

Digital pension
communication in Europe

State of play 2019



ETS

FYPO



ETS

European Tracking Service (on pensions)

FYP

Find Your Pension – A cross-border platform for pension rights of European citizens. It's safe, fast... and as easy as 1-2-3



About the ETS Project

The ETS project has taken up the challenge to carry out a European Commission action to develop the pilot stage of a European Tracking Service on Pensions (ETS), under the already existing brand www.FindyourPension.eu, a website which has been supporting mobile researchers in dealing with their various different pension claims since 2011.

The European Tracking Service 'Findyourpension' will offer 2 different products:

A European pension portal, where mobile workers in Europe can find their current, past or future pension providers and institutions as well as tailored information. Users will find recommendations in the form of a personalized action lists on what to do regarding pensions and a list of contacts of the pension providers they may have been affiliated with. The ETS–FYP-portal will contain targeted information at least of 5 European countries.

A service for pension data compilation overview. This section will provide structured, trusted and up-to-date pension information that could be used by NTS's and pension providers to provide better service to their members. In a Proof of Concept, the national tracking service (NTS) will be the Belgian NTS, where also non-Belgian citizens will have the chance to have an overview of their Belgian entitlements.

Further deliverables of the project are the set-up of an independent ETS organisation and the description of the fully functional ETS as well as a roll-out plan. Following a step-by-step approach, the goal is to roll out the service and connect as many national tracking services and pension providers to the platform as possible after the project phase.



Executive Summary

In the development of a European Tracking Service on Pensions (ETS), the ETS project wished to get more insight in the development of national tracking services (NTS) across Europe. With an NTS, we mean a digital service that can be accessed by citizens and that gives personalized information (which can—but does not have to—come from different sources) about the citizens' pension entitlements.

This insight in for example the presence and state of play of NTSs is important to the project, as the implementation of an ETS highly depends on the willingness of pension providers and national tracking services to join and connect.

Also, the survey is a way for the project team to get in touch with pension communication experts across Europe.

The results of the survey are:

- ➔ **11** countries had a tracking system in 2014
- ➔ **13** countries had a tracking system in 2019
- ➔ **18** countries could have a tracking system in the near future

The respondents to the survey were asked about the challenges and developments they see for NTSs. Challenges that were mentioned are how to reach citizens and create awareness about pensions, how to develop such a service while keeping the costs under control, and how to keep the data understandable and simple without missing important information.

In terms of developments, the respondents saw developments in staying aligned with pension legislation (e.g. pensionable age), including more products in the service (survivors pension, private pension savings, etc.), including scenario's (early or late retirement) and projections. Both the challenges and development are relevant for the ETS project as well.

Why this survey?

In order to develop a realistic roll-out plan for the service, the ETS project wished to gain more insight in the development of national tracking services across Europe. Therefore, a survey was conducted to map a state of play on digital pension communication in Europe. This report provides insight in the survey results and puts these in their policy context. These results are based on the input from stakeholders across all EU Member States identified by the ETS project and are not scientifically validated.

Having up-to-date knowledge about the situation of digital pension communication throughout Europe is critical for the success of the ETS project. In 2016, the European TTYPE (Track and Trace your pensions in Europe) project already concluded that the set-up of an ETS is feasible and should be done step-by-step. In order to have a successful, full-functioning ETS in the future, the implementation highly depends on the willingness of pension providers and national tracking services to join and connect.

Therefore, the ETS project needs insight in the state of play in Europe: does an NTS exist in a specific country? If so, what are the functionalities? What are the challenges and next steps? If not, what is blocking the development of such a national service? Already in 2014, a TTYPE-study¹ was held on this topic. That survey provided a clear starting point for this new survey in 2019. The survey results are important input to one of the deliverables of the ETS project, which is an exploration of how a functional ETS can be established. The results of this new survey give an additional insight in what topics to explore further and which countries to be contacted when considering an approach to establish a functional ETS.

Pension systems in Europe are as diverse as the European Member States themselves, representing different pillars, providers and communication practices. Therefore, finding a standard way of communicating and informing about pensions is not an easy task. When it comes to communicating about pensions, it is certainly true that 'one size does not fit all'.

