



GERMANY

POST-PLACEMENT SUPPORT HELPS FORMER JOBSEEKERS TO REMAIN IN EMPLOYMENT

INA! – Sustain integration

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A job, no matter how much it is desired, can bring some challenges for former jobseekers. Therefore, post-placement support was tested in different stages by local agencies and Jobcentres of the Federal Employment Agency. The support involves job counsellors identifying individual employment risks at an early stage and continuing counselling once the jobseeker has found employment. The counsellors cooperate with employers and other local actors in order to solve any difficulties arising.

During the pilot tests of 'INA! – Sustain integration', considerably more PES customers who received continuous counselling during the six months after placement remained in employment, compared to those who had not received such support. In addition, people receiving post-placement support were very satisfied with the service. The positive outcomes from the pilot tests contributed to the introduction of a legal regulation in 2016, which allows job counsellors in Jobcentres to decide on whether to offer post-placement support to an individual.

Experiences with the provision of post-placement support show that it is beneficial to set up certain operational arrangements, such as rapid information-sharing on customer status and the dissemination of positive results concerning the service amongst PES staff.

Name of the PES

German Federal Employment Agency (Bundesagentur für Arbeit)

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

Post-placement support was piloted in one local Jobcentre of the Federal Employment Agency (run in cooperation with a county) in 2011 and in two Jobcentres between 2012 and 2013. Following the positive results of these pilots, the project was further tested in 18 Jobcentres and 9 local agencies between 2013 and 2014. From 2016, Jobcentres and local agencies nationwide have been implementing the approach. Please refer to the description of local agencies and Jobcentres in 'Which organisation was involved in its implementation?' below.

When was the practice implemented? (including start and end date for pilot projects)

2011-2014 via the pilot project 'INA! – Sustain integration'¹. Since 2016, post-placement support for customers is legally regulated by law.

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

A significant share of local agency/Jobcentre customers found themselves returning to unemployment shortly after starting a new job: in 2008, only 55 % of new employment relations lasted longer than six months². Therefore, 'BA 2020', the strategy of the German PES for the upcoming years, regards sustainable integration into the labour market as key priority.

Which organisation was involved in its implementation?

The nationwide pilot project from 2013 to 2014 was implemented by local agencies and Jobcentres. The German unemployment benefits system is divided into insurance-based unemployment benefits (UB1) and tax-based unemployment benefits (UB2). Both benefit schemes are regulated according to two different laws: Social Code III for UB1 recipients and Social Code II for UB2 recipients. Local labour agencies of the Federal Employment Agency (local agencies) are responsible for UB1 recipients which is typically granted for up to 12 months (with the exception of older recipients). People who are no longer eligible for UB1 benefits and/or who do not have sufficient income are entitled to UB2 benefits. UB2 is delivered by Jobcentres which are either run by the county or municipalities or in cooperation between the county or municipality and the local labour agencies. Moreover, Jobcentres and local agencies cooperate with other actors in order to continuously address the employment barriers that some people might face. Cooperation partners are, for example, local authorities offering childcare, specialist integration services for people with disabilities or public health services offering preventive health promotion measures.

1 INA! stands for 'Integration nachhalten' – Sustain Integration.

2 Koller, Lena; Rudolph, Helmut (2011): *Arbeitsaufnahmen von SGB-II-Leistungsempfängern: Viele Jobs von kurzer Dauer.* (IAB-Kurzbericht, 14/2011), Nürnberg, 8 S.

