



Bosnia and Herzegovina  
Labour and Employment Agency of  
Bosnia and Herzegovina



WAPES European Regional Conference

# Enhancing Skills for Public Employment Services

*Challenges and Opportunities in a Transforming Labour Market*

Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

20 – 21 May 2026

Hosted by

the Labour and Employment Agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina

**(LEA BiH)**



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The WAPES European Conference 2026, hosted by the Labour and Employment Agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina (LEA BiH), cordially invites you on the topic of Enhancing Skills for Public Employment Services, challenges and opportunities in a transforming labour market.

## **Introduction**

Demographic trends, the digital and green transitions, rising public debt and changing expectations among employers and jobseekers are reshaping labour markets and, with them, the role of PES as key public actors supporting employment, skills, and social cohesion.

The emerging EU policy focus towards increasing employment rates (78% EU target) and tackling stubborn skills shortages increasingly requires PES to reach out beyond their traditional roles of job-matching and benefit gatekeeping to deliver tailored measures for inactive groups and people facing barriers to help them find and progress in work. At the same time digitalisation and AI are disrupting existing business models and behaviours, bringing both risks and opportunities.

This is encouraging PES to fundamentally re-imagine how personalised services are delivered and with whom - building digitally enhanced wrap-around 'ecosystems' with skills, health, and local services and with a range of specialist partners. It also means re-imagining how skills are developed, recognised, and articulated to increase employment access, support sustainability, and facilitate labour mobility & migration.

Against this background, the WAPES European Region, in cooperation with the Labour and Employment Agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, will organise the WAPES European Conference 2026 in Sarajevo. The event will provide a strategic platform for dialogue and exchange among PES leaders, practitioners, policymakers, researchers and partners to focus on how PES can develop more human-centric services by building bridges across ecosystem disciplines and sectors, re-engineer digitally-infused processes and re-model human capital capabilities to respond to current and future labour market needs.

## **Conference objectives**

The conference aims to explore strategic responses to labour and skills shortages in a context of structural and technological change; examine the role of partnerships and cooperation between PES, education providers, employers and international actors; discuss approaches to skills recognition and labour mobility across borders; strengthen understanding of future skills needs within PES, including the role of technology and artificial intelligence; and promote the use of research and evidence to inform policy, service design and capacity building in PES.

## **Conference structure and themes**

The conference will be structured around three thematic panels, combining strategic reflection with practical perspectives from WAPES member organisations and partners.

- **Thematic Block I: Bridging Workforce Skills Shortages – Innovation, Data and Cooperation**

This panel will focus on how Public Employment Services can respond to skills shortages through improved use of labour market intelligence, innovative service delivery and strengthened cooperation with education systems, employers and social partners. It will explore the role of PES as coordinators within skills ecosystems and their contribution to aligning skills development with labour market needs.

- **Thematic Block II: Skills without Borders – Recognition, Cooperation and a Mobile Workforce**

This panel will address the challenges and opportunities associated with labour mobility and the integration of foreign workers. Discussions will focus on skills identification and recognition, cooperation across borders and the role of PES in supporting transparent, efficient and fair labour mobility in Europe and beyond.

- **Thematic Block III: PES for the Future – Strengthening Skills, Technology and Counselling Excellence**

This panel will focus on the future role of PES staff and institutions in a rapidly changing environment. It will serve as the official platform for the presentation of the results of the WAPES research on the future skills needs of PES counsellors, conducted in cooperation with Leeds Trinity University and the University of Derby. The discussion will explore implications for staff development, training systems, digitalisation and the responsible use of artificial intelligence in PES.

### **Added value and target audience**

The WAPES European Conference 2026 is open to all WAPES member organisations across all regions and will also welcome a selected group of external stakeholders, including representatives of ministries, international organisations, researchers and partner institutions. By bringing together WAPES members and key partners, the conference will foster a shared understanding of emerging challenges and strategic options facing Public Employment Services.

