The European Commission Mutual Learning Programme

for Public Employment Services

DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion

Support for transfer visit:

PES and E-services

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1. Introduction

Following the Peer Review on Integrated Multi-channelling, which took place in Antwerp on 30 June – 1July 2011, the Estonian PES expressed an interest in a visit to the Dutch PES to gain practical insights into their strategy and tools for delivering e-services. A particular interest was expressed in exploring the following issues:

- The process for online registration/application and the continuation of services online without any face-to-face contact with PES staff, including e-coaching**.**
- The e-book: the content and the process of using the e-book.
- The Netwerkplein pilot project for higher educated people to participate in a community-based platform with online coaching, e-learning and webinars (online workshops).
- An understanding of the approaches/principles of the Dutch PES to be able to better understand the rationale, the role and the use of e-developments.

2. E-services in the Netherlands

2.1 New client demands and budget cuts push e-government for e-services implementation in the Netherlands

The Dutch PES introduced e-services several years ago to meet the demands of their clients who increasingly use the internet to access public and private services. The PES now faces very significant budget cuts, the budget will be halved by 2015, and the number of offices will be reduced from 100 to 30 by 2014 meaning they must make some fundamental choices about how to maintain service levels for job-seekers and employers with a vastly reduced budget.

The **digital channel is at the core of the new concept for service provision:**

- 90% of interactions to take place online. Vulnerable groups will still be offered face-to-face provision.
- Month 1 – 3 access to digital channels from the end of 2011
- Month 4 – 12 a face to face interview takes place. More intensive interventions including face-to-face meetings if complex needs are identified. Start of cooperation with municipality.
- After 12 months – UWV offer internet support only; municipalities are responsible for ALMP measures for integration.

This approach **requires a new legal regulation.** Currently, a visit to the PES office by the jobseeker is compulsory to show their passport. A new law is being introduced which will make it compulsory for jobseekers to use the internet to access PES services. Only if a jobseeker can prove that they cannot use internet will the PES have to provide face-to-face services.

2.2 Improving transparency in the labour market as precondition

A key element of the new government policy for the Dutch PES is that **citizens and employers are called upon to take responsibility themselves in the labour market**, with a PES that is downsized and realizes basic services for employers and jobseekers, control, transparency and registration. The Dutch PES takes on a facilitating role; letting the market do what it can and only intervening when the market fails. To support employers and jobseekers to help themselves, the Dutch PES is taking steps to make the information on the **labour market as transparent and accessible** as possible.

A number of **tools** are being introduced to **contribute to improving the transparency of the labour market and automatic matching.** These include a

-free public platform including vacancies from private agencies and CVs

- automatic matching systems for vacancies and jobseekers,

- tools to improve searching and finding,

- tools to make contact anonymously and

- interactive labour market information for clients, employers and NGOs including a tool on the Werk.nl website which illustrates graphically the chances of finding work in various areas of the Netherlands through matching on function name. This helps jobseekers get an image of what suitable jobs are available in the labour market and where.

Under the new system, all CVs will be published on the internet and the whole process will be automated. Currently jobseekers can choose not to publish their CV on the job-matching site, which means their job coach as the intermediary has to match them against vacancies. This intermediary stage will now be removed. Private work agencies, which play an important role in the labour market in the Netherlands, will have full access to the new automated system.

Because of the issues of **privacy of data** on the internet, the publication of data on jobseekers will be managed to protect their privacy. Employers will be able to search, find and make contact with jobseekers who remain anonymous.

National standards are a precondition for electronic exchange which help to increase the effectiveness of automatic matching. These include:

- an **e-portfolio** which sets out the standards for information exchange between schools, employers, administration and is currently being negotiated with private agencies; and
- occupational standards in the work with private agencies including working with private agencies to agree a national standard for exchanging information.

2.3 UWV netWERKplein: Pilot e-communities for the highly educated

The UWV netWERKplein is an online community which was introduced to better reach and serve highly educated jobseekers. It helps to systematically develop successful search habitats using personal networks for job search, working on the basis that clients are able to find a job on their own. The users are involved in the development of the e-community; the concept is developed by using pilots and building up the system using a trial and error principle. UWV netWERKplein includes:

- a private **online community** through which jobseekers can support each other (5000 participants in the pilot)
- **self-help tools** for jobseekers providing step by step guidance towards work (e-modules for profiling, networking, application, job market in the area etc.),
- **forum discussions and thematic chats** to help each other with CVs or to exchange experiences
- a **personal e-coach** from day one (in contrast to local offices where an e-coach is only offered after three months) who also manages the online community
- and **webinars** where many participants can participate in a workshop with an online coach.

