



# **European Network of Public Employment Services**

## **PES partnership management**

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## Executive summary

This paper reports the main findings from a PES Network Working Group on Partnership Management. Leroy and Struyven (2014) noted that *'all PES have limited human and financial resources and cannot carry out each single aspect of their broad range of tasks on their own. Consequently, the position of many PES is evolving from a public monopoly to a multi-sector system in which an increasing number of partnerships are established'*.

The Working Group found that the further evolution of the labour market since the above study has significantly reinforced the development of PES partnerships. Changes in the world of work, with the 4<sup>th</sup> Industrial Revolution driven by rapid technological change, has fundamentally altered the relationship between PES and their customers, and other partners.

Member States' PES are dealing with growing expectations from some customers for digital services, with technological advances enabling the provision of more bespoke customised support for jobseekers. To take full advantage of these developments, PES must supplement their internal customer and labour market information with data drawn from a number of other institutional sources. PES are also increasingly required to assist new customers from those vulnerable groups farthest from integration, providing support services as called for in the Council Recommendations on long-term unemployment<sup>1</sup> and the Youth Guarantee<sup>2</sup>. Supporting these clients towards employment requires PES to work with a variety of other social and educational support providers in order to offer holistic services.

The Working Group identified four main typologies for promising partnerships but established that it was often both desirable and possible for PES to adopt an 'à la carte' approach to service delivery, utilising elements from various models in order to best meet client needs.

Some partnerships are necessarily time bound to deliver specific outcomes and project deliverables, and to comply with legal and commercial requirements. In other cases, however, there are advantages in flexibility enabling partnerships to grow – and perhaps to fade out organically – without specific time limits, ideally evolving to enable adjustment to increasingly rapid developments in the labour market.

Irrespective of the model or issue being addressed, a number of transversal issues must be considered to ensure success from partnership working. An organisational culture of openness and cooperation between partners, commitment from participating organisations, transparency, clarity of objectives from the outset, proportionate governance, and suitably regular monitoring, are essential. Partnership working requires particular skills and competencies; staff need to be trained to operate to their fullest potential when operating on joint-working initiatives with colleagues from other institutions. In order for PES to fully realise the benefits from partnership working, this collaborative approach must be embraced across all areas and levels of the organisation, and not only be prominent amongst staff directly involved in joint ventures. It is also necessary for PES to adapt strategies and ways of working to take account of insights obtained through working links with stakeholders.

Whilst there may be, in some situations, legal and policy restrictions preventing the consideration of partnership working, these should be rare. Generally, the potential for added value through improved customer service should determine whether collaborations are an option.

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<sup>1</sup> Council Recommendation of 15 February 2016 on the integration of the long term unemployed into the labour market (2016/C 67/01).

<sup>2</sup> Council Recommendation of 22 April 2013 on establishing a Youth Guarantee (2013/C 120/01).

If possible, partnerships should be future-proofed to assist with their continuing relevance, though this will not always be possible given the potential for unforeseen events, as currently evidenced by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Trends in organisational development and evolving customers' needs are increasing both the potential and necessity to include clients in the design of services. In this regard, co-construction is becoming more important, and PES customers are emerging as increasingly important partners, as well as recipients, of services.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Working Group objectives

The PES Network Working Group on Partnership Management was established to explore which methods are effective to strengthen different categories of PES relationships with partners, and how PES manage their ecosystems at the strategic and operational level. Ten PES participated<sup>3</sup>.

### 1.2 Approach to researching the question

The group, which investigated the main types of relationships in which PES participate in order to meet the purpose and achieve the goals of PES partnerships, had three virtual meetings.

Prior to its first meeting the members completed a questionnaire providing information on the types of partnerships in which they are involved, and their nature and purpose. The questionnaire also explored PES' experiences on the ways in which partners are selected, the advantages of working in partnerships for delivering policy objectives, some of the challenges in establishing, maintaining, and monitoring partnerships and views on the positive and negative characteristics of different types of partnerships.

This provided an overview of their approach to partnership working. Information received enabled the **mapping of current arrangements** and allowed the group to:

- analyse current relationships and share good practice;
- examine potential new models for addressing different trends; and
- explore training and guidance needs for those managing PES partnerships.

Following the second meeting, members provided information on further key questions, to:

- analyse the benefits from partnerships;
- identify factors influencing successful partnership operation;
- establish good practice in partnership governance; and
- explore the scope for partnership working in PES.

At the second meeting, the results of the mapping exercise were used to explore in more detail the types of relationships that can exist between PES and various partners, as well as how these partnerships can be managed most effectively.

At the third and final meeting, the group agreed on a set of transversal issues that needed to be considered when assessing the impact of partnerships. These included assessing the added value from partnerships, investing in the skills of staff, considering legislative and institutional considerations, determining the life span of a partnership,

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<sup>3</sup> The Working Group members included representatives from: Belgium (Actiris and Le Forem) - Chair, Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Italy and Lithuania.

frequency and format of review, and determining the scope of services to be considered for partnership operation.

## 2. Summary of Working Group outputs

### 2.1 Mapping exercise

Following the *mapping exercise*, the group was able to consider these questions:

- Which labour market challenges can partnerships successfully address?
- What types of partnerships are most relevant for meeting current and expected future challenges and are most likely to have potential benefits?
- What types of partnerships can be future-proofed to enable adaptation to changing circumstances?

### 2.2 Partnership models

Through analysis of PES responses to the mapping exercise, the Working Group members identified four partnership models:

- **Agile partnerships**, which involve a collaborative approach; partners agree the broad direction and the provisional scope to solve a defined problem in a short timescale.
- **Subcontracted partnerships**, which are coordinated through negotiation with partners who are contracted by agreements to meet objectives determined by a PES or ministry.
- **Co-constructed partnerships**, which coordinate the design of services through negotiation between members who are contracted by agreements to meet objectives agreed by two or more partners, including organisations from outside of the PES or ministry.
- **Supportive partnerships**, in which partners opt to support an initiative by signing an agreement to join a network committed to supporting an objective.

## 3. The conceptual framework for PES partnerships

### Main points

- There are many definitions of partnerships.
- The PES Working Group defined partnerships as cooperations for a common purpose to create a new structure or process, sharing information, risk and rewards in pursuit of a draft programme.
- EU Member States have recognised that delivery of employment and social inclusion policies is too complex for any single institution and requires partnership working.

### 3.1 Definitions of partnership from the literature

In a PES to PES Dialogue Background Paper (2015)<sup>4</sup> Alex Nunn notes that *'the term partnership has come to be used in a multitude of contexts to refer to a wide range of different relationships between public, private, and voluntary sector organisations'*. The paper quotes Graziano and Vesan (2008) who suggest that *'many efforts to add clarity to the meaning of the term are unhelpful because partnerships are described as general*

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<sup>4</sup> Trends and Developments in PES partnership – working background paper, PES to PES dialogue, European Commission Mutual Learning Programme for Public Employment Services, Alex Nunn, January 2015.

*forms of cooperation established among public authorities and private organisations, without clearly identifying their specific features*'. Other studies also draw attention to some lack of clarity for defining partnerships. McQuaid (2010) was concerned that the term partnership had become *'an idea so ubiquitous in major policy initiatives that it defies definition and risks losing analytical value'*. Hutchinson and Campbell (1998) similarly described the term as *'having connotations of motherhood and apple pie'*. Rees, Mullins and Bovaird (2012) went as far as declaring that the term partnership was *'deployed by many users to mean simply what they want it to mean'*.

