EUROPEAN NETWORK OF PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Practitioner toolkit on evidence-based services

Social Europe

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SECTION 1.
Reasons to adopt evidence-based services

1.1 Why are evidence-based services important?

The *EU Network of Public Employment Services Strategy to 2020 and beyond*[1] indicates that PES need to be flexible, evidence based and focused on employment outcomes. Access to continued employment for customers requires advanced understanding by PES of what works, when and for whom. The PES mission, formulated in the PES strategy, underlines the need to optimise the use of evolving technology and enhanced data sources to assist PES in contributing to the implementation of EU employment policies and strategies. PES face challenges in carrying out their mission: labour markets are changing rapidly, while social, political and resource pressures call for excellent delivery and outcomes. The PES role is evolving to meet the needs of a wider client base, including supporting customers through more frequent job changes during their careers and assisting those vulnerable citizens furthest from labour market integration.

PES need to be aware of the rapidly changing labour market and the future world of work, using robust information to match jobseekers to more sustainable outcomes. It should anticipate and influence labour market changes by exchanging information with policymaking bodies, employers and local authorities. This calls for the more advanced use of data, including big data and analytics, to go beyond simple monitoring and output analysis towards more effective, evidence-based policy development and a better understanding of complex causal relationships and contextual factors, and more accurate assessment of PES organisational capabilities. Evidence-based approaches are a methodological and technological challenge: they stimulate wider changes in the PES policymaking process and organisational culture.

To rise to these challenges, the PES network continues to explore and identify best practice in governance structures and human resources (HR) management[2], knowledge management[3], performance management[4] and customer-centred service development and provision, including the measurement of customer satisfaction[5]. The next big step is the development of evidence-based approaches. A full understanding of the effectiveness of measures and their causal relationships with outcomes for different target groups and social contexts is the key to success. This toolkit builds on that thinking and on the importance of strengthening PES capabilities to systematically acquire and analyse data to feed into the decision-making processes. These capabilities include planning service delivery, developing new measures and scaling up existing successful measures. These approaches can and should feed into a PES culture of organisational learning and continuous improvement.

1 PES Network, 2020

2 Sienkiewicz, 2018

3 Scharle, North, 2020

4 Bjerre, Sidelman, 2016

5 Sienkiewicz, Hughes, 2016

Box 1.1: Benefits of an evidence-based approach in service delivery and performance management of PES	
Benefits for service delivery	**Benefits for performance management**
› Support for policies and political reforms with strong evidence for 'what works, when and for whom' › Improved targeting of interventions towards specific clients (both individuals and groups) to make these more effective and efficient › Better design of new services and improvement of established ones, capitalising on past experience and not 'reinventing the wheel' › Getting buy-in from policymakers, staff and stakeholders regarding new services and scaling up existing effective ones › Supporting development of staff competences and their ability to use data and make better informed decisions.	› Facilitating the decision-making process of PES managers and policymakers by providing an information-base for strategic and operational decisions › Increased transparency, enabling assessment of added value of management actions › Increases in the productivity of PES staff by developing a management-by-results approach, and supporting learning-by-doing environment and creating a learning loop › Making more rational decisions and protecting valuable resources by avoiding pitfalls and identifying and managing risks.

The COVID-19 pandemic has increased the pressure on PES. The labour market and employment prospects have changed rapidly and this has intensified the need for evidence-based policymaking and service delivery. This toolkit is based on the principle that an evidence-based approach is essential for success. It facilitates well-informed decisions on interventions and services, which is especially important in times of crisis. It is equally important for PES to recognise when what worked previously is no longer appropriate. This calls for increased efforts to gather new data and evidence on best practice, and to remain up to date with the changes and challenges in the evolving labour market.

1.2 Why is a toolkit needed?

This toolkit seeks to **assist PES in designing and implementing more evidence-based services.** It provides guidance and tools to develop systems to:
- gather and use data, information and insights to best target services to customers;
- make better informed decisions on what works, when and for whom;
- continually review, improve and develop existing tools and systems.

The toolkit helps PES to answer the following key questions – how to:
- plan, design and implement evidence-based services;
- use evidence to improve service delivery and performance;
- work actively to create an evidence-based culture;
- understand the key prerequisites and supporting tools for implementation.

The toolkit builds on the work of the PES Network Working Group on evidence-based service delivery[6], which included the previous work of the 2018 PES Network Seminar on piloting and evaluation[7]; two follow-up workshops (April/May 2019); and a paper on evidence-based policy in PES that set out how the gradual shift from resource- to results-based management has increased the demand for more usable evidence in PES across Europe[8].

This toolkit will support all PES in setting up or developing an evidence-based approach.

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6 The participating PES are those in Bulgaria, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, and Belgium.

7 PES Network, 2018

8 Scharle, Csillag, 2019

1.3 Approach, audience and structure

Who is the toolkit for?

The toolkit is aimed at all PES practitioners responsible for designing, establishing and delivering evidence-based services, including users of data, information and analytical results for the development of PES service delivery.

The toolkit also contains useful guidance for PES operational managers and policymakers in key ministries or departments (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Key stakeholder roles in an evidence-based service approach

POLICYMAKERS
(government, key ministries or departments and agencies)

› Create political will and a requirement for the evidence-based approach.
› Provide support and resources for the development of evidence-based systems.
› Use insights created by PES to feed into the political process and inform decisions.

› Develop the direction and agenda for evidence-based policy, based on mission, strategy and targets.
› Advocate the evidence-based approach with the aim of creating an organisation-wide culture of evidence.
› Allocate adequate resources to create conditions conducive to an evidence-based approach.

SENIOR PES MANAGERS

OPERATIONAL PES MANAGERS

› Facilitate and support the use of evidence by front-line PES staff to improve performance and the quality of services.
› Relate individual targets and actions to evidence-based frameworks.
› Implement change to services based on evidence and research findings.

› Use data and evidence daily, making informed decisions regarding customers.
› Foster an attitude of openness to change, driven by evidence-based insights.
› Cooperate with managers and research staff to support new studies and the generation of new knowledge.

FRONT-LINE PES STAFF

RESEARCH, DATA ANALYSIS AND TECHNICAL PES STAFF

› Ensure that PES has technical and methodological capacity to develop and use evidence.
› Work closely with PES managers to design studies and analytical frameworks to support decisions.
› Translate complex and technical information from reports and findings into user-friendly information.

› Provide external expertise if this is not available in PES or to complement existing in-house knowledge.
› Support an evidence-based approach to policymaking within PES stakeholder bodies (e.g. tripartite commissions, social dialogue institutions).
› Generate new knowledge on methodologies and use of evidence that might be relevant and useful in designing PES operations.

STAKEHOLDERS OUTSIDE PES
(non-governmental organisations, employers' associations, trade unions, academics, independent research institutions, etc.)

How is the toolkit structured?

The toolkit builds on **three main steps of continuous improvement**.

1. **Planning and designing evidence-based services** – practical advice on building an evidence-based strategy, defining the strategic rationale, securing management and employee buy-in, and building and testing a framework for the approach.
2. **Implementing evidence-based services** – practical advice on tools for generating and using evidence, preparing staff, and setting up cooperation and communication strategies within PES and with external stakeholders.
3. **Monitoring, evaluation and learning** – reviewing the whole process and creating a learning feedback loop in service improvement, including updates of the pool of evidence.

Each step contains several points to consider and actions to take. You will find here practical tips, tools and templates, good practice examples and signposts to further information. There are two appendices attached to this toolkit. The first shows the wide range of good practice identified during research. The second discusses some of the technical issues implicit in a successful evidence-based approach.

Customers at the centre of delivery

Customer-focused delivery is the core message of PES benchlearning[9]. The use of evidence helps PES achieve improved outcomes through better targeted interventions and building credibility due to better informed decisions, thus supporting customer-centred services. This is even more important following the COVID-19 crisis. Help for jobseekers (both those who are unemployed and those wishing to change jobs) and employers should reflect individual needs and requirements as far as possible. Service design should therefore evolve from 'one size fits all' towards more personalised services to improve customer satisfaction, the effectiveness of interventions and the cost-efficiency of the services provided.

Box 1.2: Key messages on reasons to adopt evidence-based services

1. Evidence needs to be reliable and comprehensive. Institutional independence may support the reliability and credibility of evidence. Combining qualitative and quantitative methods may improve reliability as well as credibility among PES staff.

2. PES staff should be trained to think about evidence in their work and about how services can be improved.

3. It is important to proactively disseminate evidence internally as well as to external stakeholders. This can be a first step in developing an evidence-based culture.

4. Visualising evidence and tailoring it to users' needs can greatly enhance usage.

5. Finding common goals and involving stakeholders in defining a multi-annual evaluation strategy can also support the emergence of an evidence-based culture.

6. Evidence should be used systematically in both the performance management cycle and delivery process.

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9 'Benchlearning' is the creation of a systematic and integrated connection between **performance comparisons** and **measures of mutual learning** in order to identify good practice.

SECTION 2.

Planning and designing evidence-based services

2.1 What are evidence-based services?

In PES, the term 'evidence' is used to cover quantitative and qualitative information on the delivery of active labour market policies (ALMPs). It covers descriptive data as well as standard counterfactual impact evaluations (CIEs)[10]. The term 'evidence-based' is used in a broad sense to cover situations where data and evidence are used to inform decisions, together with other considerations.

This approach has the following features:
- strong expertise in measuring the effectiveness of PES policies and programmes;
- a mix of methods, including more advanced techniques (e.g. CIE from randomised control trials (RCTs) or theoretical evaluations);
- control for internal and external contextual factors when evaluating a programme or policy;
- going beyond an understanding of 'what works', by seeking also to analyse why, for whom and in what circumstances.

Contextual factors are crucial in understanding the causality of policies and programmes so that one understands what works, and why programmes and services do or do not work. Contextual factors are also considered in order to collect data and evidence systematically to support better decisions on how PES operate and deliver.

Box 2.1: Data, information and insights

Data is the starting point for evidence-based policymaking: the raw facts and figures that are acquired and recorded using clear standards, as useful, comparable, processable and accessible to authorised staff. Note that sensitive and personal data must be well protected by setting up secure data warehouses, as well as procedures for data access and processing. PES must also have a data management and/or governance policy.

Information is the next level in the knowledge process. Information is data that has been organised, filtered and processed. This is very relevant for PES, because this data should feed into organisational performance management systems and reports for external stakeholders, and also support day-to-day operational management.

Insight is the product of analysing the evidence-base, and drawing on information that leads to the conclusions that drive decision-making. These insights might include understanding interrelations or even causalities of the variables analysed. These need to be framed by a deep understanding of PES strategy, the operational model (e.g. multi-channelling and its effectiveness for different groups), the best available labour market intelligence and the perspective of experience policymakers and operational managers. Only then can valuable knowleddg on what works in a given context be gained

Layers of evidence in policymaking

An evidence-based approach is not only about gathering and presenting the data on services or programmes. It also allows the knowledge obtained from data to be used to provide information and insights.

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10 A counterfactual impact evaluation (CIE) is a methodology in which the outcomes for those who have benefited from a policy or programme (the 'treated group') are compared with a control group whose members are similar in all respects to the treatment group, except that they have not been subject to the same policy or programme.

2.2 Building an evidence-based strategy

Evidence-based strategies should be derived from, or informed by, objective evidence. Stakeholders at all levels, within and outside the PES, gather, analyse and use the evidence collected to inform the design and development of services and programmes. As the strategy matures, it should integrate programme delivery and service design.

The key ingredients for building an evidence-based strategy in PES are:

- an agreed and coherent strategy for evidence-based policy;
- a culture of using evidence that is shared among PES managers and staff;
- Strong support from policymakers and key stakeholders;
- IT systems that provide timely, relevant information for different users.

The strategy will also be enhanced by:

- a well-developed and established performance management system to monitor and evaluate the results of each procedure (see Box 2.2 Cyprus);

Box 2.2: Key ingredients for building an evidence-based strategy – Denmark and Cyprus

In Denmark**,** valid register data enables the PES to be able to follow individuals' integration trajectories and to measure input, output and outcomes and to consider CIE. A randomised controlled trial is an effective method for establishing valid evidence about what works in close collaboration with practitioners and researchers to systematically apply a long-term approach to establish evidence about what works for various treatment and target groups. An effective practice in Cyprus PES on building an evidence-based strategy is the structured dialogue being developed through the meetings and online discussions among members of the management team. These discussions constitute the basis of decisions and proposals that are then promoted to the strategic team at the relevant ministry for approval. The operation of the monitoring and evaluating system of ALMP will help PES Cyprus reach safe conclusions about their future design.

