



Strategies and challenges for Public Employment Services

2022

WAPES Executive Secretary
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Introduction

In late 2021, WAPES launched a survey to gather the information needed to gain an overview of the strategies and major challenges for Public Employment Services (PESs) in 2022. After analysing the 35 responses obtained, we decided to focus our work on identifying the main common issues that will form the basis for the sharing of practices, and the questions this will elicit within our community. We also opted to look into more individual concerns, in order to potentially facilitate support or cooperation initiatives between PESs.

A word of caution

Given the number of respondents (36) and the low representation of certain WAPES regions, the statistical processing of the information gathered necessarily introduced a bias that we have attempted to reduce in our analysis. This explains why we have concentrated on an overall analysis, rather than focusing too closely on regional pictures.

We also arbitrarily chose to highlight a number of specific PES proposals, solely to provide concrete illustrations of more general remarks often shared by several PESs.

Our look back at 2021

From reading the testimonies of the 36 respondent PESs, 2021 appears to have been a year of capitalising on the experiences undertaken in 2020 to respond to the challenges posed by the effects of the pandemic. It was a year of consolidation, or even acceleration of the change processes that began under the pressure of the first lockdowns.

The March 2020 WAPES survey provided us with an overview of a year of reactivity. Public employment services and supervisory authorities have had to react rapidly and demonstrate agility and creativity to deal with unprecedented and stressful situations in a totally unpredictable and uncertain context. Adaptation has occurred step by step and has sometimes been improvised. Organisations have had to adapt to public health restrictions while at the same time coping with rapid and often profound adjustments in the labour market.

Some sectors have had to deal with significant declines in activity, while others, by contrast, have reported urgent and multiple needs in order to respond to the demands of the economy and to be able to grow.

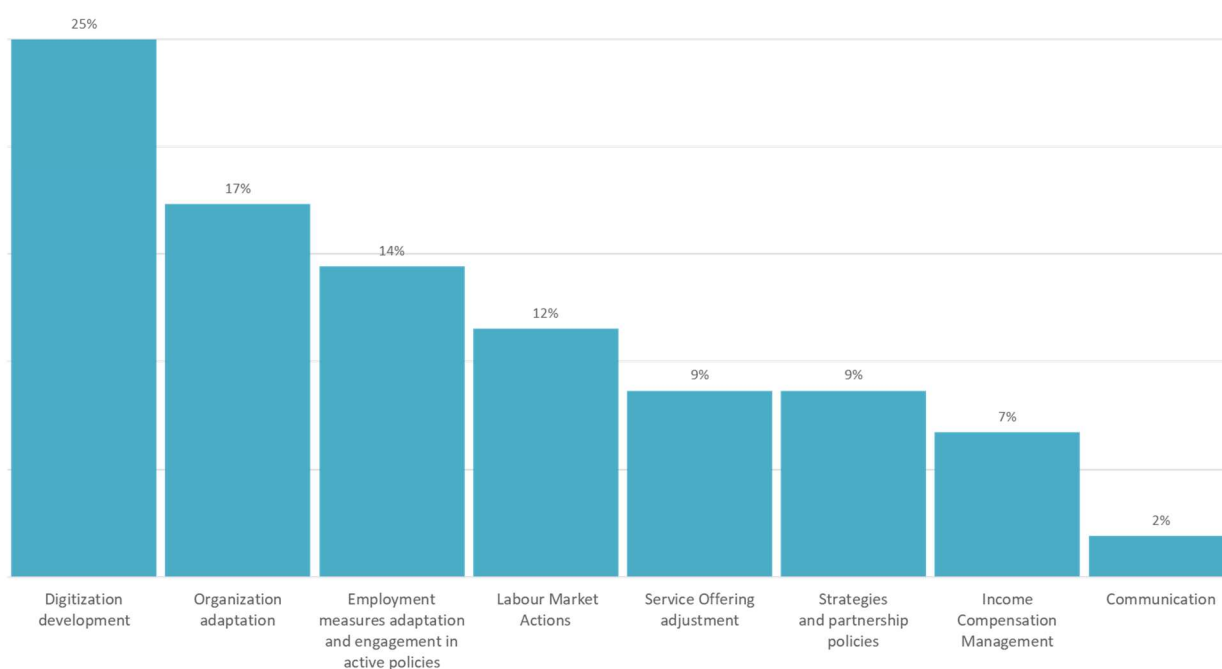
This changes in the labour market and the organisation of work necessitated by the environment has accelerated a deeper and longer-lasting trend of structural transformation.

2021 has therefore proved to be a year of anchoring our learning and conceptualising and enriching our modes of action, as we look ahead to futures for which we have at least learned one certainty: that they could be “unpredictable”.

Question 1: List the three most significant successes, achievements or areas of progress for your PES over the past year.

A rapid categorisation of the verbatim responses collected in response to this question enabled us to group together certain recurring themes mentioned in the answers.

Figure 1: Main areas of success and achievement of PES in 2021



- Digitalization development

The first recurring theme is, unsurprisingly, linked to the **growth of digital technology, of the digitalisation of services offered**. PESs have continued, and even stepped up, their efforts to expand not only the accessibility but also the range and depth of digital services offered to users. As a result, or in parallel, the working conditions and environment of our employees have been a focus for concerted efforts and, judging from your testimonies, this has ultimately been successful.

Remote service provision and remote working have now become the new normal. The use of remote working has increased substantially, albeit with numerous equipment and management difficulties. We note that this has had, and will continue to have, numerous impacts on how the labour market evolves. This new mode of working has made it possible to keep economies going. However, at the same time, social divisions have emerged between the types of professionals able to benefit from these new working arrangements and those who have had to continue with face-to-face working for various reasons.

- Organization adaptation

In our PESs, the use of remote working and changes in service delivery modes and tools have necessitated numerous adjustments that have, according to the responses analysed, helped our organisations to “grow”. We therefore see **“Organisational changes”** as a recurring theme that comes second in terms of most significant progress reported for 2021.

- Employment measures adaptation and engagement in active policies

A close third is the adaptation of measures for employment and the **commitment to active support policies**, both economic and social. In many countries, governments have not hesitated to support their PES in implementing compensatory measures (income relief, earnings replacement, support for self-employment, business support, etc.), and have been successful in doing so. Management of unemployment benefits, meanwhile, comes 7th in our ranking, with ambitious programmes to support recruitment and skills development.

- Labour market action and service offering adjustments

This is undoubtedly why, in the areas of success and progress highlighted by PESs in 2021, we also see **labour market action** (support for the working population, the introduction of employment support schemes, correcting inequalities, preventing risks of exclusion, etc.), the adaptation of service offerings (creation of new services, expansion of services offered, streamlining, improving accessibility, etc.) appearing among the major themes.

- Strategies and partnership policies

The themes converge around notable successes in regional and partnership-based strategies. In several countries, we are seeing the implementation of new multi-annual strategic plans, particularly in countries where the PESs operate with a decentralised model (regional autonomous PESs, cantonal services, or the use of private bodies under a public service contract, etc.).

For example, Spain has committed to a new 2021/2024 Active Support Strategy for Employment, laying down a new conceptual and organisational framework that governs the organisation, principles, shared objectives, tools to be used and resources to be called up for all initiatives carried out within the National Employment System, in terms of active employment policies and vocational training.

The same is true for Azerbaijan, which is pursuing an active labour market policy aimed at long-term employment (2020/2025) that takes into account the country's demographics, development prospects and economic transformation priorities.

The strategic plans outline the direction to be taken and guide future service offerings, but increasingly they also systematically incorporate formalised, transparent approaches to analysing performance, realistic outcome indicators and impact assessment methodologies. Luxembourg is an example of this, having developed a strategy (PES 2025) linked to key performance indicators and impact assessments.

Australia has begun trialling a new employment services model (New Employment Services Trial, NEST¹) that from 2022 will gradually replace the current Jobactive programme, and has also had to adapt the nature of contracts with service providers in several states and regions due to lockdowns.

