

Action Planning in the UK

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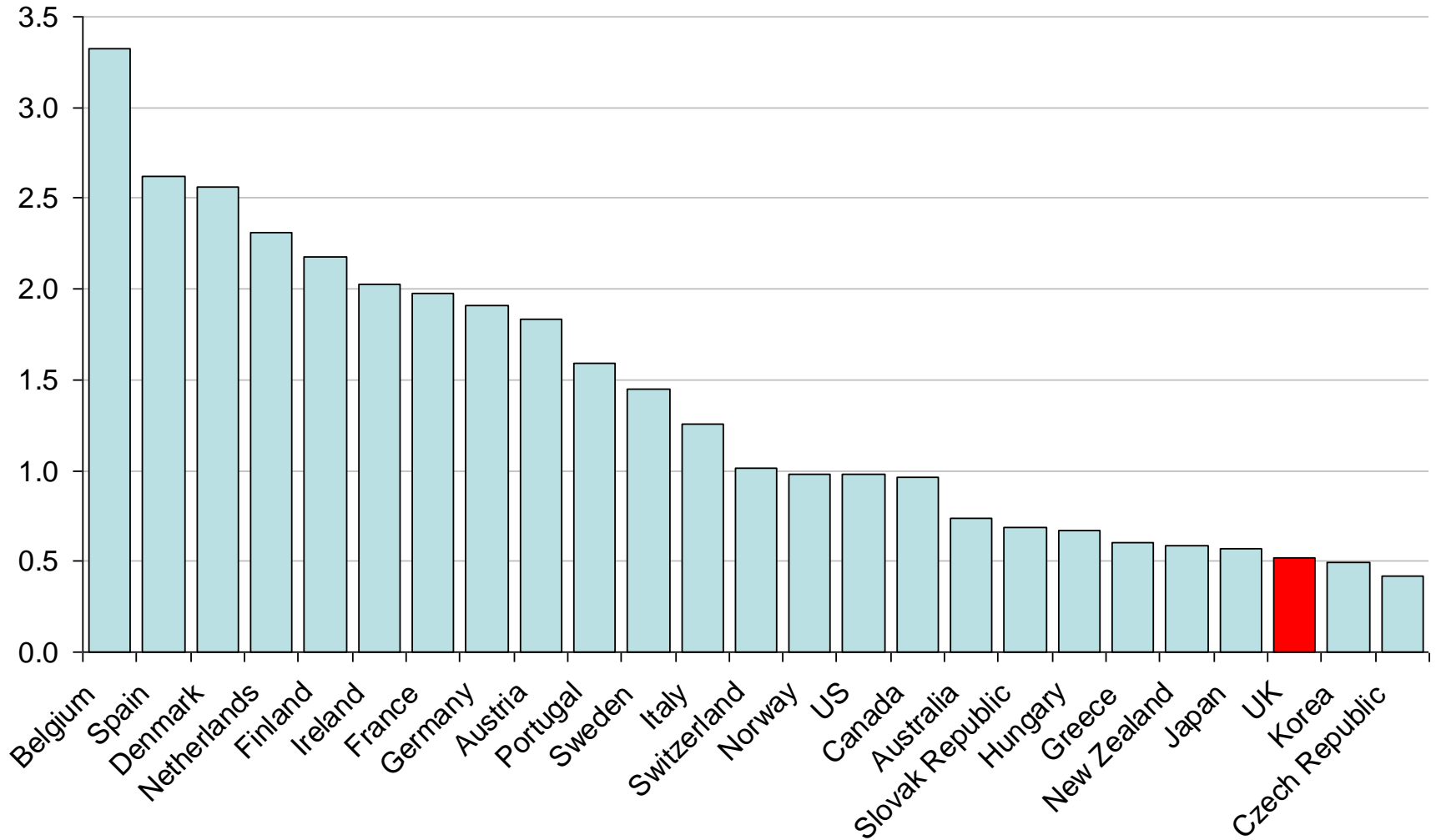
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ALMP context

- People on Jobseeker's Allowance (unemployment benefit) must attend their local PES office **every 2 weeks**, from the start of their claim, as a condition of receiving their benefit.
- They attend a short interview where they discuss **what steps they have been taking to look for work** with their adviser. They must demonstrate 3 steps a week. Around 40m of these interviews are conducted annually.
- Frequent interventions mean **most people leave the unemployment register quickly** (50% within 3 months, 75% within 6, 90% within 12) – at comparatively low cost.

