

# Partnerships

Between Employment Services

# PARES



Factsheet



PARES is a strategic integrated initiative of the Commission to encourage an EU-level strategic dialogue between Employment Services on policy implementation and delivery issues. Its results will notably contribute to the discussion for the new momentum of flexicurity as announced in the Europe 2020 flagship initiative 'An agenda for new skills and jobs' while further elaborating on how to 'Make Transitions Pay'.

### **1. Background and objectives**

In the "Agenda for New Skills and Jobs" the Commission suggests an accompanying non-legislative action to establish a partnership between employment services:

Quote from "Agenda for New Skills and Jobs": "Establish, by the end of 2011, a partnership between employment services from the public, private and third sectors to encourage an EU-level strategic dialogue to make transitions pay. The partnership will also provide small-scale funding for best-practice projects; a new web tool will disseminate the evaluated and tested good practices."

#### **Rationale for action**

The end to the monopoly in the delivery of employment services has led to the emergence of a huge number and variety of service providers on the labour market. Apart from the traditional player, the public employment services, there are private and third sector employment services, municipalities, universities as well as voluntary and community organisations providing a broad range of client services. The relations between these employment services are characterised very often by co-operation in various forms, increasingly as well by complementarity of services and by strong competition for example in case of tendering procedures and contracting out.

All these players will have to contribute to reach the objectives as defined in the Europe 2020 strategy which sets out a vision to achieve high levels of employment, productivity and social cohesion and a low carbon economy, to be implemented through concrete actions at EU and national levels. **In times of serious budgetary constraints and high unemployment the initial focus of PARES is on increased efficiency of publicly funded employment services delivered by public or private employment services and at the same time on high-quality service provision for different groups of clients. Well-structured partnerships between private and public providers combine the advantages of market forces with public social policy goals and can help reaching the EU2020 objectives.**

PARES will bring together all employment services with the aim of stimulating and improving the co-operation between them to make transitions pay and to further define the fields in which they deliver services in complementarity. In the network of Public Employment Services (PES) a discussion has already started if PES should take up a conducting function on the labour market; this could in principle include activities such as stimulating market operation and partnership formation and supporting labour market actors.

Recently some EU-MS have started to further liberalise the provision of services to jobseekers and have extended the role of private actors in the delivery of public employment assistance programmes. **PARES does not aim to further increase the competitive pressure among employment services. In fact, it should focus on how the cooperation can be further improved and how the complementarity of their service offers can be further developed.** By this the EU added value of PARES will be demonstrated. PARES does not aim at changing/revising the regulatory framework for the provision of employment services

### **Concept and main features**

PARES consists of three mutually reinforcing different strands:

**1. The PARES - Strategic Dialogue** will provide for a forum for exchanging and further conceptualizing good practices of co-operation and complementary service provision between employment services. Main objective is to fully utilise the expertise of public, private, third sector employment services as well as in the voluntary and community sectors to jointly develop schemes for policy implementation and give feedback to policy designers in order to support the EU2020 employment targets.

**2. - The PARES call for proposals** is directed at projects introduced by employment services that showcase the mixed provision of employment services for vulnerable groups. Main characteristic of the proposals should be to either have this element of mixed provision of services by different types of employment services and/or a funding scheme for the mixed provision that is purely outcome-based meaning that service providers are only remunerated in case of success.

**3. WEESP is a Webtool for Evaluated Employment Services Practices.** It will include organisational practices, tools and ALMP measures related to service delivery for jobseekers and employers including those furthest from the labour market. Pre-condition for inclusion into the webtool will be an evidence-based internal and/or external evaluation of the tools, practices and measures.

## **2. Overview of main activities in 2011 and 2012**

### **Implementation of PARES - Strategic Dialogue**

With a view to provide for free access of citizens to basic labour market services such as placement and labour market information as well as cost-efficiency of service provision in times of austerity measures PARES will look for innovative solutions how employment services can work together in order to reach the EU2020 employment targets. **The outputs of PARES can take the form of implementation feedback to policy makers on EU and national level as well as guidelines/recommendations on how employment services can better work together.**

Policy areas in which PARES could provide implementation feedback to policy designers:

- Implementation of European Employment Guidelines and the monitoring of their implementation
- New momentum of flexicurity as announced in the communication 'An agenda for new skills and jobs'
- New Skills for New Jobs

Fields in which PARES participants could exchange with aim of not-for-profit co-operation:

- Exchange of vacancy notices
- Dealing with unfilled vacancies
- Referrals of jobseekers
- Common projects for example in areas of skills forecasts, profiling, training, etc.
- Use of a common language/terminology
- Training and exchange of staff
- Projects within the PARES call for proposals
- Exchanging on professional practices – see as well PARES component: WEESP

Activities of PARES participants based upon complementarity of services

- Better definition of complementary fields of expertise, for example by division of services by target groups fully reflecting the competitive advantage of all market players
- Geographical mobility for example within the EURES programme
- Modalities of contracting out of services
- Modalities of outsourcing of government employment services

### **Timing of PARES Strategic Dialogue**

The Commission will invite relevant stakeholders – mostly represented by EU level umbrella organisations – **to the PARES Launching Conference on 28-29 September 2011 in Brussels**. Objective of the conference is to organise a discussion between public, private, third sector employment services as well as service providers in voluntary and community sectors on the PARES agenda, deliverables and envisaged time horizon.

At the conference current models of co-operation and partnership between employment services will be presented with case studies, hence designing the "starting and factual picture" for what PARES will be doing. On this basis the areas of common interest, challenges for co-operation and potential for further co-operation will be identified. Main output of the conference will be a list of topics that can be further discussed in PARES Strategic dialogue in 2012.

The list of topics will be further fine-tuned by conducting an online survey among PARES stakeholders (questionnaire with mainly yes/no answers and some open space for suggestions). Afterwards the Commission will invite interested EU level representations of all types of employment services to join the **PARES Strategic Dialogue**. The participation in this Strategic Dialogue will be limited to a smaller number of participants in order to remain operational.

The maximum two working groups of the strategic dialogue will produce **input papers** for next PARES conference in autumn 2012; these papers can be in form of guidelines/recommendations/code of ethics on how employment services co-operate or work in partnership to implement Europe 2020 or in form of implementation feedback to policy makers on both EU and national levels. At the PARES stakeholders' conference in autumn 2012 these papers should be endorsed by the PARES stakeholders.

### **PARES call for proposals**

The PARES call for proposals - VP/2011/005 "PARES; Partnership between employment services" - has been published:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=630&langId=en&callId=307&furtherCalls=yes>

The deadline for submitting proposals is **17/08/2011**

### **WEESP - Webtool for Evaluated Employment Services Practices.**

The public procurement procedure for selecting a contractor to develop WEESP will be launched in 2011.

## **3. Vision for further developments beyond 2011**

PARES should not be seen as one-off initiative. PARES consists of three mutually reinforcing different strands, these strands have all their own legitimacy and added value however the full strength of PARES is only developed over time when the three different strands deliver results and contribute to a new of momentum and spirit of partnership between employment services.

The development of the three PARES strands starts in 2011; first results of the strategic dialogue will become available in 2012. For the two other strands - the call for proposals and WEESP - 2011 is only the starting year; tangible results will become available only in late 2012.

One element of the PARES stakeholders' conference in autumn 2012 will be the dissemination of the results achieved at that moment in time. Apart from the results of the working groups of the Strategic Dialogue, the interim results of the project selected under the call for proposals and the first editions of WEESP will be presented.

In 2012 and 2013 it is envisaged to organise further follow up measures of the Strategic Dialogue such as small scale seminars focusing on specific topics.