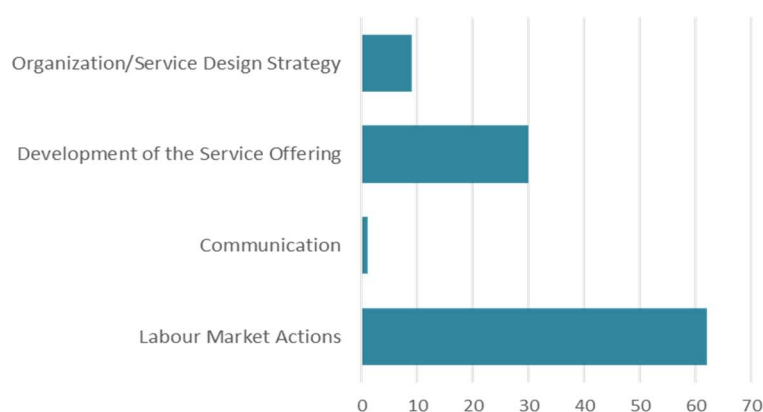
The strategies are certainly regionalised, but also incorporate international dimensions, particularly around worker mobility. This is the case for Kenya, which in 2021 embarked on negotiating bilateral working agreements with the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

¹ <https://www.dese.gov.au/new-employment-services-model>

Question 2: Mention three priority focus areas for action by your PES in relation to its environment (tensions within the labour market, region, economy, sectoral support, etc.) over the next year.

A categorisation of the key priority focus areas of the respondent PESs immediately reveals the predominance of a commitment to supporting labour market transformations, stimulus plans and active employment policy programmes.

Figure 2: “Environmental actions” themes



An analysis of the recurring sub-themes linked to priorities for labour market measures reveals the three major points of convergence of action by public employment services in relation to their environment, with three inseparable focus areas:

- Labour market measures
- Enhancing the range of services offered
- The service offer’s design strategy and organisation

PESs are resolutely committed to offering support alongside their government through their custodianship of proactive policies to support economic developments, whether these involve short or medium-term stimulus or consolidation plans, or longer-term plans to correct structural effects (ageing population, climate imperatives, integration of young workers, correcting inequalities, etc.).

Figure 3: Labour market measures sub-themes



- Labour market measures

The acceleration of changes in employment and the labour market requires a dynamic vision of the needs and resources available, and for this to be shared with labour market players (working population, economic agents, industry partners, politicians, etc.). This requires our labour market information systems to be enhanced and made more reliable, and several countries are already reflecting on the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in this area.

The majority of respondent PESs cited the following among their priorities: combating exclusion, initiatives for vulnerable groups, with a convergence towards the young working population, but there is also a very clear focus on persons with disabilities.

In Europe (Estonia) and in Asia (Japan, Thailand), the effects of an ageing workforce require action to retain older citizens in employment and to ensure that the impact of insecure career paths does not add problems of poverty to the already difficult issue of funding pensions and retirement plans for workers leaving the labour market (see the inset on Japan in the appendix). Ensuring a “skills handover”, since population ageing is also a factor that aggravates the skills shortages we see in many labour markets.

We also note that the management of skills and careers is a confirmed priority in a majority of the respondent public services. Understanding the labour market is one thing – knowing how to anticipate, make decisions on future directions and manage a career in a changing environment is another. PESs are very active in this area and position their service offerings to encourage professional mobility and therefore to expedite the transfer of resources and skills between sectors that are growing and sectors that are in decline.

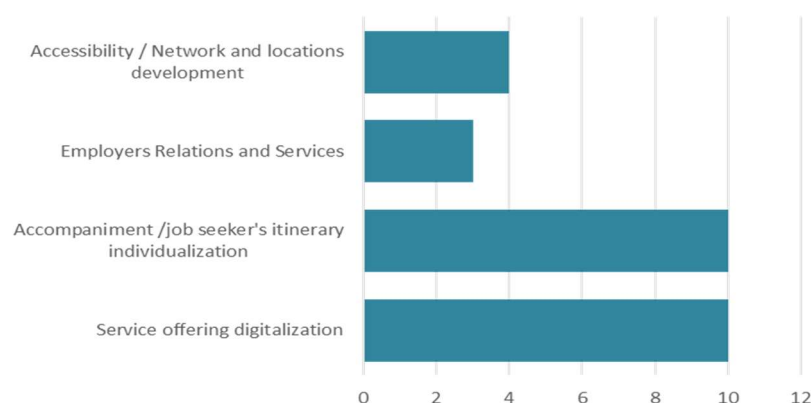
This also relies on strong political commitment aimed at returning power and responsibility to individuals so they can take an active role in their own future (lifelong training and guidance).

- Enhancing the range of service offered

Unsurprisingly, the second priority area emerging from our survey is that of expanding the range of PES services.

The verbatim responses reveal a twofold concern regarding the services offered: firstly, the need to build service offerings based on a segmentation that makes it possible to structure and organise the delivery mechanisms in an optimal way, and secondly the necessity of taking into account the experience, unique aspirations and expectations of the user.

Figure 4: Spotlight on the range of PES services focus areas in 2022



As we can see, the digitalisation of the service offering, and the optimisation of jobseekers' career paths, are major priorities. In addition, these two themes correlate closely, with the digitalisation of services having now adopted a resolutely user-centred direction, taking into account the need to individualise the responses and services offered, and to provide ease of access while at the same time aiming to streamline procedures (e.g. the "Digital First" strategy in Sweden).

In several countries, particularly within Africa (Kenya, Mali, Senegal, etc.), major focus areas include building up the network and the number of establishments, with the objective of being able to expand service access to populations that are further away from urban centres and more disconnected from the labour market.

- Design strategy and organization

A third theme also emerges, relating more to the internal organisation of services. This is mentioned, for example, by the PESs of Australia, Cambodia, Spain, Norway, Luxembourg and Tunisia.

In this theme, we discover an initial trend that confirms the importance that PESs now place on designing a service offering based on users' experience, with an emphasis on ensuring they are listened to and their experiences and points of view on the service are considered. Beyond the many high-quality initiatives undertaken for many years in the majority of PESs, we note the emphasis on improving performance based on monitoring and evaluation (or self-evaluation) that focuses not only on the results, but also on recurring analysis of processes.

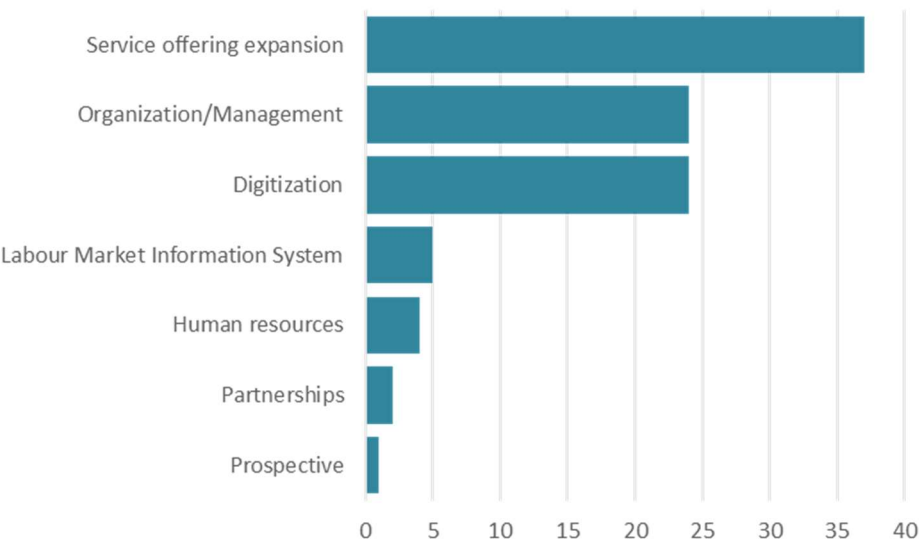
Major focus areas or shifts in emphasis concerning the relationship with businesses are also highlighted, with initiatives to collaborate on building new responses to skills shortages with players from the business community (e.g. "New Solutions for Employment", an initiative by the Brussels region in Belgium in conjunction with Actiris, the PES for the Brussels region²)

Other focus areas (mentioned by Norway and Australia) signal a commitment to maintaining or strengthening a high-quality staff-management dialogue within our organisations, to encourage support for the changes and transitions that it is up to us to steer now and in the coming years.

