

# Employment Challenge and Career Challenge initiatives

Publication date: March 2017

## SLOVENIA

PES work closely together with employers and other partners to find sustainable employment for vulnerable unemployed people. This is done by organising meetings between jobseekers and employers to find the most suitable candidates for vacancies via a matching process focused on competences rather than CVs and work history.

Name of the PES

Employment Service of Slovenia (ESS)

Scope of measure  
(a pilot project or a national reform)

The Employment Challenge initiative is implemented at national level, while the Career Challenge initiative is implemented at regional level by four out of 12 regional PES offices.

When was the practice  
implemented?

Employment Challenge has been running since 2011 and Career Challenge since 2012

What was the driver for introducing  
the practice? Was it internal  
or external?

Cooperation with employers is one of the main elements of the PES development strategy for 2020. In line with this, PES established a national office for employer services in 2016. In addition, cooperation with employers has become even more relevant with amendments to the Labour Market Regulation Act in 2011 and 2013 where employers are no longer obliged to publish vacancies.

Which organisation was involved  
in its implementation?

Both initiatives are implemented by the PES.  
The initial project on a national level, Employment Challenge, involves several partners and aims to increase cooperation with employers to reduce unemployment and raise public awareness at national level via a public-relations campaign. It is designed together with employers, the Managers' Association, the Ministry of Labour and the newspaper, 'Dnevnik'.  
Career Challenge builds on the publicity of Employment Challenge and involves cooperation between the PES and employers at regional level to find sustainable employment for vulnerable unemployed people.

Which groups were targeted  
by the practice?

'Top employers' are the target group of Employment Challenge. 'Top employers' are selected by the media-research project 'Golden Thread' (Zlata nit, <https://www.dnevnik.si/zlatanit/o-projektu>), a public relations campaign run by one of the main newspapers, Dnevnik newspaper, and the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs. Its aim is to select employers who can serve as a model and inspiration to other businesses and wider society.  
Employers with good references are the target group for Career Challenge: they are selected with the help of a database of employers which collects details of contacts and services (active labour market policy programmes, published vacancies, employed foreigners, e-services, etc.), as well as information from other institutions, like the Labour Inspectorate, Financial Administration of the Republic of Slovenia, Health Insurance Institute of Slovenia and Agency of the Republic of Slovenia for Public Legal Records and Related Services.  
The focus of Employment Challenge and Career Challenge is unemployed people and, in some cases, specific unemployed groups (such as people with disabilities, young first-time jobseekers or long-term unemployed).