Therefore, a second survey is the second step to systematically analyse the pension communication processes and foster best practice exchange between pension institutions and providers of all pillars in Europe. The survey entails the organisation of the pension communication process, the objectives of informing citizens, the content and presentation of information and ways or digital tools of communicating about pensions.

NTS, what's in a name?

At first, it is important to clarify what we mean with a National Tracking Service (NTS) on pensions. For us, an NTS is a digital service which can be accessed by citizens and gives personal information about pension entitlements in a specific country. It is more than a website where someone can read general information about their **potential** pension situation. The information given has to be **personal** pension data.

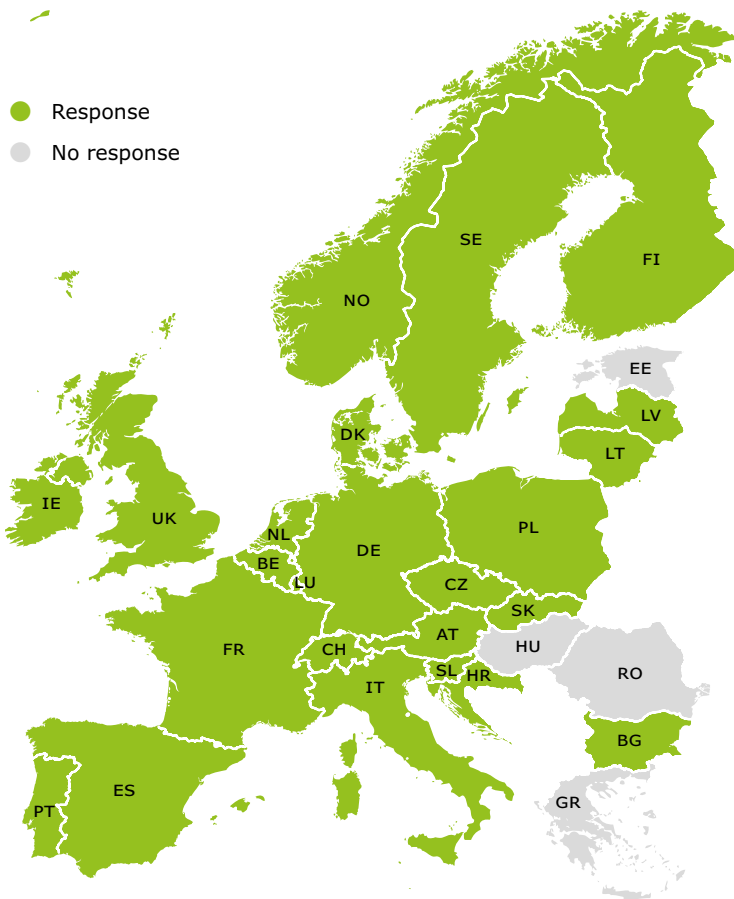
This kind of information never goes without tailored information. The user needs the background information in order to understand the personal pension information.

1. **TTYPE relates to the Track and Trace Your Pensions project, one of the earlier initiatives working towards and leading to the ETS project. The results of TTYPE survey are to be found in the addendum of the TTYPE final report.**

On the other hand, it is not necessary that the service gathers 'all' pension information in a country. Vital for an NTS is that it gives a comprehensive overview of pension entitlements in a specific country across multiple pension providers and schemes, not just one. It is important to state that the definition that we have used here somewhat differs from the TTYPE-definition. TTYPE also looked at the presence of 'finder services' for pensions, either online or offline. It is true that the presence of a digital service on the national level is not a prerequisite to connect to the central ETS. But having an online NTS on pensions means that there is an existing mechanism to gather pension information on a national level in a structured way. Also, there is experience in communicating pension information to the citizen in a digital way. This could facilitate a quick 'onboarding' to the ETS (although other blocking factors could exist).

‘Roll-out depends on the willingness of pension providers and national tracking services to join and connect’





← Figure 1
Survey participation
(Iceland is not shown on the map)

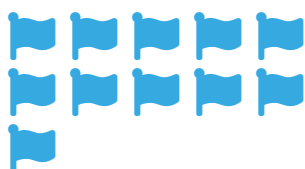
Methodology: who to be reached?