Source: PES Cyprus and PES Denmark

Box 2.3: Legislative requirements in relation to evidence-based policymaking

In the USA, the *Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act 2018* (Public Law No: 115-435) requires all federal agencies to plan to develop statistical evidence to support policymaking. All agencies have to submit annually to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and Congress a systematic plan for identifying and addressing policy questions, in relation to: data the agency intends to collect, use, or acquire to facilitate the use of evidence in policymaking; methods and analytical approaches that may be used to develop evidence to support policymaking; and challenges to developing evidence to support policymaking, including any statutory or other restrictions on accessing relevant data. Agency strategic plans must contain an assessment of the coverage, quality, methods, effectiveness and independence of the agency's statistics, evaluation, research and analysis efforts.

Source: https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/4174

- a formal agreement setting out the service level, objectives, targets, etc. to achieve technically robust evaluation methods (see Box 2.4: France);
- economic resources and cooperation with research institutions (see Box 2.2: Denmark).

The EU requirement to evaluate projects financed by the European Social Fund (ESF) provides an incentive for evaluations. Benchlearning across European PES and recommendations from peer PES will also help to encourage PES managers to embark on reforms. Benchlearning exercises can be instrumental in encouraging investment in IT and monitoring. Box 2.2 gives examples of specific good practice, and there are more examples in Appendix 1.

Influence of legislation

Legislative arrangements naturally vary according to a country's legal system, from obligations to evaluate, and the right to collect, process, store and exchange data or the requirement to protect privacy. Such arrangements offer opportunities for PES to use evidence in their everyday work. It is important, however, to note that a legislative regulation should not mean controlling the work of PES at grassroot levels. Legislation is

not a prerequisite for evidence-based services implementation. However, it may be useful in scaling up or increasing the priority of evidence-based policy processes. A framework is a feature of more advanced or experienced PES, where the evidence-based strategy has already been established and evidence is used at all stages of the policymaking process (see Box 2.3; see also 2.5 below).

2.3 Defining the strategic rationale for an evidence-based approach

Defining the rationale for an evidence-based approach must go beyond a simple justification of the need for certain services to exist. There needs to be a clear objective or purposeful plan for the improvement of services, and a more rounded view of the strategy and policy for achieving this.

This entails avoiding the selective use of statistics simply to provide evidence that will back up one's own theories or observations, disregarding the complexity of social phenomena.

2.4 Securing management and employee buy-in

Management and employee buy-in
From the very beginning, you will need management and staff **buy-in.** This can be achieved by a series of well-planned actions.
Communications from the top PES management kick off the development of the evidence-based approach: this will convey a strong message for PES staff at all levels about its importance.
A clear message is needed from senior managers to welcome the approach, making it clear that the evidence should be treated with integrity, and accepting that evidence can tell PES both what works and what does not.
Being transparent about the new approach and its intended outcomes as well as its limitations helps to increase acceptance.
Develop the business case for the use of evidence in the design and implementation of policies and programmes.
Take on board 'change agents' – working groups composed of different stakeholders – to discuss

Box 2.4: A culture of using evidence – France

Two main elements contributed to building a culture of using evidence at the PES, Pôle emploi:

- management by results;
- innovative processes used to develop new services or organisational changes.

Management by results was first only available to managers, who were tracking the results of their local agency or region. The information system made the data available to all. For about two years now, staff in local agencies have been encouraged to follow their progress towards their local targets, so that they can see how their own individual performance contributes to these targets. Making the connection between their actions and the results achieved in respect of performance targets has had a positive effect on the level of awareness staff now have for data, results and ultimately 'what will work'.

Source: PES France

concerns and the approach, to help to overcome fears and resistance to planned changes.
Prepare a communications strategy and schedule for different stakeholders, including those outside the PES, to design a plan for overcoming obstacles and avoiding pitfalls.
Managers need to secure commitment from individual employees to promote the use of evidence in day-to-day operations. The use of evidence is often limited due to the number of different barriers faced, from technical and methodological, to those stemming from perception or time pressures.

Barriers to promoting the use of evidence in PES include:
- time pressure imposed by the tight schedule of decision-making;
- limitations in data quality and access to data;
- culture and attitudes towards the use of evidence among PES management and staff;
- technical constraints, such as available expertise in data management and evaluation, or the technical limitations of existing IT systems;
- legal or ethical concerns raised by social partners or PES staff about RCTs;
- difficulty in isolating the impact of a single intervention when several changes are introduced in parallel;
- pressure from policymakers on evaluators to

simplify interpretation or to extrapolate from results that are not clear-cut;

• constraints on cooperation with academic research institutions through time pressure or legal barriers to sharing data.

Building a culture for the use of evidence

A culture of willingness and enthusiasm towards the use of evidence in strategic and operational decision-making is crucial for the development of practices and services that are based on facts rather than intuition. A culture that fosters evidence-based services underlines the value of expertise, collaboration and data-supported decision-making processes. The explicit approval and active support of senior PES leaders are essential to this. The development of a positive culture for reform should include creating a continuous learning environment for employees, and implementing systems of engagement to facilitate collaboration and information-sharing, an integrated performance management system, and continuous feedback and improvement.

The features of an evidence-based culture include:

• **Providing practical insights** – it is vital that PES staff at all levels understand the practical value of new knowledge and how this helps improve service provision.

• **Offering reliable data based on credible sources –** the reliability of data and credibility of sources encourage staff buy-in, as they can be sure that the evidence being used can be trusted.

• **Supporting decision-making –** data, information and insights are useful as long as they support decision-making not only for policymakers, but also for operational staff: the real culture of evidence extends to using data for everyday, professional decisions, e.g. among employment counsellors.

• **Feeding into the performance management process –** the existence of well-constructed performance management systems in PES, where the impact of the work of front-line staff can be assessed through links to policy outcomes, supports the use of evidence as an important steering factor.

• **Reflective learning from evidence** – an evidence-based culture supports reflective learning for all PES staff, increasing the knowledge pool and supporting two-way communication processes, which in turn increase willingness to learn and use of the evidence in daily operations.

The key factors for establishing a culture of using evidence in PES include:

• senior managers demonstrating a commitment to an evidence-based approach;

• staff at all levels understanding the importance of evidence in providing services;

• staff trained in using evidence in their daily work;

• evidence linked to performance management targets for managers and staff;

• a well-developed internal communication strategy.

Different PES across the EU have developed different approaches to building a culture of using evidence (see Box 2.5).

Box 2.5: A culture of using evidence – Germany and the Netherlands

In **Germany**, institutionalised structures of exchange and policy advice between research departments and PES boards are used, such as fixed, recurring meetings with the executive board, and monthly research presentations to the administrative board and/or the Ministry of Labour. These exchanges are adequate means of managing expectations and establishing a common understanding. Regular talks about the function of scientific policy advice as a link between politics and research can help to find solutions in critical situations.

In **the Netherlands**, the Dutch PES invested a lot of time and effort into creating a culture of using evidence and in the implementation process of a recent randomised control trial (RCT) in order to motivate PES staff and foster a culture of a 'future-proof, evidence-based PES'. The UWV WERKbedrijf carried out a 30-month RCT for gathering scientific evidence to discover the extent to which intensive face-to-face services in the initial phase after registration lead to faster and more sustainable integration of unemployed people into the labour market, in comparison with digital-only services.

The research involved all levels of staff across the organisation. Regional roadshows were used to explain why and how the RCT was going to be conducted, supported by a video message from the board of directors and a personal email from the chief executive. Management was informed regularly throughout the process. A toolkit was developed for all staff, with detailed FAQs and other relevant information. The PES also created opportunities to discuss ethical issues, notably the moral dilemmas flowing from the set-up of the RCT.

Source: PES Germany and PES Netherlands

2.5 Building a framework for an evidence-based approach

Having a predictable and transparent framework is necessary to develop and implement an evidence-based strategy.

Taking stock of the current state of play

Before starting to develop an evidence-based approach to policy, PES need to take stock of their current situation regarding:

- resources available or devoted to evidence-based operations;
- knowledge and expertise available (in-house and externally);
- infrastructure, including IT and data-management systems;
- employee and management skills/competencies, including in research, data management and analysis.

Box 2.6: Measuring the current state of play in evidence-based service delivery

Evaluation practices are closely linked to the overall PES performance management (PM) approach, since strong PM creates a need for reliable evidence. PES with a strong target-setting system also have a more advanced approach to conducting pre- and post-evaluations and integrating evidence-based service design and implementation into a transparent system of change management. PES with a fairly advanced PM system are best placed for developing their evaluation systems, while PES with a less advanced PM system need to develop both areas simultaneously.

In PES where evaluations are still developing, the evidence-base is typically limited to customer satisfaction surveys, monitoring indicators and general labour market statistics. In mature PES, development initiatives are embedded in the PM system and based on rigorous evaluations mainly prepared in-house. These PES use quasi-experimental and sometimes experimental methods in post-evaluations to ensure that impact estimates are reliable.

This latter group of PES are not equally advanced in the use of evidence. Their current practices vary markedly in terms of how research needs are derived from PM outcomes and discussed within the organisation; how research outcomes feed back into the design of ALMP and guidelines for front-line staff; and how evidence is used for making the business case for PES.

Design of the strategic framework

In creating the strategic framework, it is important to understand and design links between evidence-based services and performance management. This enables PES to build a logical, causal relationship model, that links the needs and problems identified to internal processes and outcomes.

Such an approach for the evidence-based framework can include:

- **Root causes** – the factors that lead to or cause the need or problem;
- **Need** – the specific need(s), problem(s) or issue(s) that the intervention addresses;
- **Resources (inputs)** – the resources required to address the need;
- **Activities (outputs)** – what is done or provided to address the need and lead to change;
- **Implementation outcomes** – change(s) for practitioners, organisations or systems arising from the activities;
- **Mechanisms of change** – participants' responses and learning from the activities (understanding, thinking, feeling);
- **Outcomes** – the change(s) that should result for participants (behaviours, practices, relationships, states).
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It is important to remember that an evidence-based approach should focus on those insights that are closely linked to PES operating models, goals and targets, and effectiveness factors. In order to ensure this, before designing the strategic framework, it is good to ask several questions (see Box 2.7).

To link the evidence-based approach to targets, ask the following questions:

- What are you trying to achieve?
- What are the short- and long-term goals or targets?
- What specific needs should be addressed by the use of evidence?
- How will the use of evidence change the way problems are addressed?
- What is the logic behind the solution?
- Can the final result be defined?
- What will be the success factors and measures of the new approach?

Strategic frameworks allow PES to link governance strategies with desired targets. The framework will define the basic rules and principles, as

well as conditions and resources used to achieve the desired outcomes.

There are several examples of strategic frameworks for the increased use of evidence in the public sector around Europe and beyond, notably Denmark (see Box 2.7 and Estonia and Canada in Appendix 2). For example, in Canada, a strategic framework is used in its federal public services to define the government's approach to creating, protecting, using, managing and sharing data as a strategic asset, enabling informed decisions that lead to better outcomes and services for citizens.

The use of evidence to build the customer journey

An important part of the evidence-based approach is in providing coherent pathways for PES customers, based on available data. Some PES have more formalised procedures for designing customer journeys, while others rely mainly on their staff and organisational experience, in which case pathways for customers might be rather normative and subjective than evidence-based. In the evidence-based approach, these pathways or journeys should be built on existing knowledge about what works. Some PES use pilots to check which approach is most effective (See 2.6).

Box 2.7: Defining a framework for an evidence-based strategy – Denmark

One of the best examples of designing an approach to an evidence-based strategy comes from STAR, the PES in Denmark. The Danish Agency for Labour Market and Recruitment (STAR) is working to support the policy process by systematically accumulating evidence about the effects of ALMP. The continuous development and implementation of policy and legislation can be seen as a constant cycle comprising four steps. In the first step, policy proposals, which have been negotiated by political parties, are articulated. In step two, the political parties decide the legislation. In step three, legislation is implemented. In step four, the effects of new initiatives and policies are evaluated. In these processes, evidence-based knowledge plays a crucial role, as it serves as an important source of input when designing new policies as well as the actual implementation of the employment policy.