Every three months, participants receive a self-assessment module to complete. If they score below a certain score, they are referred on to complete relevant training modules.

The platform demonstrates that e-services can, in many ways, be **very personalized and interactive.** The **results** show that there are similar integration outcomes for jobseekers using Netwerkplein to those using the traditional service offer; jobseekers are happy with the level of service which is personal, available 24/7 and easy to use.

Regarding **costs** it is likely but not clear whether this approach does lower costs for delivery in relation to other services. UWV Werkbedrijf is currently building up a measurement system for effectiveness. It is planned to develop in the future **communities also for lower skilled jobseekers**.

2.4 User-centred design approach, e-intake and e-book

The new approach taken by UWV Werkbedrijf puts the user at the heart. Therefore services are developed including the use of a typology of different PES customers and also customer panels to get feedback on proposals.

Two essential self-help tools were presented:

- e-intake
- e-book (werkm@p).

E-intake

As the e-intake is the jobseekers' first online contact with UWV, it is particularly important that the module is user-friendly. The e-intake system has been in use for about five years and has been recently redesigned based on the results of monitoring data on customers' behaviour (including. numbers who did not finish the module in one step and the stages where they are most likely to quit). The e-intake module enables jobseekers to:

- Register online, including log-in with civil number (compulsory when the new law is introduced),
- Register for the automatic vacancy matching system. Entering a jobseeker's social security number into the system will in the future automatically bring up basic data about the work history which can then be edited by the jobseeker to suit the types of vacancies they are interested in.

The redesign of the module has reduced the number of steps for registration and sign up to the automatic vacancy matching system from 23 to 15.

Werkm@p is the **e-book** providing:

- Digital support, welcome mail
- Standardized action plan for the first three months (one for people with unemployment benefit and one for 'job changers')
    - outlines what both parties can expect from each other, and the actions taken by both parties. Those on unemployment benefit have mandatory tasks to complete including applying for jobs and attending 'speed-dating events' at the PES offices (involving jobseekers, employers and work agencies). Jobseekers must indicate in the e-book when they have completed these, providing comments if necessary. If tasks have not been completed, an automatic signal is generated for the Jobcoach who

then can decide if a valid reason has been provided or if sanctions must be enforced.

- Plans to standardise acceptable or not acceptable reasons for non-compliance
    - Implementing sanctions is a difficult area for UWV Werkbedrijf; the use of e-tools to monitor compliance and impose sanctions is a relatively new development for PES, and will need to be monitored further.

2.5 Implementation of e-services at the local level: pilots and a systematic management approach

The approach for **implementing new e-services** includes nominating one **pilot branch** for each district called a '**front runner'** which tests ICT processes and suggests improvements. Front runners also play a part in the motivation of other offices. Despite the budget and job cuts, those PES employees who are due to remain at the PES and will not lose their jobs now tend to see e-services as the solution for the future capacity issues, rather than a threat and are therefore motivated to get as many people using online services as possible. Training and support is provided to employees to support implementation.

A checklist supports the central and district staff and management by standardization of the implementation process.

2.6 Measuring e-services: getting data to improve continuously

The PES uses the following measures for its online channel:

- Technology: Do the systems behave in the way they should? This mainly examines performance and availability.
- Customer behaviour: Do the customers do what the PES expects them to do? This is measured mainly via web analytics (e.g. are customers completing the e-intake module in one attempt).
- Organisation: Is the way of delivering online services efficient and effective?
- Multi channel: How does the channel compare to others?

Functionality, accessibility and ease of use are key. Typical signs that intervention is required include error pages, failed customer processes and long loading times.

In order to measure customer behaviour, UWV examines anonymous data generated by the users to see what they are doing online. This includes, for example, examining click paths (the number of clicks to get to certain pages), bounce pages (if someone leaves a site immediately) and referral sites (where the customer has come from). On

top of that, it is an ambition to use data from target groups. The individual in itself will not be identified in this way, only as a part of a larger group.

