

WAPES International Workshop: Public Employment Services and Employers: Strategy development - a view from the European Union, (Lima, May 2017)

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1. Are employers PES customers?

PES in Europe vary as regards the importance they assign to developing strategies for employers. An increasing number of PES consider employers as relevant customers on an equal footing with jobseekers. As consequence, many PES have developed or are developing dedicated strategies to reach, serve and bind employers. However, a number of PES focus on jobseekers only as legal regulations do not set out a mandate to work with employers. Another, though diminishing group of PES does not see much need to elaborate a strategy, because vacancy registration with PES is a legal obligation for employers.

2. What makes a strategy for employers relevant for PES business practice?

In order to make work with employers relevant from a management point of view, services for employers have to be an element of the PES vision, its mission, objectives, **and what is important to note, of the target setting and monitoring system.**

3. What are recent developments in service profiles for employers in the EU?

Service concepts developed by PES depend on the concrete labour market situation. In a context of surplus in **labour supply**, PES invest in relations to employers primarily to place unemployed jobseekers, in particular those more distant to the labour market. However, in a **context of demographic change and labour shortages** (e.g. Austria, Germany, Scandinavian countries) employers seek PES support. These PES have been broadening their service portfolio during the last decade, they increasingly offer HR support in particular to SMEs not having dedicated HR specialists.

4. How to best reach employers?

In times of digitalisation, **customer-friendly online platforms broadening the scope of services and their interactivity (blended service delivery)** are becoming the first choice to reach **all** employers:

- general information on PES services for employers
- vacancy (and jobseekers' CV) portal (ambition: best job portal of a given country)
- "e-job-rooms" for employers with access to more information, services upon registration
- rapid response schemes (e.g. telephone hotlines, buttons for personalised support, chat)
- advanced: automated (competence based) matching services (based upon clearly defined standards and templates for vacancies)
- information on financial support for employers and online-forms
- information on special support (e.g. recruitment of long-term unemployed, refugees; workplace support schemes for integration of disabled)

Additional activities in many PES with multiplier effect, e.g.:

- tripartite PES administration boards at all levels
- regular labour market meetings with employers' associations, chambers, trade unions
- targeted project or working groups (e.g. to place disadvantaged young people) at all levels
- promotion activities: **employers day or week** - increasingly popular in the EU - various activities at all levels (e.g. media campaigns, "**mass**" visits by PES staff to employers and multipliers, round tables, job fairs, speed dating)

At **local or even quarter level, networking with employers** (by PES or contracted providers) is helpful to build trust and acquire job opportunities for jobseekers with more complex problems.

A **special category of employers** are temporary work agencies (TWS). Legal regulations can be a prerequisite also ensuring quality employment (e.g. equal treatment, training of agency workers), while cooperation agreements with TWAs and other agencies structure public-private partnerships.

5. Equal services for all?

Practices (and legislation) vary. A number of PES **segment employers** offering **more pro-active and intensive recruitment services to large companies** publishing regularly larger volumes of vacancies. A number of PES conclude **agreements** with companies defining objectives and mutual responsibilities. The range of services includes, e.g.:

- developing and maintaining company profiles (recruitment needs, job profiles etc.)
- pre-selection of candidates (registered jobseekers)
- follow-up after placement
- company visits or pro-active calls for information and feedback on service delivery.

6. Organisation models: separate or integrated services for employers?

Increasingly, PES establish the position of **key account managers for large companies or sectors**, i.e. specialist staff with good sales attitudes and skills (partially trained in HR or in-house) as single points of contact. Apart from that, **different options exist showing each pros and cons**. While a number of PES prefer to have a clear **separation between dedicated employer services** (filling vacancies) and **employment counsellors** (preparing jobseekers for placement), other PES maintain an **integrated profile** for employment counsellors. An advantage of the first option is that staff profiles correspond to the specific requirements of each category of customers. However, well-defined mechanisms and processes are necessary to manage interfaces between the two services (service for employers does not have a good knowledge of the jobseekers / employment counsellors are not in contact with the world of work). The second, integrated job profile offers is motivating for employment counsellors as they prepare and place jobseekers, thus gaining a good knowledge of both sides. However, this comes at a price: in practice, service time for employers tends to be insufficient, above all in times when caseloads are high. In addition, employment counsellors need a training to switch roles when working with employers.

7. How to bind employers?

High satisfaction with PES services brings employers back - a common wisdom that can be challenging to implement. For example, consequent activation can fire back on PES reputation if dozens of PES applicants contact the same employer to fulfil their obligations within an individual action plan due to a lack of coordination. To increase customer satisfaction, a number of PES in the EU have made good experience with follow-up services such as periodic telephone contacts to follow up the quality of placement or to detect areas for improvement.

8. Way forward: what are prerequisites for effective international learning?

A collection of (evidence-based) good practices from the EU can be enriching as some challenges are international. In order to ensure an effective transfer a continued exchange among PES on the process of implementation can be recommended (e.g. on motivation for change - gaps detected, steps, prerequisites and main obstacles during a process of implementation). Specific challenges might deserve a **targeted exchange among countries facing similar problems**, for example, to develop cost-effective tools to work with small enterprises in order to formalise informal work.

In a more comprehensive perspective, adapting [Benchlearning](#) from the European PES network for Latin America and other WAPES regions may open new opportunities for capacity building and for strategy development including for employers. **At EU level, good cooperation of PES with employers has been defined as a key element of PES performance** in a legal act, the so-called "PES Decision". The European Parliament and the Council decided in 2014 to enhance PES cooperation and to establish the European PES network. One of its key tasks is to improve performance by carrying out a systematic **Integrated Benchlearning**. Relations to employers are one of the seven areas for the qualitative PES performance

assessment. Filling of vacancies and customer satisfaction of (jobseekers and) employers are among the eight quantitative indicators for comparative monitoring of results. Another specific feature of the EU is [EURES](#) - a cooperation network of the European Commission and PES to facilitate employment mobility across the region.

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