



Dialogue Conference: 'Activation and integration: working with Individual Action Plans'

The third Dialogue Conference under the *PES to PES Dialogue programme* took place on 8-9 March 2012 in Brussels. The conference built on existing research evidence to discuss current practices in individual action planning, with a particular focus on the preparation, monitoring and follow-up of individual action plans (IAPs). The key messages from the conference include:

Development and Design of IAPs

- Emphasis in the development and implementation of IAPs is towards more **enabling, individualised and adaptable** approaches which put the job seeker in charge and emphasise their strengths ("selling points"). This requires **quality employment guidance** and counselling techniques.
- **It is important that the IAP reflects mutual obligations**, on the one hand for the PES to provide support, and on the other hand for the job seeker to take prescribed steps towards the labour market against an agreed time horizon. This is best achieved with a document agreed and signed by both sides.
- Despite the term IAP, it is acknowledged that **the extent to which planned interventions are really individual depends on a number of factors**, including the ratio between counsellor and job seekers, the level of training and skills of individual counsellors and the legislative provisions relating to ALMPs which can restrict the extent to which IAPs can be tailor made.

Monitoring and follow-up of IAPs

- **Emphasis is increasingly placed on more regular monitoring, while the frequency of contacts depends on client/counsellor ratios and PES regulations.** Some PES tend to place more emphasis on electronic or telephone channels for monitoring which requires much greater

responsibility and autonomy on the part of job seekers, whilst others favour regular face-to-face meetings.

- The question of **sanctioning** is a politically and psychologically sensitive one for policy makers and PES employment counsellors. A **sanctioning regime can clearly only help to correct behaviour in situations where job seekers are in receipt of benefits.** As a result, in countries where benefits are only paid for a limited duration, the potential impact of sanctioning regimes is restricted.
- **A balance also needs to be struck between reasons for sanctions being laid down in law and covered by clear guidance, and discretion in individual cases.** There are differences of opinion as to who is best placed and should be responsible for administering sanctions.
- **Sanctions have a higher impact if they are clear, graduated, immediate and fair** but sanctioning which leaves individuals in severe financial hardship can be counter-productive. There is also evidence that different groups of job seekers can be motivated (or de-motivated) by different sanctions. Such factors need to be better understood.



More information on the Dialogue conference is available [here](#).



What's next on PES to PES?



Peer Reviews

"PES and older workers", Nürnberg, Germany, 10 - 11 May 2012"

The Peer Review will explore how to best work with employers to maintain the employability of older workers, and which services and measures are most effective in integrating the older unemployed.

Analytical papers

PES and performance management – May 2012

This paper will explore the different approaches used for performance management in PES and the benefits and drawbacks of these approaches. It will analyse the relationship between performance management approaches and specific outcomes in PES; and the factors that policy makers and PES managers should consider in developing performance management in PES.

Organisational development and innovation management in PES – May 2012

This paper will provide a state-of-the-art review of the literature on what works best in innovation management in PES; it will include selected examples of PES approaches used to generate and manage innovation and organisational development; future challenges, open questions and diverging positions and gaps in the current research.

Job profiles and training for employment counsellors – September 2012

This paper will examine which core competences are needed to offer quality personalised services within PES and what are the basic elements of training to develop these competences. Based upon a survey among PES the paper will analyse existing job profiles and training supervision in the light of changing working conditions in terms of technological development and their implications for face-to-face services.

Dialogue Conference

Dissemination conference, Brussels, Belgium, 19 - 20 September 2012