However, some definitions of partnership in the literature provide a potential framework within which the development of PES partnerships can be considered. Examples include *'a broad range of approaches to access private capabilities to achieve public goals'* (World Bank, 2013), and *'joint development of products and services through sharing risks, costs and resources'* (Hodge and Grieve, 2005).

Anette Scoppetta adapted Wood's (2010) definition of partnerships as a *'close relationship with shared decision making and shared commitment of partners'* as the most useful frame within which to consider PES partnerships for a 2013 PES to PES dialogue analytical paper<sup>5</sup>.

In the subsequent PES Network study, Nunn (2015) identified a definition from Graziano et al (2007) as the criteria for a collaborative working relationship to be classified as a partnership:

- Partners are otherwise independent bodies.
- Partners agree to cooperate for a common purpose.
- Partners create a new organisational structure or process.
- They plan and pursue a joint programme.
- They share relevant information, risks and rewards.

With one caveat, this definition has been adopted for the purposes of the PES Working Group, and this study summarising the findings. The PES have incorporated individual clients within this definition, noting that developments from increasing technological changes are contributing to the potential for more individualisation of services.

### **3.2 The rationale for partnerships**

Bauer (2001) noted the emergence of partnership working as a key strategic EU priority within Article 4 of the 1988 Framework Regulation<sup>6</sup>. This defined partnership as *'close cooperation between the Commission, the Member States concerned, and the competent authorities designated by the latter at the national, regional, or other level with each party acting as a partner in pursuit of a common goal'*. Stott (2019) stated that partnership working in the delivery of employment and social inclusion policies was necessary as *'the issues are too complex for any single institutions to address on their own, and that cooperation between public authorities and social partners, and more recently, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), civil society organisations, and individual citizens, is necessary to address these issues'*. She particularly emphasised the important role of citizens as partners in decisions affecting their social inclusion. She noted that including both individuals and civil society organisations in decision-making

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<sup>5</sup> Successful Partnerships in delivering Public Employment Services, Analytical Paper, PES to PES dialogue. European Commission Mutual Learning Programme for Public Employment Services, Anette Scoppetta, ZSI (Centre for European Innovation), in collaboration with ICF and Budapest Institute, December 2013.

<sup>6</sup> Council Regulation (EEC 2052/88) of 24 June 1988 on the tasks of the Structural Funds and their effectiveness and on co-ordination of their activities between themselves and with the operations of the European Investment Bank and the other existing financial instruments.

processes was a necessary vehicle for promoting democracy and assisting policy coherence.

## 4. The nature and purpose of PES partnerships

### Main points

- PES have relationships with a wide variety of institutions: public, NGO, and private.
- These include formal, informal, and legally binding agreements.
- Partnerships cover the full range of activities, primarily to source expertise, optimise the use of resources and increase capacity.
- Digital partnerships assist PES in improving labour market operation.
- Partnerships are increasingly important for PES to meet the challenges from changes in the world of work and the growth of Transitional Labour Markets.
- Sustainable partnerships require adequate resources, good management and flexible governance arrangements.

### 4.1 Nature of PES partnerships

#### 4.1.1 Categories of partnership organisations

The Working Group survey indicated that all PES had a mixture of formal (with written statement of governance arrangements including volumes and standards), informal (ongoing operational links but no document defining cooperation protocols nor specifying outputs), and legally binding (stakeholder relationships – including commercial arrangements – with delivery to contract specifications defined in law) partnerships. They did, however, have preferences for certain types of partnership arrangements. A particular preference for legally binding partnerships was evident in both the participating Belgian PES, Greece and Italy, whilst Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia and Lithuania reported frequent use of informal partnerships.

A preference for legal partnerships may be a reflection of the institutional arrangements for public administration in certain Member States. The countries reporting frequent use of informal partnerships were able to cite particular examples of successful engagement with stakeholders that developed organically and were characterised by flexibility, especially in the early stages of partnership development.

PES reported partnership working with a variety of stakeholders. These partnership organisations were **central government, local government, municipalities and regions, NGOs and non-profit organisations, private companies, social partners, education sector, health sector, and law enforcement agencies**. Continuing skill shortages in many sectors, the ongoing prevalence of bottleneck occupations, increasing requirements to activate discouraged jobseekers, and the long-term unemployed, were amongst the factors encouraging increasing engagement between PES and service delivery partners from other institutions.

Further research could include more in-depth analysis of the context and drivers for the particular types of partnership arrangements chosen by PES to deliver specific outcomes when working in concert with different types of partners.

#### 4.1.2 Inputs from partners

PES reported partnerships covering the full range of their activities. This reflects the nature of PES as part of a wider ecosystem for the delivery of employment services rather than monopoly providers of services. In this regard, PES are often one of a group of actors involved, and the survey provided examples of PES undertaking various roles in

different partnerships: in leadership capacities, in steering roles, as equal partners, or to support other organisations that have initiated a partnership.

PES reported collaborating with stakeholders in both the design and delivery of seven categories of services: **active labour market policies, counselling, support for vulnerable groups, upskilling/reskilling, matching, digitalisation and communication**. PES also described using partnership arrangements to: **access policy advice, assess the impact of policies, conduct research, source expertise, and obtain data, including labour market information**.

Every type of partnership organisation was involved in providing the full range of services to PES, except for digitalisation. This suggests that the institutional nature of organisations partnering with PES is not, in itself, a crucial factor in the selection of partners and formation of partnerships. Rather, the potential for stakeholders to meet defined needs in specific situations and places was key to the selection of partners and PES' decisions to engage with specific organisations. The very specialist knowledge and technical expertise required was cited as the reason for the one exception; that only specific private companies were involved in the design and development of the digitalisation of PES services. The only other organisations involved in digitalisation were ministries, described as key actors with ultimate legal and financial responsibility, and accountability, for commissioning digitalisation programmes.

The primary reasons PES reported for developing partnerships were sourcing expertise, optimising the use of resources, and enhancing capacity.

## 4.2 Purpose of partnerships

In order to deliver their mandate to assist the integration of jobseekers and improve labour market operation, PES must keep pace with developments in the world of work, especially technological enhancements. They must, therefore, optimise their connectivity with customers and stakeholders by capitalising on the possible benefits from shared, digitally-enabled delivery systems. PES describe this development of shared-service platforms as encouraging an inclusive approach to meet the common interests of an increasingly broad stakeholder base.

PES also reported the advantages from partnership working in promoting learning opportunities and competency development – within their organisations, amongst partners, and for their shared clients.

## 4.3 What value can a partnership add?

A key question considered by PES was: when considering fresh involvement in, or reviewing existing, collaborative working, what value could, or does, the partnership add? Further to this, it was vital to establish how partnership delivery can be monitored and measured. Addressing this issue is necessary to assess the added value from a partnership so that where the PES has a choice in regard to participation, it can seek to ascertain whether a potential return justifies the resource investment.

## 4.4 Challenges addressed through partnership working

Partnerships were identified as crucial for PES to meet labour market challenges brought about by changes in the world of work, driven by the 4<sup>th</sup> Industrial Revolution. A growing use of collaborative approaches is needed in order to develop solutions to challenges from increased automation and the growth of the platform economy, with a shift towards

Transitional Labour Markets<sup>7</sup>. In this regard, partnership arrangements are being used to assist in improving the efficiency of transitions and labour market balance in various ways. These include addressing skill shortages through improving skills pathways, increasing employability to promote the integration of vulnerable people, and facilitating cross-border recruitment.

