

Workshop Digital technology in the delivery of services of PES

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The Workshop was dedicated to present and discuss new developments in five PES from different regions and with different business priorities in order to provide inspiration for WAPES members. Examples comprised PES in China, United States, Estonia, Sweden and France. All show a common strategic line: digital services and tools ranges high on the agenda not only in the economy, but also in PES worldwide. Further, strategies behind reveal a common denominator: to offer as many routine services as possible online for self-service in order to reserve resource-intensive face-to-face services (or inter-active online services) for more complex client needs.

Summary of PES presentations

The PES **China** (Unmei Huang, Ministry of Human Ressources and Social Security) develops service concepts for a large territory including rural areas and serving an active population of 800 million people. Online services have a high potential to better reach customers as 772 million people use the internet and most of these also mobile phones. Similar to many other countries, China is intensively working on the provision of more comprehensive **labour market information at local level**. A number of **cities and regions build up online platforms** providing information on the development of labour demand and working conditions in key sectors (e.g. wages, contract length). Thanks to QR codes, this information can be accessed from mobile phones. At the longer term, China envisages to compile a national platform, but, as Ms Huang underlined, there will be a long way to go.

The **United States** (Charlie Terrel, National Association of State Workforce/Shannon Offord, Direct Employers – private company) introduced a specific institutional arrangement for **national jobs portal** based upon a **cost-free public-private partnership**. In 2007, a shift from public delivery alone to a partnership approach was triggered by a government decision to withdraw from funding a federal vacancy platform. In this situation, a specific type of public-private partnership was built up supported by Agreements of all 50 States, mainly responsible for public employment service delivery, with the National Labour Exchange. Given comparatively high recruitment and labour mobility across States, a federal vacancy platform was considered important to ensure a good functioning of the U.S. labour market. The private partner, Direct Employers, cooperates with more than 900 leading U.S. companies. Its federal platform provides real-time online job-openings from verified employers, corporate career websites and State job banks as well as analytics behind. According to Direct Employers, the platform presents unique vacancies applying sophisticated technologies to cope with the unavoidable risk of vacancy duplication inherent to web-crawling. On the average, 2.4 million vacancies can be found on the platform (For comparison: The EURES Jobs Mobility Portal portal fed by national PES: 1.7 million vacancies, 19 April 2018). While access to vacancies directly linked with employers is cost-free, Direct Employers offers further paid HR services for employers.

In addition, three examples from Europe demonstrated new approaches for digitalization of PES services and for development of new services:

The **PES Sweden** (Anders Gawell, Arbetsförmedlingen) shows that low-cost tools can have a big impact and moreover, be motivating for PES staff perceiving new digital developments sometimes with reservations. Two tools have turned into success stories, being cheap and easy to use, thus offering potential for transfer:

Specialist staff from the PES produce themselves one **podcast** per week i.e. PES online-radio emissions, that can be subscribed. These help, for example, jobseekers with job search and

employers with recruitment. A new one-hour podcast is launched every Monday reaching many users.

For internal and external purposes, i.e. for PES staff as well as for clients, the Swedish PES is increasingly producing webinars, or rather '**webinars+**'. Currently, more than 60 subjects are available. Contrasting with earlier practices, these webinars are combined with the possibility for online chats, they allow for comments and asking questions making them more attractive for users and at the same time richer in information and learning outcomes. Each webinar run by one PES specialist from Arbetsförmedlingen reaches approximately 500 viewer, thus giving staff the possibility to shine.

All these elements form part of a broader **Digital First Strategy** increasingly making use of mobile applications, confirming a trend that the future PES face will be on the mobile. A series of Apps is complemented by contact centers where in telephone chats further questions can be answered. While PES offices are being reduced, overall coverage can be improved by using virtual channels instead of physical presence. At the same time, this strategy aims at increasing service quality, by freeing resources for counselling of those with more complex needs.

PES Estonia (Karolina Kõrreveski, Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund) presented a component of Estonia's general **Digital First Strategy** with a focus on another field: **connected administration**. This increases efficiency by saving time: Each citizen should provide information only once avoiding duplication of services. Cornerstone of such connected system is the individual **ID card number** having been established back to 2002. This allows for accessing information from other relevant authorities in agreement with citizens. The Estonian PES has, for example, access to information from social insurance or tax authorities. Overall, 26 registers are connected applying the principle of a '*transparent citizen*' whilst ensuring data protection. Next steps are planned with a view to activation: to update a client's profiling, to make use of big data including process data mining to get a better knowledge of a client's internet activities and to find out where he or she get lost during the customer journey.

Finally, the **PES France** (Lauren Michel / Raphael Gaillard, Pôle Emploi) illustrated, how to develop new digital services from a management perspective in a **participatory approach** involving users and frontline staff, the so-called '**Intrapreneuriat**'. Working methods from business start-ups are applied to PES projects for online new services freely accessible for all. In a first step, a service need is identified using information from users and frontline staff. Then, an interdisciplinary team consisting of an intrapreneur from PES staff, a coach and IT specialists elaborates the targeted new online-service according to the principle 'pragmatic, not perfect' (Pareto-principle). After a testing phase the new service is added to the Pôle Emploi online store undergoing a periodic check for adjustment. Successful examples are 'Bonne Boîte' (good box). This service increases transparency on so-called hidden vacancies as seven of ten vacancies normally are not public, but filled using informal networking. The 'good box' presents occupations in high demand in a region as well as companies with high recruitment demand. A second example is 'Bonne formation' (good training), a database of trainings reflecting evidence-based needs of the labour market.

To conclude from the discussion, digital services and in particular those offered on mobile phones, are becoming increasingly important, including for, example, refugees in Sweden. However, in a first phase they are mainly reserved for information and rural areas like (e.g. in China) might need other, physical formats, such as job fairs etc. to disseminate information on job search opportunities. A second point was stressed: digital projects often do not go smoothly, project management includes learning from failures on the way.

Finally, the rapporteur pointed out that Digital PES Strategies are attractive whilst raising (ethical) questions for management and policymakers on how to best deliver good services in a public social

policy institution. It needs further discussion how to balance efficient service delivery with client orientation, equal treatment and social orientation. This means to decide at management and at political level whether access to more resource-intensive personalised information and advice should be difficult or easy (i.e. intermediate Frequently Asked Question section and difficult to find contacts vs. intuitive buttons for direct access). In a more general perspective, an important question to decide is who should be in the driving seat, the client or rules set by PES customer segmentation system making the use of certain channels compulsory for certain target groups, for example online service for more or less job-ready clients.

A second point may deserve further discussion: Good digital tools are the way to the future and will gain importance increasingly integrating interactive elements. A prerequisite to make this new type of 'omni-channelling' or blended service delivery within one channel effective, will be adequately trained staff for providing personalized information and counselling. In the end, digital tools serve as a good entry point and an app on the mobile might become (or in some cases is already) the virtual face of a PES to the customer. However, PES counsellors, working in virtual or a physical setting, will continue to be the real face of a PES to the customer and therefore deserve equally attention when shaping digital (first) strategies.