² <https://press.actiris.be/patrons-et-organismes-publics-se-rencontrent-pour-construire-de-nouvelles-solutions-pour-lemploi>

Question 3: Mention three priority focus areas adopted by your PES to develop public user/customer services in the next year.

Figure 5: Main priority areas for customers services of PES in 2022

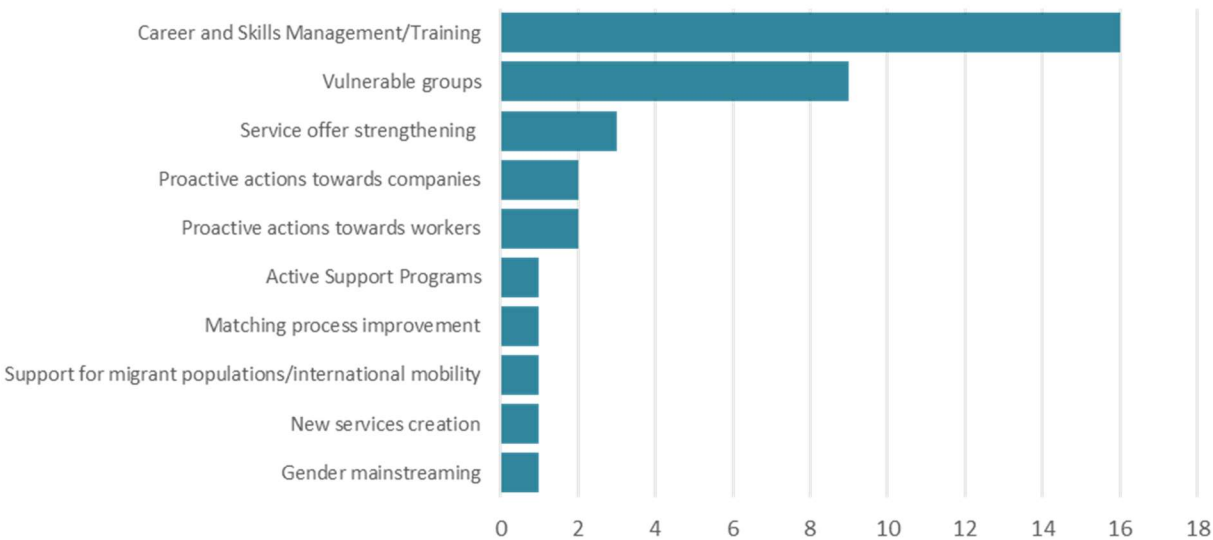


- Service offering expansion

The first set of focus areas reported by our respondent PESs, consistent with the PES commitments already described in the previous questions about our action on the environment and the labour market, relates to **the expansion of the service offer**.

A more detailed analysis of the focus areas relating to the services offered shows there was a concerted effort in 2022 around a set of guidance, career advice and vocational training services.

Figure 6: Spotlight on the expansion of service offerings



This commitment involves the redesign and development of new tools to inform and guide the working population, as well as digitalisation and the use of new technologies to make these processes more accessible to all, and more active and more individualised. We also note a strong investment in

responding more appropriately to more vulnerable people, with the aim of correcting inequalities and preventing the risks of labour market exclusion.

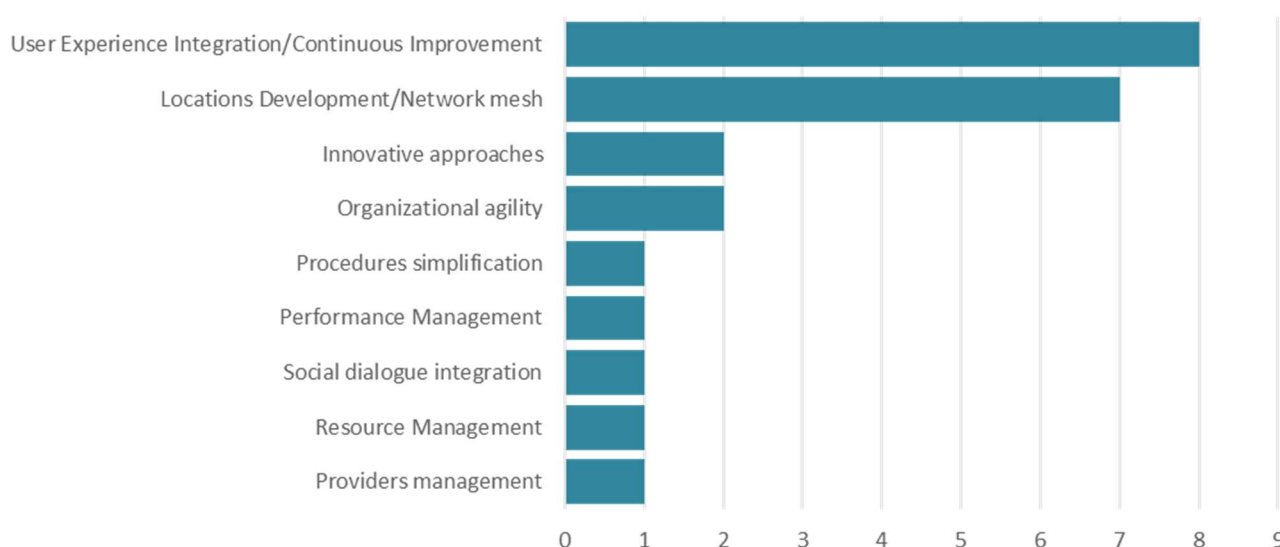
We see a notable change in the verbatim responses, with approaches to the service offering that focus less on the segmentation of profiles (which tend to pigeonhole beneficiaries into set career paths), and instead more on integrated approaches that allow individual situations to be taken into account, with more dynamic and evolving career paths.

Several PESs (Australia, Russia, Cyprus, Korea, Bosnia and Herzegovina) also illustrate a strong desire to take action earlier, and more proactively, by offering more accessible information for the working population and for businesses, and by simplifying intermediation processes (matching).

- Organization and management

Another significant topic concerns adjustments in the internal organisation of PESs, with two strong trends. The first relates to the integration of the user's experience already described above, and various approaches to continuous improvement in the processes of developing or adjusting service offerings.

Figure 7: Spotlight on PES organization/management



In some PESs, this involves creating more cross-cutting services focusing entirely on the User Experience (UX), be those users jobseekers, employers or advisers. This is the case, for example, for Iskür in Türkiye and Arbetsförmedlingen in Sweden.³

Customer focus, marketing strategies, and continuous improvement are always integrated into our organisational processes.

A second point relates to increasing our presence – growing the network either through the development and modernisation of physical establishments (offices, agencies, etc.) or through investment in platforms that enable high-quality services to be delivered remotely.

The investment in innovative practices is particularly well illustrated by the testimony from the public employment service (SEPE) in Spain. Under the government's impetus, it has committed to

³ <https://wapes.org/en/news/arbetsformedlingens-new-strategy-customer-work-digital-first>

transforming the current region-based service into a government employment agency, called the Agencia Española de Empleo (AEE), with a modernised structure and the digitalisation of all these processes to boost agility and flexibility.

Organisational agility and optimised performance (illustrated, for example, in the focus areas from the Luxembourg and Russia PESs) in relation to far-reaching changes to public employment services are becoming topics for shared reflection and for exchanging experience between PESs.