The use of evidence to inform decision-making in political process in STAR is further described in Appendix 2.

Source: PES Denmark

Analytical capabilities in a maturing PES depend on defining clearly what the PES is trying to achieve, as articulated in its mission and the defining metrics of success. The PES maturity model therefore embraces several areas, including:
- evidence-based strategy
- culture of using evidence
- investment in a skilled workforce
- data governance and protection
- technical and organisational infrastructure
- seamlessly integration with the performance management system
- collaboration and communication structures that support dissemination and buy-in
- monitoring, improvement and learning.

A self-assessment tool that can be used to analyse the level of maturity of evidence-based policy in PES can be found in Appendix 3.

2.6 Pilots and testing before full implementation

How much data is enough?

One of the key questions that PES need to ask is: 'How much data is enough?' It is vital to strike the right balance between the amount of data collected and its usefulness. Data-gathering and analysis processes are time-consuming and employ organisational resources (people, equipment and knowledge) that might be better used elsewhere. For example, in Belgium (VDAB), one of the key challenges is finding the right balance between producing evidence that is credible (methodologically speaking), and doing this for many services regularly, without too much time lag and on a sufficiently disaggregated level.

It is crucial to determine first the critical questions of **evidence functionality:**
- What knowledge and insights does the PES want to acquire throughout the process?
- How will the information be used (for which purposes)?
- Can an (informed) decision be made on the basis of existing data?
- If the decision can be made on existing data, is there access to all of the data needed and/or does it exist as an integrated dataset?
- If not, how much time, effort and resources are needed to gather the new data?

Testing
It is important to implement small-scale research and/or evaluations in the form of pilots to test the approach, programme and/or specific service in order to assess its impact. Most PES used pilots to detect and correct any mistakes in the design of measures, to inform the development of the implementation process and to assess the impact of new or modified measures. Pilots may also be used to inform the choice between design options. The obvious advantage of pilots is that problems can be tackled before national roll-out. However, pilots take time and thus may not always fit into the tight schedule of decision-making.

The systematic use of pilots is useful for PES. They are especially profitable when it comes to implementing new measures that have a significant risk of failure. For implementing large changes, pilots can serve as a test of decisions on whether or not to roll out new initiatives.

Box 2.8: Pilots for projects – France, Belgium and Estonia

In **France**, when projects fall within the strategic plan, pilots are used and evaluated formally. When it can be demonstrated that a practice or service has had a positive effect on the performance targets, this heavily influences the decision to scale up. Local initiatives can also take place, which are not formally evaluated. In addition, Pôle emploi increasingly proceeds using proof of concept (POC) as first step in reforming services. POC allows for continuous development. Once a POC is met, it sometimes evolves into a pilot.

In **Belgium**, Le Forem systematically uses pilots to demonstrate the effectiveness of services, and these are formally evaluated. The piloting process is constantly improved on the basis of previous evaluations. For instance, the following improvements have been made to the procedure for the test phase of digital projects:

- A quality team has been set up within the IT Department to ensure that the application is stable before the tests are implemented.
- Tests are carried out and validated by business managers before being made available on Le Forem site.
- For web applications, jobseekers' opinions are often solicited at different stages of the design and development of these services (for example, mock-ups have been showed to jobseekers in local offices).

Source: PES France, PES Belgium – Le Forem

Box 2.8: Pilots for projects –Estonia

In **Estonia,** PES pilot projects are planned if a new measure is needed or there is a need for change in the service design or internal processes, but it should be tested first. For example, the PES has piloted:

- new methodology for work-ability assessment
- new methodology for work-focused counselling
- methodology of the Individual Action Plan assessment
- in relation to business start-up subsidy, the possibility of submitting business plans Russian (analysis showed that the proportion of business plans submitted by Russian-speaking applicants was much lower than would have been expected, given the proportion of Russian-speaking people on the unemployment register)
- a degree study allowance and subsidy for employers who are creating jobs in Ida-Virumaa county.

The PES continuously monitors ongoing projects, e.g. following the respective indicators and provision process and discussing the information with relevant stakeholders.

At the end of the project, the results are analysed and summaries of these are presented to the Management Board, Supervisory Board and other stakeholders.

After the pilot, the following changes were introduced:

- the work-ability assessment methodology, questionnaire, work arrangement, instructions and training process
- the process and training of work-focused counselling
- the methodology of the Individual Action Plan assessment, the internal process of the labour market service provision
- in exceptional cases, business plans written in Russian or English are considered for the business start-up-subsidy
- a subsidy was created to support job creation in Ida-Virumaa and the South-Eastern part of Estonia.

Source: PES Estonia

Not every PES has developed formal ways to evaluate pilots. Sometimes they rely on the informal opinions of their staff, which raises questions about validity. However, pilots are very important for making political and strategic decisions. The bigger the project, is the more important the formal evaluation is (see Box 2.8).

2.7 Evidence-based approach in times of major disruption

For many PES, their evidence-based approach has been a vital component in planning their response to swift and large-scale labour market changes occurring in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has had immediate and almost unprecedented consequences.

The most important responsibilities among PES during the pandemic included:
- making sure people received their unemployment benefits and social welfare payments quickly and that essential services were guaranteed;
- ensuring social security of jobseekers (registration, unemployment and other benefits, social support);
- providing financial support for employers to retain employees during the crisis and avoid redundancies where possible through short-term work schemes;
- providing financial support for self-employed individuals;

Box 2.9: Evidence-based policy during the COVID-19 pandemic – Estonia

All work processes and projects in Estonia have continued during the pandemic. The PES identified that it is vital to make daily statistics publicly available. It started publishing unemployment figures on its website, which has reduced the volume of enquiries made by journalists. The PES also made new dashboards publicly available, including one giving an overview of a new measure, temporary wage compensation. There was a constant need to recalculate the cost estimates for various measures due to rapidly changing background information.
In-house, through the daily use of TARU dashboards, clients and the services provided to them were under constant review both by job coaches and the service development teams at PES central office. Having an overview and following trends over time has given the PES a general indication of progress in achieving its strategic goals.
Quantitative data-gathering has not been modified during the crisis, but additional analyses are carried out to secure have more future-oriented insights.

Source: PES Estonia
https://www.tootukassa.ee/content/tootukassast/paevane-statistika
https://www.tootukassa.ee/content/toetused-ja-huvitised/tootasu-huvitise-maaramine

Box 2.10: Internal policy during the COVID-19 pandemic – Belgium

Le Forem in Belgium has implemented a consistent COVID-19 policy, including:
- Registering as quickly as possible all people who have lost their job because of the crisis, to ensure that the PES has the most up-to-date labour market information;
- Reallocating staff to areas of work with increased demand;
- Supporting employers with recruitment, by flagging the most urgent vacancies and managing employment aids flexibly;
- Providing people who register or re-register with the PES as quickly as possible with job offers, putting them in contact with employers and/or offering quick tailor-made support (ideally within 48 hours);
- Organising collective redeployment units, especially for people who were self-employed but lost all their income because of the crisis;
- Providing staff with all the necessary material (personal protective equipment (PPE), anti-bacterial gel etc.) and instructions (behaviour, number of persons allowed in waiting rooms, etc.)

Source: PES Belgium – Le Forem

- providing limited amounts of labour market services and ALMPs;
- making information related to the effects of the new measures (e.g. temporary wage compensation) accessible publicly;
- estimating the costs of the new measures and solutions;
- providing timely and regular information and statistics, both externally and internally, to increase service effectiveness.

The most important improvements made in analysed PES due to the pandemic include:
- the promotion of technical changes in the IT system to allow electronic submission of the evidence needed for registration for benefits or vacancies (Cyprus);
- adaptation of client communication to protect client and staff health (Germany);
- reorganisation of IT infrastructure (e.g. to enable working from home at grand scale, remote counselling etc.) (Germany).

Biggest challenges for PES during the pandemic:

- uploading all training and guidance material electronically on the PES web page;
- adapting new internal metrics (e.g. staff infection rates) to monitor the continuity of services;
- meeting the increasing demand for benefits (e.g. short-term work compensation);
- dealing with a high inflow of unemployment benefit recipients;
- suspending some activities within jobcentres that closed due to restrictions on movement.

Data and evidence collection during the COVID-19 pandemic

The pandemic and subsequent lockdown prompted changes to everyday PES functions. Some of these led to improvements, such as more accurate recording of electronic data, intensive discussions among officers and managers, more detailed and frequent guidance, and increased use of electronic communication with clients.

Some PES intensified their research and made efforts to publish data on unemployment more frequently, although not every PES has sufficient resources to do this. A good idea in that case is to adapt existing planned survey studies or analyses to the current situation. More frequent (or sometimes rapid) publication of data that was not previously published can help to steer and target interventions. It can also serve independent, external researchers to produce timely evidence on the effectiveness of emerging practices and approaches taken in these turbulent labour market conditions. This can facilitate the scale-up of some supportive measures, where these are backed up by relevant evidence.

The most important change in the use of evidence during the pandemic was more frequent use of data and ensuring as rapid publication of analyses as possible, especially on labour market impact. Some of the PES also started experimenting with new predictive methods, including 'nowcasting'[11].

Box 2.11: Data collection during the COVID-19 pandemic

Data collection and publication have dramatically increased during the crisis to monitor the evolution of the labour market. One of the important aims was to make labour market information accessible, relevant and publicly available. Indicators have been published more frequently (often weekly) to facilitate a rapid response to developments in the labour market and to allow for informed decision-making.

Source: PES Denmark, PES Estonia and PES France

Box 2.12: Key messages on planning and designing evidence-based services

- Develop a strategic framework for evidence-based policy and services and gain commitment from PES and Ministry policymakers.

- Support senior PES leaders in developing a shared culture for evidence-based services and a body of skills in the PES to support it.

- Make explicit links between the PES mission and targets, the performance management system and developing the evidence-base for PES.

- Encourage senior operational managers to lead the approach internally and externally and ensure progress is reviewed independently.

- Support and celebrate a 'test and learn' approach, especially in the context of COVID-19.

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[11]   See for example: https://www.oecd.org/naec/new-economic-policymaking/NAEC_2019_Nowcasting_L_Reichlin.pdf; https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/social-sciences/nowcasting

SECTION 3.

Implementing evidence-based services

3.1 Developing tools for generating and using evidence

A successful PES evidence-based system should include, inter alia, **adequate data infrastructure within the PES and use of robust evaluation methods**[12].
Sources and tools for generating evidence include:
- PES administrative data
- contextual information about the labour market
- monitoring data from programmes and services
- customer surveys
- experimental evaluation (including RCTs)
- quasi-experimental evaluations
- qualitative evaluations.

All of these methods have their pros and cons. It is advisable to use a mix of different methods (called 'methodological triangulation') in order to analyse the issue from different angles and confirm the initial observations in unbiased way. This is crucial in order to retain objectivity of the process and support evidence-based decision-making. A table of methodological approaches to assessing what works can be found in Appendix 2.
The choice of methods should be based on the research design, starting from the identification of needs and a definition of the problem (a hypothesis). The replicability of results (or confirmation of findings) will indicate that an appropriate threshold of evidence has been reached for making informed decisions.

Box 3.1: Sources of evidence for the design of a new service – Belgium

- benchmarking studies on good practice – one approach focused on evidence indicating that front-line workers were actively included in decision-making
- exchange of good practice between Le Forem units via thematic networks (e.g. jobsearch thematic network)
- client satisfaction, monitored through the online helpline or call centre, with feedback taken into account when planning improvements
- evaluation of current labour market policies.
- regular monitoring of literature regarding the labour market.

Thanks to the centralisation of data on jobseekers, a data-mining approach is being implemented in the field of jobseeker journey management. The data relates to tens of thousands of jobseekers, including data on socio-demographic, mobility, jobseeker journey within the PES and jobseeker position in the labour market.

Source: PES Belgium – Le Forem

Consultation

In order to design sources, methods and analysis so that they match the PES's needs, it is essential to take into consideration local staff experience and established flows of information between PES branches, departments and agencies and between staff at all levels, by:
- involving operational divisions from the start in choosing methods and designing and implementing evidence strategies;
- working systematically with a long-term approach to establish evidence about what works best for various programmes, interventions and target groups;
- having reliable sources of data and consulting professionals in research design;
- setting up a steering committee for the evidence-base
- supporting evaluations to provide independent guidance and technical expertise.