Expenditure on ALMP as a % of GDP (OECD data)



Customer diagnostic

- At the **initial meeting**, the jobseeker's employment history, qualifications and skills will be discussed.
- The adviser will assess the jobseeker's barriers to the labour market, and assign them into a **Red, Amber or Green** group.
- This helps manage the adviser's caseload according to how much support each customer needs: **in-depth, support & advice, or light touch.**
- Advisers can also increase the frequency of meetings beyond the minimum of every 2 weeks for those customers who need extra support.

Jobseeker's Agreement

- In their first interview, the jobseeker and the adviser create what is known as a “**Jobseeker's Agreement**”.
- As well as documenting what steps the jobseeker will take to seek work and increase their employability, it also **sets the parameters** for the jobs they will seek.
- Jobseekers **may restrict their search to their usual sector or salary level for 13 weeks**, after which they are expected to look for any job available, within 90 minutes travelling time.

Action Plan (1)

- Part of the Jobseeker's Agreement is the **action plan**. the steps the jobseeker will take in order to secure employment.
- It will also capture what steps the adviser will take to support them. For customers who need more support this may include drawing their attention to vacancies during interviews, or identifying skills training for them.
- The action plan provides a record of the jobseeker's progress and their commitment to the actions set down.
- Action plans summarise discussions between the jobseeker and adviser, ensuring information can be quickly retrieved again (helpful if another adviser takes over).

Action Plan (2)

- The customer must identify what job goals they are aiming for, match their capability to their goals, and then plan how to achieve those goals (with help from the adviser).
- Each step is recorded, assigned a target completion date, and progress discussed at the fortnightly meeting.
- Actions should be SSMART: Specific, Stretching, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time Bound.
- For those closer to the labour market, actions will likely be focused on finding a job. For those with more barriers, actions will focus on addressing those barriers (e.g. skills training).

Sanctions (1)

- If an adviser feels a jobseeker is not complying with their responsibilities, they can refer the case to a Labour Market Decision Maker (LMDM, based in Benefit Centres), who will decide whether or not a sanction should be applied, based upon the facts of the case and guidance on decision making.
- Sanctions can be **fixed** (1, 2, 4, or 26 weeks) or **variable length** (1 to 26 weeks), depending on the condition that hasn't been met. Sanctions will get longer if a customer has received them before.
- Failure to attend an advisory interview, training or employment programme, or failure to comply with a direction can result in a **fixed** sanction.
- Leaving employment voluntarily, refusal of employment and losing employment through misconduct can result in **variable** length sanctions.

Sanctions (2)

- Between 60,000 and 120,000 people are referred for sanctions each month (current caseload 1.4m). Around half of these result in a sanction being applied.
- Varied-length sanctions are the most common, both referred and applied. Since 2010 “Refusal of employment” has increased significantly and has become the most common reason for variable.
- The most common reason for referral to a fixed-length sanction is ‘Failure to attend advisory interview’, at 35% of fixed-length sanctions applied, despite only being introduced in April 2010 (records go back to 2000).
- A 2006 DWP (UK ministry for Work and Pensions) research report found that sanctions did have a deterrent effect, and 40% of customers said that they were more likely to look for work as a result – though it also identified possible concerns from some customers at applying for a job they were uncertain about and might want to then leave.

Long-term unemployed

- If a customer is long-term unemployed (12 months for 24+, 9 months for young people) or at risk of becoming long-term unemployed (e.g. disability, drug user, ex-prisoner) they are referred to private and voluntary organisations, who are paid to get them into a job, and keep them there.
- Providers have the freedom to use their own methods. They will likely draw up an action plan for jobseekers to help them into work, and stay in work, but at their discretion and according to their own internal guidelines.
- Customers must still attend the PES office every two weeks to demonstrate that they are looking for work. If they fail to comply with any actions directed by the Work Programme provide, the provider will tell the PES adviser and the customer can be referred for a sanction as described earlier.

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