

Mutual Learning Programme Database of National Labour Market Practices

Germany - Virtual Labour Market Platform (VLM)

This database gathers practices in the field of employment submitted by European countries for the purposes of mutual learning. These practices have proven to be successful in the country concerned, according to its national administration. The European Commission does not have a position on the policies or measures mentioned in the database.

Source of national practice	Mutual Learning Programme Peer Review (October 2010)
Title of the policy or measure (Original language)	Virtueller Arbeitsmarkt
Title of the policy or measure (English)	Virtual Labour Market Platform (VLM)
Country	Germany
Name of the responsible body	Federal Employment Agency (Public Employment Service)
Geographical scope of the responsible body	National
Name(s) of other organisations involved (partners/sub-contractors)	
Start year of implementation	2003
End year of implementation	Ongoing
EU policy relevance	<p>The measure is in line with the European Employment Strategy which has acknowledged the crucial role of Public Employment Services (PES) in increasing the labour market participation and implementing policy developments in practice.</p> <p>In addition it is in line with the flagship initiative “Agenda for new skills and new jobs” and therefore it will help achieving 75% employment rate in the EU by 2020 (one of the most relevant objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy).</p>
National labour market context	<p>During the last decade the unemployment rate among people aged between 15 to 64 years in Germany decreased from 9.9% in 2003 to 5.2% in September 2013 (Eurostat 2013). Despite the positive performance of the labour market, the percentage of long-term unemployed among the unemployment population remained high (45.4% in 2012).</p> <p>In this context the PES provided free and impartial services to reintegrate jobseekers in the labour market and to support a better alignment between labour supply and labour demand.</p>
Policy area	Labour market functioning and segmentation

<p>Specific policy or labour market problem being addressed</p>	<p>The main problem being addressed was the reintegration of jobseekers into the labour market. Successful reintegration required an appropriate linkage between jobseekers' skills and the employer needs. However, it was felt that the job-seeking tool available before the implementation of the Virtual Labour market Platform" (VLM) required improvement, as it was not up to the standard of the competition and was perceived as less attractive than its market competitors.</p>
<p>Aims and objectives of the policy or measure</p>	<p>The VLM is a common platform for all labour market actors (PES, employers, jobseekers, training institutions, public organisations, private recruiters, third parties etc.). The main purpose of the VLM was to improve the online support system used in Germany to bring together information about job seekers' profiles with systematic and regularly updated occupational qualification databases, local and regional labour market data and an evidence based measures catalogue. This common platform was designed in order to develop strategies for the reintegration of jobseekers into the labour market.</p> <p>The main objectives of the 'Virtual Labour Market' project were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The development of a state-of the art job-seeking tool, attractive for employers as well as for jobseekers; • The development of consistent, centralised IT databases; • The development of a consistent tool to support the work of counsellors; and, • The development of coordinated, aligned and well-connected internal procedures.

<p>Main activities/actions underpinning the policy or measure</p>	<p>The platform was designed as an instrument to match jobseeker profiles with job vacancies and to help Public Employment Service staff to administer client data. The online platform is based on a modern user-friendly interface; which provides user-specific homepages with key search features and direct links. It allows the user to identify different qualification levels, from assistants to managers, and has easy “Google-like” search features.</p> <p>The platform consists of three different components: Jobboerse, VerBIS and JobRobot. The three components are closely interlinked.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jobboerse. This component is used by jobseekers, who register online to create their personal profile. This is followed by an interview with a counsellor where personal data are reviewed and an “integration plan” is developed. At the same time, companies post their vacancies on Jobboerse, equally followed by a personal review through PES. <p>The matching process is based on over 40 criteria, which consider the initial qualifications of the jobseekers and the competences and learning outcomes acquired via non-formal, informal and on-the-job learning.</p> <p>After the application process, the company is required to send out feedback to the candidates. Both firm and jobseeker are required to notify the counsellor about the outcome of the process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VerBIS. This component of the VLM is an internal IT-system supporting the organisation of the provision of employment services. It supports counsellors in all the processes linked to job placement and payment of unemployment benefits. • JobRobot. This component is a <i>job-crawler</i> that collects job vacancies from company websites and posts them in the PES intranet.
<p>Geographical scope of policy or measure</p>	<p>National</p>
<p>Target groups</p>	<p>Large enterprises (250 employees or more), Long-term unemployed (more than 12 months), Small and medium-sized enterprises (1 - 249 employees)</p>