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12   European Commission 2019; Policy paper on evidence-based policy

Understanding and interpreting the data

A very simple though useful example of the use of data is in devising training for PES officers and managers based on the need to improve services and practices in ways that have been identified during day-to-day work. It may be easily introduced since it doesn't require any particular additional tools, other than willingness and mechanisms for senior management to actively listen to the employees at lower levels of the organisation. There are also many IT tools available to support the practical use of data. With appropriate staff training, supporting software enables PES employees to conduct serious and thorough analyses, comparisons and evaluations. For example, Cyprus PES used software to gather data on its own electronic recording systems, which could then be disaggregated (i.e. broken down) by office and officers in order to identify any differences in the application of procedures across different offices. More advanced methods include the use of artificial intelligence (AI) and user experience approaches. A very good example comes from Estonia. Esto-

Box 3.2: Consulting – Germany

In Germany, institutionalised and independent scientific research, data provision and scientific consulting to PES administration are conducted out by the Institute for Employment Research ('Institut für Arbeitsmarkt und Berufsforschung', IAB). The IAB's activities provide PES staff with robust and reliable data sources to inform evidence-based decisions and support activities. IAB is part of the PES with the status of a special department to ensure freedom of research. Its research activities are based on a statutory mandate.

Source: PES Germany

nia PES uses its own data warehouse, TARU, in its everyday work. The data is available to employees in visual form via Tableau BI software. This makes the data accessible and understandable to all job coaches through a dashboard (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Dashboard used by job coaches – Estonia

TARU includes two types of dashboards: i) dashboards where only aggregated statistics are presented (available to all users inside the organisation); and ii) a personal dashboard for job coaches and regional managers, where the individual data for clients is presented. This means that job coaches and managers can use the personal dashboard for individuals to get quick visual overview of the clients in their personal portfolio or in their region as a whole respectively. They can also interrogate the dashboard to monitor service provision: what services are provided for my clients? who is waiting for services? who has not participated for a long time? and so on.

Evidence-based decisions

There are three key factors in making informed decisions based on the evidence:
1. access to reliable data (if unavailable, the first step is to correct faults or gaps in the data);
2. triangulation of methods – a well-judged mixture of qualitative (interviewing customers, investigating process chains) and quantitative (surveys, questionnaires) sources;
3. a culture of evidence-based decision-making.

Box 3.4: Staff training – Estonia

In Estonia, it is obligatory for PES employees to become acquainted with the use of data in their work. It ensures that all staff are aware of the importance and ways of making evidence-based decisions.
The PES organises in-house, compulsory training courses for new employees. One set of courses involves sourcing labour market information (internally, through the TARU dashboards and occupational barometer, and externally, through the labour market survey conducted by Statistics Estonia, labour market overviews by the Bank of Estonia, sectoral analysis by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications, and skills needs analysis by the Estonian Qualifications Authority). The training looks at the main concepts used and indicators that are used in labour market statistics in order to teach employees how to interpret data correctly. The course is provided by the Analysis Department.
To develop skills in data analysis and use of the TARU dashboards, the Analysis Department conducts differentiated training courses for different groups of workers at all regional offices of the PES.

Source: PES Estonia

Box 3.3: Making evidence-based decisions – Lithuania

In Lithuania, data for decision-making is extracted from a single IT platform that lets users (managers, central office staff) access the data in real time to check performance, implementation levels of strategic targets/objectives and the information used at operational level. If required, training is organised to ensure that staff know how to use the IT system correctly and efficiently.

Source: PES Lithuania

3.2 Preparing staff for evidence-based service delivery

The attitude among managers towards evidence-based decision-making is crucial, and both managerial and staff training may be necessary (see Box 3.4).

Training in the use of data and evidence should take a high priority. Knowledge is one of the tools for PES employees. Training should be designed according to the needs of staff at all levels (e.g. job coaches, managers and staff at regional and head offices).

The training is unlikely to need all the elements mentioned in Box 3.5: the list is just a suggestion of what such training might include. However, it is crucial to adjust the training content to particular needs and goals, and ensure it is relevant to the roles and responsibilities of the staff being trained. Training should also reflect methods and tools available for experienced staff. There is no need to train PES staff in advanced IT tools if they will not need to use them in their everyday work. Another important aspect of training is teaching staff about the socio-economic context. This gives PES staff the ability to understand the main concepts relating to the socio-economic environment and the labour market and to build and update their knowledge around this theme using the available tools.
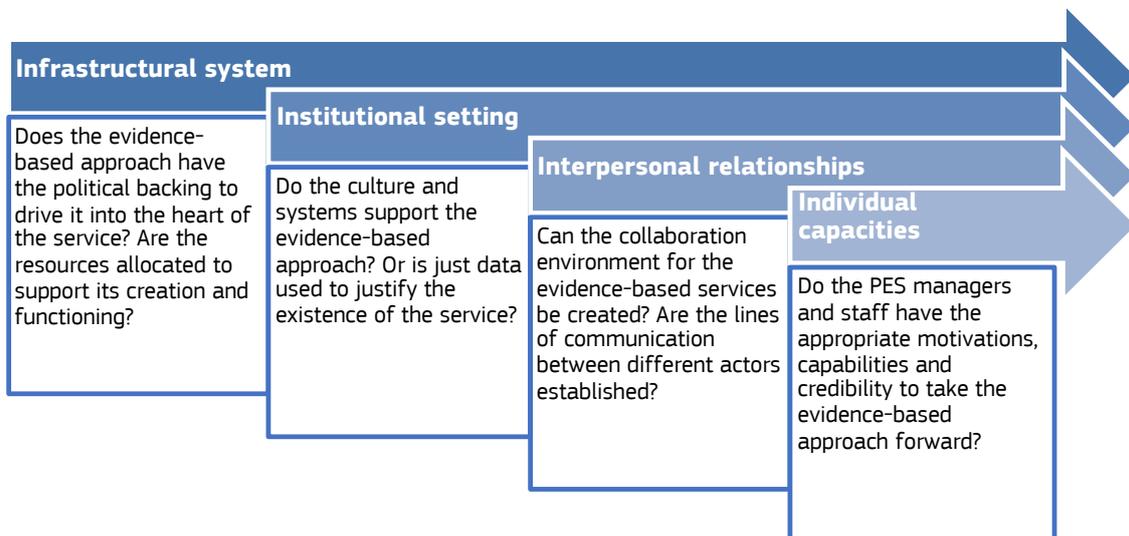
3.3 Cooperation and communication

For many PES, the first step in implementing evidence-based services is to raise awareness of their importance and to demonstrate the benefits of evidence-based practice.

Contextual factors are crucial for the effective design and implementation of PES policies and programmes. Understanding these can influence the effectiveness both positively and negatively.

> *The success of social programmes is [...] limited by contextual constraints. Interventions, by definition, are always inserted into pre-existing conditions. A mass of different contextual constraints lurks in wait for every programme and the interrelationships, institutions and structures in which it is embedded all shape its fortune[13].*

It is vital to understand the contextual factors that affect the functioning of evidence-based policy in PES (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Evidence-based policy

Box 3.5: Sample training content for PES staff

- data collection and analysis to measure the effect of actions;
- principles of measuring and comparing performance;
- steering by results: being more attentive to the results of actions both in the context of reception, compensation and support missions for jobseekers to facilitate their return to employment, and the context of meeting the needs of employers and attending to user and staff satisfaction with the quality of service provided;
- computer processing of the tasks performed by PES staff: understanding the link between the professional activity carried out by the job coach and the performance indicator;
- use of IT tools, including databases;
- analysis and exploitation of performance management data (dashboards, reports, indicators, satisfaction surveys, etc.);
- reaching conclusions that are supported by analysis of causes
- co-constructing action plans.

Infrastructural system

Does the evidence-based approach have the political backing to drive it into the heart of the service? Are the resources allocated to support its creation and functioning?

Institutional setting

Do the culture and systems support the evidence-based approach? Or is just data used to justify the existence of the service?

Interpersonal relationships

Can the collaboration environment for the evidence-based services be created? Are the lines of communication between different actors established?

Individual capacities

Do the PES managers and staff have the appropriate motivations, capabilities and credibility to take the evidence-based approach forward?

Source: Adapted from Pawson, 2006, p. 31

Understanding how the service relates to the labour market context nationally and locally

Relations between PES and related services and the labour market are multi-dimensional. The PES should both undertake actions based on labour market information, but also share information about new evidence and present the results of evaluations or new analysis to the broader audience in order to influence the labour market. To do this well, you will need a checklist of relevant organisations to work with and communicate your plans to.

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13   Pawson R., *Evidence-based Policy. A Realist Perspective,* SAGE, London 2006, pp. 24-25.

Your external stakeholders are likely to include:
- employers' organisations
- trade unions
- NGOs
- universities (academia)
- external researchers and experts
- educational institutions (e.g. schools and colleges)
- vocational training centres and providers
- social welfare and occupational health services.

Cooperation may take the form of joint research and data analysis, or exchanges of experience and good practice. Collaborative work of this kind will strengthen relationships and provide opportunities for joint communication campaigns. A common mode of cooperation with external research institutions is evaluation and other kinds of research needed by PES. Engaging external stakeholders aids transparency and an unbiased approach. PES may well include external stakeholders in their statutory activities, by delegating some services to outside bodies, for instance services for jobseekers. PES may also take part in broader national and international committees and organisations, such as the EU Centre for Research on Impact Evaluation, and create partnerships with other PES, for example through mutual learning initiatives or the World Association of Public Employment Services (WAPES).

Some external stakeholders provide training for PES. This is especially valuable when it comes to the use of specific advanced IT tools. It is worth using professional advice in order to make sure PES staff know how to use the tools in their everyday work.

Box 3.7: Communication with stakeholders – Belgium

Employers' training needs are regularly analysed thanks to thematic roundtables that bring together numerous participants, including competence centres and members of competitiveness clusters and sectoral associations. Their conclusions are validated by thematic steering committees (called strategic business units) and a transversal committee. These conclusions are then documented in reports, which are available on the Le Forem website. Roundtables are organised every two years.

Source: PES Belgium – Le Forem
https://www.leforem.be/chiffres-et-analyses/prospectives.html

Box 3.6: Cooperation with the scientific community – France

In 2013, Pôle emploi established a scientific council, which has made a major contribution to developing Pôle emploi's links with the academic world. Composed of nine representatives from several academic disciplines, the council assists Pôle emploi in its partnerships with academia and gives an opinion on its orientation in terms of study, research and evaluation. Pôle emploi regularly participates in the national scientific committees of other organisations. For example, in 2019, Pôle emploi was a member of the national scientific committees evaluating different initiatives such as the 'Investment Plan in Skills', 'Zero-LTU Territories' and the 'Jobsearch log'. Pôle emploi has a partnership with the DARES (Statistics division of the Ministry of Labour), which enables both organisations to gather diverse data.

Source: PES, France

A good example of this is in Estonia, where the PES uses external software providers as well as academics to support the design of tools (see Box 3.6 and Appendix 1 on PES practices in external cooperation).

As the evidence-based approach becomes more embedded in the PES, consideration should be given to developing a more structured model for handling flows of information between organisational levels and business units. A small network of information officers can be a good investment.

Role of information officers

The amount of data and information available in an evidence-based approach can be overwhelming, even if data visualisation practices have been put in place. In services where a large number of different datasets are used and/or data is gathered externally, it is advisable to create an organisational role of information officer. The role of the information officer is to collect, organise, summarise and disseminate information. A comparison can be made with the healthcare industry, where information or data 'brokers' are trained to gather, sort and prepare information for medical doctors, in a digestible format, so that the most recent knowledge can be used as soon as it becomes available.

External communication campaigns

The commonest way of communication with stakeholders who are outside the PES is to organise face-to-face meetings, workshops and seminars, as well as online webinars and mailing lists. Taking into consideration the current situation caused by the pandemic, webinars seem to be the most effective means of communication. They may also be used for post-pandemic activity (see Box 3.7).

