



AI and Digitalisation in PES Workshop Report

Brussels / 25 and 26 March 2026



WAPES International Working Group
AI & Digitalisation in Public Employment Services

Brussels, 25th and 26th March 2026

1. Introduction

The WAPES workshop on AI and digitalization brought together Public Employment Services, researchers, institutional partners, and practice experts for two days of focused exchange in Brussels. The workshop created an open space to reflect on how digitalization and AI are already affecting PES and to explore how these developments can be utilized in ways that are practical, fair, and centred on people.

Through case-based group work and expert input, participants discussed concrete challenges, shared national perspectives, and came up with ideas that can support future developments across PES systems. The workshop was designed not only as a space for reflection, but also as a step toward practical learning that participants could take back to their own organizations.

2. Participants

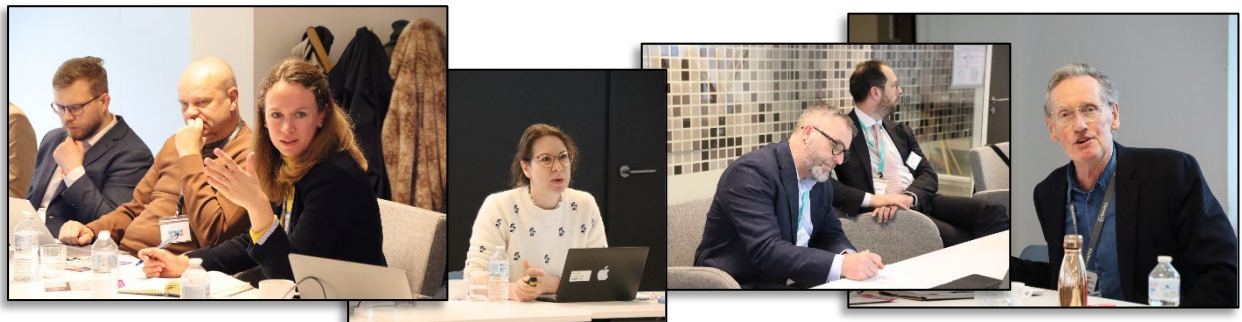
The workshop brought together representatives from Public Employment Services across different national contexts, alongside researchers from Belgium and the United Kingdom, institutional partners from the OECD, ILO, and World Bank, and providers working on digital transformation, AI, and service innovation.



Countries represented included Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Latvia, Malaysia, the Netherlands, the Republic of Korea, Spain, Türkiye, and the United Kingdom.

3. Researchers and institutions

The workshop benefited from contributions by researchers and institutional partners who helped frame the discussions and connect practical PES questions with wider developments in AI, fairness, implementation, and labour market policy.



Institutional perspectives helped situate the workshop in a broader international context, including reflections on digital readiness, inclusion, implementation choices, and the future role of PES. Research contributions added important perspectives on organizational change, human-centred service delivery, and questions of bias and fairness in AI-supported systems.

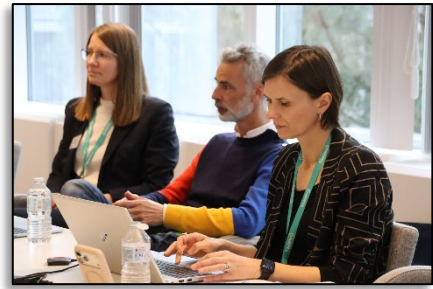
4. Workshop approach

The workshop combined plenary input, thematic group work, and practice-oriented discussion. On the first day, participants worked in smaller groups to define realistic PES cases and

identify the main challenges connected to each theme. On the second day, these discussions were deepened



through exchange with practice partners and



experts, with a strong focus on implementation and organizational learning.



A key feature of the workshop was its practical orientation. Rather than discussing AI in abstract terms, participants focused on real dilemmas faced by PES and explored how digital tools can support services while preserving trust, professional judgment, and inclusion.



5. Key highlights from the workshop

A central message throughout the workshop was that AI and digitalization are not only technical developments. They also raise organizational, ethical, and professional questions. Participants repeatedly highlighted that successful implementation depends not only on tools, but also on staff capacity, leadership, trust, transparency, and a clear understanding of where human judgment must remain central.

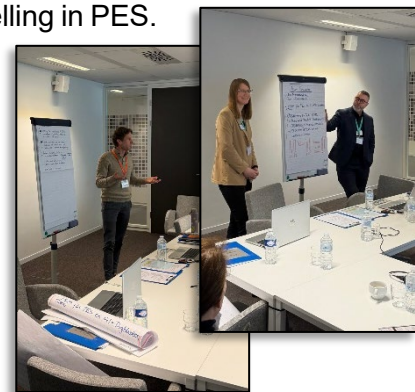
6. The cases

Team 1 explored how AI can support human-centred counselling in PES.

The group emphasized that digital tools should strengthen, not replace, counsellor judgment and that trust, transparency, and accessibility must remain central.

Team 2 focused on bias, fairness, and inclusion in AI-enabled PES. Participants stressed the importance of safeguards, human oversight, and ongoing review to ensure that digital tools support equitable access and do not reinforce existing inequalities.

Team 3 explored organizational readiness for digital transformation in PES. The group highlighted that successful implementation depends on leadership, staff capacity, realistic planning, and a long-term approach to organizational change.



7. Overall reflections

Across all groups, participants shared a strong interest in learning from each other's experiences and in developing practical responses to common challenges. Despite different national contexts, many of the same questions emerged: how to introduce AI responsibly, how to strengthen staff readiness, how to preserve fairness, and how to ensure that technology supports rather than weakens the public service mission of PES.



The workshop showed the value of creating international spaces where PES can discuss emerging issues openly, compare approaches, and work through concrete cases together.

8. What participants said

“What made this exchange so valuable was the focus on real practice and real implementation challenges.”

“The workshop showed that AI in PES is not only about technology, but also about people, trust, and professional judgment.”

“It was very useful to hear how other PES are approaching similar questions in different national contexts.”

“The case discussions helped turn broad ideas about AI into concrete issues we can work on in our own organizations.”



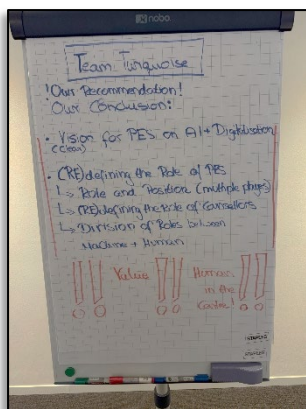
9. Video

The workshop was also captured in a short video highlighting the atmosphere, the exchange between participants, and key reflections from the two days.

Watch the video [here](#)

10. Next steps

The workshop marked an important step in the ongoing work of the International Working Group on AI and Digitalization. The discussions, case work, and exchanges will help inform future WAPES activities and contribute to continued learning across Public Employment Services. The recommendations developed during the workshop will also be reflected in the upcoming working paper of the group, planned for publication in September 2026.



By bringing together PES practitioners, researchers, institutions, and thematic experts, the workshop reinforced the value of international exchange in addressing the opportunities and challenges linked to AI and digital transformation.