In pursuing their mandate to promote social and economic inclusion, PES increasingly need to review and enhance their labour market information, and operate simultaneously to address macro-level issues, whilst also responding to local specificities. Partnerships are being developed to meet these contingencies.

#### 4.5 Relevant partnerships for meeting labour market challenges

Analysis of information provided by PES identified partnerships as having three main **design objectives**:

- Assisting policy delivery.
- Supporting adaptations to reflect changes in the socio-economic and technical environment.
- Enabling PES to manage labour market evolution.

Partnerships are used by PES to assist delivery of both current policy objectives and to provide a focus on emerging trends, such as the 'green agenda'. Working in concert with other stakeholders facilitates broad-based input to promote a joined-up (de-segmented) approach to fostering the social and economic inclusion of clients.

By cutting across silos, partnerships can encourage an inclusive approach to meet the common interest of broad-based stakeholder groups. Rapid advances in technology are driving great increases in connectivity between support services and their clients, and amongst different agencies, significantly enhancing the speed of communication and the potential for data sharing.

Therefore, partnership working is an overall driver for the growth of digitally-enabled systems, whilst individual partnerships benefit from the increasing use of digital communication technology. Improved communications assist partnerships in promoting learning opportunities and competency development within PES, in partner organisations, and amongst clients.

#### 4.6 Future-proofing partnerships?

The Working Group considered how partnerships could be 'future-proofed' to adapt to changing situations. A number of design principles were identified as supporting their longer-term sustainability. These are primarily structures that are agile, strongly established, and adaptable. In order to continue to deliver their objectives, partnerships need to have sufficient stakeholder coverage to reflect all interests and ensure that the accountabilities of stakeholders are clear.

Establishing partnerships with these features required agreement between participants to provide adequate resources, well-managed and flexible governance arrangements, a cooperative environment and, crucially, partner commitment to shared objectives. This could allow for ongoing learning, monitoring, review, and adjustment to changing circumstances. However, notwithstanding the positive enablers identified, a question

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<sup>7</sup> The Transitional Labour Markets (TLM) approach comprises analytical and political propositions aimed at understanding and reforming labour market policies and further improving how the labour market functions by increasing its capacity for integration and adaptation. Schmid and Auer, 1997.

remained as to whether partnership 'future-proofing' is fundamentally possible given the inherently unpredictable nature of the future.

## 5. Partnership models

### Main points

- Examining practice examples provided by participating PES (see annex) the Working Group identified detailed characteristics of the four models defined following initial mapping i.e. **Agile, Subcontracted, Co-constructed and Supportive partnerships.**
- Agile partnerships are often most appropriate for delivery of quick solutions.
- Subcontracted partnerships are typically suited for complex technical projects.
- Co-constructed partnerships can provide the best framework for activities based upon equal, reciprocal relationships between stakeholders.
- Supportive partnerships can facilitate innovation and the generation and sharing of ideas in networks with open, rather than rigid, structures.

### 5.1 Agile partnerships

Agile partnerships are tasked with producing quick solutions. They commence with a broadly agreed stated direction but do not initially have a precisely defined specification. These partnerships are adapted as they mature, and members acquire increased learning and understanding of other stakeholders' roles and their possible contribution. They are typically convened to deliver rapid change, and often to initially meet short-term needs e.g. recruitment exercises. They often use an iterative, rather than linear, approach to solving problems and developing solutions. This can involve informal ways of working and interaction, with collaboration through open, fluid discussion. The outputs are often service prototypes rather than pilot schemes produced following detailed predetermined structured plans. Agile partnerships often involve adaptation and learning, sometimes with a revision of scope to accommodate rapid and unforeseen changes. Agile arrangements can involve a change of the partners involved as relationships develop. Partners work collaboratively in shaping outcomes, so that ongoing benefits are realised during partnership working.

### 5.2 Subcontracted partnerships

Subcontracted partnerships involve assigning or outsourcing specific obligations and tasks to another party, a subcontractor, through a prior agreement. Subcontracted partnerships are prevalent in areas where complex projects are the norm e.g. IT development/systems maintenance. They can enable adaptation to varying cycles of demand, with a service offering that can, subject to contract, be expanded as needed. These partnerships can be used to secure expertise to provide ancillary activities outside of an organisation's core role, without the contracting organisation having to employ extra staff. This increases the capability of the core team and by accessing capital and expertise the partnership can assist with cost control, thereby allowing overhead expenditure to be reduced. The main contractor retains primary responsibility for tasks subcontracted whilst maintaining an in-house focus on core processes. These partnerships have clearly defined outcomes and targets, and activities are often recorded through comprehensive documentation. Outputs tend to be developed through linear processes. Management of subcontracted partnerships tends to focus upon negotiation, process, and tools.

### 5.3 Co-constructed partnerships

Co-constructed partnerships support an asset-based approach to producing services. They enable people providing and receiving services to share power and responsibility, and to work together in equal, reciprocal relationships. Partners can learn from each other to expand their knowledge, and are involved in the joint solving of issues, contributing to strengthened links. These partnerships are often used to develop services where input from target customers is not just desirable but is essential for successful delivery, i.e. involving particular behavioural outcomes. Co-constructed partnerships develop mutual support networks and build relationships of trust, with shared power and responsibility. These partnerships deliver public services in an equal and reciprocal relationship between various professionals and service users and/or their representatives. They are intended to enable public sector bodies and citizens to make better use of each other's assets and resources, to achieve improved outcomes and efficiency. Partners come together to find a shared solution; this involves people who use services being consulted, included, and working together with providers.

### 5.4 Supportive partnerships

Supportive partnerships are catalysts for the growth and success of participants and provide space for members to grow, succeed, and generate innovative ideas. These partnerships are based upon services with open and cohesive, rather than rigid, structures. They promote collaborations with the efforts of each partner contributing to the whole. These partnerships often take the form of networks, which organisations opt to join due to a commitment to a particular aim. They retain autonomy as to how they decide to mainstream this objective into their policies, strategies and services. They operate through open-minded feedback loops, with organic processes of growth and innovation rather than steering from a lead organisation. The partnerships prioritise quality, diversity and flexibility. Members have significant freedom to operate in any way that commits to the goals in hand. Collaboration is built upon open and honest communication, and direct and consistent interaction. The partnership dynamic is that collective relationships should contribute towards shared success. Members are supported and encouraged to fulfil both individual and collective goals.

## 6. Dynamic application of PES partnership models adding value from the 'à la carte' partnership menu

### Main points

- PES should decide which type of partnership is most appropriate for meeting client needs.
- This is determined by considering a number of factors: the nature of the beneficiary target group; the status of other stakeholders; and analysis of the optimum benefits from collaboration with other organisations in meeting client needs.
- Successful partnerships develop organically.
- There are advantages to adopting an 'à la carte' approach, i.e. adapting appropriate elements from different partnership models to best meet the requirements of a specific situation.