Box 3.8: Key messages on implementing evidence-based services

- Check that PES data sources and infrastructure are robust and reliable.
- Make sure that the PES performance management system is the key foundation for data and enlist the engagement of operational managers and staff.
- Consult widely on good practice and service design within PES and with external stakeholders.
- Strengthen your organisational culture to use evidence and drive training interventions and internal and external communications.
- Make sure evidence is placed in the labour market context and refers to the main PES objectives, especially in the context of the challenge of COVID-19.

SECTION 4.
Monitoring, evaluation and learning

4.1 Monitoring and evaluation

What evidence is being collected for the purpose of monitoring?
Monitoring may take place at every level of PES and apply to internal procedures as well as external activities, such as the impact of PES on the labour market and overall labour market operation. There is clearly a link with the way PES are increasingly managing operational performance. There may well be experts from that discipline already in place in key roles who can be supported and developed to play an important part in the monitoring process. It will be useful to consult your steering group on the best approach to monitoring (see Section 3.1).

At a minimum, it is essential to:
- define concrete goals and monitor them regularly to capture trends, including taking account of contextual information (e.g. changing labour market conditions, changing structure of target groups, etc.);
- design specific indicators for regular monitoring (annually, bi-annually, quarterly – depending on the nature of the indicator) and feed these into the PES performance management system.

There will be various sources of data and information sources, including:
- official statistics
- scientific evidence
- employee surveys
- management information from relevant processes
- qualitative evidence from internal processes
- client/customer questionnaires and satisfaction surveys

Box 4.1: Accurately forecasting labour market demand – Estonia

An important supporting tool in the process of job counselling is PES Estonia's occupational barometer (https://www.tootukassa.ee/eng/baromeeter). This provides a qualitative method of forecasting short-term labour demand by occupation. The estimates are compiled by the regional departments of the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund, and involve external experts wherever possible. Labour demand forecasts look at two indicators: first, trends in employer demand for labour in the next 12 months; and second, the balance between labour supply and demand for the next 12 months. This raises questions such as, What the ratio will be between the existing labour force and employers' demand by occupation? Will there be a labour surplus, labour shortage or a balance in occupations on the labour market? The general trends within the labour market are evaluated, which means that the barometer does not take seasonality into account. The estimates are based on the employers' perspective.
Another important tool is the OSKA sectoral labour force needs and skills surveys (https://oska.kutsekoda.ee/en/), conducted by the Estonian Qualifications Authority. OSKA analyses the labour and skills needed for Estonia's economic development over the next 10 years. These analyses indicate which sectors and occupations need to be prioritised in order to secure continued employment for individuals in the future

Source: PES Estonia

- administrative data
- specific researches designed by PES
- commercial research
- state social insurance register and other data collected by the state.

Regular monitoring is crucial – as a minimum, one impact evaluation of services a year. It is worth using both quantitative and qualitative methods, mixing them if necessary (see Appendix 2). Monitor ongoing projects, e.g. by tracking indicators and the provision process, and discuss the information with relevant stakeholders and local managers and staff. This means that valuable information about 'what works' can feed into the political process when new policies and political reforms are introduced.

Some examples of the most significant and useful items to monitor are:
- effectiveness of services, service models and interventions
- employee satisfaction
- client/customer satisfaction
- effects on outflow and labour market position of clients
- effectiveness of job counselling and other active measures
- views of delivery managers
- staff views on the services provided
- caseworker service, in terms of efficiency and quality of case-handling
- customer behaviour
- information about 'what works'
- quantitative data on the use of ALMPs and services.

Box 4.3: General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

Regulation (EU) 2016/679 relates to the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data. The text includes the corrigendum published in the *Official Journal of the European Union* (OJEU) on 23 May 2018.
The recent revolution in artificial intelligence (AI) and analytics has raised questions in relation to transparency and the ethics of using data (especially big data) in PES. The regulation is an essential step in strengthening individuals' fundamental rights in the digital age and in facilitating businesses by clarifying the rules for companies and public bodies in the digital single market. A single law will also do away with the current fragmentation in different national systems and unnecessary administrative burdens.

More information on data protection in the EU can be found here.

Box 4.2: Coordinating research efforts – Germany

In Germany, there are specialised departments in the IAB and within the PES. The staff unit for research coordination (Foko) at IAB gathers research and its results together, ensures transparency and provides impetus for new research projects. It coordinates and provides resources for evaluation research and assists IAB researchers or PES units in placing tenders for research projects. In the PES itself, the unit for policy evaluation takes similar tasks on a smaller scale (e.g. assisting with tenders for evaluations of small pilots). The situation in the tax-financed basic income support scheme (Social Code II, SCII) is somewhat specific. Here, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs is highly influential in determining the research targets, and results are reported to it. The exact definition of key performance indicators within the SCII is codified and therefore not defined by PES internally.

Source: PES Germany

Independent evaluations

Evaluations done by or in cooperation with external research institutions are common. The main aim of such evaluations is to gain an objective and unbiased perspective on PES activities. External evaluation may also give PES a broader perspective on their actions. It is easier to choose well-adjusted tools and methods with the help of independent professional researchers (see Box 4.2).

Data protection

While using advanced software for data collection and analysis, it is extremely important to observe data protection. All the PES that implemented such methods pay special attention to their customers' privacy. It is also extremely important to ensure that PES staff are trained in ethics of data collection and usage (see Box 4.3).

For example, Belgium VDAB has started using AI and big-data analysis to detect gender bias in job vacancies and to pinpoint the most vulnerable citizens needing assistance[14].

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14   More information can be found in the recorded version of the PES Network webinar, 'Big Data and Ethics – Insights from Flanders and Norway' that took place on 24 April 2019. Learn more by watching the webinar here.

Since data protection is extremely important, strict regulations sometimes restrict the cross-use of data in national registers. Although the process of data-exchange is a time-consuming and complex process due to these statutory requirements, it is necessary to follow the data protection guidelines, as the data gathered at PES is often sensitive.

For example, in Belgium, restrictions imposed by GDPR represent a challenge, particularly since these restrictions impede automatisation of data analysis. Difficulties in sharing data also restrict potential cooperation with researchers outside the organisation, because the processing of personal data or indirectly identifiable data is strictly regulated (see Box 4.5).

Evidence to support improvement

The evidence gathered from data may support both national and local improvements. Starting from grassroots level, it may support improvements in the quality of counselling as well as providing the basis of national strategies. A good example here comes from Estonia, where evidence is used both for national monitoring and for local improvements (see Box 4.1). Another example of local improvements in France is described in Appendix 1, under 'Mechanisms of learning from experience in PES'.

Box 4.4: Privacy and transparency in PES

There is a need to balance the privacy of jobseekers, employers and other identifiable sources with being an open, transparent organisation. Transparency through open data is not only a great way to increase PES accountability: it could also lead to novel applications of the data that could aid the work of the PES.

The tension lies between providing rich enough data for meaningful applications to be developed and being generic enough so that individuals cannot be identified. In this context, it is also important to have very clear consent procedures and to be explicit to clients about the purposes for which their data is being used.

Source: Pieterson, 2016

Box 4.5: Data protection restrictions – Estonia

In Estonia, ethical and organisational barriers restrict the use of an experimental approach to trialling services. Employees of the PES may be reluctant to conduct an experimental approach if the process increases workload or puts them in an inconvenient situation, for example in having to explain to clients why more frequent job counselling is needed. It also may raise questions among clients ('Why do I have to come more often to counselling than my friend?'). Time pressure often then restricts the ability to conduct a thorough analysis using new and experimental designs, particularly if there is an insufficient period of time over which to measure the impact of innovative or experimental approaches.

Source: PES Estonia

Box 4.6: Sharing outcomes – the Netherlands

Depending on the nature of the evaluation (high impact or not), outcomes are shared with the managing board and the leadership team. A structure of separate 'domains' serves continuous improvement, as outcomes of research and evaluation influence changes made to client services. The PES has domains for all major service areas, for example:
employer services
employment benefit recipients
disability benefit recipients.

Responsibility for defining and implementing change projects is held by district management, which is the level between head office and the regional and operational management of the Dutch PES. District managers who are responsible for one thematic domain act as 'domain holder', covering one or various specific thematic issues. Their responsibility also includes rolling out and implementing change processes throughout the country.

The portfolio holder group, represented by operational managers of all districts, plays an important advisory role to senior management and the leadership team at head office with respect to the definition and prioritisation of change topics.

In the future, the portfolio holder group will lead on suggestions and priorities for improvement. Thus, the portfolio holder group is the real 'heart' of the domain. Ownership is stimulated by giving the participants a decision-making mandate and responsibility to share good practices, identify bottlenecks and ensure coordination with the grassroots within their respective districts.

Source: PES Netherlands

4.2 Learning from experience

Evidence-based policy involves the design of the mechanisms for learning from experience – including learning from mistakes – as well as identifying what works, and when, where and for whom. It is vital to use the experience of more advanced institutions, including PES in other countries. The PES Network, especially through Benchlearning, can provide an exchange of practices and useful hands-on experience for those interested in developing their approach to evidence-based policy.

Drawing on Kolb's cycle of experiential learning (see Appendix 2), PES can build their own approach to experiential learning in designing an evidence-based approach. This is especially vital in times of major disruption, such as digital transformation, or the COVID-19 crisis. In such cases, past experiences are often of limited or no use: there are no similarities to refer to. This means that learning from current experience and transforming it into valuable organisational insights should be prioritised. Each country and each PES has its own way of learning from experience.

Box 4.7: Key messages on monitoring, evaluation and learning

- Ensure PES is capturing the data needed to track progress against the goal and objectives of the policy or service.
- Maximise data sources, including PES performance management system, feedback from operational managers and front-line staff, labour market intelligence and external stakeholders.
- Encourage independent external evaluation and check data integrity.
- Record results systematically and learn from experience.

The most important thing is to be aware of the necessity of self-improvement, from which the choice of a method of improvement will follow.

SECTION 5.
Summary and conclusions

It is clear that evidence-based policy, programmes and services will drive change, improvement and high performance among PES. The examples of good practice collected in creating this toolkit are themselves evidence of that. Toolkit users are encouraged to work through it systematically and discuss it with colleagues. In doing this, bear in mind the major themes that have been identified – they all need attention if your approach is to succeed.

1. Start by building a strategic framework that sets out your approach to evidence-based services. Aim to get clear support for it amongst PES leaders and policymakers in your ministry.
2. Develop your thinking around building a culture to support the framework. This will need consistent messaging and training of staff. Aim to embed a culture of what works and what needs improving throughout the PES.
3. Link your framework explicitly to your PES mission and the performance management system that supports it. Aim to reassure PES operational managers and front-line staff that these three elements (mission, evidence and performance) align and support each other and are linked to the achievement of desired labour market policy outcomes.
4. Use resources and stakeholders from outside PES to guide and offer technical and independent support in design, evaluation and monitoring; provide access to analytical expertise in order to interpret results and advise on appropriate future directions, and provide independent oversight of results to reinforce the transparency and credibility of research findings.
5. Build a learning approach into the framework so that test and learn is a natural part of how the PES develops and manages its services. It should aim to build a customer-oriented culture, encouraging open and honest feedback to foster learning and continuous improvement.
6. Finally, invest in communications and skills for front-line staff. They will repay that investment in the value they add.

Appendix 1
Good practice examples

Good practice: building an evidence-based strategy

DE
PES use institutionalised and independent scientific research, data provision and scientific consulting of PES administration by the Institute for Employment Research ('Institut für Arbeitsmarkt und Berufsforschung', IAB). IAB is part of the PES with the status of a special department to ensure freedom of research. Its research activities are based on a statutory mandate.

FR
There is a committee for evaluation that provide guidance for unbiased studies and strategically coherent evaluations. Operational divisions are involved from the start as this also provide a lever to disseminate an evidence-based culture and build interest within PES.

LT
Data for decision-making is extracted from a single IT platform that lets users (managers, central offices staff) access the data in real time to check performance, the implementation level of strategic targets/objectives and operational level process information.

NL
The PES is governed by the line ministry with no formal involvement of social partners. The governance structure is essentially top down, in that the ministry decides on the annual performance targets of the PES. However, since its budget was significantly reduced in 2010, the PES has been increasingly proactive in developing its own vision and making proposals for improvements and investments in PES activities. This strategy has required the PES to generate reliable evidence on the effectiveness of ALMP and PES services. Furthermore, it set up an advisory board that includes influential experts from academia and the social partners. The proactive approach of the

PES has strengthened the cooperative aspects of its relations with the ministry. In the current practice, the PES Department of Strategy, Policy and Knowledge has weekly meetings with the ministry and they discuss policy proposals coming from both the PES and the ministry and subject all proposals to impact analysis.