<p>Which groups were targeted by the practice?</p>	<p>The target group for post-placement support is determined by local agencies and Jobcentres, and the job counsellor decides on a case-by-case basis which customers would benefit from post-placement support. The target groups identified are based on the experiences from the pilots. Continuous counselling is therefore recommended in the first six months of employment for the following groups: (older) long-term unemployed; low-qualified workers; people in repeated short-term employment relationships; and people in atypical employment, such as fixed-term employment, part-time employment or temporary employment. Moreover, post-placement support is beneficial for people with disabilities and refugees who often face barriers during employment.</p>
<p>What were the practice's main objectives?</p>	<p>The aim of post-placement support is to maintain employment and to avoid a return to unemployment. There are many reasons for a rapid return to unemployment. Based on the experience from the pilots, the need for counselling often increases during the new employment relationship as new unforeseen employment risks occur.</p> <p>Hence, counselling for some individuals continues for six months after taking up employment. Customers can use this service on a voluntarily basis. The counselling intends to address or minimise difficulties before they occur in the workplace. If required, other actors, such as public authorities and the employer, will be included in finding solutions. In the case where the employment relationship is terminated nevertheless, the job counsellor and customer take early steps to ensure a seamless replacement into alternative employment.</p>
<p>What activities were carried out?</p>	<p>Post-placement support extends the fourth phase of the traditional four-phase counselling model of PES support after the integration into the labour market. The model consists of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Phase 1: Profiling on the basis of occupational strengths and possible barriers to employment ▶ Phase 2: Jobseeker and job counsellor agree on a goal on the basis of the profiling exercise ▶ Phase 3: An integration plan is drawn up that entails targeted actions ▶ Phase 4: Implementation of agreed measures and efforts to sustain them: with the consent of the customer, the counselling approach continues for 6 months after placement in employment. <p>Depending on the personal circumstances of the customer, various support strategies in the fourth phase help to sustain integration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Assistance in the first days and weeks of employment. If necessary, additional qualifications based on the employers' needs are arranged. ▶ Reconciliation of work and family by guiding the customer towards support offers by other partners in the process, for example, child care from local authorities. ▶ Further counselling regarding training or working with employers to support 'on-the job training'. ▶ Support with mobility aspects, for example, making the customer aware of car-sharing or employer support to cover parts of their transport costs. ▶ Help with options to extend fixed-term employment and working with the employer in this regard. ▶ Support with job transitions taking into consideration newly gained skills and qualifications.
<p>What resources and other relevant organisational aspects were involved?</p>	<p>Post-placement support is offered by permanent job counsellors. The fact that the service helps to prevent a return to unemployment can lead to additional staff capacities.</p> <p>The introduction of post-placement support by local agencies and Jobcentres depends on local conditions (e.g. the sustainability rate in performance management systems or the personnel situation). Contracted services for some groups that might already include post-placement support are taken into account when designing the service.</p>
<p>What were the source(s) of funding?</p>	<p>Post-placement support is implemented with already existing PES staff resources and available PES funds.</p>
<p>What were the outputs of the practice: people reached and products?</p>	<p>In 2013, post-placement support was tested in the pilot project 'INA! – Sustain Integration' in cooperation with nine local agencies and 18 Jobcentres. In the project, more than 3,000 customers received post-placement support after having started employment.</p> <p>Training material is available for job counsellors including recommendations on how to organise post-placement support, possible aspects to include in post-placement counselling or how to involve employers. In addition, a guidance document with recommendations for the implementation of post-placement support is available for operational managers.</p>

What outcomes have been identified?

The pilot 'INA! – Sustain Integration' showed that employment relations between employers and PES/ Jobcentre customers last longer if targeted counselling is continued during the first six months of employment. During the pilots, considerably more employment placements endured for customers who received post-placement support, compared to customers who had not been supported in employment. It was however not possible to set up a control group because of the complexity of the intervention. Moreover, customer surveys show a high satisfaction level with this service: more than 70% of those questioned who received post-placement counselling rated the service as good or very good after completion of their post-placement support. In addition, many local agencies and Jobcentres that participated in the pilots advocated for the implementation of post placement support.

What are the lessons learnt and success factors?

The results of the pilot 'INA! – Sustain Integration' led to an amendment of the Social Code II in 2016 (the Social Code III did already provide the legal basis for post-placement support). This was necessary because the Social Code II regulates services provided by Jobcentres based on 'dependency (low income)'. Hence, there is now a legal basis to provide post-placement support, even in cases where a former customer is no longer 'dependent'. Social Code II provides support for a period of six months after commencement of employment. Based on experience from the pilots, the risk of returning to unemployment is greatest during the first six months in employment.

The form of post-placement depends on local conditions and the judgement of the job counsellor, as the way of service provision is not specifically outlined in the Social Code. Local PES and Jobcentres can decide on a particular target group and job counsellors decide independently on a case-by-case basis whether or not to offer the service. Non-binding recommendations are provided by the federal PES (such as the frequency and times of contact or recommended work with partner organisations).

The following conditions have proven to be successful during the pilot project:

- ▶ An operational manager acts as coordinator within a local agency or Jobcentre. This enables professional exchange between job counsellors in order to establish post-placement support. The results achieved are then considered in performance management.
- ▶ Rapid dissemination of information about the customers' transition to employment has proven to be a decisive factor in making post-placement support possible at an early stage.
- ▶ Open communication about individual, successful cases and general results (e.g. post-placement leading to fewer unemployment re-entries) help to convince staff members to commit to and improve this service.



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