In 2012 and 2013, data on customer contact and behavior will be collated in a **central data warehouse** from which it is possible to analyse the data via Business Intelligence. It is essential that this data and intelligence is used to inform future design and development of operational processes.

3. E-services in Estonia: approach and stage of development

Multi-channelling, increasing the use of online services and ICT solutions in PES administration in general are key activities for the Estonian PES in improving the quality of client service. The use of internet is widespread in Estonia with 87 % using internet banking.

The overall strategy of the PES is to make available online all the services that do not require personal contact with the PES staff. A key principle is to reuse data on clients wherever possible in the PES' information systems and e-services, and to take information from the national security system. However, e-services and alternative channels are seen as additional ways of communication and client service rather than aiming to be a substitute for face-to-face service.

New legal regulations can help to increase the use of online services. While job-seekers are required by law to register as unemployed in person in the employment office, the legal requirements were changed in May 2011 to allow the PES to agree with individuals after registration the possibility to report on job-search also via the self-service portal or telephone. This can be agreed with new clients (for three months) or with clients participating in ALMPs or other measures aimed at helping them into employment. Estonia has an automatic vacancy matching system and an e-diary for jobseekers which clients are encouraged to use.

4. Lessons and topics for discussion

1. **Legal regulations and changes needed to make online registration and services work and standards needed for service quality**

As seen by the examples of Estonia and the Netherlands, **legal regulations** can impact significantly on the possibilities for online service delivery. In Estonia and other countries, it is a legal requirement for jobseekers to register in person at the PES. In contrast the Netherlands are introducing a new law which compels jobseekers to register and use PES services online. A change in law may be necessary, therefore, before PES can implement certain online services. Estonia has all the steps for online registration already in their online service channel. Although for legal reasons it is not possible for jobseekers to register online, Estonia are already considering asking

jobseekers to pre-register online before attending the local PES office for their registration interview.

The use of online services will also require **new standards** to be put in place to ensure service quality. For example, the Dutch PES is developing a **standard e-portfolio** which sets out the standards for jobseekers and employers when inputting information on the vacancy matching system. This includes working with private agencies to agree a **national standard for exchanging information** on occupations.

2. **Increased responsibility for jobseekers including building up self-help tools and communities**

A key element of the new government policy for PES in the Netherlands is that citizens and employers are called upon to take responsibility for themselves in the labour market, with a PES that is downsized and realizes basic services for employers and jobseekers, control, transparency and registration. The Dutch PES is changing to a more facilitating role; letting the market do what it can, and intervening only when it fails. Various **self help tools** have been introduced by both PES to support jobseekers in finding employment themselves, including automatic vacancy matching tools. The Dutch PES have also piloted the described innovative **self-help online community** making use of social media.

3. **E-services must be simple and easy to use**

It is essential that e-services are **straightforward and easy to use for customers**. The experience in the Netherlands showed how piloting, user involvement and monitoring data can be used to identify where customers experience problems with using e-services. E-services must also be designed carefully to ensure that sufficient information can be communicated online between the job coach and the jobseeker to enable the job coach to monitor and support the jobseeker effectively

4. **Changing profile for job coaches / employment advisors**

It is clear that the profile of a job coach/employment advisor will change as more services become digitalized. **E-coaches** may need a **different set of competences** to those of a face-to-face coach. The Netherlands have recognized this and are producing a manual which outlines the new skill set required for their e-coaches. There may also be some resistance by job coaches to a move towards digitalized services; job coaches may fear that they won’t have a personal relationship with the client online or that they will be replaced by digital services. Involvement of job coaches in the design and development of new tools and procedures can help to improve **buy-in** and develop systems which are more user-friendly. Training and development for job coaches is also important.

5. Role of face-to-face services compared to online services

The services provided on the NetWERKplein platform demonstrate that **digital services** if well structured and managed **can be very intensive and personalized**, even more so than some types of short and not very frequent face to face interventions. However, it is a question for future service development whether jobseekers who are furthest away from the labour market could benefit from such services in a similar way to the higher educated jobseeker.

There is a lack of data available in the Netherlands to compare the **effectiveness of face-to-face provision and online services in reintegrating jobseekers** into the labour market. There is also very little data currently available on the **costs of online provision** overall and how this compares to face to face provision. Costs for development and maintenance of IT tools can sometimes be very high although in other cases IT solutions are already developed by the market which PES can use for less cost or for free.