



INTERNAL ASSESSMENT OF INDIVIDUAL ACTION PLANS TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF JOB COUNSELLING

Quality assessment of Individual Action Plans (IAP)

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Individual Action Plans (IAP), drawn up by the job counsellor and the jobseeker, contain a plan of action and measures to help jobseekers find suitable employment. The aim of the quality assessment of IAPs is to ensure that plans take into account the needs of the jobseeker and outline relevant support measures. The quality of IAPs is assessed by an internal unit that reviews a sample size of IAPs twice a year. The internal evaluators rate every IAP on a four point scale on the basis of different criteria. The average score of IAPs per region and for the whole organisation is used as one of five 'quality-related' performance indicators. Together with the other indicators, this indicator is used in the performance dialogue between national and regional offices. The assessment also includes feedback on individual IAPs which is used to support job counsellors to improve their skills in work-focussed counselling. As a result, the quality of IAPs shows gradual improvement from 2.76 points in 2012 to 3.14 points in 2014.

Name of the PES	Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund (EUIF)
When was the practice implemented?	2011 – on-going
Which organisation was involved in its implementation?	Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund (EUIF) at national and regional level.
Which groups were targeted by the practice?	PES managers in the regional offices and national office use the score of the internal quality assessment of the IAPs as one of the five 'quality-related' performance indicators. Targets for the indicators are set annually and the actual scores are reviewed by both governance levels in the performance dialogue. In addition, managers and job counsellors at regional offices are able to use the reviews of individual IAPs in performance reviews.
What were the practice's main objectives?	<p>The practice aims to improve the quality of the IAPs in order to provide more effective job counselling to jobseekers.</p> <p>The IAPs include an assessment of the needs of the jobseeker and a plan with measures to address these. In 2010, it was noticed that IAPs were missing background information and that actions were inconsistent. Therefore, a methodology to assess the quality of IAPs was developed.</p> <p>IAP assessments are part of the 'quality-related' performance indicators in the performance management system. Alongside eight 'results-based' indicators and 14 'output' indicators there are five 'quality-related' indicators in total: the satisfaction of jobseekers, the satisfaction of employers, the quality of documents used to register jobseekers, the share of documents processed and activities carried out within their deadline, and the quality of IAPs.</p>
What activities were carried out?	<p>The IAPs are drawn up within 30 days of registration (usually during the second appointment) and next steps are discussed at each appointment (at least every three months). The IAP is drawn up by listing the jobseeker's education, skills, work experience, and job expectations. Then the opportunities and obstacles to finding work are assessed. On this basis, the most relevant actions are then outlined (such as referrals to vacancies, job search assistance and ALMP measures).</p> <p>Twice a year, a random sample size of 130 IAPs from all regional offices is reviewed within the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ accuracy and consistency of information about the jobseeker ▶ coherence of the individual's opportunities and obstacles to finding employment ▶ relevance of agreed actions ▶ progress reporting, analysis of results ▶ record of appointments and other relevant information ▶ relevance of the services and ALMP measures to the needs of the jobseeker <p>The IAPs are assessed within these criteria on a four point scale by an internal team.</p>

<p>What resources and other relevant organisational aspects were involved?</p>	<p>New PES staff receive training on counselling skills during their initial employment period and during regular additional training. Since 2013, EUIF has had internal trainers for teaching and improving counselling skills.</p> <p>The internal team at head office that assesses the IAPs is made up of specialists on work-focused counselling and people with previous experience as job counsellors.</p> <p>The analysis department at head office selects 130 IAPs randomly twice a year. Selection takes the size of the regional offices into consideration.</p>
<p>What were the source(s) of funding?</p>	<p>National funding</p>
<p>What were the outputs of the practice: people reached and products?</p>	<p>Scores for the quality of IAPs are provided for the whole organisation and for every regional office (including detailed feedback on every IAP studied). The scores make up one of the five 'quality-related' performance indicators included in the performance dialogue. Projected targets and actual scores for the indicator are discussed by managers of the national and regional offices. Internal training programmes for job counsellors are modified.</p> <p>According to the actual scores of the quality of IAPs, the evaluators provide written comments and suggestions for improvement for each IAP. These results are discussed by the regional manager and the job counsellors to improve the quality of plans. This is monitored by regional managers who decide how and how often they check with individual employees. The comments are also included in the annual performance reviews of job counsellors.</p>
<p>What outcomes have been identified?</p>	<p>The general score per regional office and the feedback from individual IAPs help managers to plan employee training and to support job counsellors to improve the quality of the IPAs. The internal quality assessment of the IAPs shows gradual improvement from 2.76 points in 2012, to 3.03 points in 2013, and 3.14 points in 2014.</p> <p>The job seeking process and its outcome is always influenced by several factors, such as the state of the job market, the jobseeker's motivation, and available vacancies. Therefore, the quality IAPs is only one of several measures used to improve results for jobseekers as the effect on actual job placements is difficult to measure. However, well-compiled IAPs that thoroughly analyse a jobseeker's situation and provide relevant measures support a quicker integration into the job market.</p>
<p>What are the lessons learnt and success factors?</p>	<p>The following lessons learnt and success factors can be drawn from the practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The assessment criteria must be clear to the evaluators and job counsellors. The assessment of IAPs is therefore introduced during new employees' training so that they understand their IAPs might be reviewed. ▶ Managers need to explain to job counsellors that the outcome of the assessment of the IAPs is only one part of how their work is assessed. The overall work performance is never evaluated solely on this basis. ▶ It is also important to discuss the results in a supportive way with job counsellors. They also need the opportunity to explain the content of the specific IAP assessed. The aim is not to point out mistakes, but to learn and improve the counselling process. ▶ To provide feedback to the job counsellor, the regional managers decide how to discuss the results, for example, individually or in a group. This depends on their work as a team. ▶ Relevant areas for improvement (for instance, the most common mistakes when developing IPAs) are incorporated into in-house training programmes and addressed by coaching in the workplace.



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