### 6.1 Applying partnership models

Four case studies of PES programmes supporting the integration of vulnerable groups have been selected to illustrate how PES apply the various models mentioned in section 5 (above) in different situations. They have been mapped on the table below:

Form	Agile	Subcontracted	Co-constructed	Supportive
<b>Purpose: Integration of vulnerable groups</b>	One Stop Career Support for Youth (Lithuania)	Workability Reform Peer Counselling (Estonia)	Social Impact Bond to fund digital skills (Belgium, Actiris)	Cliché Free initiative (Germany)
<b>Service design</b>	Collaborative approach; partners agree broad direction and provisional scope to solving defined problem in short timescale. Detailed specification and learning remitted to pilot and prototype.	Co-ordinated design of service through negotiation with partners who contract through (informal, formal, legally binding) agreements to meet objectives determined by PES/ministry.	Co-ordinated design of service through negotiation between partners who contract through agreements (informal, formal legally binding) agreements to meet objectives by two or more partners, including from outside PES/ministry.	Partners opt to support an initiative via signing an agreement to join a network committed to supporting an objective. Key goal is to improve networking to enhance knowledge through exchange of information.
<b>Service delivery</b>	Partners collaborate to deliver prototype and pilot approaches to deliver service, learning and adapting through doing, to deliver jointly-agreed solution to meet defined need.	Delivery of service by non-PES actor, within parameters and to deliver specification, defined by PES/ministry.	Co-ordination of PES and other providers to deliver services, within parameters and to deliver specification agreed by partnership members.	Partners seek to embed learning into mainstream practice (e.g. challenging labour market gender stereotypes) into operational practices.

PES applied different partnership models in seeking to achieve the objective of addressing barriers to labour market integration faced by vulnerable clients. The approach chosen was determined by the role of PES in specific sets of circumstances and in relation to the target group and other stakeholders, and by an assessment of how best to take advantage of collaboration with other organisations to meet client needs.

## 6.2 Reasons for PES' choice of specific partnership approaches

The **Lithuanian** government's Ministry for Youth Affairs has identified a need to improve the coordination of career services for young people. A number of organisations involved in providing careers advice were invited to join informal discussions to consider how this objective could best be pursued. The PES was given the role of coordinating partners in a One Stop Career Support for Youth initiative.

Partners concluded that the best way to meet a challenging political timescale was to identify and agree a general direction (service integration through 'one stop' delivery) recorded in a broadly drafted cooperation agreement. Detailed specification was remitted until the completion of a period of 'learning through doing' in a prototype centre, with solutions emerging as the partnership matured. Input from a number of stakeholders

was needed, and it was important that they had equal status in decision-making. In this situation, a collaborative approach was desirable.

An **agile** approach to problem solving has been adopted, with no prior assumptions about solutions. This has generated creative proposals. Informal governance and rotation – with stakeholders taking turns in chairing meetings – has contributed to positive engagement creating a platform for an open exchange of ideas.

The **Estonian** PES was presented with proposals by groups representing disabled people to challenge negative attitudes preventing the integration of clients with limited work capacity. In response, the PES identified a need to engage with delivery partners to source expertise not available in-house. The PES specified requirements and co-opted a number of these stakeholders, with potential to meet this need, to join a partnership.

The partnership has defined volume targets for numbers of clients becoming active in the labour market, and monitoring these outcomes required formal agreements, with performance reviewed twice a year. Though individual providers can change over time, the partnership itself is not time bound and will continue as long as it is deemed useful.

In this project, which was initially proposed by PES clients, strong customer orientation is especially important. Where partners have been selected for their expertise, particularly transparent responsibilities and clarity concerning client responsibilities are needed, therefore goals must be clearly defined. The PES has consequently **contracted** with partners to ensure that these key elements can be assured.

Social Impact Bonds have been issued by Actiris (Brussels-Capital Region PES, **Belgium**) to address labour market challenges requiring a different innovative approach in order to make progress. Actiris has a budget for innovative actions and wanted to also secure funding from, and transfer risk to, external partners – hence the use of a Bond to support measures for dealing with the high demand for, and shortage of, digital skills in the Brussels-Capital Region despite large numbers of long-term unemployed people.

The PES also wished to attract NGOs to work with them to promote a client focus and encourage innovation. Therefore, an open call was launched which allowed potential partners to present their innovative approaches to address what they considered to be the most urgent issues to be tackled. After a selection procedure the retained project (on digital skills for jobseekers) was further developed through **co-construction** with three stakeholders (PES, NGOs and the private investor's representatives) defining the detailed specifications (public targets, KPI, evaluation, methodology etc.). As issuance of a Social Impact Bond is governed by specific legal requirements, the project has a defined timeline.

The **German** PES participates in the Cliché Free initiative. This is a formal partnership established in 2017 by the Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth to promote stereotype-free career and study options as a national strategy in Germany. There are now more than 200 partners involved in the field of career and study selection who have opted to participate.

Organisations joining the partnership can receive assistance from a service centre established to promote study and the exchange of ideas and information through a **supportive** network. This encourages good practice on how to encourage gender-neutral approaches to career development. The partnership enables members to access support materials and network with other partners within a flexible structure. Each organisation is free to adapt the opportunities from partnership membership to meet its own specific priorities and support needs. The very broad-based membership both raises the profile of gender equality issues and provides a comprehensive and up-to-date knowledge base, drawing upon the expertise of participating organisations.

Though the above examples describe partnerships, which closely match specific models, the Working Group concluded that some of the most important features utilised by PES in these situations could equally be adopted in conjunction with aspects of other approaches to partnership working.

### 6.3 Advantages from PES adopting certain elements from partnership models

Particular advantages identified by the Lithuanian PES from agile partnership working, such as flexibility, can equally be applied in conjunction with elements from other models. Similarly, broadly drafted initial partnership agreements, pending detailed subsequent specification, can be used in conjunction with aspects of other approaches. Informal meeting styles fostering a dynamic approach to problem solving may be applicable in a number of partnership contexts.

Subcontracting can be appropriate, and indeed necessary, where a PES is specifying requirements prior to selection of partners from among a group of potential service providers. However, there are various ways to deliver this. The Estonian PES has found that ensuring providers operate within not just the letter, but also the spirit, of contracts can be best achieved by introducing greater flexibility. This has included providing more support for delivery partners, such as providing some free training for them, to improve outcomes. Following review, more use has been made of flexible partnership agreements than legal procurement contracts.

The use of Social Impact Bonds by Actiris displays how it is possible within partnerships to enable a very results-orientated approach to meet labour market objectives whilst co-constructing programmes jointly with other partners in order to better reflect client specifications and requirements.

The German PES is taking advantage of networking opportunities from a supportive partnership to adapt and refine its messages to changing situations. This can facilitate further closer relationships with partners, utilising elements from other models as opportunities are identified in the future.

The typologies identified within the Working Group have produced a useful frame within which to consider the concepts behind particular policy decisions on partnership working. However rather than applying one model PES can, and often do, adapt elements from the various typologies to best meet the requirements of specific situations. Organic development was also a feature of all of these examples illustrating clear benefits from an **'à la carte' approach**.

## 7. Transversal issues in partnership development

### Main points

- A culture of cooperation is needed for quality partnerships.
- SMART measures need to be agreed at the commencement of a partnership, for use in later evaluation.
- Soft measures can be useful to assess progress at partnerships reviews; these should take place at least annually.
- The differing cultural context of partnership stakeholder organisations and their geographical coverage must be taken into account.
- Subject to policy and legal requirements, any area can be considered for partnership working.
- It is important that people involved in partnership working have appropriate skills i.e. in negotiation, organisation, working autonomously and project management.

## 7.1 Scope for partnerships

The Working Group considered the question of whether there were services that should always, or never, be considered for partnership working. Reasons for considering delivery through partnerships included: where input from other organisations had the potential to improve efficiency; when a partnership can improve access to information; and if advantages can be identified from complementarity. Considering the increasing development of employment service ecosystems, with PES as part of a wider network of service providers, it was concluded that there were very few cases where there was no scope for cooperative action. Policy and legislative factors were identified as the reasons for which input from other partners may not be considered. Except in such rare cases, a potential improvement in outcomes for customers was identified as the appropriate factor to determine PES decisions to participate in partnerships.

