



AMSEP WAPES AMSPE



Eesti Töötukassa

The 12th WAPES WORLD CONGRESS (WWC 2021)

***Challenges and innovative actions for
Public Employment Services in a rapidly
evolving labour market***

Tallinn, ESTONIA
29 November - 2 December 2021

Call for Speakers

Deadline: 31/07/2021

This event will most probably be partially recorded or live broadcasted. By registering, you agree to be recorded (image and voice), published and/or streamed on [congress webpage](#).

World Association of Public Employment Services
Association Mondiale des Services d'Emploi Publics
Asociación Mundial de los Servicios Públicos de Empleo

Summary

PES In(novative) Action

Challenges and innovative actions for Public Employment Services in a rapidly evolving labour market

In a constantly accelerating movement, the world's labour markets have constantly been undergoing structural changes, mainly related in recent years to rapid technological developments and the globalisation of economic exchanges. However, new factors are increasingly amplifying this transformation process with direct impacts on our lives:

- Demographic changes (ageing of the population in high GDP countries/ youth growth in low GDP countries) leading to controlled or less controlled migratory movements.
- Climate change and the ongoing process of "decarbonisation" of our economies.
- The new economic and social patterns changing labour relations and subordination relationships in companies.

In such rather challenging context, the global pandemic that we have been enduring since the beginning of 2020 has profoundly affected global economic growth, provoking considerable damage, whose effects are likely to be felt over several years. This pandemic has also brought the strengths and weaknesses of our health and welfare systems to light, thereby challenging policy, and decision-making abilities in times of great uncertainty.

Forecasters are expecting long-term effects from this crisis. In the coming year, in the event of a gradual cessation of state support for companies, we could see a significant increase in business bankruptcies and in job losses. But other sectors of our economies will be experiencing, on the other hand, either through relocation policies or the use of new technologies, but also through the environmental commitments, strong growth and the need for new skills. This means for the PES to strengthen their own competence, their flexibility to consolidate their position as a major supporting actor in the subsequent changes, transitional and vocational retraining processes.

The purpose of our world conference is, through an exchange of future-oriented visions, reflections, and proven experiences, to provide everyone with inspiration and food for thought to guide future policies, strategies, and on-the-ground actions, in the spirit and values of the WAPES Long-Term Strategy 2015-2025.

The slogan of the Congress is PES Innovative Action meaning that the presentations will focus on organisational resilience and innovation throughout different aspects of PES work that are important to address all kinds of crisis (health pandemic, economic, environmental, humanitarian, ...), when PESs are expected to act quickly to the rapidly changing needs of the labour market.

The 12th WAPES World Congress will highlight and discuss these challenges with particular emphasis on the following topics (non-exhaustive list):

- “Organisational resilience” or what lessons for the future are being learned by PESs regarding the responses to the pandemic?
- The advances of new technologies and their mastering by PES
- The impact of new forms of work on the internal organization of PES, management and the working conditions of our employees
- The image of PESs in society
- Projecting the future of employment and skills needed in the labour market
- The conceptualisation and design of client-oriented services
- Social groups most vulnerable to labour market movements

All the topics aim to be forward looking and future oriented and guide to better understanding of what experiences to take from the past and how to use them to shape the future labour market.

Objectives

The 12th WAPES World Congress aims to:

- Encourage the delegates from member countries to contribute, through the sharing of ideas, solutions, and innovation strategies, to a constant and dynamic adaptation of PES in a changing working world and labour market.
- Provide suggestions on how best to address key issues of the future labour market with presentations of best practices by PES representatives and external speakers.
- Propose new methods and possibilities of collaboration, exchange and mutual learning between existing WAPES members, potential new members and various key actors in the labour and employment sector.

Call for Speakers – Workshops & Conferences

This two-day programme will combine lectures and workshops.