With the survey, the project aimed to reach pension communication experts of all 27 European Union countries, and Norway, Switzerland, United Kingdom and Iceland.

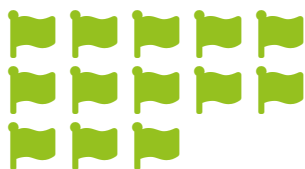
The goal of the survey was not to contact as much respondents as possible per country, but to include the appropriate representatives of the pension communication landscape.

Our approach was twofold: First, the survey was sent to known pension experts, pension communication experts and specialized organizations. Then, it was sent to national pension organizations for the countries in which we didn't have a contact, in order to establish such a contact and broaden the pension communication network. In the end, we received responses from 25 countries, with multiple answers from some countries. Unfortunately, the experts from Cyprus, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Romania and Iceland did not respond. With the responses collected, the project team has conducted qualitative, descriptive analysis.

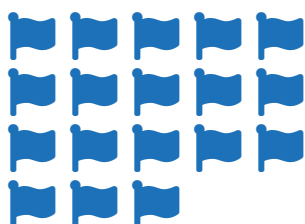
‘The mission of the ETS is to create the means for people to have an overview of the pension entitlements they have acquired and to give them tailored as well as personal information on their pensions no matter where they were accrued’



11 countries had a tracking system in 2014



13 countries had a tracking system in 2019



18 countries could have a tracking system in the near future

Policy Context

The interest of developing a European tracking service already dates back to the publication of the White Paper on Pensions in 2012. To facilitate cross-border mobility in Europe, the effective provision and preservation of social security rights, including pensions, is important. However, there are persisting gaps in the access to information on individual pension entitlements, creating obstacles in ensuring transparency and pension coverage for mobile workers.

In this context, the successful realization of the mission and vision of the ETS project will support the further integration of the European labour market and will facilitate an improved access to social protection.

In addition, the ETS will support the process of modernization and digitalization of social protection through the implementation of a functional digital service, providing structured information on pension benefits on a centralized European platform. This has the potential to substantially improve communication on pensions also at national level, which is a crucial factor towards future adequacy and sustainability of the Member States' pension systems. In the context of this report it is important to stress that the NTSS play a major role in this process.

Looking at the next steps in the development of the ETS and its relevance to the operation of the existing NTSS, we consider that there is a high level of complementarity between the objectives of the project and the current legal and policy framework at the EU level in the context of pension provision.

Coordination of Social Security Systems, the IORP II Directive and the PEPP

The functional ETS will be beneficial to the operation of all pension providers (statutory, occupational and personal pensions), as the platform will aim to provide information on individual pension entitlements per pension pillar. The ETS will also provide users with information on their scheme affiliation. This is currently not possible in the case of workers who are no longer residents but have previously accrued pension rights in a European state. The improved access to information and the identification of past and current pension systems of affiliation will facilitate the acquisition and preservation of pension rights for mobile workers and will improve the overall operation of the European pension systems.

The Council Recommendation on Access of Social Protection for non-standard workers and the self-employed

As part of the realization of the European Pillar of Social Rights, the European Council adopted its Recommendation on access to social protection for workers and the self-employed in December 2020.

Council Recommendation 15, referring to transparency in the provision of social protection, states that: 'Member States are recommended to ensure that the conditions and rules for all social protection schemes are transparent and that individuals have access to updated, comprehensive, accessible, user-friendly and clearly understandable information about their individual entitlements and obligations free of charge.' Recital 22 of the Recommendation further establishes that: 'Digitalisation can, in particular, contribute to improving transparency for individuals.'

The ETS is well positioned to contribute to the realization at a national level, as it focuses particularly on the development of a digital service for improving access to information on pension rights for mobile workers.

Portability Directive

The ETS will be especially relevant for and will facilitate the compliance with the provisions of the so-called Portability Directive². This Directive lays down the rules for effective preservation of supplementary pension and ensures adequate information, especially on the impact of mobility on individual pension rights.

