

SUMMARY REPORT

PES NETWORK SEMINAR: CAREER GUIDANCE AND LIFELONG LEARNING



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SUMMARY REPORT

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AND LIFELONG LEARNING**

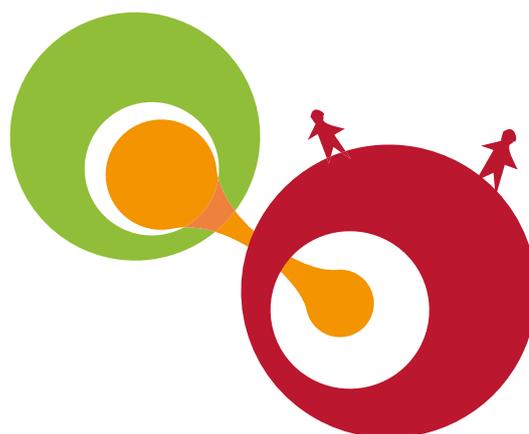
Written by Naomi Williamson and Chelo Millan, ICF



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1. Introduction

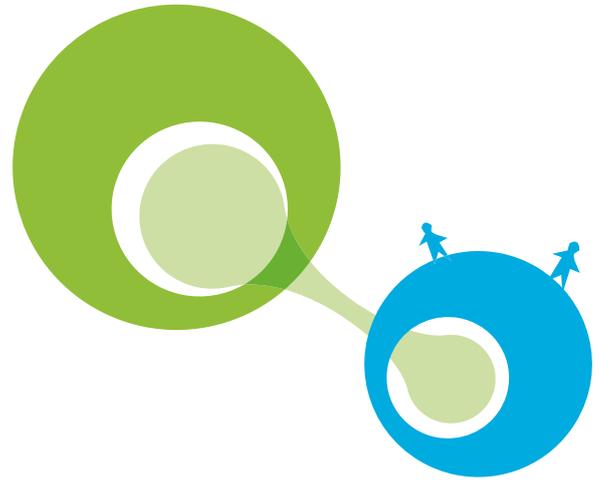
The European Network of Public Employment Services (PES) Network identified 'sustainable work, better functioning and integration of labour markets and better matching of the skills of jobseekers with employers' among its objectives¹. As such, the Network agreed in its 2017 PES Network Programme that a seminar should take place on 'Career Guidance and Lifelong Learning' with the aim of bringing together PES practitioners to learn from each other about how to make improvements towards these goals. The impetus for the seminar is closely connected to the continuously changing world of work, an issue on the agenda of the PES Network. To that effect, the seminar also focused on 'the new world of work', in particular how PES need to continuously improve to stay one step ahead of the changing needs of the labour market in order to help jobseekers make good career choices.



Welcoming words from the European Commission

The seminar took place in Helsinki on 28-29 June 2017, which directly followed the eighth International Symposium for Career Development and Public Policy that was held in Seoul, Korea on 18-21 June 2017. Participants who had attended the Seoul conference were able to disseminate some of the international recommendations for PES and national governments².

The seminar in Helsinki brought together 56 participants of which 41 were representatives of their national PES – mainly senior leaders responsible for



strategic operations. 23 PES Member States were represented, including the host country Finland. The remaining participants were representatives of the Youth Guarantee initiative, European Institutions (including Cedefop and the European Commission) and subject-matter experts. The objectives of the seminar were to:

- Gain an overview of the different institutional settings of PES concerning the delivery of career guidance and lifelong learning;
- Share and present practices and facilitate discussions to support peer learning with the aim of enhancing collaboration between PES, career guidance services, Youth Guarantee providers, employers, education and training institutions, municipalities and NGOs; and
- Ensure that the results and learning from the seminar can be disseminated to relevant stakeholders through the production of a follow-up toolkit (expected publication in autumn 2017). In addition, two webinars will take place in the autumn on specific aspects of career guidance and lifelong learning.

The one and a half day seminar included presentations and parallel workshops around institutional settings, career guidance and lifelong learning, working with education providers and working with employers. In addition, participants discussed policy influence and changes in policy priorities (such as the Upskilling Pathways initiative) with European Institutions via an expert panel. Practical 'live' experiences of tools and services was provided to participants through a poster session of online tools (led by participating PES) and a visit to a local one-stop-shop centre for youth in Helsinki.

This report summarises the contributions made during the seminar, structured around three thematic areas covered in more detail: institutional settings for career guidance and lifelong learning; career guidance and PES; and lifelong learning and PES. The report also provides conclusions and outlines future directions emerging from the seminar.

1 Article 3 of the Decision on enhanced co-operation between Public Employment Services.

2 <http://iccdpp.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Communique-2017-ICCDPP-050717.pdf>

2. Institutional settings for career guidance and lifelong learning

On this particular subject, discussions focused on the role that PES plays as a conductor among various actors, and good cooperation is developed, how IT infrastructure is provided and how career guidance is delivered.