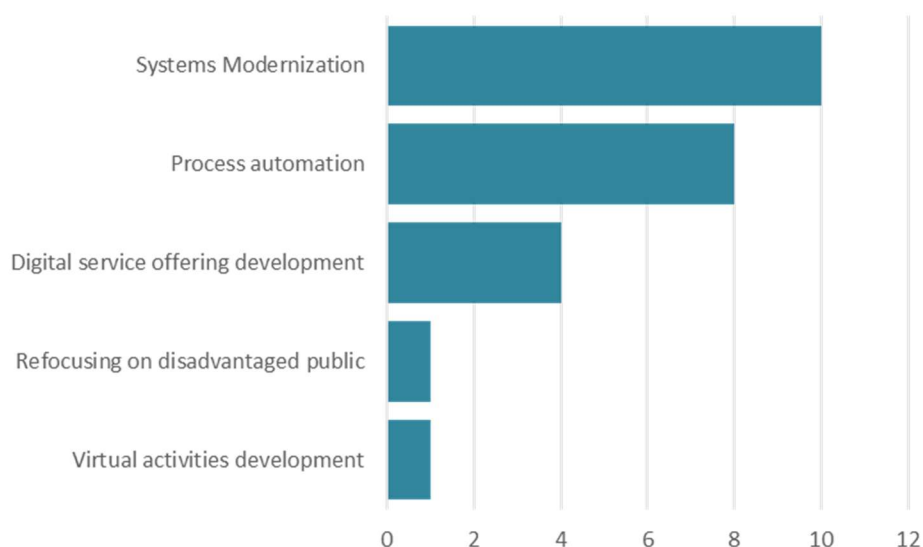
The streamlining of procedures, management of resources, delegation of services and quality control of service providers, and integration of staff-management dialogue are all topics that are mentioned regularly.

The commitment of the European Union's PES Network to its Benchlearning strategy and the involvement of PESs in the self-evaluation initiative proposed by WAPES as part of the Long-Term Strategy are concrete expressions of this sharing of experiences and practices on these topics. After the SAMPES Pilot carried out in 2020, in 2021 19 African PESs embarked on the "SAMPES Africa" project through active cooperation with the YouMatch initiative, and funding from GIZ.

- Digitalization

The third subject to emerge from focus areas relating to the evolution of services concerns digital technology and the digitalisation of services.

Figure 8: Spotlight on the digitalisation theme



Whatever stage each PES is at in terms of digitalisation of its services and processes, the ongoing modernisation of systems is a priority.

Based on the responses analysed, in concrete terms, digitalisation involves the automation of processes and of internal management (management of resources, organisation, increasing collaboration, etc.), as well as expanding the scope and the depth of the services offered to users, with an increase in virtual activities (advice, skills development, training, etc.).

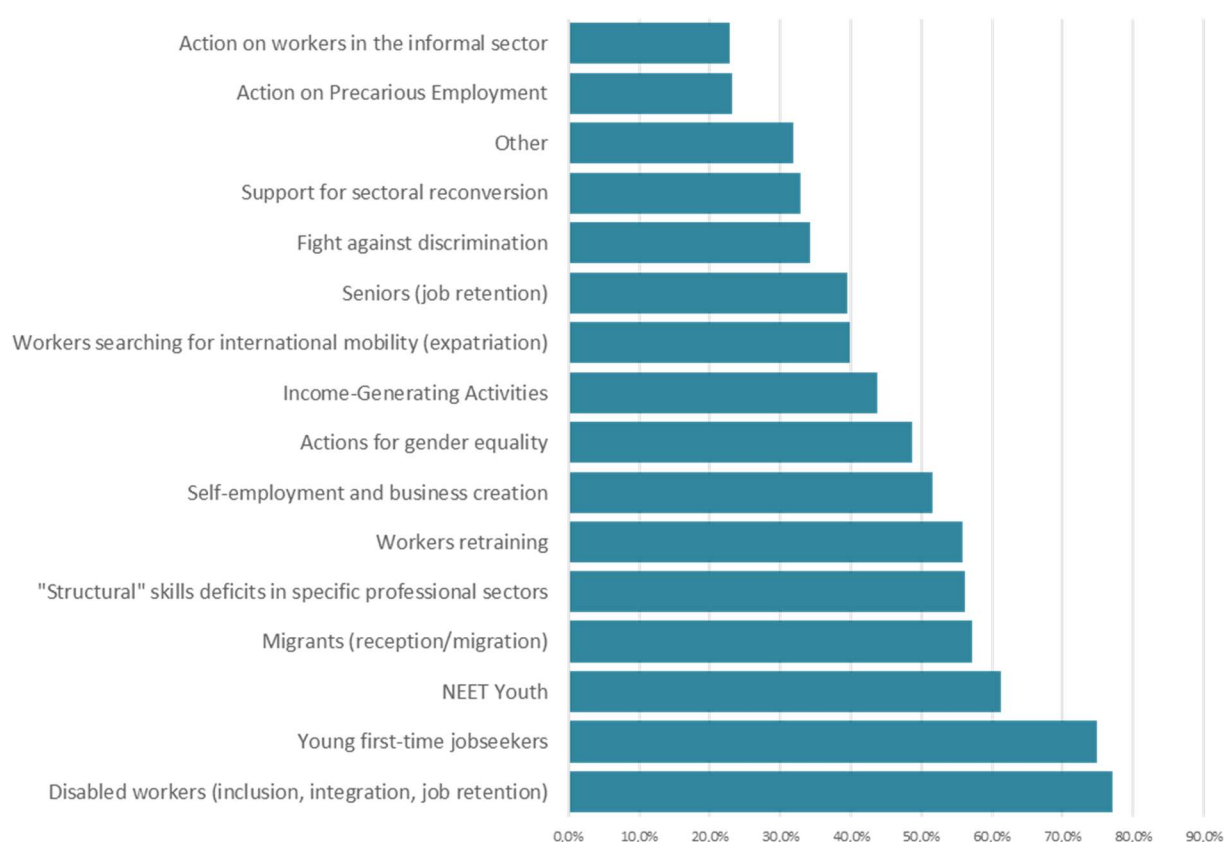
An important point to note concerns the time and productivity gains that result from this strong investment in new technologies. This makes it possible to refocus advisers' work on more disadvantaged groups for whom access to employment is particularly difficult. The other side to this is

that it is now necessary to strengthen advisers' skills to offering more complex support for these groups. This requires the development of interpersonal skills, more advanced psychosocial knowledge and, in some cases, work to reassign resources to new professions and new expertise emerging from the digital transformation in our PESs (data scientists, community managers, data protection officers, online reputation monitors, etc.).

In any case, digital acculturation has become essential for all PES professionals.

Question 4: Are there any planned or ongoing national (governmental) programmes aimed at specific groups (working population and businesses) or national priorities?

Figure 9: Recurring themes



In the above graph, we can see that, of the three most frequently cited themes, two relate to young workers. In a majority of countries, regardless of their demographic structure, the issue of labour market access for young workers remains key.

As a cross-cutting issue for several of the themes mentioned here, correcting inequalities in labour market access is at the heart of government concerns and of commitments by PESs: the integration of persons with disabilities (the theme most frequently mentioned in the answers to this question), the management of migrant populations, gender equality initiatives and combating discrimination.