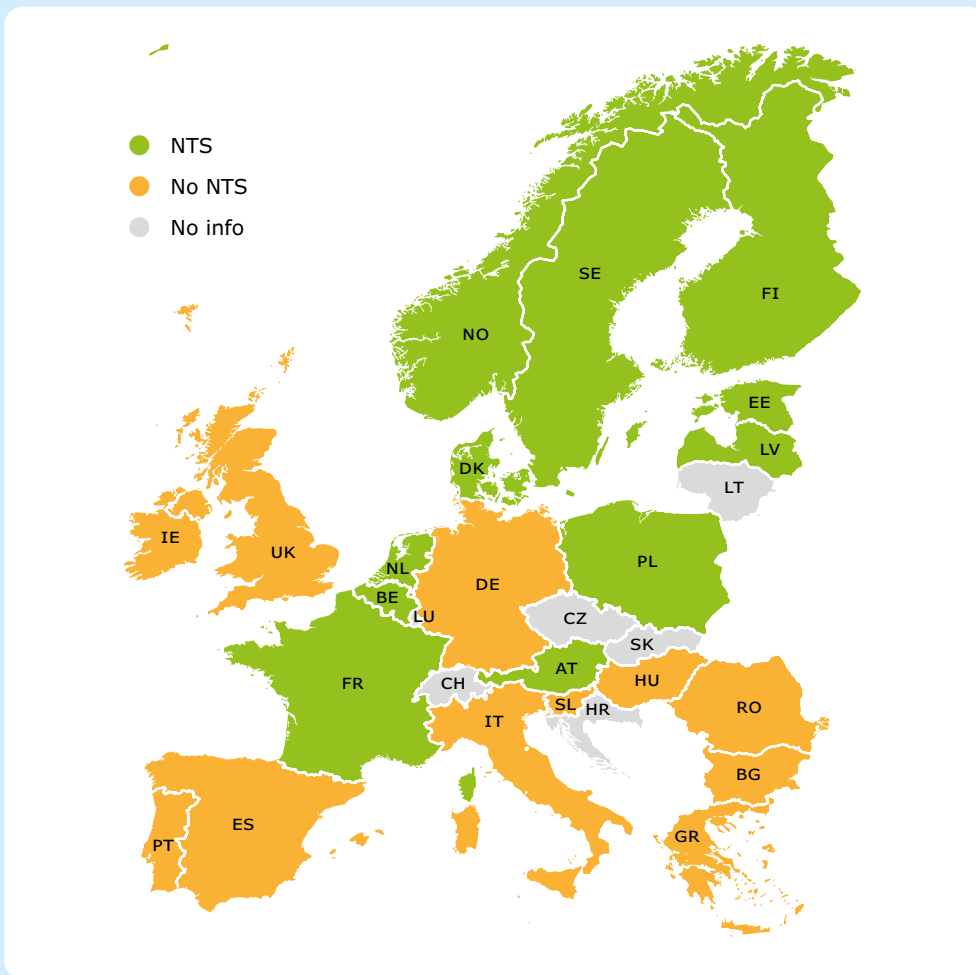
In its report³ on the application of the Portability Directive published in July 2020, the European Commission specifically refers to the ETS Project in the context of the observed implementation of information requirements as part of the Directive's application at national level (p.12).

Further development of the EU Capital Markets Union

In June 2020, the High-Level Forum (HLF) on the Capital Markets Union (CMU) published its final report⁴ outlining a series of clear recommendations aimed at moving the EU's capital markets forward. In its final report, the HLF recommends that: 'the Commission encourages the development of pension tracking systems for individuals' (p.22) in the context of improving future pension adequacy and sustainability (p.32). Moreover, the HLF calls on the industry: 'to support and contribute to financing the full roll-out of the European Tracking System' (p.88).

Following the High Level Forum report, the European Commission published its Capital Market Union Action Plan⁵ in late September. In order to facilitate access to individualized pension information and raise people's awareness regarding their future retirement income, the Commission will seek to develop best practices for the set-up of national tracking systems. They will send a call for advice to EIOPA to seek input on this topic.