The conference will encourage active participation and exchange among WAPES members and partners, combining policy dialogue, institutional perspectives and research-based evidence. In doing so, it aims to support PES in strengthening their capacity to respond effectively to labour market transformation.

The conference will contribute to ongoing discussions within the WAPES European Region and provide inputs for future cooperation, mutual learning and innovation among member organisations.

***Please note that the working language of the conference will be English only.***

Tuesday, 19 May 2026		
Time	Activity	
19:00	<b>Welcome Reception</b> at <a href="#">Four Seasons Penthouse Restaurant</a> , Alta Shopping Centre, Franca Lehara 2, Sarajevo	
Wednesday, 20 May 2026		
Conference Venue: <a href="#">Mövenpick Hotel Sarajevo</a> , Fra Filipa Lastrića, Sarajevo		
Time	Agenda/Activity	Speakers
08:30 – 09:00	<b>Registration and Welcome Coffee</b>	
09:00 – 09:10	<b>Master of Ceremony</b> – Ms Sanela Mešanović, Expert Adviser for Programme and Project Coordination, Labour and Employment Agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina	
09:10 – 10:15	<b>Opening Remarks and Welcome Addresses</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ <b>Welcoming Remarks</b> – Mr Ivan Barbalić, Director General, Labour and Employment Agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina</li> <li>❖ <b>Welcoming Remarks</b> – Mr Mehmet Altun, WAPES Vice President of the European Region and Head of Foreign Relations and Projects Department, IŞKUR</li> <li>❖ <b>Welcoming Remarks</b> – Ms Magdalena Mueller-Uri, Head of Cooperation at the Delegation of the European Union to Bosnia and Herzegovina</li> <li>❖ <b>Welcoming Remarks</b> – Mr David Womble, Chief of Mission &amp; Western Balkans Coordinator, IOM Bosnia and Herzegovina</li> <li>❖ <b>Welcoming Remarks</b> – Mr Amer Kapetanović, General Secretary, Regional Cooperation Council</li> <li>❖ <b>Welcoming Remarks</b> – Mr Edis Arifagić, National Coordinator for Bosnia and Herzegovina at the International Labour Organization</li> </ul>
Thematic Block I: Bridging Workforce Skills Shortages – Innovation, Data and Cooperation		
10:15 – 11:15	<b>Panel Discussion 1: Labour Market Intelligence and Skills Forecasting</b>	<p><b>Moderator</b> – Ms Inga Balnanosienė, Director of the Employment Service under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour of Lithuania</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ <b>From Labour Market Intelligence to Action: How Public Employment Services Turn Skills Data into Dynamic Pathways</b> – Mr Yves Magnan, General Director Products &amp; Services, FOREM (Belgium)</li> <li>❖ <b>Use of International Labour Market Information to Tackle Dutch Staff Shortages</b> – Mr Michel Van Smoorenburg, International Labour Market Analyst, UWV (Netherlands)</li> <li>❖ <b>Regional Work Centres in the Netherlands: How an one-stop shop approach, skills based ecosystem, and labour market intelligence, delivers better outcomes for</b></li> </ul>