DAY 1 – strengthening organizational development and resilience

Keynote speech:

PES challenges and innovative actions in rapidly evolving labour market (and how the future of social protection is affected by it)

The world is constantly changing and so is the labour market. Economy is characterised by the periods of growth and contraction and labour markets in general react more or less to its fluctuations. Constant changes and the demand to keep up with the progress puts PESs into situation where they face many challenges. Therefore, the **success of PESs and labour market policies' outcomes** depend largely on how/to what extent and how fast PESs or governments react to these challenges and what kind of innovative actions they implement in return. The more advanced and diverse labour markets become, the more **complex challenges** emerge and the more **innovative actions** need to be sought to meet the expectations and needs.

The OECD monitors closely how labour markets change in response to the **mega-trends** of digitalisation, globalisation, population ageing and greening economy. The aim is to better understand the **opportunities and risks** associated with these new developments and provide evidence-based advice on how countries should respond in the areas of **skills policy, social protection, labour market regulation and social dialogue**. The big challenge now is to translate these general policy prescriptions into actionable policy packages that can promote better jobs and guarantee social protection for everyone in a fast-changing world of work.^{1 2}

This keynote speech aims to provide a general introduction to the main congress theme and give an overview of the challenges we face today and what actions could be enforced considering the future trends of labour markets. It should pave the way to next panel and parallel sessions, which give more practical insight about the topics.

First panel discussion

PES governance structures and the role of social partners for PES

PES governance structures vary significantly between different countries. Some PESs are **part of ministerial structures**, while some are organised **as executive agencies**. Others are **more independent bodies**, often characterised by greater regional or local autonomy. Depending on the overall organisational approach there are also **different degrees of involvement of other actors** within PES

¹ For further information please refer to: <https://www.oecd.org/future-of-work/reports-and-data/>

² For further information please refer to: <https://www.oecd.org/employment/the-future-of-social-protection-9789264306943-en.htm>

management structures, with some, for instance, including **social partners** on their management boards. There is no common PES model, and it is difficult to say that one model is better than the other or what mix of **decentralisation and centralisation** is needed to provide **effective PES operations**. There are significant structural, legal, political and cultural differences with often deeply seated roots that determine the chosen model. However, different approaches to PES governance can influence the flexibility to adapt and response quickly to the changes, the **range and quality of the services delivered** and consequently **labour market outcomes**.³ In rapidly changing times, PESs need to find innovative solutions to meet clients` needs and those clients themselves provide the best input for designing the services. Therefore, the social partners, who represent the interests of PESs clients are important partners and play a role as a mediator between service provider (PES) and clients.

This keynote panel aims to discuss and compare different PES governance structures and their limitations and opportunities in times of crises and rapid development of labour markets. Focus will be on the involvement of social partners and the degree of shared responsibility. Representatives from different PESs with different governance structures or experts will share their expertise on organizational development and which kind of reform trajectories, for example enhancing existing performance management systems or experimenting with different forms of cooperation with private placement agencies, have proven to be effective.

Series of workshops/parallel sessions

The workshops will last 1h45min and are divided into three parts:

- An introduction to the workshop topic by a facilitator and (up to) 5 minutes interactive/creative session;
- 3-4 presentations (one presentation 10-15min) by PES's representatives or experts;
- A discussion with and between the workshop participants led by the facilitator (who will also have the role of rapporteur of the proceedings) and Q&A. Main conclusions of the workshop will be introduced on the second day.

First series of parallel workshops/sessions

▪ Session A1 - PESs' Crisis Preparedness, Management and Recovery

What we have learned from today's experience in our responses to the effects of the pandemic is that several factors have enabled us to react and continue our action, to contribute to the collective resilience of our economies.

