

PES Mutual Learning Webinar 'Staff motivation and leadership' Input paper

PES and other organisations are facing similar human resources challenges stemming from the external challenges of the VUCA (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, Ambiguous) world (including changing labour markets, digitalisation, prevailing skills mismatches, etc.) and internal constraints (including shortage of talent, securing engagement of staff and managers, trust, and developing managerial competence). Moreover, PES are operating in increasingly competitive markets, where they need to compete for workers with other public and private organisations. New threats and challenges are being imposed on PES due to the outbreak and prevailing incidence of the Covid-19 pandemic. As noted in a recent OECD paper¹, Public Employment Services will play a crucial role in preventing the labour market from seizing up during the crisis and in promoting a fast recovery once confinement measures start to be lifted. In order to respond effectively to the Covid-19 crisis, they need to be agile and pro-active.

*The Key Considerations Paper: Implications on Strategic HRM for Future PES Organisations*², published in 2019 by the European Network of Public Employment Services, analyses the current status and changes implemented in PES in relation to the management of staff. Among four of the key considerations, which have been identified to help increase PES capacity to support further organisational transformation, two relate directly to the topic of this seminar. Firstly, PES need to become learning organisations, ready to face the internal and external changes, retaining agility and ability to renew their operations. Continuous learning environments are highly dependent on staff motivation: engagement to facilitate collaboration and information sharing, continuous feedback, and measures supporting employee retention, satisfaction and innovation. Secondly, PES need to support leadership, including encouraging empowerment and self-leadership for staff at all levels. Most importantly, PES can achieve this by: creation of training programmes that develop leadership abilities and competencies, creating space for development and utilisation of individual talents, creating an environment of trust and autonomy (that allows self-leadership) and stimulating ownerships and initiative. The issue of staff motivation and leadership is therefore one of the prerequisites for PES organisations being able to face the challenges of the future.

Motivation of employees has long been analysed both in the private and public sectors. Theoretical assumptions focus on finding the best set of internal and external drivers of certain actions and behaviours of employees, that affect their performance in a given task, job or organisation. Staff motivation is therefore crucial for delivering an organisation's services – including Public Employment Services. Much research and a number of publications focus on "public sector motivation" or "public service motivation"³. However,

¹ OECD, *Public employment services in the frontline for jobseekers, workers and employers*, 28 April 2020, https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/view/?ref=131_131935-gg47t7rrfi&title=Public-employment-services-in-the-frontline-for-jobseekers-workers-and-employers

² <https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=20660&langId=en>

³ See for example : *Public Service Motivation*, State of the Public Service Series, Institute of Public Administration, June 2013 (<https://www.ipa.ie/fileUpload/Documents/PublicServiceMotivation.pdf>); Ritz A., Neumann O., Vandenaabeele W., *Motivation in the Public Sector*, in : *The Routledge Handbook of Global Public Policy and Administration*, Routledge, November 2016.

there is no data available on staff motivation practices in Public Employment Services, either for Europe or globally. Also, developing leadership capability has not been a priority in many PES.

Many PES are however currently implementing new approaches and tools to tackle issues of staff motivation and leadership development. For example, in Austria⁴ a Management Assessment tool is being implemented to improve processes using a combination of self-assessments and external validations, based on the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) model. In Belgium (Flanders), the Teambox⁵ – a set of tools to support experienced and inexperienced team leaders in the development of their team – has been implemented. The new requirements are set up according to the leadership model which demands that managers and team leaders take on different roles: coach, manager, entrepreneur and leader. The Teambox is a digital tool full of examples, practical tips and tricks, and inspiration to help old and new team leaders both when establishing new teams and when completing the activities of existing teams. Norway launched its PULS programme⁶ – an extensive, two-year leadership development programme – for the 1 600 leaders in the Norwegian PES (NAV). This programme aims to enable leaders to steer NAV in the right direction, towards achievement of the objective 'More people in work', and at the same time to build a corporate culture and identity. Cooperation and communication between leaders are key elements of the programme.

There are also examples of self-leadership or staff ownership developments in European PES. One of the most widely discussed developments is the 'Self-leadership' approach in Sweden⁷. In 2014, the leadership of Arbetsförmedlingen (Swedish PES) launched a new strategy and vision for the organisation. PES senior management introduced measures to encourage changes in the organisational culture, by promoting a more horizontal structure and giving more autonomy to managers. Also, in the Netherlands⁸ the new 'Domain Structure' aims at increasing ownership of change processes within the service structure. Within this business-oriented approach, the operational level has the role of a principal, compared to the former situation where improvements in service delivery were often frustrated by policy restrictions. In Lithuanian PES⁹, to ensure high motivation and commitment to change not just in the top management but also in regional and local offices, the "club of enthusiasts" has been established. It is made up exclusively of front-desk staff, with the aim to support change processes, as well as working on different change projects.

The development of motivation and leadership processes can be challenging for many managers and employees. While PES face an unparalleled inflow of new jobseekers, but cannot meet with their clients in person due to confinement restrictions¹⁰, more and more work is being performed by remote or partly remote teams. This poses new management challenges to managers of such teams, needing to assure high levels of motivation and

⁴ <https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=18517&langId=en>

⁵ <https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=20538&langId=en>

⁶ <https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=20437&langId=en>

⁷ <https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=17305&langId=en>

⁸ <https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=20436&langId=en>

⁹ <https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=19896&langId=en>

¹⁰ OECD, *Public employment services in the frontline for jobseekers, workers and employers*, 28 April 2020, https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/view/?ref=131_131935-qq47t7rrfi&title=Public-employment-services-in-the-frontline-for-jobseekers-workers-and-employers



effectiveness without (or with limited) direct contacts with the team members. This requires careful planning and communication in order to build the environment of trust and inclusiveness. Employees often feel threatened by the changes introduced, so the management needs to remain supportive. Through actions aimed at improving employee motivation and engagement, as well as developing leadership potential and practices, PES can strengthen their position as valued employers, attracting the best candidates and serving society.

In order to better understand practices in the field, this webinar will focus on recent developments in the areas of staff motivation and leadership in EU PES, with examples from Ireland, Belgium (Le Forem) and Germany.