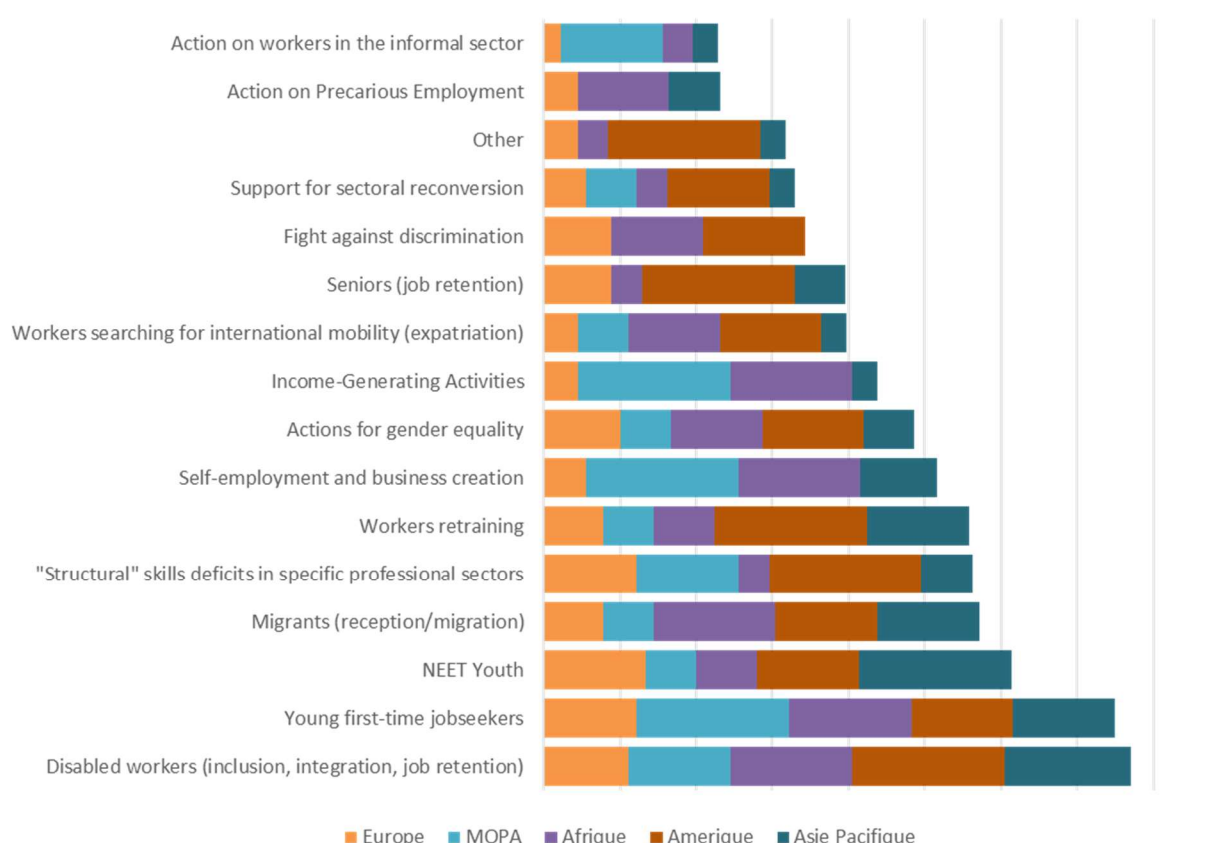
Government plans and policies correlate with regional issues. It was therefore interesting for us to observe the relative weighting of each theme within the region to which the respondent PES belongs. This is illustrated in Figure 6.

The first two priority themes of employment policies are relatively balanced between regions.

This means that, for 2022, the integration of disabled people and young workers into the labour market will be common topics for the majority of respondent PESs.

We also see that the issue of migrant populations is a common concern for countries of origin as well as for receiving countries (see Figure 6).

Figure 10: Recurring themes by region



Despite the limitations of this exercise, given the small sample size, the above figure shows the weighted distribution by region for each of the proposed themes. Although several areas of action are shared, some, such as self-employment and income-generating activities (IGAs), are more pronounced for African and Middle East and Adjoining Countries (MEAC).

In “other responses”, the more specific themes mentioned are as follows:

- Indigenous peoples⁴ - Armed Forces Veterans⁵ - Temporary Foreign Workers⁶ (Canada);
- Government social safety net⁷ and the Presidency of the Republic emergency programme (Mali);

⁴ <https://www.canada.ca/fr/services/autochtones/education-formation-emplois.html>

⁵ <https://www.canada.ca/fr/ministere-defense-nationale/services/avantages-militaires/transition/prochaine-carriere.html>

⁶ <https://www.canada.ca/fr/emploi-developpement-social/services/travailleurs-etranagers.html>

⁷ <https://rsu.gouv.ml/portail/jigisemejiri/>

- Programmes to promote employment in rural areas⁸ (Spain);
- Long-term unemployed adults, jobseekers with no basic education, disadvantaged groups⁹ (Roma population, Egyptians, etc.) (Albania);
- Specific actions: Brussels support plan for single-parent families¹⁰ (see appendix).

Clarification by Australia on those not in education, employment or training (NEETs)/Young people:

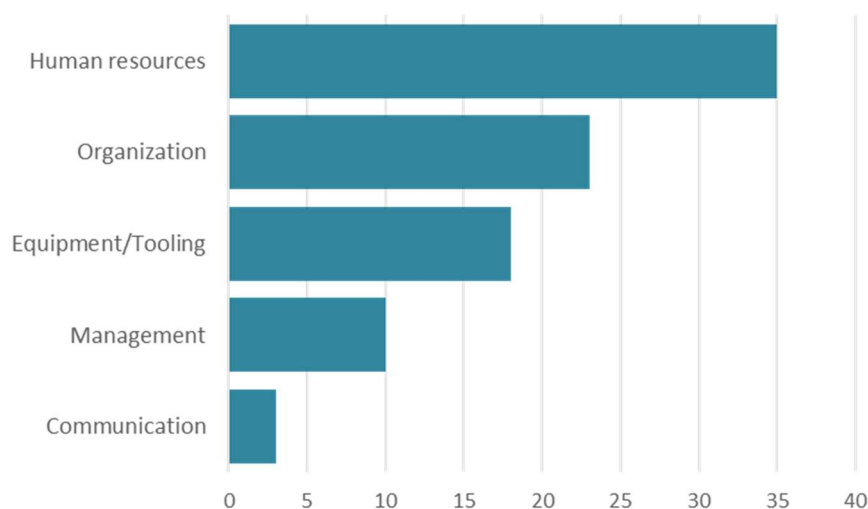
The existing employment service for the “Transition to Work” (TtW) helps young people aged 15 to 24 to find a job (including apprenticeship and training courses) or continue their studies.

From 1 July 2022, TtW will be a service dedicated to youth employment in the new employment services model. This will enable more young people (aged 15 to 24) to access specialist youth employment services and to have the best chances of being ready for work and finding secure employment. The Australian Government is also investing 7.5 million dollars over four years in the Youth Advisory Sessions service for young jobseekers in digital services starting from 1 July 2022.

Question 5: Mention three priority focuses of your PES aimed at developing and transforming its internal organisation and the working conditions of employees.

The responses to this question clearly reveal five main areas of focus for 2022 among the respondent PESs:

Figure 11: “Internal organisation and employee working conditions” recurring themes



• Human resources

Out of 89 verbatim reports, nearly 40% (35) report a strong focus on, and prioritisation of, human resources. This is followed by focus areas that relate to the organisation or reorganisation of services, the adjustment of processes to changes in the environment and political and social requirements, followed by issues relating to increasing the equipment and tools made available to teams. Scrutiny of

⁸ <https://sede.sepe.gob.es/portalSede/procedimientos-y-servicios/empresas/empleo/programa-fomento-empleo-agrario.html>

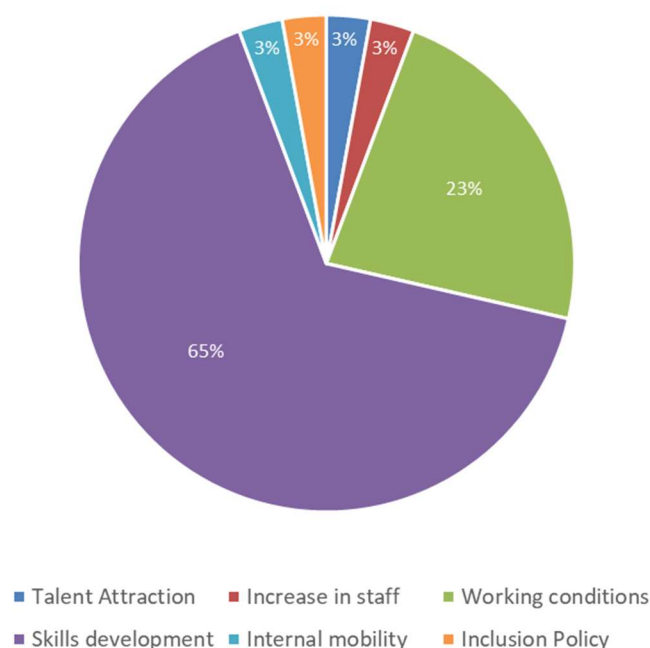
⁹ <https://www1.undp.org/content/undp/fr/home/ourwork/ourstories/giving-roma-and-egyptians-in-albania-an-economic-boost.html>

¹⁰ https://parentsolo.brussels/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Plan_Monoparentalite_2021.pdf

managerial practices and how organisations are run also features prominently. Finally, the topic of communication and brand image as levers of motivation is emphasised.