## 7.2 Features of quality partnerships

In order for partnerships to provide added value, participants should have shared responsibility for outcomes and equal status. To enable this, partners need to be carefully selected, and partners should complement each other so that the shared and individual interests of partners can combine to deliver objectives. Partnership must have meaningful goals, and a results-driven focus. To provide continuing value partnerships must be adaptable, have their support needs identified at the launch stage, and commence with a culture of cooperation – which in well-functioning partnerships further develops over time.

## 7.3 Assessing added value from partnership working

PES identified assessing the added value gained from a partnership as both important and challenging. Where partnerships have objectives to achieve a specific volume of outputs to realise defined policy outcomes, SMART targets are needed. These are necessary in order to reflect the results for target groups, with robust evaluation to take into account contextual factors. This is necessary to establish whether a partnership is producing better results than were being achieved by stakeholders operating in parallel or isolation from each other. To this end, results from 'traditional' non-collaborative and partnership approaches can be compared using control groups. Similarly, where partnerships evolve with some pooling of resources it can be possible to establish whether various organisations working together can produce more efficient delivery of outcomes.

Partnership monitoring requires the development of indicators that demonstrate the impact of the stakeholder cooperation. These need to be agreed at the outset of a partnership in order to establish an initial baseline. A partnership evaluation strategy will, therefore, include information from a variety of sources, including statistical/administrative data, as well as qualitative data from intermediary reports or from interviews with partnership members and customer surveys. In order to ensure the best possible data collection and follow up, all partners should be involved in the development of monitoring procedures and identification of data collection tools. Performance measurement and monitoring systems should be user-friendly to ensure that they are accessible and useful to managers, partnership board members, and frontline practitioners in participating organisations.

A degree of separation between the partnership's internal governance structures and performance management functions is helpful in adding credibility to reporting and providing an objective, independent perspective to reviewing progress. A periodic external evaluation, auditing the partnership's progress, with achievement measured against objectives and use of resources, can be usefully combined with ongoing internal performance review to maintain the performance focus of partnership members.

Some partnerships exist to provide complementarity where partnership organisations are able to offer and receive benefits from other stakeholders; as a consequence the whole impact of the partnership can add value by being 'greater than the sum of the constituent parts'. PES may be able to improve their store of labour market knowledge by obtaining information from organisations with which they collaborate, particularly stakeholders with an especial focus on the needs of particular groups. In turn, PES may be well positioned to share information on employers' requirements, and the skills and competencies of registered jobseekers.

Assessing the intrinsic effectiveness of a partnership operation was noted as a particular challenge. However, a number of 'soft' indicators can be developed for use in periodic partnership reviews. These might include consideration of partners' commitment as demonstrated through their levels of involvement and participation, and a record of innovative practices emerging from partnership working.

It is difficult to empirically assess the impact that changes in personnel can have on the effectiveness of a partnership, though this can be very significant. This can result in a review of a stakeholder's priorities, degree of commitment – including resource provision – and the extent of decision-making responsibility afforded an individual representative. Evolving policy and legislative environments can also have an impact on the ability of partnerships to deliver results.

The differing cultural contexts of partner organisations and mismatches in the spatial level at which they are established can also have an impact upon the way in which partnerships operate.

#### **7.4 Skills requirements**

PES reported a number of essential skills and key competencies for effective partnership working. Good communication skills and sensitivity to the cross-cultural issues between different organisations were identified as especially important in promoting a positive collaborative environment with a culture of trust and mutual support. Subject knowledge was considered especially important for staff engaging with other stakeholders. Effective partnerships require participants to be empowered with sufficient authority to make decisions without needing frequent referral back to more senior colleagues. This places them in potentially exposed positions unless they have the necessary technical expertise to develop approaches that are in the best interests of both their own organisation and the wider stakeholder group, as well as a mandate to negotiate or make decisions and have direct access to the resources needed to make the partnership work. Furthermore, partnership members must be able to collectively gather intelligence to inform decision-making; this needs all participants to be both active listeners and good communicators.

In developing policies and services outside of their normal institutional settings, operational parameters and frameworks, partnership participants need to be adaptable. This is in order to identify the potential to flexibly interpret their own organisation's policies where this can contribute to improved outcomes through collaboration with other bodies. Successful achievement of optimum outcomes for all partner organisations, which should be consistent with the best outcome for the priority group targeted by the partnership, requires successful negotiation. Representatives must, therefore, have good negotiating skills and be open to change. A systematic implementation approach is particularly important in a collaborative setting. For this reason, effective project management and good organisational skills are also especially relevant. Partnerships must also have access to analytical skills to assess and evaluate outcomes.

#### **7.5 How can partnership working skills be developed?**

PES identified a number of instruments for developing effective training to equip staff for partnership working. It was noted that the skills needed to operate successfully in a

partnership environment were also very useful for developing expertise on in-house activities. It was therefore suggested that, where possible, these could form part of standard training programmes, and staff involved in partnership activities could supplement these with bespoke modules building on their existing individual training plans. The Working Group concluded, however, that some partnership working skills, such as negotiating with and influencing other organisations, are difficult to acquire before one is involved in a partnership 'on the ground'.

Information sessions providing an overview of the policy priority to be addressed by a specific collaboration were noted as good vehicles for induction to a particular partnership, as part of a mix of in-house training and external seminars. Joint training initiatives developed through partners' collaboration were noted as an important component of training programmes, with secondments to other organisations desirable where these could be arranged.

## **7.6 Deciding the life span of a partnership**

Study of practice examples provided by Working Group members indicated that the decision to establish either time bound or open-ended partnerships was often determined by the reason for which the cooperation had been initially established. Examples were provided of partnerships established to deliver pilot exercises trialling new inter-agency cooperation models. Such partnerships are necessarily time bound, being clearly driven by the deadlines for establishing a new facility and evaluating the service prior to deciding whether to mainstream a new approach.

Where PES have established formal legal contracts governing partnership with other actors for the delivery of services, these will also be time bound. In situations where there is no commercial relationship it is, nevertheless, good practice to place a formal review date into an agreement at the commencement of a partnership. This provides partners with opportunities to review progress with a view to determining whether continuing a relationship with a particular stakeholder still adds value.

Where PES have choices as a contractor deciding which organisation(s) should provide services for their clients, time-limited relationships enable alternative providers to be considered. This can also incentivise existing agents to improve their performance. Where a partnership outcome is not a specific deliverable, but a time limit is still desirable, the life span of a partnership initially agreed should strike a balance between two objectives. These are allowing sufficient time for cooperation to become established and to mature, and ensuring that a review is within a reasonable horizon to enable corrective actions to be taken. These could include ending a partnership, or significantly altering the terms of a relationship.

Other, less task-based, partnerships may be best operated if left open-ended. An example considered in the Working Group was the long-term cooperation to support the policy objective of combatting gender discrimination in the labour market. A decision to continue with involvement in such a partnership can be made based on a number of factors. These include the continuing magnitude of the policy issue being addressed, and the level of partner participation. Reasons for terminating involvement include perceptions that the policy priority of a particular subject has diminished, or the partnership is not adding value for a member, even though the issue being explored is still very relevant.