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2. [Directive 2014/50/EU on minimum requirements for enhancing worker mobility between Member States by improving the acquisition and preservation of supplementary pension rights.](#)
 3. [Report from the Commission on the application of Directive 2014/50/EU on minimum requirements for enhancing worker mobility between Member States by improving the acquisition and preservation of supplementary pension rights, available here.](#)
 4. [Final Report of the High Level Forum on the Capital Markets Union capital markets, available here.](#)
 5. [Capital markets union new action plan: A capital markets union for people and businesses. Available here.](#)



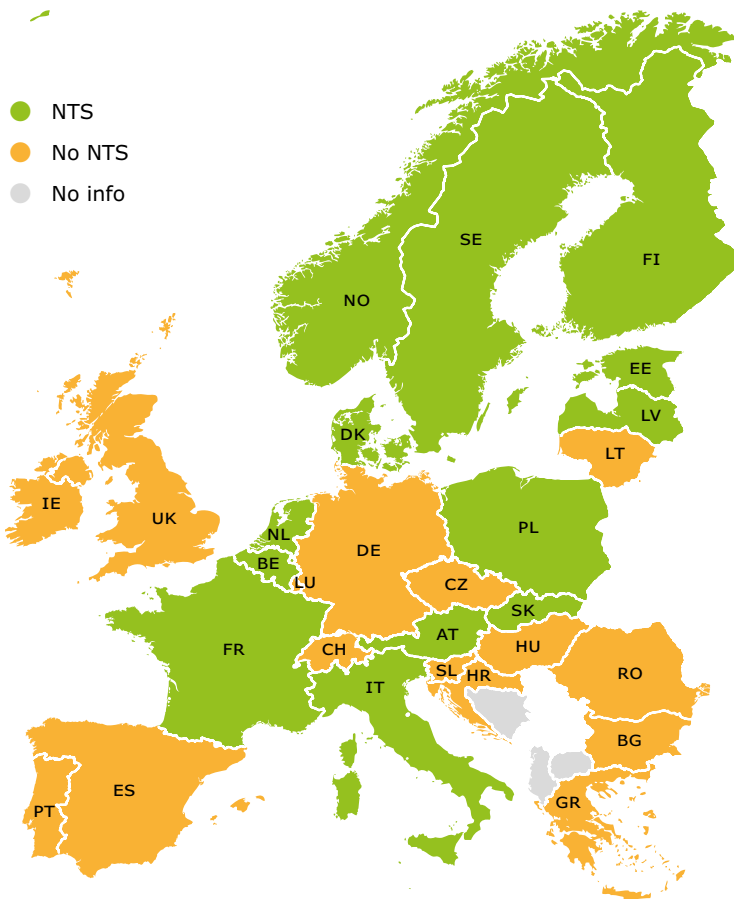
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Figure 2
State of play 2014

To NTS or not to NTS

Our most important question was: ‘Which countries in Europe have an NTS?’. The situation across the EU has changed since the TTYPE survey in 2014. Since some of the countries did not respond in the survey of 2019, the results regarding the NTSs from the 2014 survey were used to create an overview of the state of play.

State of play 2014

Figure 2 shows the situation of digital pension communication in Europe anno 2014. The 11 green countries on the map are the countries with a tracking service using the ETS definition. The orange countries did not have such a service. An important remark is that this includes the UK, Ireland and Malta, which have a finder service but no digital service for the citizen. The countries in grey did not respond to the survey.