		<p><b>jobseekers and employers</b> – <i>Mr Sven Daverveld, Business Advisor, UWV (Netherlands)</i></p> <p><b>Q&amp;A Session</b></p>
11:15 – 11:50 Coffee Break		
11:50 – 13:00	<p><b>Panel Discussion 2: Innovation and the Future Workforce</b></p>	<p><b>Moderator</b> – <i>Mr Shawn Mendes, Director for International Relations, Swedish Public Employment Agency (Arbetsförmedlingen)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ <b>Strengthening Skills-to-Jobs Ecosystems: Digital Solutions Supporting PES, Education and Employers</b> – <i>Mr Željko Pauković, Director of Human Capital of the Future, Foundation Mozaik (Bosnia and Herzegovina)</i></li> <li>❖ <b>From Measuring Shortages to Unlocking Supply: The Next Generation of Skills Intelligence in PES</b> – <i>Ms Azza El Hayek, Co-founder, Business Development Partner, SkillLab</i></li> <li>❖ <b>Innovative Approaches to Gen Z Employment</b> – <i>Mr Jan Zlatan Kulenovic, President, Social Innovation Incubator MUNJA (Bosnia and Herzegovina)</i></li> <li>❖ <b>Skills for Today and Tomorrow: The Voucher System Solution</b> – <i>Ms Kristina Mazalin, Expert Adviser, Career Guidance and Education Department, Employment Service of Croatia</i></li> </ul> <p><b>Q&amp;A Session</b></p>
13:00 – 14:30	<b>Lunch</b>	
<b>Thematic Block II: Skills Without Borders – Recognition, Cooperation and a Mobile Workforce</b>		
14:30– 16:00	<p><b>Panel Discussion 3: Regional Cooperation, Recognition and Labour Mobility</b></p>	<p><b>Moderator</b> – <i>Ms Živa Štiglic, Head of International Department, Employment Service of Slovenia</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ <b>Unlocking Migrant Skills: Timely Support for Inclusive Labour Mobility</b> - <i>Ms Andrea Frkanova, Regional Labour Mobility Coordinator, IOM Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia</i></li> <li>❖ <b>Skills Portability and Labour Mobility – PES Role and Challenges</b> - <i>Ms Cristina Mereuta, Head of Unit, Knowledge Hub for Skills and Jobs, European Training Foundation</i></li> <li>❖ <b>Integrating Foreign Workers into the Labour Market: PES Tools and Institutional Coordination – The ISKUR Approach</b> - <i>Ms Meltem Anduse, Employment Expert and Coordinator of Projects for Migrants, İŞKUR</i></li> <li>❖ <b>Implementation of the Interstate Agreement between Bosnia and Herzegovina and Slovenia</b> - <i>Ms Anka Rode, Head of Labour Migration, Employment Service of Slovenia</i></li> <li>❖ <b>Bosnia and Herzegovina Perspective/ Bilateral Agreements as a Bridge Between Policy and Practice</b> <i>Mr Ivan Barbalić, Director General, Labour and Employment Agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina</i></li> </ul> <p><b>Q&amp;A Session</b></p>

<b>Closing Session</b>		
16:00 – 16:15	<b>Closing Remarks</b> for Day 1 and outlook Day 2	<b>Ms Greta Metka Barbo Škerbinc</b> , <i>President of WAPES and Director General of Employment Service of Slovenia (ESS)</i>
16:15 – 16:30	<b>Group Photo</b> of Conference Participants	
19:00	<b>Dinner</b> at Restaurant " <a href="#">Druga kuca</a> ", Kolodvorska 9-11, Sarajevo	