A more detailed analysis of the verbatim reports on human resources reveals six main human resources (HR) themes, of which the main one, which recurs in 65% of the focus areas, is that of skills development.

Figure 12: “HR focus” details



We note **that for 65% of the verbatim reports priority is focused on employees’ skills development**, mainly the training of advisers but also – significantly – of managers.

The themes mentioned relate, of course, to proficiency in new digital tools and the changes in ways of working that they entail, but we clearly see a strong focus on the upskilling of advisers to enhance their expertise in providing interpersonal support. This can be easily explained by the fact that most PESs have opted for a strategy of digitalisation and providing autonomous access to more services, to enable face-to-face support to be deployed for the groups that need it most. These groups, whose integration is more complex, require interpersonal and psychosocial competences. With digitalisation, this will be achieved far less by improving employment advisers’ command of information than by improving their command of interpersonal skills.

We noted the same thing when it comes to focuses on service offerings, with career management guidance and advice becoming essential levers for action in the labour market. The clear concern to refocus on the “customer”, on the user and their needs and expectations, leads us to bolster among our employees a truly advisory role that is more akin to that of coaching.

Managers are no different. The changes in working conditions and in the organisation of work experienced since the start of the pandemic have simply accelerated a major movement driven by social and generational changes, with strong expectations from our employees for more autonomy, collaboration and cooperation.

The refocusing of management methods on operational and social performance is transforming how management is applied. Several PESs have therefore given priority to supporting and upskilling management at every level.

In this context of profound change, we are seeing the emergence of more and more initiatives to create universities and academies within PESs to ensure a quantitative and qualitative increase in investment in the development of PES staff skills.

Note that the second area of engagement relates to working conditions. Remote working, even if already partially or experimentally applied within certain PESs, has clearly emerged as the best response to the organisational constraints introduced by lockdowns or access restrictions, to keep services going.

For several years now, new ways of working have emerged within our sites and networks (shared workspaces, flexidesks, cleandesk policies, etc.) and outside them (remote working at home, satellite offices, coworking and external project-specific secondment). Against a backdrop of globalisation and individualisation of the employment relationship, with increasing use of digital technology, and the growth of these more flexible forms of work, in terms of location and working time, our organisational structures and therefore our management and supervisory practices are being transformed.

For many PESs, this is becoming a new employment standard that needs to be accompanied, for most of the changes, by work agreements and regulations as part of staff-management dialogue (examples cited by the PESs of Canada, Switzerland, Sweden, Mali and Norway).

Some PESs have launched “NWOW”¹¹ (“New World of Work”) reflection and action workshops or, more broadly, new forms of work organisation with more involvement and contributions from our employees. This is totally consistent with the approach of an organisation that is refocusing on the user experience.

The main issues raised by the respondent PESs are the following: mobility, environment, work-life balance, change management, etc. Issues that recurred less often, but which are nevertheless representative of the HR focus that many PESs share for the coming years, were recruitment, with the consequent aim of the PES being attractive enough to attract and retain “talents” and, of course, the ongoing concern with setting an example through an inclusive human resources management policy.

- Organization

The theme of organisation also comes up in several priority focus areas, with a series of sub-themes that precisely outline the levers deployed by the PESs, in general, to continuously adapt to changes in modes of intervention in the labour market and the requirements of society (political authority, economic players, citizens, etc.).

As illustrated in Figure 13 below, the ongoing and iterative review of management and service provision processes is becoming a defining characteristic of our organisations, with the need to combine this with a genuine policy for supporting change – for which the key players are, of course, the managers. Our management supports and embodies this transformation, hence the HR priorities regarding skills development and support for this population, but also for all employees. (e.g. Australia, Sri Lanka, Hungary, Algeria, Luxembourg, Senegal, Russia, Türkiye, Cyprus, Thailand, Albania, Belgium, Sweden).

¹¹ NWOW approach mentioned by Actiris, the PES for the Brussels region (Belgium).

Figure 13: “Organization” sub-themes



We also see strong focuses on building up the network, but also on a commitment to operational partnership policies, with a view broadening the accessibility and scope of service offerings with more regionalised approaches (e.g. Sweden, Canada, Kenya, Bosnia and Herzegovina).

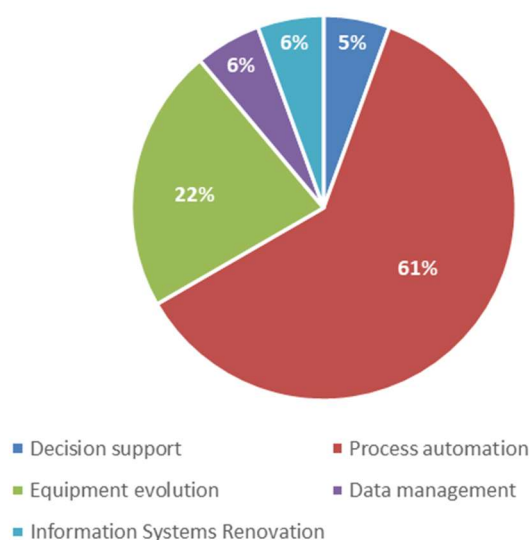
We are equally seeing definite policy focuses on quality and continuous improvement, with stated commitments by several PESs to undertake processes of objective evaluation of the quality and impact of their actions vis-à-vis their users.

Finally, a side effect of investment in the digitisation of services is the issue of data security, mentioned by İşkur in Türkiye but which emerges as a concern shared by all PESs.

- Environment, equipment and tooling of employees

The third grouping of priority focus areas aimed at developing and transforming internal organisation and employee working conditions is changes in their working environment and the tools made available to them, with changes in applications and modernised equipment. Process automation, aimed at simplifying tasks or even transferring administrative activities, to increase productivity and refocus action on effective intermediation, is a focus area cited in 61% of the responses to this question.

Figure 14: Changes in PES working environments



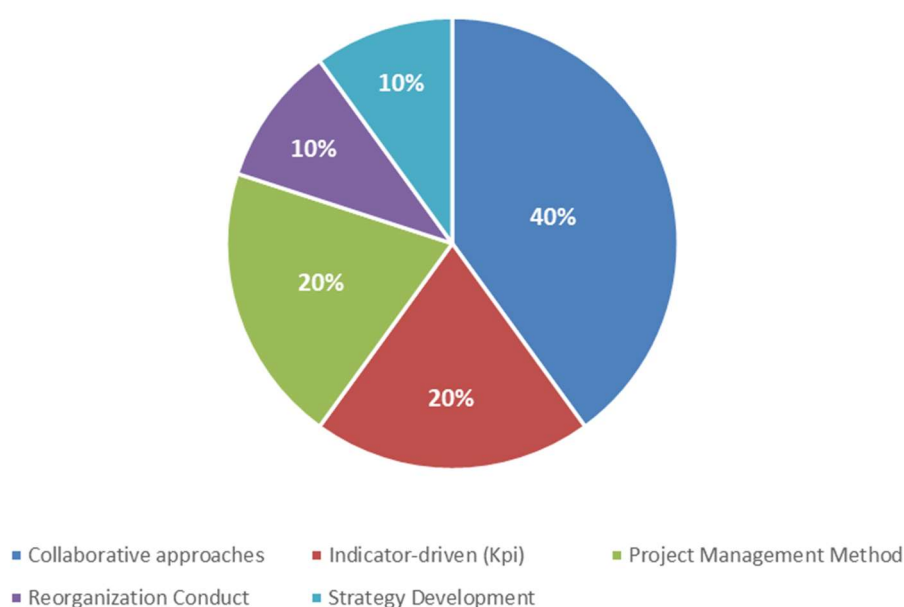
Changes in equipment are mentioned in 22% of the verbatim responses, particularly in relation to the provision of mobile equipment to allow full and efficient access to new ways of working.

Other responses mention the upgrading of information systems, which were often built on technology that is now obsolete; the management of data (reliability, protection, etc.) and data usage, to make these information systems effective decision-making support systems.

Although it was not directly expressed in this part of the survey, the significant investment in the use of artificial intelligence by many PESs also sought to address these challenges of changing our employees' working environment.