OECD has marked, "The **crisis unleashed by COVID-19** is affecting every aspect of our lives, from health, jobs and education to financial security, social relations and trust." Topics of **inequality** in employment, income, education, skills levels etc are the ones that are addressed in the daily work of PESs counsellors more fiercely every day with the rapid **increase of**

³ For further information please refer to:

<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1163&intPageId=3443&langId=en>

unemployment. In addition to **heightened public expectations** for PESs financial support measures, active labour market measures and vacancies available, PESs themselves have quickly needed to **adapt to the changes** in relation to their **own working environments**, operational systems, **means of working**, organisational and HR management. These changes have had to take place under the keen attention of the public. **PESs counsellors** have been one of the frontline workers of the crisis, addressing the most immediate consequences of it. These conditions have put an extra stress on the **mental health** and **wellbeing** of the PESs workers. Definitely PESs have previous experience with worldwide **financial crisis** and other **regional crisis**, and PESs have applied **different strategies** to react towards these challenges, but no one could foresee the crisis we face today and the scope of it. Therefore, the PES inward-looking strategies, such as **human resources and internal communication management** for example, need to be more elaborated as well. **Crisis management** strategies and policies differ in countries, but one thing that should be common is to think about the future and to develop the strategies to increase the **crisis preparedness and to fasten recovery**, also in the future.

This workshop aims to discuss the changes and new measures undertaken in PESs in order to deal with the effects of the pandemic, which have proven to be sustainable and should be developed further on to response quickly to similar crisis in the future - both in terms of internal organisation of work and external service delivery.

- **Session B1 - PES experiences with technological innovation and the use of AI in the service delivery:**

The **role of data** and the use of **artificial intelligence** to provide better PES services and improve work processes is increasingly gaining importance. **Technological innovation** offers a lot of opportunities for modernising services that are more effective and efficient. From **profiling** and **matching** to **data mining** and **machine learning**, the aim is to deliver services in a faster, better and smarter manner. However, despite acknowledgement of a vast deal of possibilities that data and technological innovation can offer, **the level of digitalisation of PES services and processes** varies greatly due to the quality and availability of data, financial capacity, regulations and restrictions such as **data protection**, political willingness and **digital mindset** etc.

This workshop aims to discuss how does the use of new technologies and particularly the use of artificial intelligence fit into our services today, what transformations need to be carried out and how to anticipate and support them. The intention is to present the benefits what the use of AI can create for PESs, and pave the way to thoughts about to start using it in the service delivery.

- **Session C1- PES reputation, plausibility and reliability in society**

PESs are organisations with social goals which means that their **reputation, plausibility** and **reliability** depends heavily on their added value in the society. This added value is also a strong motivation and commitment factor for our employees. Nevertheless, building a solid **communication and brand management strategy** is crucial for PESs in order to manage their image and raise the **confidence of their clients**, stakeholders, social partners and supervising authorities. The keywords here would be **visibility and transparency** that PESs should focus on, **especially in the times of crises** when their communication often proves to be the most sensitive area. The gap between public perceptions and opportunities of PESs in the service delivery might enlarge during the periods of **increased pressure on the PES**. **Reputational challenges** related to attitudes towards PESs, however, can be caused either by actual poor performance or instead lack of communication and transparency in their activities. It is crucial to keep an eye on the PESs reputation in society and its development and changes to react quickly when it starts to decrease. For instance, **measuring the opinions and attitudes of the clients towards PESs** is a good tool for that purpose. Hence, PESs can better position themselves by improving strategic and brand communication. It is evident that different target groups and stakeholders, as well as PESs reputation and **communication channels** have to be considered while creating and planning PES (communication) strategy. Nowadays, the online presence of PES is evidently becoming more important than ever. Whether through social media or by other online means, PESs can reach out to a larger audience, which is why PES **online communication** must be **quick, noticeable and understandable**.

This workshop aims to discuss PES reputation in society and how the good image benefits PES. Testimonies should present good examples of (proactive) communication and brand management strategies, different communication channels used, in particularly social media and campaigns, and give forward-looking tips on how to increase the plausibility and reliability of the PES in society. Furthermore, the key-partners who and to what extent should be included in PES strategies (for instance social partners) can be discussed in this session.

Second panel discussion

Self-assessment, co-learning and cooperation : progress together (Benchlearning state of play)

The PES **benchlearning** concept was introduced in the PES European Network in 2015. Today it is one of the **central parts of the PES Network's activities**. It combines efficiently the concepts of benchmarking together with mutual learning together with the aim of improving the performance of PES. **Based on a specific guide and model**, PES benchlearning has been made **transparent** to the outside world. It has allowed to show an example of a systematic, indicator-based learning method between organisations, which is transferable by other organisations or network. Therefore, since its implementation, the **concept has gained increasing international, European and national interest**.

