	no	no	no	no	-3
CYPRUS	no	no	n.a.	no	encouraged	no	yes	no	-4
"S core"	20	14	11	10	8	2	-1	-3	

- Already good starting points in several countries (France, Netherlands, Germany, UK)
- The MFA of these „leading“ countries are not leaning back, but working on further improving the situation (e.g. Germany)
- South-European and smaller countries still with only few measures to support working abroad
- The best way to improve the situation will be specific to each country
- Those countries facing similar situations and challenges could act jointly and share experience

Important remarks:

All info based on EUFASA charts“(March 07), Preliminary - only reviewed by countries from working group

Code for bilateral agreements: few: 1-5, . some: 5-10, many: >10 agreements

Calculation of “Score”: each green field adds +1, each red field subtracts -1

Sources: Evaluation by France (November 2006), Eufasa charts as of 11.3.2007
Working abroad

Various measures can improve the situation, both for working abroad and when returning home



	Working abroad	Both abroad and at home	When returning home
"Support" finding a job	1 Negotiate more bilateral agreements for work permits	11 Plan transfers transparently and reliably advance to give spouses time to prepare, make contacts, and adapt	18 Facilitate work opportunities at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs
	2 Try to post MFA officer where spouse has a good chance of finding a job, or one has found one	12 Subscription to professional databases for jobs and CV's	19 Recommend employers to give leave of absence to spouses of foreign service officers, so that spouses have a job to return to.
	3 Actively support hiring spouses, if they qualify, as local employees in embassy or for specific projects	13 Actively support the applications of spouses to posts in international organisations.	20 Have the MFA issue a statement of acknowledgement for the work performed by the spouse abroad
	4 Facilitate and subsidise language training and up-grading qualifications	14 Provide office facilities to job hunting spouses including facilities for internet, fax, copiers etc.	21 Language courses for foreign-born spouses
	5 Trip to the host location prior to the relocation, for networking etc	15 Put Family /Liason officers in place to support spouses	22 Re-integration tuition, e.g. 6 month internship paid by MFA to reintegrate into job market
	6 Maintain updated information on jobs and contacts with firms at posting	16 Use outplacement companies/ employment agencies to find suitable job as a spouse	
	7 Help with official translation of diplomas and explaining the degrees of different countries.	17 Give spouses an official status	
	8 Offer spouse the possibility to participate in discussions on MFA officers' career and postings		
	9 Provide higher allowances, for supporting MFA and to compensate for break in career		
	10 Provide higher pensions benefits/ allowances during posting		23 Improve entitlement to unemployment benefits, and/or financial support*
"Compensate" (appreciate) for giving up career			=measure being detailed later on

Source: Eufasa 2001, working group Working abroad

*for time of initial unemployment not covered by unemployment scheme

Several measures are very promising in terms of impact, cost and realism



Measures with highest impact

- Actively support hiring spouses, if they qualify, as local employees in embassy or for specific projects (**measure 3**)
- Maintain updated information on jobs and contacts with firms at posting (6)
- Actively support the applications of spouses to posts in international organisations (**13**)
- Give spouses an official status (17)
- Provide higher allowances, for supporting MFA and to compensate for break in career (9)