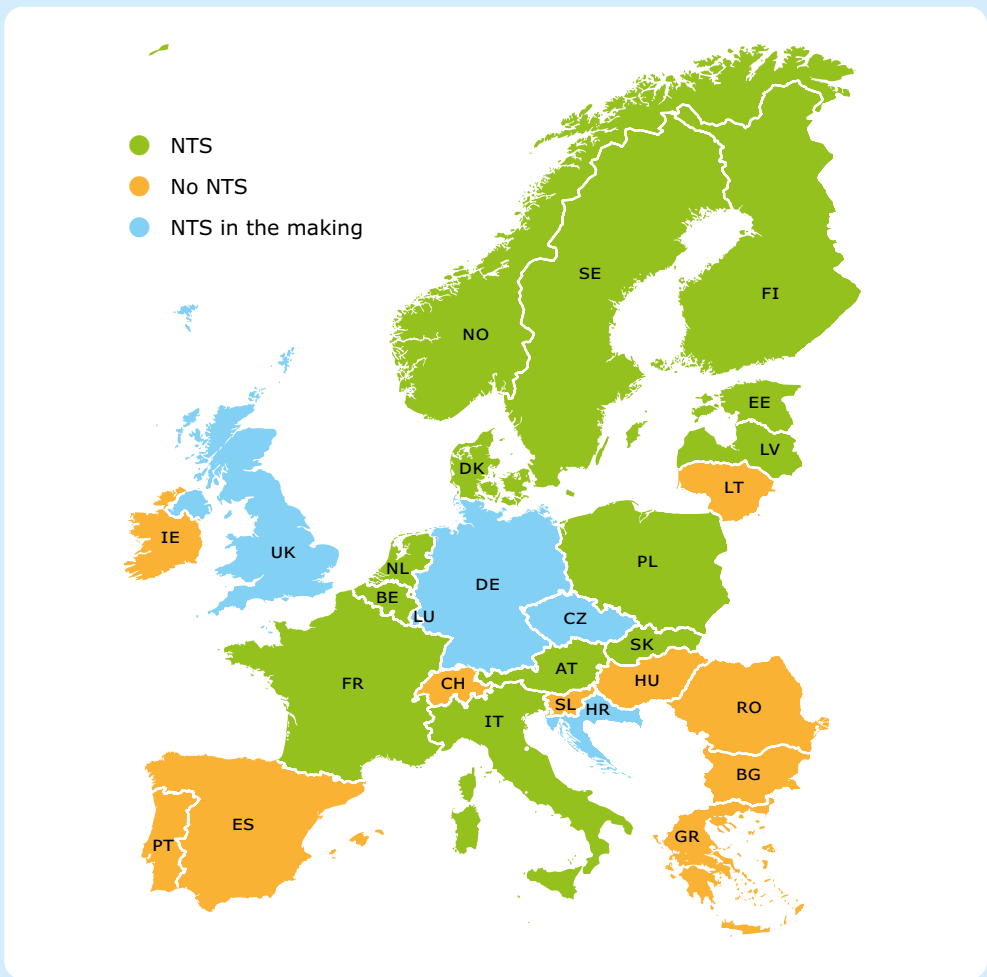


← Figure 3
State of play 2019

State of play 2019

The survey about digital pension communication in 2019 showed us that there are two extra countries that have launched an NTS in this period (*figure 3*). Italy has joined with the legal pension application of INPS and Slovakia with the pension application of the social insurance agency. The fact that there are two more countries that launched an NTS shows that there is an evolution going on in the pension landscapes.

‘There is an evolution going on in the pension landscapes’