The general reason for benchlearning is to **support each PES to improve their own performance** through a structured and systematic reflection on their performance against the performance of other PES and through **institutional learning from peers**. The aim is to learn from good practices and adapt them to their national circumstances. This in general is meant to lead to **better PES results**, and to contribute to the convergence of labour markets, thus further demonstrating the **added value of PES**.⁴

Two other projects inspired by the same philosophy were initiated with the support of WAPES and its partners, as part of WAPES Long-Term Strategy 2015-2025:

- the SamPES project (Self-assessment for Public Employment Services) with the technical and financial support of GIZ and the YouMatch initiative (cooperation Germany) for the benefit and with the commitment of 18 African PES
- The "Joint project" initiative led by the Japanese PES in Asia

In this panel, three PESs' collaboration and mutual learning projects carried out in 2020/2021 will be presented with feedback and results:

- Joint project Japan/Cambodia
- SamPES
- European PES network

DAY 2 –providing effective services for clients

Keynote speech: *Experimental research and evidence-based service design to address labour market needs (and alleviate unemployment)*

Employment policies are very important policy areas that governments manage and that actually concern all the people. Politicians and public officials create and implement various strategies to **alleviate unemployment**, increase lifelong learning, encourage people to engage in entrepreneurship etc, but not all the initiatives are always effective and meet the expectations of individuals or labour market. Use of these sorts of non-evidence based strategies run several risks and can have unpredictable results. Therefore, it is important to rely on solid **evidence** which determines the labour market measures with most **successful outcomes**, also in terms of **cost-effectiveness** for allocating budget reasonably. Economic characteristics and needs of a country or region differ, hence, labour market policies also need to be **tailored**. In order to design more effective labour market policies, governments must improve their understanding of the **behaviour** of three actors – jobseekers, employers and PESs and how they interact in the labour market. Continuous **testing of scientific merit** makes sure that solutions are appropriate for local needs. While not all the PESs have the capacity to **conduct evaluations** in-house, **cooperation with experts and research** offers several advantages, for example reliability of independent research and **innovative and experimental**

⁴ For further information please refer to:

<https://op.europa.eu/et/publication-detail/-/publication/44626fc3-4769-11e8-be1d-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

methods used for generating evidence. The aim of this section is to have an insight into ex-ante or ex-post evaluations in different forms, such as **pilots, quasi-experimental evaluations, surveys** etc and how these should be embedded in the PES strategic planning and overall employment policy making.⁵

This keynote speech aims to present good examples about experimental research and evidence-based service design and how they have been integrated to policy making.

Second series of parallel workshops/sessions

- **Session A2 - Labour market analysis for early identification of skills shortages and skills needs**

Despite increased spending on education and training and growing educational attainment, countries around the world are experiencing a persistent gap between the skills demanded and those available. **Skills mismatch** resulting either from **over- or underskilling** remains a challenge and negatively affects labour productivity and hampers the ability to innovate and adopt technological developments, also in relation to greening economy. ILO states that individuals, businesses, training organizations and governments, all have to make decisions about what education and training investments they need to make now, in order to maximize the future return on those investments. This means **assessing the future prospects** on the labour market and the potential imbalance between the **demand for and supply of skills**. For PESs to prepare jobseekers to manage their **career transitions or transformations** smoothly, they must have knowledge about **labour market trends** and **create synergy with educational sector**. PES should thereby give more attention to early interventions such as **skills assessment** and **identification of the need for different skills and qualifications**.

This workshop aims to present examples of the use of labour market information and different tools, methods and cooperation partnerships developed by the PES for identifying shortages in skills in the labour market in order to support upskilling or reskilling for the future needs.