Measures with lowest cost

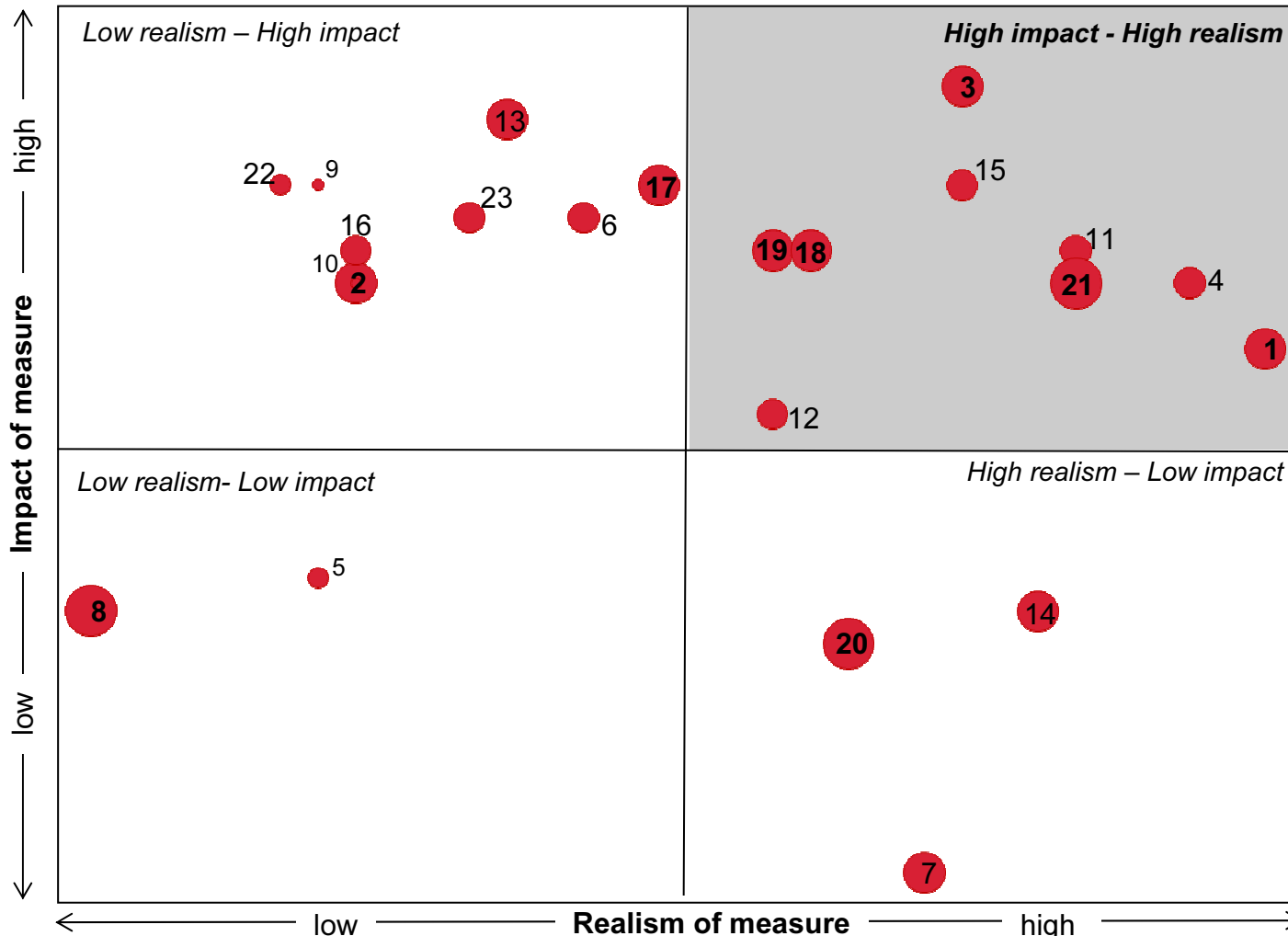
- Have the MFA issue a statement of acknowledgement for the work performed by the spouse abroad (20)
- Offer spouse the possibility to participate in discussions on MFA officers' career and postings (8)
- Plan transfers transparently and reliably advance to give spouses time to prepare, make contacts, and adapt (**11**)
- Actively support the applications of spouses to posts in international organisations (**13**)
- Provide office facilities to job hunting spouses including facilities for internet, fax, copiers etc. (14)

Measures considered most realistic

- Facilitate and subsidise language training and up-grading qualifications (4)
- Negotiate more bilateral agreements for work permits (1)
- Plan transfers transparently and reliably advance to give spouses time to prepare, make contacts, and adapt (**11**)
- Actively support hiring spouses, if they qualify, as local employees in embassy or for specific projects (**3**)
- Help with official translation of diplomas and explaining the degrees of different countries (7)

Some measures have high impact and are very realistic and have reasonable cost

Impact, costs and realism of various measures to improve situation of spouses re/working abroad



- High impact - High realism**
- 21 Language-course foreign spouses
 - 18 Facilitate work at MFA
 - 19 Leave of absence
 - 1 Bilateral agreements
 - 3 Spouses as local employees
 - 4 Language training, qualifications
 - 11 Plan transfers well in advance
 - 15 Family /Liasion officers
 - 12 Professional job databases