<p>What were the practice's main objectives?</p>	<p>The aim of Employment Challenge is to change the negative attitudes that employers may have towards unemployed people. The purpose of the Challenge is to increase awareness among companies of jobseekers who may have the relevant skills for vacancies, but who tend to have reduced chances of being recruited for these vacancies via the 'normal' recruitment process. This is done by a more efficient, matching process that considers employers' skills needs and assesses the skills of jobseekers. In addition, Employment Challenge aims to raise public awareness by promoting the skills of unemployed people, as well as promoting awareness of PES activities amongst new employers and companies taking part in the initiative.</p> <p>Career Challenge which reaches out to more people at regional level, aims to find suitable jobs for people who have been looking for employment for a long time, like long-term unemployed or people with disabilities.</p>
<p>What activities were carried out?</p>	<p>Both, Employment Challenge and Career Challenge consists of the following steps:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Where an employer has a vacancy, the PES and employer agree on a concrete and specific job description for that vacancy. This is then published internally as information for PES job counsellors and externally on the PES job portal.</li> <li>2. The PES invites jobseekers to submit their CVs for the vacancy.</li> <li>3. The PES checks the CVs and organises interviews with potential candidates for the job. In the meantime, the PES organises an event at which the employer presents the vacancy to potential applicants.</li> <li>4. The PES identifies potential suitable applicants to fill the position depending on the job requirements; interviews of applicants may focus on training and work experience or include questionnaires about certain aspects of the job. The employer might take part in these interviews as well. From these interviews, the PES decides which jobseekers are suitable for the next step of the process.</li> <li>5. In the next stage, a psychologist from PES reviews candidates' interests and certain soft skills depending on the skills need of the employer expressed in the job description. For example, for some jobs, practical working skills are more important than cognitive skills. If this is the case, a visit to a company can be organised to show candidates the role in practice. These candidates are then asked to resolve a practical work-related problem and their skills are assessed based on their performance. For example, at one Employment Challenge for chefs, the assessment was not a psychological test, but a practical assessment of cooking skills.</li> <li>6. The PES then consults with the employer about the results of the assessment and reviews skills that can be beneficial for the employer. They then decide together on the most suitable candidates.</li> <li>7. Based on the outcomes of the assessment, two to four candidates are interviewed by the employer.</li> <li>8. After hiring the most suitable candidate, all other candidates receive career counselling based on the results of the psychological assessment and practical tests. PES job counsellors advise them on other possible vacancies or can decide to address certain barriers to employment via training.</li> <li>9. If a former successful candidate re-enters unemployment, he or she has the chance to review the results of the psychological assessment and receive in-depth career counselling on that basis.</li> </ol> <p>Both initiatives follow the same process as described above. While Employment Challenge also aims to raise public awareness of employers and jobseekers at national level by involving national media, Career Challenge is implemented by four regional PES offices in order to involve more jobseekers and employers from these particular regions.</p>
<p>What resources and other relevant organisational aspects were involved?</p>	<p>Internal resources were restructured to focus on proactive cooperation with employers: PES job counsellors are trained internally and externally to work with employers, some PES job counsellors became advisors to employers, and regional offices for employers were established in 2012. Now, four out of 12 regional offices are working with employers as part of Career Challenge. Most PES offices employ their own psychologist (part or full time) in order to carry out the psychological assessment of jobseekers (for those applicants that are selected as potential candidates for vacancies as part of the programme).</p>
<p>What were the source(s) of funding?</p>	<p>The resources for both initiatives comes from national funding.</p>
<p>What were the outputs of the practice: people reached and products?</p>	<p>Since 2011, there have been 18 Employment Challenge interventions, involving different employers. 28 people found employment via Employment Challenge which means that employers created 10 additional vacancies for jobseekers they met during the process.</p> <p>Since the initiative started in 2012, more than 800 unemployed people participated in the Career Challenge up to August 2016. Of these, 80% were in employment in August 2016, either in the original vacancy or were working for another employer.</p>

What outcomes have been identified?

Employers are increasingly satisfied and motivated to work with the PES. The satisfaction rate of employers grew from 85.5 % in 2014 to 87 % in 2015 (surveys began in 2014). This can also be seen in the growth in the amount of vacancies employers are sharing with the PES; although employers are no longer obliged to share vacancies, the amount of shared vacancies has grown from 30 % in 2013, to 40 % in 2014, 50 % in 2015 and 60 % until June 2016.

What are the lessons learnt and success factors?

The success factors of both initiatives include the following:

- ▶ Active partnerships with employers are important to find suitable candidates for a vacancy. In order to reach out to employers, PES built up partnerships with, for example, the Managers' Association and also run a public relations campaign on Employment Challenge to make employers aware of PES services.
- ▶ The PES has also made efforts to increase the quality of already existing ways to work with employers. For example, they visit employers and maintain contact; there are regional meetings between PES and employers two to eight times a year, as well as consultations to receive input from employers.
- ▶ Efforts have been made to improve the competences of PES staff in dealing with employers: internal and external training is provided on the skills to work with employers; specific offices at regional level have been created to work with employers; and PES staff have visited employers during so-called 'Open Days'. Employment Challenge and Career Challenge build on and complement these efforts.
- ▶ The results of the psychological assessment are not only used for the individual vacancy, but to inform further career counselling and make the jobseeker aware of more suitable vacancies. It is also useful to identify barriers that might be a problem once the jobseeker is in employment, so that they can be addressed earlier.

Challenges for the initiatives include:

- ▶ Both initiatives are time intensive, especially Employment Challenge, which involves a nationwide public media campaign. Therefore, the PES needs to plan these campaigns in advance and carefully consider when to implement one.
- ▶ The PES cannot follow-up on successful candidates of Career Challenge for data protection reasons. They only have information on the employment status, but cannot monitor how long candidates stay in one job, nor do they have access to information on how long someone has been unemployed once they re-enter unemployment.



Contact details for further information

Name: VONČINA, Brigita, Guidance Coordinator

Email: brigita.voncina@ess.gov.si