- **Session B2 – Service delivery design and impact evaluation**

Customer-oriented service design has in recent years gained a lot of support and followers because of its clear focus on **customers' expectations and needs**. PESs most certainly should put their customers', employers' and jobseekers', needs at the heart of their **service model**, however, it is sometimes easier in theory than in practice. Organisations face uncertainty in a rapidly changing environment and increasing complexity of challenges. While PES **customer satisfaction surveys** are widespread, then involvement of

⁵ For further information please refer to:

<https://www.bi.team/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/TheBehaviouralInsightsTeam-LabourMarketsReport.pdf>

customers in actual service design is relatively new. **Co-creation of services** means engaging customers in different stages of the service design processes that has also its advantages, risks and barriers. In many cases it requires a paradigm shift from a basic service delivery organisational model towards more **data- and experience-driven model**. Our employees remain the main players in the satisfaction, the quality of the experience of our customers and the achievement of our objectives. This undoubtedly means that this type of service design must be associated with an appropriate management model, centered on trust and the development of autonomy. Regular monitoring of labour market measures after their implementation is also crucial to study on the **effectiveness of measures**. Carrying out **impact evaluations** is a suitable way to improve service delivery, because it is based on real experiences of individuals and labour market outcomes.

This workshop aims to discuss customer-oriented service design and approaches of evaluating labour market measures in order to provide high quality and effective services that meet the needs of the PES clients and the labour market.

- **Session C2 – Reaching out to vulnerable social groups in the labour market**

All the people, regardless of their gender, age, education level, health condition, socio-economic status or geographical location should be able to access economic and employment opportunities. However, this has not always been achieved in reality, and there are still **vulnerable social groups**, who lack skills, knowledge or are discriminated against some of their characteristics. In many cases, there are even multiple overlapping employment barriers. PESs face challenges here **how to reach out to these groups** and **what services to provide** to include them actively in the labour market. These vulnerable social groups need much more **attention and guidance** and hence, also more resources, which makes PESs work more complicated. At the same time, we need to bear in mind that **more active people** in the labour market are beneficial to all the counterparts. Therefore, PESs should make an effort and create possibilities to as many people as possible to be/become employed, even if the cost of the inclusion of these social groups is high for PESs.

This workshop aims to discuss the impact of changes in the labour market on vulnerable groups and present examples of different policies, **inclusion strategies, outreach services** and **services accessibility** to prevent the risks of exclusion and support these social groups back into the labour market.

For each of these workshops, we are looking for motivated speakers able to offer presentations on best practices, methods, or innovative projects implemented in PES. We would welcome your input in sharing best practices and opinions. We expect contributions to focus on example and innovation.

Members, non-members, stakeholders, and actors from the academic community are invited to share their experiences and take part in the workshops.

The presentations may be conducted in the WAPES official languages. We are encouraging our speakers to use different interactive means for making presentations.

The workshops will conclude with Q&A session and main discussion points and conclusion will be presented afterwards in plenary session.

Target group

- WAPES members (general managers and PES contacts);
- Decision-makers in labour market institutions;
- Stakeholders in international organisations;
- Academics;
- Experts in governmental bodies, including public employment services;
- Representatives of international organizations addressing labour, employment, and social inclusion issues;
- Stakeholders from the private sector, local entities, and non-profit organisations.

Participants will come from all over the world, WAPES members and non-members (non-members by invitation only).

Terms and conditions

If you would like to participate as a speaker, please send us a proposal (abstract, draft presentation, etc.) by July 31, 2021 at the latest accompanied by a **short speaker/author biography**.

Any suggestions for innovative ways of displaying information will be welcome, so do not hesitate to contact the Congress project team to find out about the technical and technological possibilities available for this event.

Please be aware that at this moment it is a general concept note and the topics will be described in more detail according to the presentation proposals from the WAPES member states.

Warning related to the pandemic situation

Our priority was and still is to organise this congress in traditional working and reception conditions, with physical presence of the attendees.

However, depending on the evolution of the pandemic and the associated health measures, the general organisation of this event could be partly or totally converted to a digital format.

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Any questions or comments are most welcome.