- Management and leadership

Figure 15: "Management and leadership" sub-themes



As already highlighted in the previous responses, changes in managerial practices are typified by focuses on implementing collaborative approaches, a more project-based, more cross-cutting mode of management, with a commitment to monitoring all the many different aspects of performance (operational results, efficiency and security of processes, corporate climate, well-being at work, etc.).

- Communication

Finally, the last topic addressed in this section relates to communication (mentioned by Mali, Canada and Luxembourg), with the aim of improving the visibility of the PES and improving its brand image among its users, businesses and partners. While PES activities remain focused on the core task of intermediation, the services they offer and their means of intervention have evolved significantly. This has been particularly influenced by the growth in use of digital technology.

Communication by PESs through the web and via social networks now involves designing the service offering to take into account the user experience, and the image conveyed in how the services are presented, the quality of the interfaces in which we present them, and the way we dialogue with users and partners are all now essential elements of the PES's positioning in its environment. The brand

image and online reputation of a PES are as decisive drivers of performance as organisation, professional proficiency and the services offered.

Question 6: What do you think will be the major issues (challenges) for your PES for the coming year?

- Job shortage

For most of the respondent PESs, the effects of the pandemic will continue to be felt on employment, and there are still challenges they will have to face: business sectors that are facing job shortages may, in some cases, see more systemic consequences for the rest of the economy. Most of the PESs (Canada, Belgium, Kenya, Denmark, Mali, Bosnia and Herzegovina, etc.) reported increased vigilance about the risks of business bankruptcies, or a freeze in job creation, with most countries having actively supported their economies over the last two years, gradually phasing out support mechanisms.

- Short, medium and long term actions on labour market

A major common challenge also arises: being able to take action in the short, medium and long term on aligning supply and demand for skills in the labour market (Morocco, Germany, Norway, Malaysia, Luxembourg and Iceland, etc.) with early and corrective action on demographic impacts.

- Integration of youth in the labour market

For many countries, there are major challenges in pursuing action on integrating young people into the labour market, whether they are newly arrived young graduates (Azerbaijan, Belgium, Cyprus, Norway, etc.), young people without qualifications (NEETS) or, more recently, young people who, during the pandemic, have found it difficult to find a job.

European PESs are demonstrating their commitment to the European Commission's recommendations on implementing actions under the reinforced Youth Guarantee programme.¹²

- PES reorganization

We also note that several PESs are in the midst of changing political contexts, requiring some of them to adapt and reorganise their PES. This is true for Australia's PES, which is undergoing an ambitious transformation while ensuring that jobseekers and employers are actively served during the transition to the new employment services model (NESM).¹³ It is also true in Switzerland, with its return to the previous unemployment insurance scheme and reflection on the PES, and for Spain, which is supporting investment and reform of the Recovery, Transformation and Resilience Plan, and the roll-out of the new 2021–2024 Active Employment Support Strategy.

¹² The **reinforced Youth Guarantee** is a commitment by all EU countries to ensuring that all young people under the age of 30 benefit from a high-quality offer for work or further training, an apprenticeship or traineeship within four months of becoming unemployed or completing their studies. To learn more: <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1036&langId=en>

¹³ The NESM represents the largest reform of employment services in Australia since 1998. The Australian Government is investing 5.9 billion dollars in the programme to help jobseekers who are ready to find a job and to better serve those who need additional support. The model will need to continue to respond to external factors and macroeconomic conditions, including federal government elections in 2022.

- Facing change of political context

For other PESs that we have not listed here, under WAPES' principles of apoliticism and neutrality, their answers indicate the emergence of political contexts that appear to be making their work more difficult, or even jeopardising their existence, with a stated desire to return to the original objectives of a PES as defined by International Labour Organization Convention No. 88.

- Inclusive labour market

A large number of issues reported for 2022 by the respondent PESs can be summarised as combating all forms of exclusion and correcting labour market access inequalities for certain categories of the population (women, persons with disabilities, migrants). Finally, for the majority, the continued transformation of service offerings (expansion, simplification, digitalisation) remains a priority issue, with support for developing the skills of PES staff.

Question 7. What do you think will be the main levers available to your PES to respond to these challenges and/or address these issues?

Figure 16: The main levers of PESs



The lexical treatment of the responses to this question groups the levers that will enable public employment services to rise to the challenges of the coming year into broad categories.

The first set of levers relates to the implementation or continuation of active policy plans, or the activation of employment with targeted strategies, supported or accompanying government plans. These plans provide resources and legitimise the action of PESs, which are the main operators of these programmes, with different target groups already mentioned in other questions, such as the integration of young people, gender equality in the workplace, the integration of disabled people, and the development of the social and solidarity economy, etc.

The second set of consequences arising from the first groups together all the responses that relate to establishing partnerships to boost and supplement action by the PESs. Partnerships make it possible to broaden the range of services offered through coordinated actions with other labour market players, whether they are other operators, associations or other government services. Opportunities and contractual arrangements with private partners or service providers also offer the possibility of

enriching the services offered, in terms of their technological aspects (design, digitalisation, etc.), the search for innovations, as well as their appropriation, with the delegation of user support activities (jobseekers or businesses).

We also see that the third category of levers represents performance monitoring actions within our organisations, with challenges in terms of process security, optimised resource management, managing and evaluating milestones, results (KPIs), with an increase in upgraded management practices.

A similar and related subject is that of human resources, which are such an asset for our organisations, provided they are used effectively by supporting their upskilling and by offering them motivating working conditions (equipment, interpersonal relationships, motivation, etc.). The attention that should be paid to the changes introduced by widespread remote working (work-life balance) and new management practices (personalisation of targets, trust-based management, etc.) was widely mentioned.

Question 8. Please identify three topics or questions that you would like to share with the other PESs.

List of verbatim reports

- Examples of best practices for those groups requiring a special policy, particularly for women and young people, as part of active labour market programmes
- How have other countries' PESs adapted to COVID?
- What types of penalties have other PESs applied for unemployed people who reject job or training offers, particularly during crisis periods?
- What would be the best scenario for a PES to fulfil its role or adapt to cope with the COVID pandemic?
- Labour market monitoring
- What are the innovative approaches to staff training in the other PESs?
- Strategies and mechanisms for mobilising additional resources
- The deployment in Spain of the Network of Guidance, Entrepreneurship, Support and Innovation Centres (Centros de Orientación al Empleo (COEs))
- What are other members' experiences of using IT and AI in the provision of publicly funded employment services?
- Lack of awareness of PESs among young people
- What tools, mechanism and methodologies would you recommend for coordinating the link and relationship between a country's labour market and its education system?
- Wide range of different vulnerable groups and long-term unemployment
- The development of a new PES mission statement
- Gender-based violence and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
- Changing internal culture and cybersecurity resilience
- What interventions have you introduced to improve protection for your migrant workers?
- The digitisation of the intermediation process in employment.
- Use of technology
- PES best practices in addressing coronavirus-related problems
- How PESs manage working from home (remote working)
- eServices (including AI)

- Digitalisation of employment services
- Can “playbooks” be shared to accelerate new programmes such as apprenticeship programmes?
- What non-tax incentives have been put forward to encourage workers to prolong their careers?
- Migration
- What basic competences should young jobseekers have

Question 9. What are your expectations of the WAPES network?