## **7.7 Frequency of review and evaluation of efficiency**

An important question addressed by the Working Group related to the frequency of reviews of partnership operations – a number of considerations were identified for determining the optimum timescale. A primary consideration is the particular partnership model being applied and the objectives of the collaboration. The extent of value gained

from a review is one indicator of the timeliness of the process, particularly the extent of assessment possible at a review meeting. There was a consensus that a minimum of an annual review was needed, with (if appropriate) monthly production of statistical reports. The periodicity of reviews needs to enable corrective actions to be taken, and the format should allow for feedback both from partners and beneficiaries.

### **7.8 PES clients as delivery partners**

Technological developments, especially enhanced customer relationship management systems, are enabling greater client autonomy and control over their own integration journeys. In this model, PES can enhance their function as a source of labour market information for jobseekers to steer individual re-integration journeys. Clients can fulfil some of the tasks traditionally performed by PES staff using the same methods and tools, with access to the same information and options that have traditionally been offered from within PES structures.

Clients can therefore become an organic extension of the PES; this gives them a new status. With this evolution, the PES can augment its capacity to deal with the market and makes their customers more autonomous and empowered as jobseekers become part of the joint solution.

## **8. Partnerships and the future**

### **Main points**

- PES are increasingly operating as part of an ecosystem for the delivery of employment services.
- Technological changes, especially the development of big data, are increasing the priority of partnership working within PES.
- PES need to develop partnerships to optimise their contribution to increasing citizens' employability, especially the social and labour market integration of the most vulnerable jobseekers.

### **8.1 Evolution of the employment service ecosystem**

The PES Network Vision<sup>8</sup> is to be the vehicle for enhanced European PES cooperation, enabling them to deliver their role as labour market conductors, contributing to European employment strategies, improving labour market function and integration, and creating better balanced labour markets. PES will continue to be central labour market actors, however a number of fundamental changes in the environment within which they operate is contributing to their increasingly operating as part of a wider ecosystem for the delivery of services.

### **8.2 Impact of technology on relationships between actors**

Technological developments are having a major impact on labour market mechanisms, including the way employees are recruited and the way jobseekers apply for a job. New business models and new occupations are emerging, including developments from the rise of the 'gig' economy, driven by digital mediation platforms. Analytics will play an increasingly important role with both opportunities and challenges for PES in using new techniques to support jobseekers to enter the labour market, to help employers to get the right skills and to maintain contacts with partners. In order to take advantage of these opportunities and meet the challenges, PES are increasingly required to collaborate with partners.

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<sup>8</sup> PES Network Strategy to 2020 and beyond.

Technological enhancement is driving rapid change in the world of work as part of industrial transformation. Consequently, working lives are changing with new forms of employment, demographic change, increased migration, different career patterns, new social attitudes of (especially younger) jobseekers and the continuing low participation rate amongst vulnerable groups. Many individuals face employment barriers, which PES have to identify and work with other institutions to address in order to keep pace with wider developments.

Automation and artificial intelligence (AI) are creating changes across all employment sectors. The pace of change will determine how easily the resulting structural alterations and their effect on the labour market can be handled. PES will need to increasingly develop partnerships in order to take advantage of big data, which will become ever more important to help workers adapt to this changing work environment.

### 8.3 PES and future priorities

A new set of PES roles are emerging in response to fundamental changes in labour markets and society. These are intended to support customers throughout their entire working careers. There is a significant shift away from the 'unemployment/employment dichotomy' stemming from the Transitional Labour Markets paradigm. To cope with these current and future challenges, PES will need to work flexibly to generate creative responses and this will be especially dependent upon successful cooperation with partners. In order to anticipate and influence labour market changes, PES will need to increasingly exchange information with policy-making bodies, local authorities, other public and non-governmental support service providers, and the private sector.

The PES Network discussion paper *The Roles of PES in Supporting Structural Changes* (2020)<sup>9</sup> notes the profound impact that the COVID-19 crisis has had on PES. It stresses their role in the forefront of activities to cushion the shock and help companies and workers maintain their consumption and competencies. It further emphasises the importance of PES working in close cooperation with other actors to help workers at risk of redundancy. The ILO Guidelines for Emergency Public Employment Services (2003) also stress that liaison with other agencies and networks is the key element to assist in identifying jobseekers' skills and labour market demand.

Stott (2019) described shared stakeholder ownership as central to a number of key EU policy instruments: the Europe 2020 Strategy<sup>10</sup> for achieving smart, sustainable and inclusive growth; the European Semester<sup>11</sup> coordination framework; and the European Pillar of Social Rights<sup>12</sup>.

The PES Network response<sup>13</sup> to the consultation on the Pillar of Social Rights noted the shared responsibility of PES and other actors for policy delivery of a number of domains identified in the Decision. PES involvement in partnerships was especially important for: provision of skills, education and lifelong learning; secure professional transitions; active support to employment; integrated benefits and social services; unemployment benefits; minimum income; and sickness benefits. The response notes the shared responsibility of PES and partners for ensuring that citizens, particularly the most vulnerable, can take full

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<sup>9</sup> Discussion paper, PES Network webinar, *The Roles of PES in Supporting Structural Changes*, May 2020 Bernard Gazier and OSB Consulting.

<sup>10</sup> European Commission (2010), *Europe 2020, A Strategy for Smart Sustainable and inclusive Growth*, Brussels

<sup>11</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/economic-and-fiscal-policy-coordination/eu-economic-governance-monitoring-prevention-correction/european-semester/framework/europ-2020-strategy-en>

<sup>12</sup> European Pillar of Social Rights [https://ec.europa.eu/beta-political/files/social-summit-european-pillar-social-rights-booklet\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/beta-political/files/social-summit-european-pillar-social-rights-booklet_en.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> The EU PES Network response to the consultation on the European Pillar of Social Rights, adopted PES Network Board meeting, Valetta, Malta, May 2017.

advantage of opportunities to update their employability and stimulate labour market participation. Consequently, a key recommendation calls for '*improved partnerships between organisations offering employment and social support, education, and skills and competency development*'. This is described as a '*priority to enable the successful transformation of integration systems*'.

## 9. Conclusions and recommendations

Following the completion of its activities, the Working Group formulated a number of conclusions and proposed several recommendations.

A positive environment and partner commitment were deemed paramount among the necessary conditions for successful partnership working – this culture of cooperation was deemed essential. To take advantage of the opportunities provided by this positive environment, both management and staff need to develop partnership working skills. It is important that partnerships are consistent with Member State legal and institutional frameworks.

It was concluded that partnership working is an essential component of PES delivery, and that dynamic, flexible partnerships offer the greatest potential to add value. Reflecting upon the partnership models identified in the study, the group concluded that an '*à la carte*' approach is ideal, adapting elements from the various approaches to best meet the needs of a particular stakeholder relationship.

The Working Group stressed the importance of considering transversal issues, especially investing in developing the partnership working skills of participants. It was noted that advances in technology offer particular scope for greater collaboration and more interaction. Monitoring and review of progress are necessary and, where possible, SMART measures should be applied to assess progress towards achievement of the goals and objectives of partnerships, which must be clearly defined.

Good governance is a further essential enabler for effective partnership working, and this is best achieved when appropriate and proportionate. The question of the life span of a partnership was primarily contingent upon the objectives. Some partnerships were established to deliver defined specific deliverable outputs within a certain timeframe. In these situations, the timespan for the activity was necessarily determined by the target date for completing a particular project. Other partnerships were established to promote broader policy objectives and were not necessarily time-bound.

