AN INTRANET STANDARD TOOL TO ENHANCE THE AUSTRIAN QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM, INTERNAL COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION BETWEEN PES STAFF.

Internal Social Network

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The Internal Social Network is an intranet standard tool that offers additional options for direct communication as well as the possibility for direct collaboration between Austrian PES personnel. By using the tool, Austrian PES staff can create or join a "community", a space where different people can participate, collaborate and work at the same time from different locations. In principal, it is used by the Austrian PES staff but external users can be invited to be a member of a "community".

In addition, through the Internal Social Network' "Wikis", sources of information can be created. This tool is similar to a social media platform: there is a "homepage" where people can post news, make recommendations and leave comments and you can follow communities and people. To date, 1 246 communities have been created. Appropriate communication about the tool and guidelines on how to use it were crucial for its acceptance and appropriate use among staff.

Name of the PES	Austrian PES (Arbeitsmarktservice, AMS)
Scope of measure	National
When was the practice implemented?	2016 – ongoing
What was the driver for introducing the practice? Was it internal or external?	The initiative to set up the Internal Social Network was internal: it was proposed by the board of management, a pilot run followed and then it was rolled out for all employees. It was part of the existing project on knowledge management
Which organisation was involved in its implementation?	Austrian PES
Which groups were targeted by the practice?	The groups targeted are Austrian PES staff and in some cases external members that can be invited to be part of specific "communities". These external members can include various partners of the Austrian PES such as external service providers, municipalities or consultants. However, there are no specific guidelines for the external users - Austrian PES staff have the freedom to decide who they invite to become a member of a community.
What were the practice's main objectives?	The Internal Social Network offers Austrian PES staff a modern internal communication tool and aims to support the successful implementation of their quality management system. Moreover, it promotes internal knowledge management by creating "Wikis" which consist of a collection of information and contributions on specific topics that can be edited by the users themselves. Through the Internal Social Network, users can also discuss common topics, make suggestions and recommendations for better services, create virtual working groups and launch surveys. The Internal Social Network is an internal social media tool, part of the wider knowledge management project and it is intended to supplement the existing Austrian PES intranet. The latter is an old network that offers the possibility to read information only and users cannot work on documents and collaborate. Moreover, not every user can share information through the intranet – the number who can place information on the intranet network is limited to around 20 people.

What activities were carried out?	Though the Internal Social Network , users can create or join communities, follow other users, share news, comment on users' posts etc. Activities include the following:
	▶ Short training sessions were offered to employees to get familiar with the tool. These sessions have a four-hour duration and they take place in IT meeting rooms where the trainees have access to a personal computer (PC) and the Internal Social Network tool. However, this training is not mandatory for all employees. To date, 147 training sessions were held with an average of 10 employees participating in each session.
	▶ Some employees can ask to receive special training to familiarise themselves with the Internal Social Network. They can then coach other colleagues that ask for extra individual training.
	▶ The intranet platform also includes a "lessons learned process", in which local Austrian PES offices list measures which they have used in order to achieve the Austrian PES Balance Scorecard (BSC[1]) targets and rate them in terms of "impact" (how effective the measure is) and "effort" (resources used).
What resources and other relevant organisational aspects were involved?	Before adopting the Internal Social Network , the Austrian PES tested its operation by looking at the good practice of an external partner. The Austrian PES requested that some minor changes be made in the existing tools concerning layout (for example, the colours of the Austrian PES logo) and usability (different colours for different types of communities).
	The department for organisational and professional development was in charge of the development of this project, in cooperation with the IT department.
What were the source(s) of funding?	The Austrian PES' IT budget.
What were the outputs of the practice: people reached and products?	Since the launch of the Internal Social Network, hundreds of communities were created at all organisational levels. By November 2018, there were 1 246 communities of which 182 were open to users outside the Austrian PES. There were 6 545 active users who were members of at least one community while there were 1 872 active users that own (or have created) at least one community.
What outcomes have been identified?	The Internal Social Network improves cross-regional collaboration since different Austrian PES staff members can work simultaneously on the same task via the tool, thus saving time and money. For example, documents in the Internal Social Network can be seen and edited by staff located in all Austrian regional PES offices; thus, PES personnel can work together on a document from different regional offices. By using the tool, people can learn about other communities, participate, leave comments and recommendations.

1   Find out more about the Austrian PES' Balanced Scorecard here:
     http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=15215&langId=en

What are the lessons learnt and success factors?	The lessons learnt include: ▶ To implement a tool like this, appropriate internal communication is needed to communicate the benefits in order to achieve staff cooperation. The acceptance of new tools like the Internal Social Network is always a challenge. In this case, the Internal Social Network was communicated in multiple ways: via the intranet, an e-mail from the Director General, an invitation for training and discussions in management meetings. ▶ Despite the communication about the tool, its acceptance by all employees was challenging at the beginning but it seems that more and more people are using it. ▶ Austrian PES staff accept new tools much more easily when they are simple and when staff can have individual coaching on how to use it. However, since its use is voluntary, some of the PES employees have opted not to use it. ▶ It is important to have clear guidance and rules on what needs to be documented and included on the intranet and what is to be captured on the Internal Social Network. This means that they have clear purposes and the Austrian PES staff are aware of the differences between the two. It also avoids duplication of information on both platforms, but with some careful links between the two then it means that PES staff are able to find the same information no matter where they look. The success factors include: ▶ Creating a 'netiquette' (rules) and standards for using this additional tool. This provides Austrian PES staff with clear guidance on how to use the Internal Social Network as well as useful 'dos' and 'don'ts'. ▶ The Internal Social Network does not need input from the IT department to update and the responsibility for updating specific pages is placed upon Austrian PES staff.

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