

PES to PES Dialogue:

The European Commission Mutual Learning Programme for Public Employment Services

Dialogue Conference: Quality management: professionalism of employment counsellors

The fifth conference under the PES to PES Dialogue programme took place on 17-18 April 2013; it was attended by representatives from 22 PES, the European Commission, the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network and the academic community. The conference built on a paper on job profiles and training for employment counsellors prepared in 2012 which identified a common set of core competences for employment counsellors. The messages from the conference include:

Recruitment and initial training for employment counsellors

- Counsellors need a set of core competences, including a combination of both hard and soft skills, complemented by indepth local and country-specific knowledge. Client-orientation, problem-solving and other soft skills are particularly valued.
- A range of factors need to be considered when determining the entry-level requirements in a specific Public Employment Service (PES) including the availability and quality of the labour supply, the adequacy of the national education and training systems and recruitment legislation.
- The duration and design of initial training reflects the different educational attainment levels of recruits on entry across the PES: the lower the level of educational attainment on entry, the longer the initial training offered. Mentoring and coaching are essential components of both initial and on-going training both to support new staff and to help counsellors to develop the soft skills and attributes required for the job.

Continuing professional development (CPD)

 CPD is important with regard to 'talent management'. CPD training days should be supplemented by measures to frame and support CPD across the whole PES organisation including competence profiles and personal development plans incorporated into the structured appraisal processes. A range of CPD opportunities should ideally be offered in order to cater for different learning needs, contexts, styles and motivations; examples include a PES university, on the job training, peer-to-peer learning.

Staffing concepts and leadership

• **Diversity management** is important both in terms of staff and clients. Strategies used to manage a more diverse staff base include talent management programmes and flexible working arrangements. Strategies to work effectively with a diverse client base include training all staff to work with diversity, recruiting and training specialist staff and using specialist service providers.

• Leadership is essential to maintain and improve the quality of frontline employment services particularly when organisations are under pressure to meet service demands while working with more constrained resources. Leadership action requires a focus both within and outside of PES involving action to increase job quality and satisfaction internally whilst promoting the PES externally through connecting with other stakeholders.

Given the similarity in core tasks of employment counsellors across the EU PES, the diversity of concepts for recruitment, training and CPD is striking. The **issue of professionalisation**, including the development of a shared competence framework, requires further exploration.

More information on the Dialogue Conference is available here.





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"Performance Management in Public Employment Services: Toolkit for PES"

The introduction of new public management models, increasing budgetary constraints and the ever increasing need for effective interventions have heightened interest in the development, use and refinement of performance management systems in PES in all Member States.

A practical toolkit for PES has been published based on the Peer Review "Performance management in PES" held in Copenhagen on 21-22 March 2013. Based upon a wide range of PES examples, as well as academic research, the toolkit provides practical insights into key tools for performance management and the assessment of effective practice, as well as means towards effective dissemination.



"PES approaches for sustainable activation of lowskilled adults and young people: train first or work first?"

This paper reviews the relative contributions of 'work-first' and 'train-first' approaches to activation of the low-skilled and gives examples of innovative PES measures, supports and services in Member States. The paper concludes that work-first activation is most suitable for low-skilled who are **job ready**, primarily **adults with previous work-experience**. It can also be appropriate for some categories of low-skilled young people if combined with additional supports.

Train-first activation (secondchance education and VET) focused on skill development prior to employment, is an option for early school-leavers and can have sustainable outcomes. Shorter duration specific skills training is also an option for low-skilled adults redundant from traditional sectors and occupations. The most effective training for the low-skilled is employer demand-driven, tailored to the needs of the low-skilled target group, includes on-the-job experience; combines occupational and generic skills and is certified. The paper is available here.



What's next on PES to PES?

ANALYTICAL PAPERS

PES and green jobs - July 2013

The role of PES in the wider 'green jobs' agenda will be explored in this paper, including the role played in relation to skills anticipation for a greening economy, and what PES services and measures are effective in the reintegration of jobseekers into green jobs.

Making the business case for PES - July 2013

The paper will explore the arguments for investing scarce resources in PES and how PES measure the cost and benefit of their interventions, as well as systems for measuring efficiency and effectiveness of PES services and measures.

PES and the disabled - August 2013

This paper will review the services and measures provided by PES to achieve the sustainable activation of people with disabilities, including how PES work with partner organisations to provide specialist services and measures to this group.

DIALOGUE CONFERENCES

Dissemination conference, 3- 4 October, Brussels, Belgium