- Low realism - High impact**
- 17 Give official status
 - 2 Post where spouse has a job
 - 13 Applications intl. Organisations
 - 23 Improve unemployment benefits
 - 16 Employment agencies
 - 22 Re-integration tuition
 - 6 Updated information on jobs
 - 9 Higher allowances abroad
 - 10 Higher pensions benefits

- High realism - Low impact**
- 20 Acknowledgement for work
 - 7 Help with diplomas and degrees
 - 14 Provide office facilities

- Low realism- Low impact**
- 5 Trip to host location
 - 8 Participate in career discussions

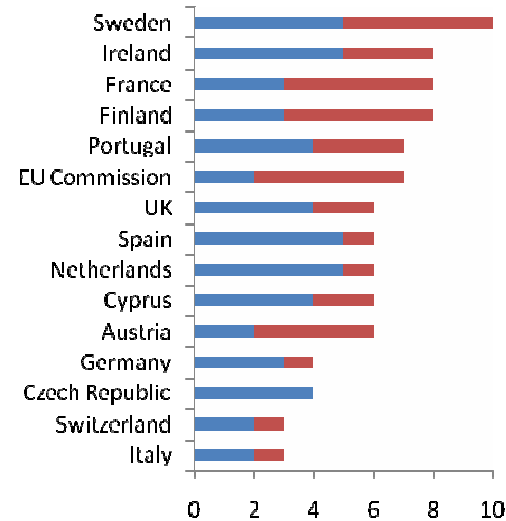
Source: Survey assessing realism, impact and costs of measures re/working abroad, 15 participating countries (March 07) Working abroad

Country comparisons on most promising measures show different situations and perceptions

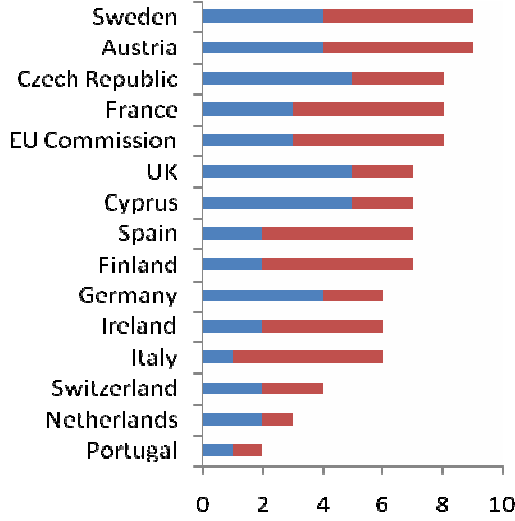


■ Realism (max 5 points)
■ Net impact (max 5 points)