BE Le Forem
The Belgian PES Le Forem has a formally agreed and coherent strategy for evidence-based policy.

BE VDAB
Management are allowed to report more systematically on the effectiveness of services in a periodic monitoring system. The idea is to use a semi-automated machine learning approach to provide regular updates on the evolution of the effectiveness of the key services.

Good practice: building a culture of using evidence

FR
Pôle emploi adopted an innovative method for developing new services or organisations. It has now been used so often that most of the staff are aware of how the elaboration process works. Within this process, tests and evaluations are sometimes conducted and their results are used to make informed decisions. Pôle emploi uses proof of concept (POC) and pilots for its services and organisational developments.
Engaging staff in the innovation process has encouraged them to pay attention to the effect that ideas can have once they are implemented and to build an internal culture of awareness of effects, based on evidence gathered during the process. Staff can propose ideas on an internal online platforms and, if selected, this results in the testing of a POC. Staff have been involved in the design–thinking process leading to POCs. POCs are tested in local agencies or at other levels de-

pending on the project. Even though the POCs are not evaluated, they provide a first level of interest with data and results for staff.

Pilots are evaluated in-depth by the Statistics and Evaluation Division. In combination with the work of the Scientific Council, these evaluations provide evidence for PES decision-makers to either go ahead or not with projects. Staff participating in pilots are sometimes contributing to evaluations through qualitative questionnaires). Evaluations are also published on the intranet and available to all staff.

DK

New policy suggestions and reforms are, if possible, based on existing knowledge about what works. Being able to provide such a picture helps to build a culture of using evidence.

CY

The provision of services to unemployed people who receive public assistance has recently been enriched and reviewed based on officers' and managers' empirical comments and conclusions, with the aim of producing more viable and effective results. Last year, PES officers and managers were being trained according to the needs identified by them during their daily work, based on weaknesses in behaviour and practices applied. The suggestion by CY PES to the Human Resource Development Authority regarding the organisation of new training courses for the unemployed was based on statistical sectoral occupation data. The key element for successful implementation is the production of reliable statistical data and opinions.

NL

The Dutch PES has invested a lot of time and effort in the implementation process of a recent RCT in order to motivate PES staff and foster a culture of 'future-proof, evidence-based PES'. It involved all levels of staff across the organisation: regional roadshows were organised to explain why and how the RCT was going to be conducted, supported by a video message from the board of directors and a personal email from the general director. Management was informed regularly throughout the whole process starting at the design stage. A toolbox was developed for all staff, with detailed FAQs and other relevant information. The PES also created opportunities to discuss ethical issues, notably the moral dilemmas flowing from the set-up of the RCT.

LT

Since the beginning of 2019, ISO 9001:2015 quality management system has been implemented. One of the core pillars of this system is the PDCA cycle. LT PES employees have an opportunity to provide feedback and evidence on the implementation of processes (what works, what does not work). This is then discussed in working groups and the feedback 'author' is informed about the decision of the work group to pursue or not pursue the idea. The register of feedback and evidence is publicly available on the organisation's intranet.

BE Le Forem

In Le Forem, a thought process on an evidence-based knowledge strategy has been in progress since 2018. A proposal to improve the evidence-based decision-making process (in particular for the evaluation of services) has been drafted and is regularly improved.

Good practice: evaluating the customer journey

LT

In Lithuania, evidence-based assessment of the effectiveness of processes and services allows the PES to prepare an individual service package for each client. Evidence is collected from its database, where all the information about each customer's journey is stored. The results and best (and worst!) practices are disseminated and discussed during work meetings at multiple levels of organisation (central office, client services department, local offices).

CY

In Cyprus, the process starts with a thorough analyses, comparisons and evaluations of the statistical data gathered through the electronic recording of procedures, broken down by office and officers. This is aimed at identifying differences in the application of procedures. Discussions on the evaluations and results of analyses may end up in written instructions, which are disseminated either to the management team for implementation and unification of the procedures, or the IT team for the revision of procedures. If it is needed, staff training is organised in the use of the IT system.

BE VDAB

In Belgium VDAB, analysis of the labour market programme is far removed from the individual customer level. However, the underlying measurement is ultimately based on individual data. This eventually evolves into a system that recommends an optimal trajectory for each individual, taking into account the characteristics and history of the customer. See also https://www.iza.org/publications/dp/12875/priority-to-unemployed-immigrants-a-causal-machine-learning-evaluation-of-training-in-belgium

FR

In France, different types of data are gathered throughout a user's journey. Evidence is built on qualitative and quantitative data that the PES can collect before, during and after participation. Examples of the use of evidence to build coherent pathways for jobseekers are found in the case of young jobseekers, with the evaluation of intensive support for youth (*accompagnement intensif pour les jeunes*) and for beneficiaries of the basic social minimum income, with evaluation of the global support pathway (*accompagnement global*).

BE Le Forem

In Belgium Le Forem, data relating to customers' journeys is processed using artificial intelligence. The objective is to make predictive profiling tools available to job coaches, as the first step in setting up a lab, which is planned for 2020. A user-experience approach is used to optimise the development and design of a support process that combines different management approaches and functions (often called a 'transversal support process'). Le Forem relies on a customer journey approach and makes use of personae. A tender is sent out every two years to elicit proposals from partners for jobseeker services and training. Each new tender is improved based on staff feedback. In 2020, the 10th call was improved based on surveys carried out by job coaches (about 500 completed surveys) and jobseekers (about 1,000 completed surveys). The purpose of the survey was to better identify customers' needs. External partners have also been consulted informally.

Good practice: using pilots

CY

In Cyprus, pilots are used to trial the implementation of new measures and to assign the right roles and responsibilities to officers before defining and finalising a measure or a process. A final evaluation of the results is reached after a process of consensus decision-making. The evaluation of a pilot is submitted to the director for approval of the implementation of the new measure.

DE

In Germany, with an increase in the magnitude of a pilot, evaluation approaches tend to become more formal. New or modified ALMPs are throughout evaluated by experts in the field of empirical economic or social research. While the decision to scale up a tested programme is necessarily political, scientific evidence can help to support these decisions. Sometimes evaluation results only cover some aspects of the decision (e.g. being unable to adequately quantify efficiency or secondary effects etc.). Post-implementation evaluations can be helpful to shed light into these areas.

BE VDAB

Pilots are set up regularly before the implementation of new approaches or measures. These are usually very focused on practical implementation. There are typically methodological limitations that prevent really strong conclusions from being drawn regarding effectiveness. However, the design of the measures still changes significantly after implementation. This means that the pilot situation tends to be very different from the final product.

LT

In Lithuania, PES sometimes use pilots, but this process is not implemented systematically. Formal evaluations are not usually carried out and pilot results are assessed internally.

NL

In the Netherlands, PES establishes 'pilot offices' (or frontrunner offices), which are subject to formal evaluation. A description is available here: https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=17554&langId=en

DK

In Denmark, trials are used to develop evidence about treatments. All existing knowledge is used in the political process (see Boxes 2.2 and 2.5 for description).

Good practice: using data

NL

The Institute for Employee Benefits Schemes (Uitvoeringsinstituut Werknemersverzekeringen, UVW) has set up regional support bureaus in recent years, to offer analytical support to UWV managers in planning and work preparation, data management, management information and analysis, signalling and quality control. These bureaus also help local jobcentres that lag behind in their performance. The bureaus have a staff of between three and 14 people, depending on the size of the region, with expertise in data analysis, planning, controlling and labour market analysis. UVW also develop tools to guide and support job coaches, such as an online profiling tool (*keuzegids, or* 'option guide') that gives insights into which approaches would be most suitable for a given client.

DK

Danish PES uses a data bank that provides statistics on the labour market (www.Jobindsats.dk). There are also separate knowledge bank for experts and researchers (www.Jobeffekter.dk) and practitioners (www.Jobevidens.dk)

DE

The TrEffeR (Treatment Effects and Prediction) tool routinely provides intelligence about the effectiveness of ALMPs and can be used by PES case workers, local managers and central planners to improve the design and targeting of ALMPs. The role of TrEffeR is to employ micro-analysis on an individual basis and according to different sub-groups and local areas, with the aim of estimating domain-specific net effects. The results are disseminated via standardised reports to PES case workers or fed into the regular dashboards used by the performance management team.

FR

For quantitative data, the performance targets are aimed at results that are easily tracked and are understood by, and important to, staff, such as targets on satisfaction rates and return to work rates. In addition, the Statistics and Evaluation Division publishes results of the formal evaluations it conducts. These publications are available to everyone on Pôle emploi's intranet. They are written in such a way that all staff can understand the results, with particular attention paid to explaining the method used, how things were measured and what point of comparison or control has been used to build the evidence.

BE Le Forem

Training sessions on the socio-economic context have been developed for job coaches. The content of the sessions focuses on the dissemination of socio-economic data. Le Forem socio-economic experts (for the content) and academy experts (for the training design and approach) have worked together to put these sessions in place. A wiki project is under development on the intranet, with the aim of disseminating reports and literature reviews on various key topics to all staff. Quantitative data is stored in an electronic data warehouse and is accessible to experts via an application that allows them to read the data and produce reports.

LT

In 2019, LT PES implemented a counterfactual impact evaluation study on the effectiveness of active labour market policy measures, using administrative PES data and data from the Social Insurance Fund (which records the employment history of former clients). It plans to carry out this study each year. Each month (and weekly during COVID-19 crisis), LT PES published an internal newsletter for all staff members about the current situation in the labour market, where the data is presented in summary, with visual aids in the form of infographics.

CY

The process of providing services to unemployed GMI recipients has been revised after the analysis of the monthly statistical data. Officers' comments and evaluations are recorded on the computerised system during the provision of these services. The coordination team, through the PES management team, gathered the opinions and suggestions of officers who were willing to participate in this exercise, about the estimated weaknesses and strengths of the processes and how to overcome the problems so as to provide more effective and viable services and solutions leading to increased and sustainable placements. After a thorough study of the data, the coordination team suggested new ways of providing these services such as, upon every renewal of unemployment, officers provide the client with two or three job referrals, and within five working days, the client has to communicate with the officer on the outcome of the job interviews. The suggested measures, which are agreed by consensus among the officers, are accompanied by specific targets, after their approval from the director and the PES management team. After four months of implementation, the results, broken down by office and officers, are evaluated. The coordination

team then disseminates the results, aggregated by regional office, to PES staff, congratulating the offices with the highest performance.

Good practice: external cooperation

EE

In Estonia, data exchange between different national registries and information systems is conducted via a special infrastructure: X-road. Estonian Unemployment Insurance is the largest X-road user in Estonia, using data from 26 different registries daily. Resta (a private company that has been providing data analysis and consultation services since 1991) provided the PES with the technical solution for a data warehouse. Working with the University of Tartu, the PES has three different projects:
- renewal of the performance management system
- development of a decision-making support tool
- development of the service impact analysis model.

Wizon (a private company specialising in business analysis solutions) provided the data analysis team with training in the software, creating a chatbot to convert speech to text. Cooperation with both academia and IT companies is vital to keep in pace with the most recent methodological and technological developments.

LT

In Lithuania, the PES cooperated with vocational training services providers to improve the quality of vocational training. For example, this resulted in an increase in the proportion of practical training, and changed some elements of the content of training programmes.

DK

In Denmark, the PES engaged in a formal cooperation agreement with the behavioural economics research team at Copenhagen University to develop new knowledge about the effects of behavioural economics in the field of labour market policy.

Good practice: learning from experience

FR

In France, the use of POCs at the beginning of the innovation process allows for a phase of learning from mistakes, without necessarily formalising their evaluation. Formal evaluations of pilots allow the PES to engage in reflection for the next strategic plan and tripartite agreement. At the end of the tripartite agreement, all new projects are tested and evaluated. Results feed into the next tripartite agreement. Tripartite agreements are renewed regularly, which means the system is under constant review and evaluation, and the PES can learn from any mistakes.

BE Le Forem

In Le Forem, ALMPs are regularly evaluated and improvements are suggested. Evaluation reports are regularly discussed at the management board. A good example is an invitation for proposals which is sent to partners of about 20 years' standing. The 10th invitation has just been published, and each one contains suggestions for improvement compared to the previous version.