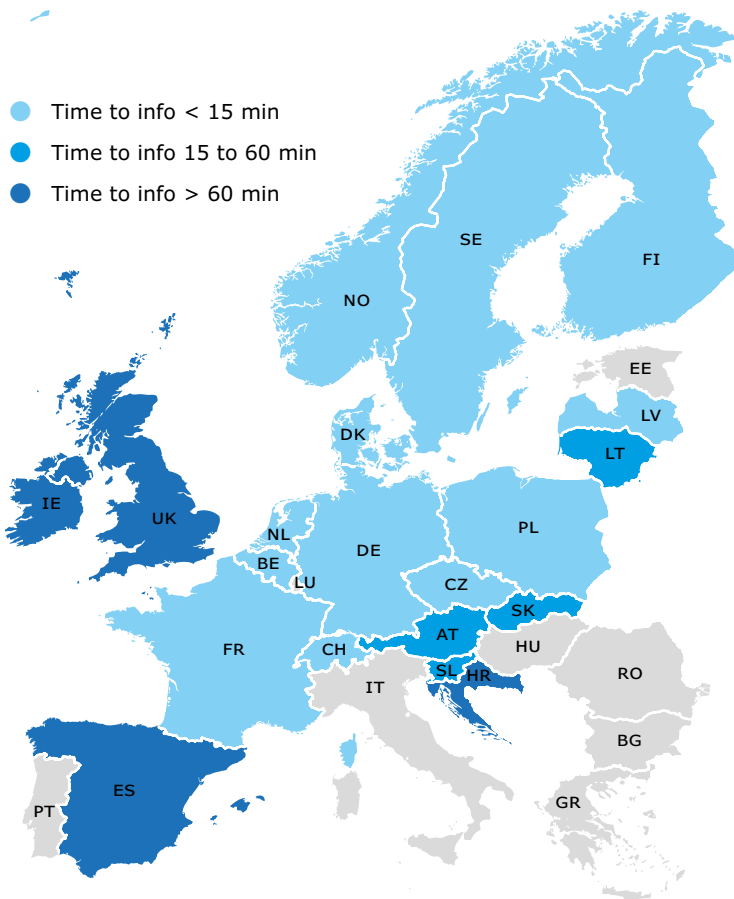


← Figure 4
State of play 2024

State of play 2024?

Next to new NTSs, several countries are currently working on one (see figure 4). This shows that the evolution continues and that more countries are thinking about or working on setting up an NTS. In the foreseeable future this could lead to already 18 operating NTSs.



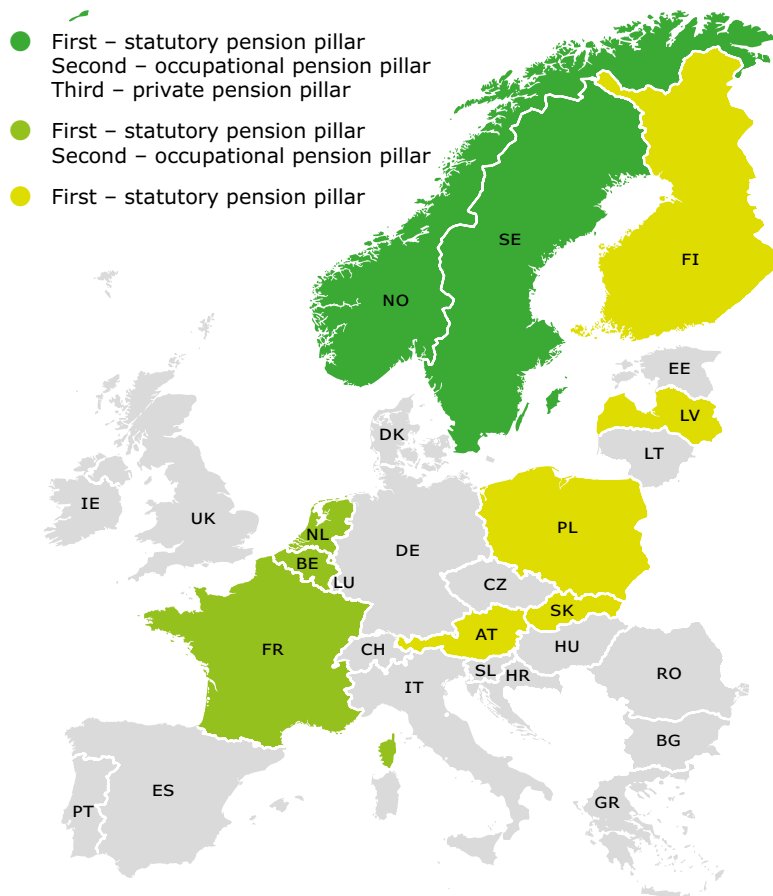


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Figure 5
**Time to
find information**

Take your time?

One of the questions in the survey was about the time people spend finding information about their pensions. The results can be found in figure 5 above. Twelve countries answered with less than 15 minutes (light blue), five said it takes between 15 and 60 minutes (middle blue), four mentioned that it takes more than 60 minutes (dark blue). Hence, in many countries, of which some with and some without an NTS, it takes a considerable amount of time to find pension information. This is one of the problems the ETS project wants to tackle.

‘In many countries it takes a considerable amount of time to find pension information. This is one of the problems the ETS project wants to tackle’



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Figure 6
**Coverage of
the pillars**

Coverage of the different pillars

In theory, an NTS can comprise three pension pillars. However, not every NTS includes all three.