List of verbatim reports

- Examples of good practices for passive employment programmes were strongly applied during the pandemic; digital services solutions for disadvantaged groups (the disabled, immigrants, women, etc.); measurement and evaluation tools used in counselling services; more information transfer in fields such as business-to-business routing and international study visits is expected.
- Gain an overview of COVID-19’s impact on PES delivery mechanisms and identify current trends in PESs for economic recovery.
- Production and dissemination of important information on the challenges, priorities and policy measures promoted by different PESs through briefing papers and web conferences.
- WAPES members will not only share challenges, but also provide robust solutions or case study examples to help enhance service quality and serve customers better.
- Sharing good practices and expertise. Regular organisation of seminars, round tables. Boosting collaboration and partnership between PESs for international mobility.
- Enhanced cooperation on topical issues (e.g. remote consultations), launch of joint projects.
- Supporting WAPES in preparing and implementing specific employment promotion programmes and projects. Supporting PESs in mobilising additional resources (carbon funds, climate funds, etc.). Contributing to the capacity building of PES human resources. Support for PES’ equipment and materials.
- Exchanging knowledge and experience on relevant issues - Establishing cooperation between members - Publication of information on the activities of PES members.
- Accessing applicable good practices in the case of Spain. Being able to rely on expert support in specific fields of employment.
- A stronger presence, more offers of events/exchanges, sustainability in topics/projects, clear objectives and ways of achieving them.
- Sharing best practices, cooperation
- “Peer Knowledge” regional collaborations
- That WAPES continues to organise activities that contribute to the Association’s objectives, and its continued use of its IT platform for future events, with a particular focus on learning and on strengthening knowledge about the design and provision of employment services. Australia looks forward to the resumption of face-to-face WAPES meetings, including meetings with members from the Asia-Pacific region, when circumstances allow.
- World labour market forecasts, PES success stories in other countries, etc.
- 1) Share best practices for increasing employment levels and provide technical, methodological support and support for implementation; 2) Provide financial, technical, methodological and implementation support for policies, programmes, projects and

unemployment reduction measures; 3) Develop and implement joint intergovernmental action plans on labour migration.

- Exchanges of inspiring and innovative practices, for example with countries from other continents (the Americas, including Canada-Quebec, the United States, Asia, North Africa and South Africa) on shared themes: urban contexts, federalism, multilingualism, long-term unemployment and job guarantees, NEETs of all ages, inactive people, digitalisation and AI, new technologies, the green transition, etc.
- Present proven practices integrated into practical experience and manage the transfer of knowledge.
- Continue and expand the opportunity to exchange experience to improve our organisations' capacity.
- Restart active membership.
- Share good practices
- More exchanges of knowledge and good practices on the labour market and training between member PESs.
- Share best practices and exchange ideas for improving PES services.
- Sharing knowledge on best practices and successful actions in other organisations.
- Ongoing collaboration efforts to improve our PES.
- Technical support - Financial support - Material support
- Better coverage between the different regions. More individual support projects with concrete results expected.
- Repository of relevant documents.
- A review of best practices and workshops on specific and topical themes (see questions above).
- Exchanging good practices and successful experiences in different fields. Supporting the PESs as they face the labour market repercussions of the global pandemic, and skills adaptation in particular Promoting the expertise of ANETI, the Tunisian PES.
- Ad hoc support for expertise, finding partners and technical support for the integration and skills development of young people.

By way of conclusion

Despite the very significant impacts of the pandemic on the labour market and on the activity of PESs, the strategic focus areas of PESs remain mainly concentrated around initiatives and programmes designed to streamline the labour market, with a shared commitment to groups that find it more difficult to access the labour market (persons with disabilities, young people with or without qualifications, those in insecure jobs, etc.) and an ongoing concern for reducing inequalities.

The questions focused on short-term issues and focus areas (looking ahead to 2022), but we can see from the responses that the PESs are all engaged in medium or long-term approaches, some with a comprehensive review of their organisation and ways of working. The services offered have been enriched, simplified and made more accessible to all through a resolutely user-focused approach, with two key levers:

- the first is digitalisation and the rapid integration of technological progress;
- the second is a commitment to developing new partnerships and recalibrating relationships with other labour market operators or players, both public and private.

The other strategic lever, and an essential one for PESs, is our human resources. In the last two years, there have been changes, revolutions even, in working conditions and methods. Besides the ability to work remotely, automation and digitisation now allow our advisers to refocus on their core work: advice and support. But the speed of the changes, whether social, economic or technological, requires us to invest heavily in developing the skills of our employees.

Structuring the activities offered by WAPES differently

This leads us to propose that WAPES activities should be structured and classified around three main groups of “strategic” themes that have emerged from this survey, namely:

- Labour market measures
- Enhancing the range of services offered
- Organisation and management of PESs

Labour market measures include any programme or action plan with sector-specific or regional approaches, incorporating the mobilisation of partnerships, more policy-focused action by PESs, forward studies, etc.

Enhancing the range of services offered through diversification, adaptation to users’ expectations (workers and employers), accessibility and digitalisation.

Organisation and management, which encompasses everything related to the architecture of a PES, its organisation, governance, leadership, management of resources, etc. This section will include a number of levers and facilitators described within the SamPES project:

- Strategic performance management
- Design of business processes
- Evidence-based design and implementation of PES services
- Allocation of PES resources

Each activity should be designed to enable it to fulfil several functions: reciprocal information between members (news, sharing of experience, asking questions); facilitation and inspiration through the

benchmark, and a function more focused on future prospects, research and development by sharing content and co-learning or mutual learning initiatives.

The new WAPES platform, with its social network and e-learning opportunities (Labour Market Survey (LMS)), should enable us to have a more fluid and proactive relationship and discussions, and to truly capitalise on experiences among member PESs.

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Appendices

Brussels region: Single parenthood and training/employment/jobseeking/job retention



For single-parent families, the route to training, employment or jobseeking is often littered with obstacles.

This is particularly true for single mothers.

Whether or not single parents have children, how many they have and how old they are, has a significant impact on their employment rate.

Given the difficulty of balancing work and family life, women's participation in the labour market tends to decline after they have a child. In addition, single women with one or more children encounter more practical difficulties in balancing and aligning this responsibility with the demands of the working world. The employment rate drops substantially in single-parent families, for both men and women, but it is more significant for women. The employment rate for single mothers is significantly lower than that of mothers who have partners. When the children are very young (aged under 3), job seeking is even more complex. Childcare places are prioritised for working parents, making it difficult for single mothers to attend training, go to employment offices or job interviews, because they generally cannot afford to hire a babysitter and do not have family support. All this occurs despite policies to encourage this group into the workplace.

In addition, employers may be reluctant to hire a single mother with children (especially when her children are very young), due to limitations on her working hours when they are in childcare and then at school. Finally, lone mothers, more than others, face the phenomenon of employment "traps": for some women who are low-skilled or working in low-wage jobs, when they add up the costs of employment (travel costs, food, clothing, childcare, etc.), and after taking into account the loss of social benefits, the difference between accepting a job and staying unemployed is negligible.

This means that employment is not necessarily synonymous with an increase in income or an improvement in living conditions.

Japan: Japan's "Employment Ice Age" generation



Between 1990 and 2000, Japan experienced a deep recession after its stock-market and real-estate-bubble economy burst, with lingering effects that can still be felt today.

The generation of workers who graduated from university or college between around 1990 and 2004 is referred to as the "Employment Ice Age" generation.

Members of this generation, who joined the labour market during this period of recession, faced a very contracted market that offered few opportunities and found themselves having to accept temporary, unstable and poorly paid jobs. When the Japanese economy gradually recovered, businesses resumed a traditional recruitment policy that involved hiring new graduates en masse, leaving the "ice-age generation" excluded from more stable and better-paid jobs.

Workers from this generation are now aged between 30 and 40.

Many members of this generation of workers are at risk of not having access to sufficient income when they reach retirement age, unless they benefit from family support to help them.

The Japanese Government has therefore set itself the objective of stimulating and prioritising stable employment for this generation's workers over the next three years, by offering them intensive support.

As part of this programme, the Government aims to support around 1 million people who are currently in unstable employment or who do not have a permanent job.

Vocational guidance and training will be improved, and subsidies for businesses that hire these people will be increased. By working with industry groups in the transport and construction sectors, which are currently experiencing labour shortages, the Government is prioritising assistance that will enable the "ice-age generation" to acquire the necessary skills quickly.

The Japanese Government has been implementing support measures for this generation for several years. Following a re-employment assistance plan adopted in 2006 and targeting part-time workers and "NEETs", i.e. young people not in education, employment or training, the number of part-time workers in the "employment ice age" generation has fallen from 880,000 to 520,000 over the last decade. During that same period, the number of unemployed people from this generation increased from 380,000 to 400,000.

Under recent policies, those who have not been able to find regular employment despite the measures already adopted will be eligible for assistance.

It is not uncommon to find, in these age groups, people who have been out of the labour market for more than 10 to 20 years, and so their reintegration is more complex and often requires them to take alternative routes to employment and reintegration before returning to ordinary work situations.