Outputs and outcomes of the policy or measure	<p>After its launch, the Virtual Labour Market Platform became the market leader in the field of online job portals. Every week, the online portal accounted for an average of 18,500 new registered jobseekers and 1,600 new registered companies.</p> <p>During its implementation period, the number of job vacancies and applicant profiles among the three elements of the support system can be summarised as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Jobboerse accounted for approximately 1.1 million job vacancies • VerBIS included 3.8 million of applicant profiles • JobRobot was used by roughly 250,000 job vacancies <p>In addition, the number of people who used every day the tool was up to 1 million for the Jobboerse, 100,000 for the VerBIS and 100,000 for JobRobot.</p> <p>With regards to the level of satisfaction among the different user groups, internal surveys carried out illustrated a high level of satisfaction among both jobseekers and employers and a medium level of satisfaction among staff.</p>
Management and implementation arrangements	<p>The VLM was managed, coordinated and implemented by the Public Employment Services.</p>
Key challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content and designing of the platform. The continuous necessity for amendments linked to structural changes implemented during the running of the project required flexible reactions and close coordination between all levels of development. • Costs. The high costs of the platform triggered broad criticism since added value and benefits of the new tool were initially highly doubted. However, after its implementation the platform found acceptance and was widely appreciated. • Server management. For the VLM a decentralised system of 180 regional servers had to be reformed. These servers only provided regional data and were not interconnected on a trans-regional level. Thus, information about jobs in other regions was not available, trans-regional job placement was impossible, and previous information about jobseekers who moved was not accessible. This required a great effort and posed problems related to security measures since a centralised server was more prone to attacks. • Acceptance among staff. As a result of the initial scepticism among the staff, new tools had to be developed to improve the user-friendliness and enhance acceptance.

<p>Key conditions for success</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attractiveness of the tool. Since employers in Germany are not obliged to report vacancies to the Public Employment Services, a key success factor was to create a tool perceived as very attractive by employers to search for suitable candidates. • Data centralisation. A success factor was the ability to centralise all data regarding jobseekers and job vacancies, increasing the level of information among Public Employment Service Offices. • Recognised qualifications. A recognised qualification framework at national level or an effective method of matching qualifications and learning outcomes in place is regarded as a success factor for the effective implementation of the Virtual Labour Market Platform. • Competence based recognised mechanisms. Another important factor for success was to implement processes able to capture those competences or learning outcomes acquired through formal, non-formal and on-the-job trainings that are not obviously documented through a qualification or a certificate. <p>Potential for transferability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feasibility. The concrete implementation of the platform was based on a series of online-processes that are feasible to transfer in every Member State. • Data protection. The scope of access to data needs to be aligned with specific country rules and legal demands. As a result data accessibility underlies regulations connected to the legal practice that might vary across Member States. • Qualifications and competences. Potential transferability might be limited because of the specific qualifications framework of each Member State. Therefore the measure can be effectively implemented only considering the peculiarities of the methods of matching qualification and learning outcomes and labour market needs of each Member State. • Counselling. In Germany, face-to-face meetings and a confident personal relation between counsellor and client are perceived as pivotal for high quality counselling (especially for clients with special needs). Hence the electronic platform is seen as a tool to support the counselling, not as a means to replace it. In other countries the importance of the face-to-face counselling activity might be conceived differently.
<p>Method of assessment</p>	<p>Internal monitoring, Internal evaluation</p>

Type of assessment	Qualitative and quantitative assessment
Duration and frequency of the assessment	Internally the PES continuously monitors and evaluates the Virtual Labour Market Platform in relation to technical efficiency (server management, server downtime, technical issues) and utilisation and functionality (number of job profiles, number of accounts, reported vacancies etc.).
Further information on the assessment	Staff satisfaction surveys were carried out also to monitor users' problems with the different functions and applications of the platforms
Links to the website, background information and assessment material	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case study 1 • Case study 2 • General link to the Mutual Learning Programme
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Keywords	matching skills demand and skills supply; (re)integration in the labour market; labour market functioning; PES; labour market guidance; web-based tool