CY

In Cyprus, the PES management team, comprising the departmental director, PES coordinator and district labour office supervisors, is the unit responsible for identifying failures, problems, weaknesses and strengths of a process. It is also responsible for disseminating the results generated from its efforts to solve problems and improve performance.

LT

In Lithuania, the PES uses several tools to learn from experience: customer feedback analysis, adaptation of process standards according to customer feedback, work meetings, self-education activities, and internal training.

BE VDAB

There is an evaluation unit that regularly evaluates the implementation and concrete execution of some measures. There is an internal audit unit that in essence does something similar, albeit more from a typical audit point of view. There is also a research unit that, among other things, looks at what works for whom. The latter is done by external researchers.

DE

In Germany, the PES has restructured its headquarters and introduced a new department focusing on the quality of service delivery. It aims to establish a quality management system, to collect the knowledge of its employees, which is to some extent decentralised in the locally organised employment agencies. The divisions' ambition is to work in partnership with the regional directorates and local employment agencies, to strengthen the individual responsibility of the local units and to promote a holistic approach. One way to support this is to have a unit for internal consulting services located in each agency.

DK

In Denmark, randomised controlled trials are used to identify if treatments work and for whom (heterogeneous effects) and qualitative research to identify the 'how and why'.

Good practice: disseminating operational practices

EE

In Estonia, the PES continuously monitors ongoing projects, by following the respective indicators and provision process and discussing the information with relevant stakeholders. At the end of the project, the results are analysed and summaries are discussed with local managers before being submitted to the management board, supervisory board and other stakeholders.

DK

In Denmark, the PES has an evidence strategy within the Employment Ministry. Every three years, the focus areas within the evidence strategy are revised systematically in order to have an updated focus on the relevant knowledge gaps.

BE Le Forem

ALMPs are evaluated by the PES and/or external consultants and the results discussed by project leaders, who propose recommendations and improvements to the management committee and management board. New services that are planned to address future needs are explored prior to piloting by running organising focus groups with employers, universities, schools, and other significant communities of interest. Digital services are closely monitored and reviewed by the newly created department of digital transformation as well as by the directorate of numer-

ic channels. Good practice is disseminated and discussed between different Le Forem units via thematic networks (e.g. the jobsearch thematic network).

DE

Within the performance management system, there are three controlling branches (unemployment insurance (Social Code III, SCIII), basic income support (SCII), and internal services (resource and service-level). There are many specificities to each branch. With regard to the top political/institutional goals, the underlying key indicators are planned and then controlled – management remuneration is linked to reaching these targets. However, target-setting is increasingly based on dialogue with partners and experts, such as local executives with extensive knowledge of regional differences. In addition, the German Federal Employment Agency (Bundesagentur für Arbeit, BA) has begun to incorporate qualitative components more firmly into its performance management system. The first steps can be seen in a further developed target system for unemployment insurance, which takes into account the perspectives of clients (outcome), employees and customers (quality). In the future, the BA will strive to base the measurement of performance on the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM). Following a decision by its executive board, the concrete concept for this started in January 2020.

CY

The PES management team is responsible for estimating the need for reviewing a process based on the problems created during its implementation and the failure to meet its targets. The coordination unit, in partnership with the IT team, gathers the appropriate statistical data for the identification of the problems. Through discussions with PES supervisors who are members of the PES management team, they examine thoroughly the causes behind the problems.

FR

Pôle emploi is required by law to have an evaluation committee. One of its objectives is to review services based on the results of evaluations and to bring proposals to the administrative board. The administrative board is engaged in the review process as it decides in which direction the organisation will go in terms of services. For example, it decides whether or not a pilot will be generalised in the light of its evaluation results. In addition, the IGAS-IGF (General Inspectorate of

Social Affairs – General Inspectorate of Finance) lead independent midway and final assessments of the tripartite agreement. They assess how Pôle emploi is achieving its objectives. Finally, the French Court of Auditors will sometimes investigate Pôle emploi on specific topics.

LT
The best (and worst!) practices are disseminated and discussed during work meetings on multiple levels of the organisation (central office, client services department and local offices). These results are also used to set the following year's performance targets for all levels of organisation, and to review process standards.

Appendix 2
Technical information

Figure 2.1: Qualitative and quantitative approaches to collecting evidence

Qualitative methods	Pluralistic approaches	Quantitative methods				
		Cross-sectional designs	*Longitudinal designs*			
Focus groups, in-depth interviews, ethnographic approaches and discourse analysis	Multi-method strategies, in-depth case studies and qualitative data-gathering Qualitative work carried out as preparation for large-scale quantitative work Qualitative work carried to explore and explain quantitative findings	Surveys of users' and providers' experience of services	*Observational only* Cohort studies (prospective follow-up studies), case-control studies (retrospective designs), statistical modelling (econometric)	*Quasi-experimental* e.g. before-and-after studies with limited control over extent and timing of interventions	*Theory-driven evaluations* Pluralistic approaches underpinned by comprehensive theory, perhaps involving quasi- and true experiments	*True experiments (RCTs)* Random allocation to experimental or control groups

Source: Davies, Nutley, Smith, 2000

Kolb's cycle of experiential learning

The theory of learning from experience (also referred to as experiential learning) is generally attributed to the work of the American educational theorist David A. Kolb. he believed that learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. His theory focuses on a cyclical model of learning, consisting of four stages:

1. Concrete experience (or 'DO') – the first stage, concrete experience (CE), is where the learner actively experiences an activity such as a lab session or fieldwork.
2. Reflective observation (or 'OBSERVE') – the second stage, reflective observation (RO), is when the learner consciously reflects on that experience.
3. Abstract conceptualisation (or 'THINK') – the third stage, abstract conceptualisation (AC), is where the learner attempts to conceptualise a theory or model of what is observed.
4. Active experimentation (or 'PLAN') – the fourth stage, active experimentation (AE), is where the learner is trying to plan how to test a model or theory or plan for a forthcoming experience.

Source: https://www.learning-theories.com/experiential-learning-kolb.html

Examples of strategic frameworks

Figure 2.2: Data strategy framework for the federal public service of Canada

DATA STRATEGY FRAMEWORK FOR THE FEDERAL PUBLIC SERVICE

A whole-of-government approach to creating, protecting, using, managing and sharing data as a strategic asset, enabling informed decisions that lead to better outcomes and services for Canadians

GUIDING PRINCIPLES
- Client-centered
- Purposeful
- Trusted
- Enabling
- Agile
- Open

DESIRED OUTCOMES FOR CITIZENS, BUSINESSES AND GOVERNMENTS
- Improved services
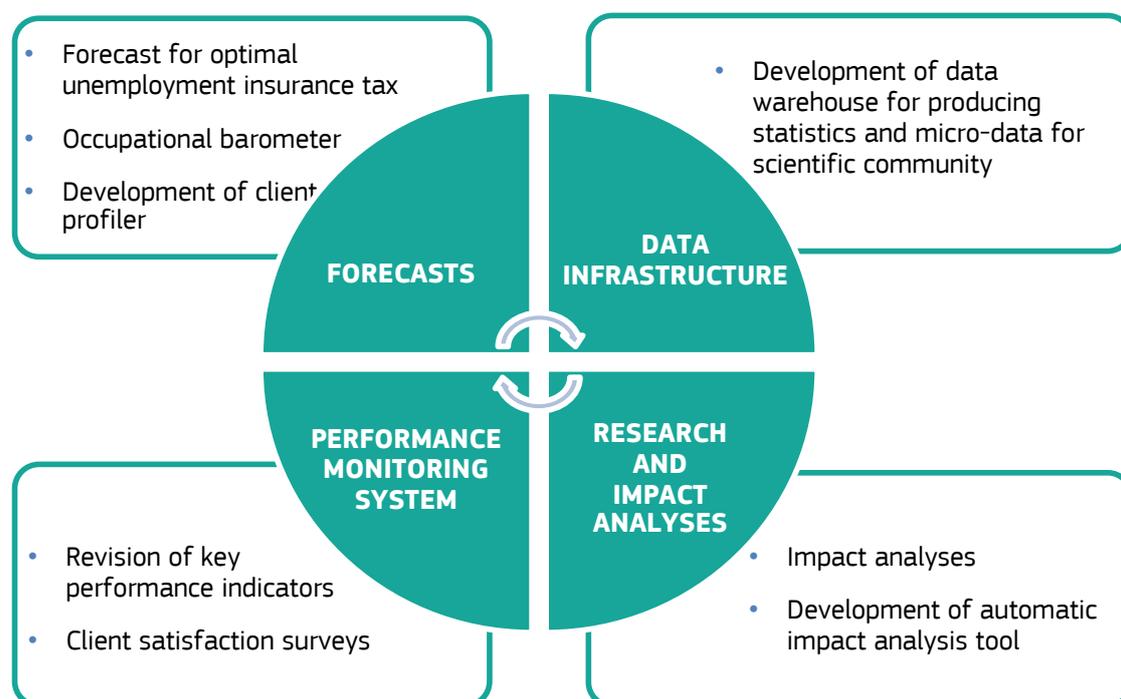- Greater public value from data
- Greater usability and availability of data
- Protection of individuals' information and privacy by design
- Trusted and sound governance of data, which are treated as a valuable and strategic asset
- Increased evidence-informed decision-making
- Better reporting on results
- Increased intra and inter-governmental collaboration

PROPOSED PILLARS

People and culture	Environment and digital infrastructure	Data as an asset
The government has the talent and capacity it needs to manage, interpret, use and understand data. Includes, for example: • Culture • Skills • Recruitment and retention • Development and training	Processes and infrastructure are aligned to turn good data and analysis into action. Includes, for example: • Enabling infrastructure and tools • Security, confidentiality and integrity • Privacy • Legislation and supporting policies	The government has the data it needs, which are fit for use, discoverable, and available. Includes, for example: • Planning and stewardship • Use • Quality • Storage • Sharing and access

FOUNDATION

Governance
Governance exists at the right levels to ensure that data are managed holistically as a strategic asset. Includes accountability, roles and responsibilities.

Communication
Transparency to Canadians on the government's management and use of data, as well as effective intra and inter-governmental communication.

Strategic framework – Estonia

In Estonia, using evidence to improve the design of services has always been an important part of the business model – it is recognised as one of the cornerstones for achieving the strategic objectives in the four-year development plan, which states that labour market experts disseminate knowledge and support an evidence-based labour market policy. As such, the evidence-based culture is really embedded in PES business model, as presented below.

Figure 2.3: Cornerstones of the evidence creation model in Estonia

- Forecast for optimal unemployment insurance tax
- Occupational barometer
- Development of client profiler

- Development of data warehouse for producing statistics and micro-data for scientific community

FORECASTS

DATA INFRASTRUCTURE

PERFORMANCE MONITORING SYSTEM

RESEARCH AND IMPACT ANALYSES

- Revision of key performance indicators
- Client satisfaction surveys

- Impact analyses
- Development of automatic impact analysis tool

Use of evidence to inform decision-making – Denmark

Evidence-based knowledge is used in political initiatives and reform processes, to point out what effects are to be expected from various policy proposals and as a basis for calculating behavioural and economic consequences, and to support the implementation of employment policies. The focus is on implementing central and effective core elements and ensuring that appropriate indicators can be monitored. The desired outcome is that front-line employees are supported in providing the best possible employment services. The systematic impact evaluation of employment policy ensures that, as part of policy development and implementation, a natural feedback loop of new knowledge is created in addition to existing knowledge.