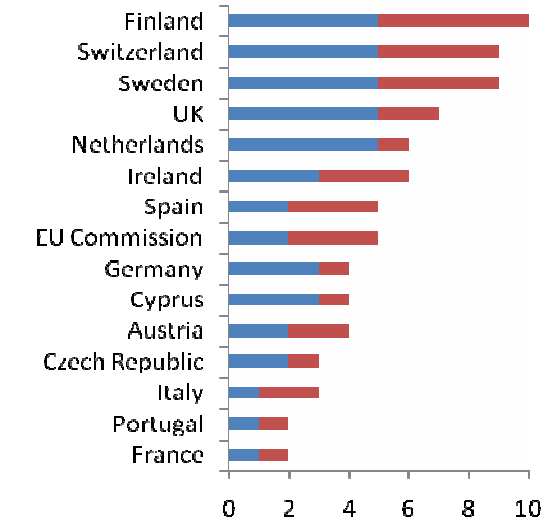
1 Bilateral agreements



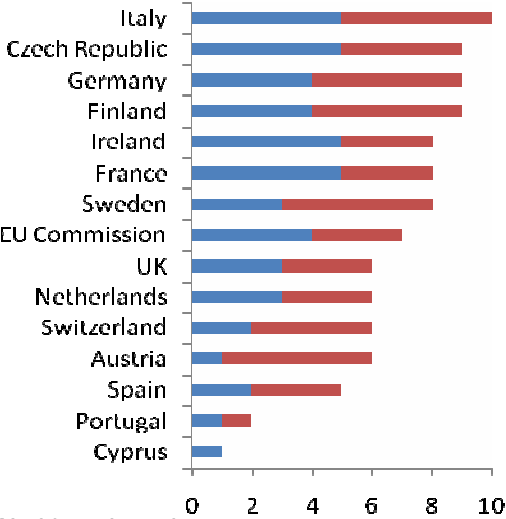
3 Spouses as local employees



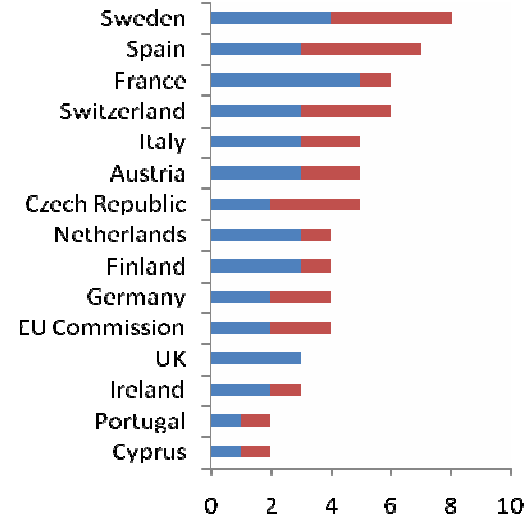
15 Family /Liason officers



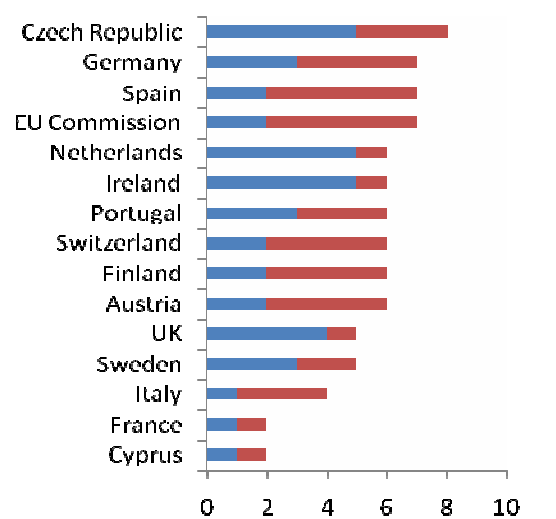
11 Plan transfers well in advance



12 Professional job databases



18 Facilitate work at MFA



Working abroad

Subscription to professional databases for jobs and CV's (Measure 12)



Key results from working group on „Job Databases“

- Job platforms can support spouses finding a job. However, most jobs are still found via other means
- There are three basic types of job platforms: Databases, Networking sites, Professional services
- Some countries have established some kind of database, but two were closed in the meanwhile
- From the various experiences within EUFASA, we conclude that „own“ databases probably would not be successful
- A number of potentially interesting international job platforms exist.
- Any EUFASA-wide cooperation would have to build on some internal prerequisites
- „Going Global“ has offered EUFASA a one-year trial period

Way forward (for discussion in the workshop)

- Discuss situation and needs of interested countries
- Select and agree on one provider to serve several countries for a trial period
- Agree on next steps

For details, see document on „Job Databases“ (input for workshop)

Provide higher pensions benefits/ allowances during posting (Measure 10)



Key results from working group on „Pensions Schemes“*

- 18 countries participated in the questionnaire on pensions schemes and basic state pensions. Evaluation was complex due to differences in pensions systems
- Aim of questionnaire was to identify changes in the pension systems concerning spouses, to investigate solutions, and to look for a model that could be applicable to our respective countries.
- Key results of the survey cover
 - Different kinds of “pensions” for spouses
 - Changes since Madrid 2002
 - Possible solutions for Basic State Pension
 - Possible strategies concerning BSP for spouses

Way forward (for discussion in the workshop)

- Discuss a common position (see document for a draft)
- Agree on next steps

For details, see document on „Pensions schemes and basic state pension“ (input for workshop)

Improve entitlement to unemployment benefits, and/or financial support (Measure 23)