Thursday, 21 May 2026

Venue: [Mövenpick Hotel Sarajevo](#), Fra Filipa Laštrića, Sarajevo

Time	Agenda/Activity	Speakers
08:30 – 09:00	<b>Registration and Welcome Coffee</b>	
<b>Master of Ceremony</b> – Ms Sanela Mešanović, Expert Adviser for Programme and Project Coordination, Labour and Employment Agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina		
09:00 – 09:15	<b>Summary of Day 1 and Outlook for Day 2</b>	<b>Ms Sanela Mešanović</b> , Expert Adviser for Programme and Project Coordination, Labour and Employment Agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina
<b>Thematic Block III: PES for the Future – Strengthening Skills, Technology and Counselling Excellence</b>		
09:15 – 10:00	<b>Launch of the Research Paper – Future Skills for PES Counsellors</b>	<b>Moderator</b> – Ms Alia Kamlani, Partner, Deloitte <b>Presenters:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>❖ <b>Prof Tristram Hooley</b>, Professor of Career Education at the University of Derby</li><li>❖ <b>Dr. Alex Nunn</b>, Senior lecturer on global political economy, University of Manchester and University of Johannesburg</li><li>❖ <b>Ms Nicole Clobes</b>, Consultant, WAPES</li><li>❖ <b>Mr Scott Parkin</b>, Group Chief Executive, Institute of Employability Professionals Ltd</li></ul> <b>Q&amp;A Session</b>
10:00 – 11:10	<b>Panel Discussion 4: Counselling Excellence and Partnerships</b>	<b>Moderator</b> – Mr Anton Eckersley, International Relations Director, APM Group <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>❖ <b>"Heart and Algorithm" Cultivating 21st century workforce development talent that can thrive in a role of high-touch human partnerships and high-tech tools</b> – Mr Marc Hanke, CEO, Ingeus GmbH, part of the APM group</li><li>❖ <b>The Network of Centres for Guidance in Employment (RedCOE) of Spain's National Employment System: role in strengthening the skills of the PES counsellors</b> – Ms Lucía Muro Abad, Social Worker, SEPE - Public Employment Service of Spain and Ms Gabriela Álvarez Roosvall, Social Worker, SEPE – Public Employment Service of Spain</li><li>❖ <b>EU Support to Labour Market Institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina</b> – Ms Ljiljana Pandzic, Programme Manager for Employment, EU Delegation to Bosnia and Herzegovina</li></ul> <b>Q&amp;A Session</b>
11:10 – 11:40	<b>Coffee Break</b>	

11:40 – 12:50	<b>Panel Discussion 5: Digital Transformation and AI in PES</b>	<p><b>Moderator</b> – <i>Ms Cristina Mereuta, Head of Unit, Knowledge Hub for Skills and Jobs, European Training Foundation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ <b>AI Ruined the Recruitment Process. How to Reshape the Processes of Career Counselling and Recruitment Using an Innovative Personality Assessment Combined with AI &amp; Data</b> – <i>Mr Peter van der Bel, Founder and Curator, Cappr.org (Netherlands) and Mr Ludger Weller, Senior Consultant and Trainer, Cappr.org (Netherlands)</i></li> <li>❖ <b>Digital Transformation of Public Employment Services: The Azerbaijan Case in Building a Data-Driven and Client-Centred PES Model</b> – <i>Ms Aygun Mehraliyeva, Head of the International Partnership Division of the International Relations and Projects Department of the State Employment Agency of Azerbaijan</i></li> <li>❖ <b>The (R)Evolution of Employment Services of Montenegro</b> – <i>Mr Luka Djurickovic, Assistance Director, Employment Agency of Montenegro</i></li> </ul> <p><b>Q&amp;A Session</b></p>
12:50 – 13:30	<b>Closing Remarks and Official End of Conference</b>	<p><b>Mr Ivan Barbalić</b>, <i>Director General, Labour and Employment Agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina</i></p> <p><b>Ms Greta Metka Barbo Škerbinc</b>, <i>President of WAPES and Director General of Employment Service of Slovenia (ESS)</i></p> <p><b>Ms Amandine Moignard</b>, <i>Executive Secretary at WAPES</i></p>
13:30 – 14:00	<b>WAPES European Region Meeting</b> (WAPES members only, information will follow separately)	<b>Ms Amandine Moignard</b> , <i>Executive Secretary at WAPES</i>
14:00 – 15:00	<b>Lunch</b>	
17:00 – 19.00	<b>Leisure Activity</b> – Guided Tour of the Old Town of Sarajevo (Optional) Meeting point: <a href="#">Vjerna vatra</a> (Eternal Flame), Intersection of Mula Mustafe Bašeskija Street and Ferhadija Street	
19.00	<b>Optional Dinner</b> at local restaurant in the Old Town of Sarajevo <a href="#">Restoran Pod lipom, Prote Bakovića 4</a> , Sarajevo	