Delivery of career guidance and lifelong learning

All PES deliver career guidance in some form (e.g. PES provide employment and integration-oriented guidance for jobseekers by PES counsellors / employment advisors / placement officers in PES and use blended services). However, career counselling services across the PES Network vary depending on the context and operational models of national systems. Most notably, differences lie in whether these services are produced as an in-house service, in partnership with other organisations, or purchased from external suppliers.

A common theme for PES is to *tailor support according to the level of need*, and PES discussed how the context for delivering career guidance and lifelong learning typically differs according to the need of the jobseeker. In the Netherlands for instance, a profiling tool was developed in partnership with a university, which categorises people based on their perceived distance from the labour market. Career guidance is then provided based on resulting categories. For those furthest from the labour market, a person-centred approach is taken, including training, face to face group support, individualised coaching and job search support. For those closest to the labour market, support or engagement is done mostly online.

Secondly, *a clear mandate* to deliver career guidance services supports PES in enhancing their 'conductor' role. However, some participants suggested that challenges remain, where the dual role of PES as a career guidance service provider and as a manager of social benefits led to confusion about their role. This affects not only the staff working in PES (and partners) but also the general public, which ties in to discussions about improving the public image of PES (see below).

Finally, PES discussed the *value of maintaining a standardised narrative* when engaging with the public, especially when using a range of providers to deliver career guidance services. PES suggested that the public do not always understand the role



Workshop participants

that PES plays in delivering these services. PES discussed the need for greater marketing activities and for the promotion of career guidance and lifelong learning to partners. In Belgium-Flanders (VDAB) for instance, the delivery partner's logo is included on all materials which helps to reinforce a common narrative. More generally, promotional activities should address the needs of the citizen, as well as those of the labour market and employers.

IT infrastructures

Reflecting on the 'future-focused' theme of the seminar, participating PES discussed the need to *maintain modern systems, processes and IT services* to support the changing needs of jobseekers and workers in the new world of work. For instance, the Swedish PES described how their organisation is on a 'journey of renewal', after outdated systems and IT services led to a decline in customer satisfaction. This happened during a time of increased demand for PES services as a result of high immigration. As such, the PES is exploring ways of providing future-ready and future-proof services. This includes understanding how customers' changing needs in their working lives impacts how they access career guidance and lifelong learning services, and how they interact with employers. This has led to a system design focused on 'sustainable activation' rather than on 'first activation' of jobseekers.

Agile IT infrastructures also require appropriate *budget allocation to boost the use of technology and innovation*. PES need to find ways to increase the use of electronic channels and incorporate them in their services, at the same time as they keep up-to-date with the varying use of rapidly evolving technology. To that effect, some PES have found working with other organisations, such as universi-

ties helpful to foster innovation. For instance, The Belgian-Flemish PES (VDAB) took the initiative with a university to create collaborative communities with clients through Facebook and network events, in order to identify services and tools that young people would like to use for job search.

Big data can be used to inform people about the trends of the Labour Market. This is the case of the Dutch PES, which uses data mining to follow customers' searches and keep them informed of i) how many jobs are available in their area of interest and ii) how many people are looking for them. However, while data is shared with providers of career guidance services in some PES, participants emphasised that *due consideration needs to be paid to the data protection and legal implications*, as well as its relative cost effectiveness. The ownership and management of jobseeker data and related IT infrastructures differs across PES Network members. Some PES are responsible for maintaining and managing databases of jobseeker data, while in other countries data comes mainly from the jobseekers themselves.

Finally, participants emphasised that despite technological advances and ensuing efficiencies, *face to face / personal contact with jobseekers is still important*, particularly with those who are furthest from the labour market. Most PES still face challenges regarding the setup of IT services which need to be maintained and modernised. IT equipment needs continual servicing and updating, which is resource intensive in a time of increasing pressures on PES. This is combined with a need to maintain and develop PES staff knowledge of computer systems in order to provide effective career guidance services to their customers. Some PES are also not effectively able to share information with

partners due to data restrictions and legal issues. Finally, a growing emphasis on using digital services can alienate older jobseekers or those with accessibility issues.

Cooperation between partners

National joint policies were suggested by participants as a 'gold standard' to developing cooperation between partners. However, in some countries PES and other services operate in silos with little opportunity for connection or exchange in practice. In these circumstances, participants stated that it would be difficult to envisage the PES taking a 'conductor' role. Participants and experts recommended that targeted cross-sectoral approaches to supporting young people (for instance through a one stop shop model – see below) can be an effective way of fostering a dialogue between organisations which historically worked in silos. By collaborating with partners that are trusted advisors in a certain field, more credibility can be given to policy measures and their related campaigns.

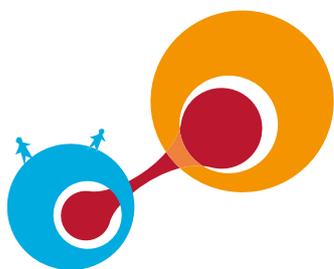
PES stressed that *delivery of services in partnership with other providers was crucial to the successful implementation of career guidance and lifelong learning*, but that national and local conditions remain a deciding factor. Experts suggested that a desired goal for PES should be to offer services for career guidance and lifelong in a cross-sectoral way and through multi-channelling. Here, the focus needs to be shifted from supply-centred to customer-centred, where citizens and employers are the customers.