Key results from working group on „Unemployment benefits“*

- The unemployment law in most countries is very complex and complicated and there are many exceptions to the rule.
- In any case, postings outside the EU/EEA area do not give any right to benefits being transferable, unless there exists a special bilateral agreement
- Full time study, maternity/parental leave or caring for a handicapped /elderly person do not lead to losing unemployment benefits in several countries.
- Unemployment benefits upon returning home depend on many factors and only two countries allow the spouses to be absent for unlimited period of time.
- In all these cases, employment in the home country prior to going abroad is a must. This can impose a special problem for foreign born spouses.
- As it is increasingly more difficult to find employment after being absent from the job market for several years, this is a real problem for accompanying spouses.
- It is not only a question of “wanting” to work but a question of “having” to work, since in today’s societies, both partners need to work.
- If one is not eligible for unemployment benefits, this is also reflected in lost pension, due to missing “working years” countable for pension.

Way forward (for discussion in the workshop)

- The working group strongly recommends that MFS support and work towards a system, where unemployment benefits can be frozen for an indefinite period of time and in which spouses can be eligible for unemployment benefits when returning home from a posting if not securing employment.
- Agree on next steps

For details, see document on „Unemployment Benefits“ (input for workshop)

Negotiate more bilateral agreements for work permits (Measure 1)



Key results from working group on „Bilateral Agreements“

- Only a few EUFASA countries have set up a broader coverage of bilateral agreements granting work permits.
- For those countries with only a few bilateral agreements yet, there seems to be no balance between in- and output for putting them in place.
- Reciprocity seems to be a simpler and more effective system than bilateral agreements. However, this principle is not favoured by all MFA.
- “The Permit Foundation” is dedicated to promote work permits for expatriate spouses worldwide. The foundation had no direct contact with EUFASA yet. But both the UK and NL MFA and spouse associations are sponsors of Permits Foundation.
- UK’s spouses association participated at round table meeting in London in March 2007 (Geraldine McKendrick)

Recommended way forward

- Establish cooperation with “The Permit Foundation” to get transparency on „destination countries“ outside EU who already support work permits. This could be helpful for countries with less agreements willing to improve the situation.
- Name contact person for establishing EUFASAs relation to Permits Foundation

For details, see appendix

Overview



Introduction and key trends

Current situation within EUFASA

Measures to improve the situation

Conclusions and recommendations

Working abroad: Conclusions



for discussion

1. In today's European societies, both partners going to work is the norm. However, MFA* families on average have a significant backlog in adapting to developments in society.
2. Awareness on urgency of the topic is growing. All stakeholders – spouses, MFA officers, spouses associations, MFA, multinational employers and media – are putting „working abroad“ to their agendas.
3. MFA need to increase their efforts towards spouses, in order to reduce rejected postings and unwanted leaves. Also, to increase attractiveness of MFA career, especially for female and younger employees.
4. The benefits of supporting spouses do outweigh their costs. Multinational companies do „invest“ in significant benefits for spouses to make international assignments more successful and more profitable.
5. Measures should focus on both supporting the spouse in finding a job, and – where this is not possible – compensate for giving up spouses' career and for being reliant on only one income.
6. Some measures are relatively cheap, have high impact and are considered realistic to implement. The concrete, most promising measures differ from one country to the other.
7. Spouses associations and EUFASA can support the ministries by creating awareness and understanding. They should also support their members by offering work-related services and fora to share experiences.

* MFA = ministry of foreign affairs
Working abroad

Working abroad: Recommendations



for discussion

What should be done

How this could be achieved

① **Join forces within EUFASA to improve the situation regarding specific topics**

In the EUFASA workshops, deepen the topics re/job databases, pensions benefits and unemployment benefits, and agree on concrete next steps

② **Associations should help MFA to understand situation, and its urgency**

(Re-)Start discussions with your MFA. Re-use the various parts of this report for discussions or workshops with MFA

③ **Associations should define a country-specific, realistic set of actions**

Assess the measures in terms of impact, cost and realism. Agree on 2-3 most promising measures to focus on, and how to achieve them. Try to achieve some „quick win’s“.

④ **Share experiences within associations, and between individual members**

Pursue workshops for working spouses (e.g. already done in France). Facilitate exchange between multinationals and MFA. Carefully manage any conflicts vs. non-working spouses

⑤ **Share experiences between associations**

Institutionalise EUFASA-wide experience sharing (*for discussion in specific workshop at the conference*)