

Questions and answers on 'Future Skills for PES Counsellors' Webinar

03 February 2026 10:00 – 12:00 (CET)

Question on the subject of competition with other sectors /roles: do you have any insight on that? What kind of roles do PES frontline workers consider when switching jobs? Recruitment roles?

Tristram: That's a really interesting question as to where PES workers go. We didn't ask about this, but I think that this is definitely something that we should explore. My guess would be that Recruitment is one destination, career guidance roles within the education system would be another - but I suspect that many will just go into wider administration and public administration role. We must investigate this further

Alex: I think an interesting issue to think about in terms of competition and a variety of providers is the role of 'values' alongside skills, competency and knowledge. This has featured in some health and social care recruitment and I wonder if this is something that we should focus on more in the future.

There is some research on this in relation to PES but not a large amount - something to think more about in the future.

Did you collect info/data on current practice with respect to skills and qualifications of PES counsellors?

Yes, the report goes through current and future expectations in relation to tasks, skills and knowledge.

Alex, does your research look at whether the level of funding for PES is going up or down internationally? I would have thought that normally it would rise in periods of high unemployment

Alex: The paradox point is an unfortunate consequence of the pro-cyclical nature of public sector budgets - but I would argue that spending on PES should be seen as an extension of 'automatic stabilisers' to use 'economics language' - i.e. the spending should go up when demand is higher. On another project I have been working on some resource/capacity/accessibility indicators for PES. They are a bit experimental but a useful way of thinking about PES resources nonetheless - please do watch this space

We do not have accurate data globally at the moment - but the indicators I talk about above will really help with this.

Tristram: I think that the curriculum point is interesting. Our work could certainly be used as a useful starting point for the creation of a curriculum for PES training/education.

There are training and support available from international organisations currently. Part of the point of our project though is to use the findings to think about some common (online?) training resources that might be made available - and would be useful in particular for PES which are not as well-resourced as say Germany etc

Marie: A couple of nuances on the PES budgets:

- We observe globally a rise in (complex and stagnant) caseloads across social supports ecosystems, creating additional strains on social services and often PES.

- This may lead to needing to serve more people or through more intensive supports, with similar or at times less budget
- There is a global optimization effort across PES activities, with the intention to free up resources. This also includes shifting towards digital channels and calibrating the level of case management to needs.

Alex: There is a real mix of practice globally on the qualifications that PES offer. I don't know the answer to whether some PES certify work-based skills - I.e. work based assessment of skills demonstrated 'on the job'. As with our training point - it might be a useful capacity building initiative to support PES globally with certification of work-based skills.

Greetings from the ILO in Geneva, and thank you for the useful insights, Alex. The ILO currently offers a basic online training for counsellors, launched in 2023 to support the professionalisation of the counsellor role in contexts where such systems are not yet in place. We are now revisiting the content with a view to launching an updated version and are also exploring options for certification. Have you come across any relevant or innovative initiatives in this area? Happy to discuss further.

Alex: Thank you Zulum - we were hoping to look at training/capacity building support in the next phase of our research. There are examples - as we are hearing about in Germany and Denmark. These are very advanced, but we are also thinking about variety of contexts - many PES operate in labour markets with a high degree of informality for example, and we would be keen to look at building capacity in these contexts, where the evidence base in the 'literature' is less well developed. We'd love to work with ILO colleagues as well as WAPES on this of course!

Tristram: Yes, very keen to talk about what kind of frameworks could be produced to support both international and national training delivery for PES practitioners.

Marie: It will also be interesting to consider how ecosystems partners specialized in this space can help (e.g., organizations like Proper - employer engagement capability building or IEP who will be in our next WAPES webinar this afternoon)

Tristram: Yes, there is a key question here about what is done by PES and PES practitioners and by other organisations within the PES ecosystem

It was mentioned that action planning with jobseekers is much more important. any strategies that you can share to create an effective action plan?

Alex:

There has been some research in this area, particularly building on behavioural economics (you might know that as 'nudge' in English). It is also something that I think training/capacity building might focus on.

The lack of confidence in PES managing change, would it be influenced by their vulnerability to the political economy in their respective countries?

Alex: change in processes and systems.

Tristram: Yes, I think that this is right. There is a big question as to how far PES can determine their direction and strategy.

Marie: At times, it can also be about the lack of tools and capabilities to act as steward in a complex delivery ecosystem (e.g., when involving service providers, working across levels of government). Leadership structure is also critical.

Tristram: In many cases they have to implement what policy directs them to. There is a need for more co-production of strategy between policy, professionals and users;

In France there is an "official" diploma for Employment counsellor, level equivalent to 2 years after graduating from high school. Does that exist everywhere, even though this diploma is not compulsory to work at the French PES, but it could be a way to help young people to look into this role?

Alex: No this doesn't exist everywhere - it is a feature of some of the better resourced contexts.

How to effectively target skills to develop beyond everyday skills Employer section

On the question of where to start - agree with everything that colleagues have said. I would also emphasise three further points: 1. The need to build skill development from the tasks required of staff groups (top-down), but also 2. The data across most countries shows a very high level of skill mismatch and underutilisation in employers. PES staff will have relevant skills that are not always effectively used because of process, system or other constraints. So my second point would be to use employee forums to identify how skills can be better used, including an understanding the issues faced by jobseekers and employers (bottom up). 3. Speak to those service users directly - (outside in).

Thank you for the very insightful research. I have one question: did you observe any differences across regions of the world?

Alex: Our sample size was not large enough to do this in lots of detail, but we did check some of the answers against the region of expertise of our respondents. Perhaps surprisingly, there wasn't a massive difference where we checked this.

In the current context, given the need to diversify skills, what are the specific areas in which advisers should prioritise training?

Alex: In our report the expert consensus does address this - more than I can type quickly here - but the report does address it. The skills, knowledge and tasks on our slides cover it in summary.