Ideally, partnerships should continue to evolve organically, with periodic reviews testing whether the partnership continues to add value by promoting the intended policy outcome and intensifying the attained impacts.

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## Annex: Case study fiches

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## Belgium – Actiris: Social Impact Bond for vocational integration through digital training for Brussels jobseekers

<b>Name of the partnership project</b>	Social Impact Bond for vocational integration through digital training for Brussels jobseekers
<b>Country</b>	Brussels City region Belgium
<b>Labour Market Challenge addressed by partnership</b>	High demand for and shortage of people with Digital skills despite high levels of long term unemployment
<b>Organisation instigating partnership</b>	Actiris Brussels City Region PES
<b>How were partners selected</b>	Call for interest launched by PES
<b>Date partnership commenced</b>	2020
<b>Period for partnership operation</b>	2020-2025 Final evaluation at end of period, some reimbursement to investors after 2 years to comply with public budget rules
<b>Organisations involved (partners)</b>	Private social investors NGO
<b>Objective of partnership</b>	Development of innovative proposals co-constructed between PES and investors in the Social Impact Bond to enable jobseekers to secure jobs using digital skills (eg web development)
<b>Role of PES</b>	Co-ordinating partner, monitoring committee oversees operation of Social Impact Bond to ensure compliance with correct processes with PES as an observer
<b>Sources of funding</b>	PES has budget for innovative actions and uses this to provide start-up funds, investment funding secured from participating organisations ( which guarantees an important working capital for the NGO to start the project)
<b>Targets/Success Criteria</b>	The target group of the initiative are jobseekers in Brussels City Region, registered with the PES (25% non-EU nationals, 30% women).Goal of the project is 63% of participants completing training to secure employment

<b>Added value of partnership</b>	Co-construction requires the most intensive activity to be undertaken before launch to agree design of programme and resource input from investors. The successful launch of the Bond is therefore proof of the added value from the partnership
<b>Success factors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Allowing sufficient time to attract suitable partners to invest i.e. interested in innovation and with sufficient capacity to participate</li> <li>- Externalising/reducing risk, PES only fund successful outcomes</li> <li>- Securing private funding which can be used to meet needs</li> <li>- Open minded constructive dynamic discussion prior to Bond launch</li> </ul>
<b>Strengths of partnership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Promoting results orientated culture that meets both PES and partners' priorities</li> <li>- Transparency</li> <li>- Co-construction means that a Project can be launched to attract potential partners before detailed specification is agreed, this can promote client focus and innovation</li> </ul>

## Croatia: Outreach and Activation of NEETs – Lifelong Career Guidance (CISOK) Centres

<b>Name of the partnership project</b>	Outreach and Activation of NEETs – Lifelong Career Guidance (CISOK) Centres
<b>Country</b>	Croatia
<b>Labour Market Challenge addressed by partnership</b>	Young people not in employment, education, or training (NEETs)
<b>Organisation instigating partnership</b>	Ministry of Labour, to support delivery of the Youth Guarantee
<b>How were partners selected</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- National (formal) partnerships were initiated by the Ministry of Labour and selected where their policy orientation supports the objectives of the Youth Guarantee scheme</li> <li>- Local (informal) partners were approached (ad hoc) by CISOK Centres and supported by the PES where they were identified. These (informal) partners supported the mission, vision and development strategy of the centres that had approached potential partners directly</li> </ul>
<b>Date partnership commenced</b>	2013
<b>Period for partnership operation</b>	<p>Indefinite: partnership agreements established by CISOK Centres are not time-bound</p> <p>Monthly, quarterly and annual evaluation reports include statistical data on CISOK Centres and clients' satisfaction with services provided</p>
<b>Organisations involved (partners)</b>	Education and training organisations, NGOs, local governments, Ministry of Labour
<b>Objective of partnership</b>	To reach inactive young people and offer them a different kind of tailor-made support, including facilitating their transition to the labour market and preventing social exclusion
<b>Role of PES</b>	Coordinating partner in cooperation with CISOK Centres, the PES provides planning, monitoring, evaluation and implementation support
<b>Sources of funding</b>	ESF and national budgets

<b>Targets/Success Criteria</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The core target group is NEETs</li> <li>- Other groups who can have an interest in CISOK services include pupils, students, parents, adults outside of the labour market and education, school counsellors, employed people, employers, and all interested in career development issues</li> <li>- Success is assessed through the number of partnership agreements signed for delivering services at the local level (402 signed since 2016)</li> <li>- The aim is an increased coverage of CISOK services for potential users and actual number of NEETs using CISOK services</li> <li>- 13 centres have been established in 12 of the 22 regions – target is one centre in each region by the end of 2021/2022</li> <li>- Customer satisfaction rates are also measured</li> </ul>
<b>Added value of partnership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Raised awareness of the importance of career guidance</li> <li>- Enhanced cooperation and coordination between employment, education, and social inclusion organisations</li> </ul>
<b>Success factors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Partnership agreements enabling sharing of information, helping CISOK Centres to identify and target specific groups and plan activities around their needs</li> <li>- Increased availability and quality of lifelong career guidance services, and users attracted</li> <li>- Visibility of CISOK Centres</li> <li>- Improved methods for reaching and attracting users to access CISOK resources, including improved systems for identifying NEETs</li> <li>- Location of centres outside of PES premises</li> </ul>
<b>Strengths of partnership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Clearly-defined roles and responsibilities of each partner</li> <li>- Builds upon a strong tradition of positive collaboration between PES and educational sector</li> <li>- Partnership model based upon recognised, existing overall framework for addressing issue through institutional cooperation, combined with close attention to specific regional and local factors</li> <li>- Established quality standards for service delivery</li> <li>- Comprehensive IT support</li> </ul>

## Estonia: Workability Reform Peer Counselling

<b>Name of the partnership project</b>	Workability Reform Peer Counselling
<b>Country</b>	Estonia
<b>Labour Market Challenge addressed by partnership</b>	Negative attitudes preventing the integration of people with limited work capability
<b>Organisation instigating partnership</b>	Disabled client representative group
<b>How were partners selected</b>	Co-opted by PES
<b>Date partnership commenced</b>	2016
<b>Period for partnership operation</b>	Indefinite: two-yearly satisfaction survey of clients and partners used to inform decision on continuance of partnership Service contracts are for one year
<b>Organisations involved (partners)</b>	Mainly NGOs
<b>Objective of partnership</b>	Improved design and delivery of integration services for disabled clients
<b>Role of PES</b>	Contractor/partnership leader
<b>Sources of funding</b>	European Structural Funds managed through PES, and national Unemployment Insurance Fund
<b>Targets/Success Criteria</b>	The target group of the project is disabled people; the effectiveness of the project is assessed on the number of participants becoming active in the labour market
<b>Added value of partnership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Extra value provided through expert provision from external providers offering greater flexibility than in-house provision of inclusion services for the target client group</li> <li>- Partners bring new ideas to the table, plus better understanding of the needs and expectations of target groups</li> <li>- Trust of target groups – partnerships draw in NGOs that have credibility in relation to client groups</li> </ul>

<b>Success factors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Strong customer orientation</li><li>- Project originally proposed by client group so rationale and need for project as vehicle to improve services is apparent from outset</li><li>- Specialist organisations providing expert input from their detailed knowledge and understanding of needs of client group</li><li>- Partnership structure ensures that both PES contractor and specialist providers understand their roles, with transparent responsibilities</li><li>- Partnership is responsive to client needs</li><li>- Clearly defined roles</li><li>- Evaluation and monitoring</li></ul>
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## France: Building e-Skills through the Digital Divide