One reason is that the coverage heavily depends on the pension landscape of a country meaning the role of the different pillars and how widespread supplementary pensions are.

According to the respondents, three countries have all three pillars included, three countries have the first two pillars included and five countries only have the first pillar included.



What services are offered?

Across the NTS's there are four services that are being offered.

The first one is about providing general pension information. This service contains, as the name suggests, general information on pensions. One can think about legal aspects, non-personalized information on preparing for retirement, etc. The second one is the provision of personal information on a basic level. This shows the pension benefits connected to career history and more personal data. The third one is also personal information, but on an advanced level. This means that there is interactive personal information which shows the effect of personal choices on retirement and pension benefits. The last one consists of additional functionalities. An example is a service where one can compare pension projections with other individuals or compare two pension providers before transferring assets.

The diversity of the pension landscape in Europe is wide: not only in the composition of the different pillars, but also in the development of NTSs themselves as well as

the services they offer. A well-functioning ETS should embrace this diversity and be a true European solution.

Challenges and future developments

The respondents were also asked what challenges and developments they foresee for national tracking services. They indicated different challenges: how to reach citizens and create pension awareness? How to develop and operate tracking services while keeping costs under control? In addition, data quality and keeping it simple whilst trying to be complete were points of attention. In terms of developments, the respondents saw developments in staying aligned with pension legislation (e.g. pensionable age), including more products in the service (survivors pension, private pension savings, etc.), including scenario's (early or late retirement) and projections. Other developments, like facilitating value transfer, creating an API and showing uncertainties in pension outcomes, were also mentioned. These challenges and developments are also part of the challenges of developing a European service.



About the project:

The ETS-project is a consortium of eight European partners. The goal of the consortium is to create a platform for mobile workers where they can find their pensions from across Europe. The aim is to make sure that no pension is left behind. The project is a collaboration of eight parties who are working on finding the best ways to create a platform that works for everyone.

Members of the consortium:

AEIP (*European Association*)

APG (*The Netherlands*)

Federal Pensions Service (*Belgium*)

Minpension.se (*Sweden*)

PGGM (*The Netherlands*)

Sigedis (*Belgium*)

The Swedish Pensions Agency (*Sweden*)

Verorgungsanstalt des Bundes und der Länder (*Germany*)

Conclusion

The mission of the ETS is to create the means for people to have an overview of the pension entitlements they have acquired across Europe and to give them tailored as well as personalized information on their pensions no matter where they were accrued. In order to develop a full functioning ETS that can deliver on this mission, the development of NTSs is crucial. Therefore, the ETS project conducted a survey to analyze the state of play of NTS development.

The survey shows that there has been progress in the development of NTS's across the EU and beyond. Where there were already 11 NTSs in 2014, that number has increased to 13 in 2019. The plans to launch an NTS in Germany, United Kingdom, Croatia, Luxemburg and the Czech Republic give a clear perspective of ambitions and the possible future landscape. The challenges and developments regarding realizing NTS's are similar to those of setting up an ETS. These need to be taken into account when creating an ETS useable for all citizens of the European Union and beyond.

Next steps

In the beginning of 2020, we have explored the status of pension communication processes on the level of pension institutions. The second pension communication survey was conducted and evaluated by Lisa Brügger, professor at the Maastricht University. The presentations of the webinar hold on the 6th of July can be found [here](#).

One of the findings was that cross-border pension information requires an holistic and tailored approach, taking into account the different national pension concepts.

In autumn/winter 2020–21, the FYP-ETS Pilot website will be implemented technically and the editorial concept will be described in a ETS-FYP content guideline. More workshops on the topic will follow. At the same time, we will continue the work on the roll-out concept and deepen the exchange with the National Tracking Services as well as the wider pension community.

ETS

FYPPQ

The ETS project has taken up the challenge to carry out a European Commission action to develop the pilot stage of a European Tracking Service on Pensions (ETS). In a period of three years, the project is building a pilot under the already existing brand www.FindyourPension.eu, a website which has been supporting mobile researchers in dealing with their various different pension claims since 2011.