Working with evidence-based knowledge consists of three parts (see Figure 2.4). In the diagram, A) decides on subject areas that require knowledge, B) starts gathering appropriate knowledge and C) establishes a systematic knowledge database, where all developed and identified knowledge is pooled and available to those who require it, so that the purpose of the knowledge is understood.
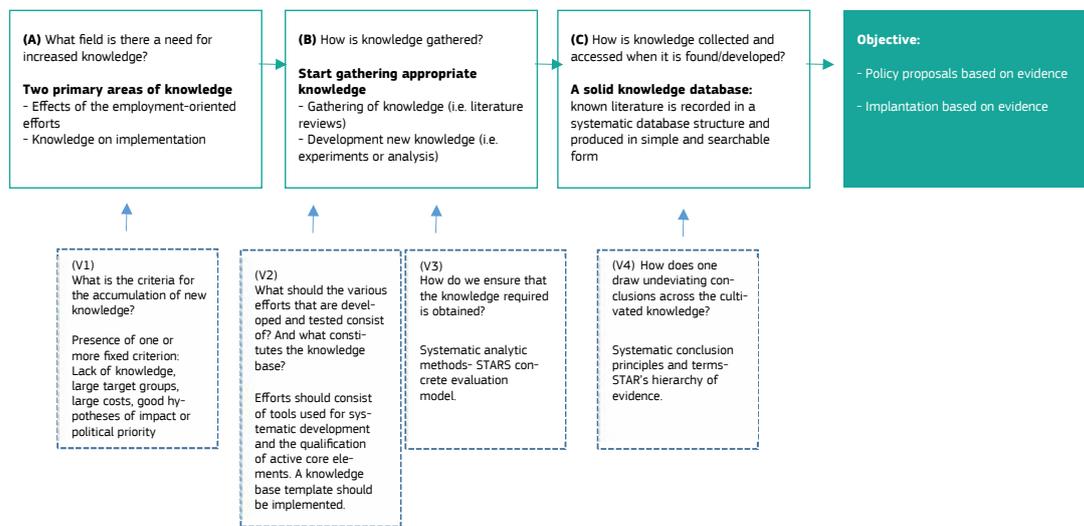
The pool of evidence-based knowledge is as follows.

- The preparation of policy proposals where the evidence strategy is intended to ensure solid knowledge of the effects of employment-oriented efforts and other conditions within the labour market
- When implementing the adopted policy and legislation, where the evidence strategy is used to ensure solid knowledge of how the employment effort is best implemented to achieve the desired effects.

The two points above are closely related; however, there is a fundamental difference in the usage of the knowledge concerning each respective area. When formulating policy proposals, the focus typically lies on whether or not there is an effect and if there is an effect, how wide-ranging it is. In the local implementation of employment efforts, there is also a great need for knowledge regarding how the effort works in practice.

This includes knowledge on which core elements are most important and should be implemented in order for the effort to have the best effect and outcome possible.

Figure 2.4: STAR's work with evidence-based knowledge

Source: PES Denmark

In order to support working with knowledge, STAR applies a wide variety of tools:

- The Ministry of Employment's common prioritisation criteria, outlined in the general evidence strategy, are applied in order to populate the choice of subject fields where knowledge needs to be cultivated (V1).
- To support knowledge-building activities, a knowledge-base template has been developed to define and qualify the active core

elements that various efforts consist of (V2).
- STAR has developed a concrete evaluation model, which is applied when knowledge and implementation projects are initiated. This is done in order to support systematic analytical evaluations (V3).
- Lastly, STAR has a predetermined hierarchy of knowledge to ensure systematic and uniform conclusions based on the identified knowledge at hand (V4).
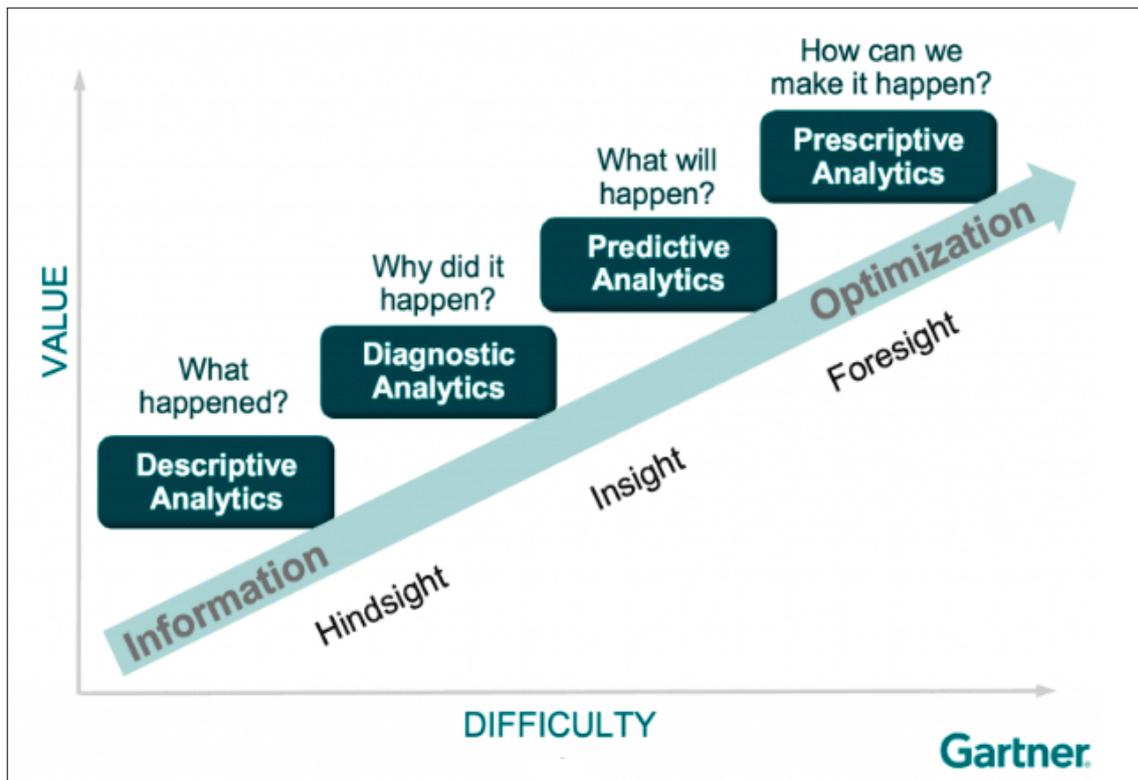
Appendix 3
Tool for self-assessing evidence-based maturity

Gartner analysis

Policy and evaluation professionals can use the self-assessment tool described below to review the position of their PES and how it is developing over time. It uses the Gartner analytical maturity model with its four stages of analytical capabilities:

1. Descriptive
2. Diagnostic
3. Predictive
4. Prescriptive.

Figure 3.1: Gartner analytics maturity model

Source: www.gartner.com

Self-assessment tool

For the purpose of this toolkit, a self-assessment tool has been developed. It aims to assist PES in the EU in analysing the level of evidence-based policy maturity in their organisation, and in pin-pointing priority areas for further development. The maturity model embraces several areas, including:

- evidence-based strategy
- culture of using evidence
- data governance and protection
- technical and organisational infrastructure
- collaboration and communication
- monitoring, improvement and learning.

Scoring the level of maturity evidence-based policy and practice
Level 0 – Practice/approach is non-existent in PES and/or there are no plans to design and implement it.
Level 1 – Practice/approach has been designed, but its implementation has not yet been initiated.
Level 2 – Practice/approach is in the initial stages of implementation, but has not been scaled up or implemented at the level of whole organisation.
Level 3 – Practice/approach is well developed and implemented organisation-wide

Enter numbers from 0–3 in the relevant boxes in the table below to record the level of maturity in your PES. Mark areas where the most effort is needed to tackle the challenges of evidence-based policy design and implementation.

This self-assessment tool is not intended to give a definitive score for the level of maturity on the basis of normative scales. Rather it should be used by:

- advanced PES – to pinpoint areas where important developments might have been overlooked, and to fill any gaps
- PES with some variation in scores – to prioritise the areas for further efforts to increase effectiveness
- PES starting to develop – to prepare a roadmap with important milestones and to assess progress.

Self-assessment tool for evidence-based policy maturity in PES

Area	Practice/approach	Level
Evidence-based strategy	Strategic targets and policy priority areas to be supported by evidence have been defined.	
	The data, information and insights needed to support strategic targets, service delivery models and programmes have been identified.	
	The framework for using evidence in policy-making (describing what data and how it is used) has been established.	
	Strategies for the acquisition of new evidence have been developed.	
	...	
Culture of using evidence	Staff at all levels understand the importance of evidence for the decision-making process and seek for information before making a decision.	
	Decision-makers use evidence to support policymaking decisions.	
	Staff at all levels actively seek opportunities to acquire new evidence that could support the services and processes.	
	Staff at all levels are involve in sharing evidence by disseminating good practice, collaborating in generating new data, and initiating new research).	
	...	

Area	Practice/approach	Level
Data governance and protection	Relevant (directly and indirectly accessible) datasets have been inventoried.	
	Data protection policies and procedures have been implemented in terms of internal and external data security perspectives.	
	Roles and responsibilities in data governance and protection have been defined and assigned.	
	Procedures for assuring data quality and consistency have been established.	
	…	
Technical and organisational infrastructure	Staff at all levels have received training that is adequate to their needs for the proper use of evidence.	
	Analytical infrastructures have been established to support the process of transforming data into insights.	
	Adequate resources have been allocated to maintain, develop and analyse data and information that the organisation holds.	
	Access to an appropriate and well-balanced mix of research methods has been provided.	
	…	
Collaboration and communication	Data is shared internally between units, departments and/or organisational bodies within the overall PES structure.	
	Data is shared externally with cooperating parties and stakeholders, within legal and data protection boundaries on the basis of agreements.	
	Dashboards allowing for data visualisation and usefulness for everyday operations have been developed and implemented.	
	Access to data is provided on a 'just-in-time' principle (accessible when it is needed) to all data users.	
	Partnerships with relevant stakeholders are supported in the generation of new evidence.	
	…	
Monitoring, improvement and learning	Evaluations and internal assessments are performed regularly to pinpoint areas of possible improvement.	
	Performance indicators have been linked to evidence thorough evaluation outcomes and metrics.	
	Outcomes of evaluations and assessments are shared among relevant stakeholders to increase transparency and accountability and to strengthen evidence-based policymaking.	
	Learning loops for experiential learning have been designed and implemented in the evidence-based approach.	
	…	

Appendix 4
References and
further reading

Publications

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Presentations

Centre for Research on Impact Evaluation (CRIE), Presentation on case studies discussed at the 2018 Community of Practice on Counterfactual Impact Evaluation of ESF interventions (CoP-CIE-ESF), 14 June 2018, https://crie.jrc.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2018%20CoP-CIE-ESF%20Working%20tables.pdf

Centre for Research on Impact Evaluation video tutorials on:
▶ Tips and tricks on how to plan intervention design
▶ Data collection, Data access and data merging
▶ What is administrative data?
▶ How to evaluate policy
▶ Communicating the results of counterfactual impact evaluations

Counterfactual Evaluation Archive (CEA), https://crie.jrc.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ceaMetadata.pdf

CEA is an online database that classifies published articles and working papers using counterfactual impact evaluation methods to assess the impact of active labour market policies within EU-28. Use filters to search for studies regarding the country, the CIE method or the target group you are interested in.

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PES Network, Webinar on Big Data and Ethics – Insights from Flanders and Norway, 4 May 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DieY0_4PfCE&feature=youtu.be

Organisations active in the field of evidence-based policy

Centre for Research on Impact Evaluation (CRIE)
https://crie.jrc.ec.europa.eu/

CRIE is part of the Competence Centre on Microeconomic Evaluation (CC-ME). It provides scientific expertise and methodological support on counterfactual impact evaluation (CIE) to the Directorate General Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL) and Member States for the impact evaluations of interventions funded through instruments managed by DG EMPL, namely the European Social Fund (ESF).

Campbell Collaboration
https://campbellcollaboration.org/

The Campbell Collaboration is an international social sciences research network that produces high-quality, policy-relevant evidence syntheses, plain language summaries and policy briefs.

Alliance for Useful Evidence
https://www.alliance4usefulevidence.org/

The Alliance for Useful Evidence is a network, hosted by the UK's innovation charity Nesta, that champions the smarter use of evidence in social policy and practice.

What Works Clearinghouse
https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/

The What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) reviews existing research on different programs, products, practices and policies in education. It aims to provide educators with the information they need to make evidence-based decisions.

J-PAL
https://www.povertyactionlab.org/about-j-pal

The Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL) is a global research centre working to reduce poverty by ensuring that policy is informed by scientific evidence. Anchored by a network of 194 affiliated professors at universities around the world, J-PAL conducts randomised impact evaluations to answer critical questions in the fight against poverty.

Behavioural Insights Team
https://www.bi.team/about-us/

The Behavioural Insights Team works in partnership with governments, local authorities, businesses and charities. It generates and applies behavioural insights to inform policy, improve public services and deliver results for citizens and society.

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