<b>Name of the partnership project</b>	Building e-Skills through the Digital Divide
<b>Country</b>	France
<b>Labour Market Challenge addressed by partnership</b>	Jobseekers who lack basic e-skills, which is a barrier to integration
<b>Organisation instigating partnership</b>	National Agency for Territorial Cohesion
<b>How were partners selected</b>	Call for tenders
<b>Date partnership commenced</b>	2018/2019
<b>Period for partnership operation</b>	One year: plan for further one-year exercise in future
<b>Organisations involved (partners)</b>	Service providers certified by APTIC, the organisation for accreditation of digital training
<b>Objective of partnership</b>	To enable jobseekers to improve their basic digital skills
<b>Role of PES</b>	Contractor procuring services through purchasing vouchers for issue to selected identified jobseekers
<b>Sources of funding</b>	PES budget
<b>Targets/Success Criteria</b>	Number of service points available to offer jobseekers access to digital mediation from qualified organisations Target for 3,000 service points; 1,000 by end of 2020
<b>Added value of partnership</b>	Flexible delivery model offers jobseekers choice of provider, format, and location of training

<p><b>Success factors</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 'Springboard effect': increased motivation, greater self-confidence of beneficiaries, some of whom may then wish to acquire computer equipment</li> <li>- Flexibility of schedule, service users book their own workshops</li> <li>- Beneficiaries gain a sense of responsibility from securing services via vouchers with a face value</li> <li>- Learning method applied</li> </ul>
<p><b>Strengths of partnership</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The provider ensures the quality and reliability of services so that there is permanent capacity to offer training as planned, delivered by qualified individuals</li> <li>- Provider carries out quality control remotely through a monitoring device on the data collected; alerts can block payment until the service quality has been verified</li> <li>- Provider undertakes to assist in the validation, analysis and measurement of the capacity to deliver the stated services, the satisfaction of beneficiaries, and their skills development</li> </ul>

## Germany: Cliché Free Initiative

<b>Name of the partnership project</b>	Cliché Free Initiative
<b>Country</b>	Germany
<b>Labour Market Challenge addressed by partnership</b>	Gender stereotyping in career choices
<b>Organisation instigating partnership</b>	Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth
<b>How were partners selected</b>	Any organisation involved in career and study selection is able to join the initiative
<b>Date partnership commenced</b>	2014
<b>Period for partnership operation</b>	Indefinite: annual Cliché Free Initiative conference reviews developments in past year; experts meet regularly to consider shared areas of interest, timings and subjects for discussion set by interested organisations
<b>Organisations involved (partners)</b>	More than 200 organisations from the education, training, political, business and research sectors
<b>Objective of partnership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Enable young people to select their career and study path on the basis of their individual strengths and interests and to actively support this through concrete actions</li> <li>- Reduce the gender connotations of occupations through networking and provision of information</li> <li>- Highlight measures to expand the range of careers and study options available to young people</li> </ul>
<b>Role of PES</b>	Participant
<b>Sources of funding</b>	A service centre has been established to provide guidance on gender-neutral career and study choices, funded by both the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, and of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth

<b>Targets/Success Criteria</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Expanding the range of gender-neutral career and study options</li> <li>- Supporting career and study options based upon individuals' strengths and interests</li> <li>- Identifying ways for people to achieve long-term career goals</li> <li>- Providing information to assist in removing gender stereotyping associated with specific occupations and sectors</li> <li>- Considering the importance of gender-free occupational choice, different life situations, and individual interests as a universal principle</li> </ul>
<b>Added value of partnership</b>	<p>Gender divisions in training and labour markets can lead to structural, economic and individual disadvantage: the partnership assists young people to broaden their career choices, promotes individual skills and brings these to the labour market, regardless of gender – this can assist in reducing the gender division of occupations</p>
<b>Success factors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Exchange of scientific research on gender-free career development</li> <li>- Production of various group-specific materials on a specialist portal managed by the service centre, ensuring that all target groups are supported</li> <li>- Opportunity for daily networking</li> <li>- Profile of annual conference enables exchange of ideas and inspiration</li> </ul>
<b>Strengths of partnership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Broad-based participation provides a forum to continually revise and update knowledge, taking into account recent research</li> <li>- More than 200 partners declaring their willingness to take appropriate action in their respective areas of responsibility helps to create positive awareness whilst simultaneously publicising the nationwide initiative – a strong network (in numbers, profile, and commitment of participant) is persuasive</li> <li>- Advice portal is an extensive source of information on a subject, offering a large collection of knowledge on career and study choices, free of gender stereotypes</li> </ul>
<b>More information</b>	<p><a href="https://www.klischeefrei.de/dokumente/pdf/20200326_Die%20Initiative%20Klischeefrei_EN.pdf">https://www.klischeefrei.de/dokumente/pdf/20200326_Die%20Initiative%20Klischeefrei_EN.pdf</a></p>

## Lithuania: One Stop Career Support for Youth

<b>Name of the partnership project</b>	One Stop Career Support for Youth
<b>Country</b>	Lithuania
<b>Labour Market Challenge addressed by partnership</b>	Need for increased coordination of career advice services for young people
<b>Organisation instigating partnership</b>	Ministry of Social Security and Labour
<b>How were partners selected</b>	Programme 'Create for Lithuania' initiated cooperation Selected organisations are involved in providing careers advice, and have specific tasks and responsibilities within the cooperation
<b>Date partnership commenced</b>	2019
<b>Period for partnership operation</b>	2019-2021
<b>Organisations involved (partners)</b>	Tripartite cooperation agreement has been signed between the Department for Youth Affairs (under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour), the Lithuanian PES and Alytus city municipality  When organising activities, the following organisations are involved: education institutes, employers' organisations, and organisations under Alytus city municipality
<b>Objective of partnership</b>	Pilot scheme to develop improved services for young people seeking careers advice; at end of trial consideration will be given to a national roll-out, incorporating successful elements
<b>Role of PES</b>	Co-ordinating partner
<b>Sources of funding</b>	Each partner funds its own contribution; PES provides premises for One Stop pilot office

<b>Targets/Success Criteria</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Outcome of project: development of scaleable model for more systemised delivery of career guidance services for young people, which can be rolled out nationally</li> <li>- Structured and active involvement of stakeholders in career guidance processes</li> <li>- Employers' participation in career guidance processes benefiting from cooperation</li> </ul>
<b>Added value of partnership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- One-stop-shop – all career guidance services under one roof</li> <li>- A more common approach adopted for career guidance through stakeholder collaboration, allowing for development and trialling of shared solutions</li> <li>- Implementation of successful aspects in national roll-out, subject to agreement amongst partners at the end of the trial period</li> </ul>
<b>Success factors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Commitment from stakeholders</li> <li>- Active input from partners</li> <li>- Agile working environment</li> </ul>
<b>Strengths of partnership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Flexible working methods</li> <li>- Broadly drafted co-operation agreement, adapted with more detailed specification and developed as partnership matures</li> <li>- Agile approach to solving problems with no prior assumption about solutions generates partner 'buy in'</li> <li>- Partners convening in open discussion with informal meeting structures generates creative proposals for implementation</li> <li>- Platform for open exchange of ideas supports consensus-building</li> </ul>
<b>More information</b>	<a href="https://uzt.lt/karjeras/">https://uzt.lt/karjeras/</a>

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