



A DATABANK FOR PES EMPLOYEES
TO SHARE INNOVATIVE IDEAS

Idea management

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The Austrian PES collates ideas from employees in a databank (called Ideefix) accessible to all PES employees. The tool is part of the systematic implementation of the PDCA-cycle (Plan, Do, Check, Act) from the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM). The aim is to enhance learning and innovation by sharing ideas. This is based on the assumption that employees often have the most useful and innovative ideas because they best understand the processes and practices.

Bonuses and awards are used to encourage employees to submit ideas and a process of quality assurance ensures that the databank can be used to share knowledge and implement ideas. Ideas are implemented at all governance levels of PES. The databank is a well-established tool, PES employees submit between 430 and 750 ideas per year.

Name of the PES	Croatian Employment Service (CES).
When was the practice implemented?	2001 – ongoing The tool has been in operation since 2001. In 2011, new software was introduced to increase the efficiency and professionalism of the idea databank. In 2019, a software update was made in order to improve the clarity of the tool.
Which organisation was involved in its implementation?	The department for organisational development at the national office is responsible for idea management and the databank. A single contact point from this national department, the 'idea manager', works with the HR development department and the HR section that pays the bonuses for ideas.
Which groups were targeted by the practice?	All AMS employees can submit ideas and receive bonuses.
What were the practice's main objectives?	Idea management aims to promote a culture of innovation and to empower employees to contribute proactively towards improving performance. All PES employees can upload ideas about all aspects of PES performance, such as internal processes, job market goals, external or internal communication, and customer or job satisfaction. To qualify for inclusion in the databank, ideas must be innovative so they need to suggest new improvements or processes while complying with AMS policies, objectives and legislation. The review and implementation of ideas is part of the systematic implementation of the PDCA-cycle (Plan-Do-Check-Act) from the European Foundation for Quality Management.
What activities were carried out?	Employees submit ideas to the databank by providing information on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ PES performance area; ▶ Description of the problem; ▶ Description of the solution and expected outcome. Once an employee submits an idea, a quality assurance step ensures it meets the above criteria, is coherent and includes information on potential outcomes. Line managers need to approve the idea within these criteria, within a certain timeframe, and also decide whether it is workable. PES staff are encouraged to submit ideas via a bonus system, consisting of a one-off payment (from EUR 50 to EUR 1000) on top of their monthly salary for an implemented idea. The amount of the bonus depends on the scale of implementation (whether the idea is implemented on department, local, regional or national level) and on its impact on customer satisfaction, services, processes and gender equality. The initiator of the idea and the amount of the bonus is published in the databank.

<p>What resources and other relevant organisational aspects were involved?</p>	<p>One employee, the 'idea manager', in the national department for organisational development is responsible for the databank. This person works in collaboration with the HR department at PES national office. The total cost of bonuses paid in 2018 was around EUR 22 735.</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><u>Databank</u> The idea databank contains a total of 11 000 ideas that have been added since inception. All ideas remain in the database and new ideas are constantly being added. From January to September 2015 the databank was extended by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 435 newly submitted ideas; ▶ 356 ideas to be assessed by a line manager; ▶ 494 assessed ideas with 202 realised ideas. <p>There are written guidelines on how to submit ideas to the databank.</p> <p><u>Awards</u> The best three ideas are announced in the annual AMS award ceremony. This is based on a review by a jury of all realised ideas with the following criteria: improvement for customers; internal processes; cooperation with colleagues; working conditions; and the promotion of equality or innovation. The jury members are internal experts on various PES performance areas. This ceremony aims to promote awareness of good practice and acknowledges employees at a ceremony.</p>
<p>What outcomes have been identified?</p>	<p>Idea management encourages commitment from employees and promotes an innovative working culture to improve PES performance. Idea management is well-established within the organisation, meaning that almost half of all ideas submitted during the year are implemented by the Austrian PES.</p> <p>Although ideas can be used to improve processes and services, idea management mainly aims to promote an innovative working climate that engages employees. Even though there is no empirical evidence of the link to employee satisfaction, there is anecdotal proof that employees feel valued and motivated when they are asked for ideas. In addition, the award ceremony acknowledges employee ideas.</p>
<p>What are the lessons learnt and success factors?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The commitment and willingness to suggest ideas to improve services and processes rely on a culture of mutual respect and recognition. It therefore makes sense to embed idea management into the qualifications of PES managers, so that leadership remains open to new ideas. Moreover, the main objective of the annual award ceremony is to acknowledge employees. ▶ Ideas from employees can also save costs spent on external consultations because employees understand procedures better than external advisors. However, there are currently not enough implemented ideas with measurable outcomes that would prove cost savings. ▶ Within AMS, there has been a learning process regarding the balance between quality and quantity of submitted ideas. Experience over several years has shown that a certain amount of ideas is needed to make the databank meaningful and to generate ideas that impact on the performance of the organisation (around 35 % of all ideas in the databank are currently realised). Employees are therefore encouraged via bonuses to submit an idea. The platform is also promoted at other events, such as summer parties. At the same time, sufficient information needs to be available to check that the idea is in fact new. Therefore, the Austrian PES developed a quality assurance process for line managers.



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