

FRANCE

InnovAction: a collaborative platform to put ideas into practice

With the online platform 'InnovAction', the French PES (Pôle Emploi) introduces a new form of dialogue on innovation between management and counsellors. The method has proved very successful, with 70 % of PES employees regularly involved on the platform during its first 5 years.

At first, InnovAction operated around challenges, ideas, and practices submission to encourage all PES employees to participate. In June 2019, the original platform was redesigned and divided into two. InnovAction evolved to a more ergonomic platform, with an increased focus on challenges, even if PES employees can still submit their ideas outside of the challenges. PES employees engage with the submitted challenges and ideas by suggesting and discussing their own ideas. Practices that have been implemented in a local agency or tested on a small scale now have their own platform "La Fabrique de l'inspiration" (*The Inspiration Factory*). InnovAction is a pool of ideas for local, regional and national PES management who decide which ideas to test out on a small-scale. Each idea tested is followed up by the Department for Innovation, which informs the PES General Management Committee about the developments.

Name of the PES

French PES (Pôle Emploi)

When was the practice
implemented?

2014 – ongoing.

Which organisation was involved
in its implementation?

The Department for Innovation is responsible for the collaborative platform. Local, regional and national PES managers can launch 'challenges' on the platform through their regional moderator. Each region has its 'referent' (total of 33), who is responsible for promoting the platform and ensuring its quality. In addition, regional teams of moderators are monitoring the discussions. PES employees take part in the innovation by proposing, sharing, voting and commenting on ideas.

Which groups were targeted
by the practice?

The 'InnovAction' platform allows all PES employees at any governance level to participate in innovation. All employees can submit, comment and vote on ideas. They can also follow the progress of an idea from launch to implementation at local, regional, or national level.

What were the practice's
main objectives?

The aim of the platform is to encourage employees to participate in the innovation process that improves PES performance. Ideas can cover any aspect of PES, such as technological, social, operational and managerial developments. The collaborative platform aims to:

- Encourage participation from all employees through: (1) 'challenges' that PES might face, which can include any PES services and operations; (2) the submission of ideas to improve a product, service, organisation, functionality, tool, etc.
- Provide one location where all employees can contribute to challenges faced by PES and share ideas.
- Process ideas transparently to engage employees in solutions to challenges faced by PES, and more broadly, in the development of the organisation, its services and operations.

<p>What activities were carried out?</p>	<p>PES employees submit new ideas (not already implemented) onto the platform. 'InnovAction' then enables the next steps towards innovation:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ideas can be posted in two ways: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Local, regional and national PES managers put forward 'challenges' and ask employees for solutions. Depending on the issue, managers can address employees in one local office, in one region or all PES employees. ▶ PES employees can also post ideas that address issues they have identified themselves. A regional 'referent' checks that the idea is complete. 2. Once ideas are on the platform, all employees can comment, monitor and vote on them. 3. For a challenge: The management team sponsoring it will review the ideas submitted, which ones are the most popular, and decide how to move forward. 4. For ideas not related to a challenge: they constitute a pool of ideas that are noticed by the regional referents, but they will not necessarily go through a selection process. They remain open to consultation and appreciation (likes and comments) by all. 5. Moving forward with an idea can take different forms depending on what the challenge sponsor proposes, the issues addressed, the level of maturity or content of the idea, and the wishes and possibilities of the PES employee. For example, the person behind an idea can participate in different follow-up activities such as a working group / lab session / workshop to refine the idea, the conception of a demonstrator, join a project team, become an "intrapreneur", etc.
<p>What resources and other relevant organisational aspects were involved?</p>	<p>The platform is managed nationally and implemented at all governance levels, demanding staff resources. At regional level, there are 33 'referents' responsible for promoting the platform and ensuring its quality.</p> <p>There is one project manager at the Department for Innovation at the national office. The platform was developed by an external provider and new functions are continually added by PES and the provider.</p>
<p>What were the source(s) of funding?</p>	<p>National budget.</p>
<p>What were the outputs of the practice: people reached and products?</p>	<p>In January 2016, there were 3 700 ideas and 1 284 practices.</p> <p>Up until April 2019, a committee made up of all national managing directors published reports every two months listing which ideas was going to be tested at national level and which practices qualified as national practices. Regional managers also informed their staff about regional innovation. The form and frequency depended on regional management.</p> <p>As before, guidelines remain available for regional referents and moderators.</p>
<p>What outcomes have been identified?</p>	<p>'InnovAction' successfully encourages employees to participate in innovation to improve overall PES performance. Since its introduction in 2014, 70 % of all 54 000 employees have accessed the platform to submit an idea or practice (until 2019), to comment or vote. In January 2016, 21 % of all practices submitted were regionally or nationally implemented.</p> <p>Some examples of successful ideas that have been put into practice include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Workshops and individual advice to train jobseekers how to do well in job interviews. This is done in partnership with companies as part of their corporate social responsibility policy. ▶ An automatic sign language translator to translate gestures and spoken language between job counsellor and jobseeker. ▶ An algorithm-based website that predicts which companies might be hiring within the next six months. Jobseekers can then use this information to send spontaneous applications.

What are the lessons learnt and success factors?

A culture of mutual respect, encouragement and experimentation is needed to inspire every employee to participate. The following aspects helped to foster this:

- ▶ Before its implementation, the platform was tested by 1 200 staff in 45 local offices. This generated 'agents of change' who promoted the use of the platform.
- ▶ The platform creates a new type of dialogue between counsellors and management. By asking employees for their ideas to tackle 'challenges', managers demonstrate that they value their opinions. The managing director showed strong support for the platform by making it clear that bottom-up innovation is central to PES.
- ▶ All ideas on the platform remain on the platform. This way, managers can monitor the importance of each idea, at different times, and identify which employees would be interested in being involved in its test/implementation.
- ▶ To be open to experimentation and risk. Innovation depends on the willingness of the organisation to try something new, bearing in mind that it may fail.

Updates made in 2019:

- ▶ In June 2019, a new design of the platform was launched.
- ▶ After a review of the first 5 years of the platform, Pôle Emploi decided to focus more on challenges faced by PES so the ideas submitted address its priorities. Ideas not linked to challenges can be submitted and are encouraged as well. However, the submission of practices has been stopped, this is now on another platform. Strong of its past experience, Pôle Emploi now wants to make sure participants get faster feedback on their ideas through a more efficient review process.
- ▶ Votes by employees can now take many forms depending on the challenge and the will of its sponsors. Voting options include, but are not limited to, thumbs up, thumbs down, star rating, credit voting and tournament voting. In this way, employees can support ideas they want to see tested. If an idea is then chosen to be tested, they receive bonus points in their profile.



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