On the subject of partners, the Hungarian PES presented a case study on their approach to lifelong learning and lifelong guidance. One of the key challenges they face involves the cooperation and coordination of strategic partnerships, as cross-policy cooperation is still a fairly new process. There are many stakeholders to consider (NGOs, educational authorities, local municipalities, etc.) and the challenge is to establish responsibilities and leadership across this network. In Hungary, for the PES to take a leading role in career transitions, this requires a shift in mind-sets for both employers and jobseekers. A common working group format will also help to bring together policy makers at a national level, as this forces the development of common objectives across stakeholders.

In Finland, while there are similarities to Hungary in their legislative environment, the approach to part-



Seminar participants



nership development has evolved towards national and regional lifelong guidance working groups, with greater emphasis on cooperation with employers. However, reforms of the national regional administration are expected in 2019, when employment and business services that are presently provided by the public sector will be combined to become *growth services*. Most activities involving employers will then be transferred to the regional level, where services will be delivered by a range of businesses, the third sector or the public sector.

One stop shops

The presentation and experience of one stop shop models inspired thinking, enthusiasm and debate among PES participants. Indeed, this concept provided a useful starting point to discuss ways of organising services in one place, and producing them as a *joint* service by various service providers. The model was seen to be an attractive solution to building cross-sectoral partnerships, while also helping to tackle reputational issues that some PES face in the eyes of the public (and especially young people).

One key principle in the design of this concept is to *jointly agree on the key outcomes of the services and how each partner can contribute to this common goal* – this provides a basis for contracts and agreements on the allocation of financial and human resources. Here, participants questioned some aspects of one stop shop concepts: is it substitutive or complementary to existing services? Is it sustainable in terms of personnel (danger of burn out?) and resources (as there are many different institutions). It became clear from discussions that more evidence of effective results of one stop shop models is required.

During the seminar, participants had the opportunity to visit a local one stop shop in Helsinki called Ohjaamo [EN – *The Navigator*], which is co-funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) until 2018. The project pilots a holistic approach to integrating young people aged under 30 into society, education and working life by providing multi-sectoral information, advice, guidance and support using basic services and a broad network of partners from public, private and the third sector. These include youth and employment counsellors from PES, social workers, nurses, outreach workers and a range of other service providers under one roof. The service has a low threshold entry point and walk-ins (no appointment) are accepted. Various dimensions of this



Visit to Ohjaamo one stop shop

support were considered valuable by participants: the low entry threshold, the customer-oriented nature of the provision, the multi-sector and multi-professional approach as well as the involvement of user groups in the design of the services.



Key points to future-proof institutional settings of PES

- When delivering career guidance and lifelong learning: tailor support according to the level of need; have a clear mandate to deliver career guidance services; and all providers should maintain a clear and standardised message and narrative when engaging with the public.
- Maintain modern and efficient IT services and boost innovation with an appropriate budget and resource allocation. Ensure data protection and legal implications are considered, and recognise that face to face and personal contact with some sub-groups of customers is still important.
- Strive towards joint national policies for partnership cooperation with education where this is appropriate.
- If considering a one stop shop model, ensure that the key inputs and outcomes of the services are jointly agreed between partners, seek evidence to support the change and evaluate to ensure service provision continues to meet the needs of the target group.

Another such example was presented at the seminar by the Belgium-Brussels PES (Actiris): the *Cité des métiers* is a one stop shop to serve the needs of the local labour market in Brussels, where the main challenge for the PES is to match low-skilled workers to jobs in a local economy which has mainly high-skilled labour demands. The concept is a newly-opened multi-partnership project for career cooperation. It is based on the original French concept of *Cité des métiers*³ established in 1993 and it provides three types of support through group activities and events, individual counselling, and resources (such as free access to library and digital tools). Due to open in 2018, it will rest on a cross-policy contract between PES and vocational education and training (VET) providers, which encourages cooperation and goal-orientated joint working. *Cité des métiers* offers a central space to signpost individuals to different partners who handle specific target groups.

Finally, other interesting examples of one stop shop concepts were also delivered in Croatia (the CISOK centres, see section on ‘PES support to lifelong learning’ below) and Slovenia.

3. Career guidance and PES

On the subject of career guidance, discussions centred around how PES support transitions in a jobseeker’s working life, the spaces that PES create for interaction, and how PES engage with education providers.

Supporting transitions

One of the key themes emerging from the seminar was the role that PES can play in supporting customers’ transitions between critical moments in their career paths (first phases from education to work, middle phases through re-employment, re-training, rehabilitation, second-chance education, and later phases of ending a working career).

Labour market information (LMI) tends to be publicly available and shared on PES websites, but to varying degrees of use for jobseekers to support their transitions. In this context, the Swedish PES presented their ‘Occupational Compass’ to PES participants in a workshop on career guidance and PES. The Occupational Compass provides jobseekers with information on tasks and qualifications that are

typically required in roles that they have looked at while searching for vacancies; it also shows where occupational shortages exist (locally, regionally and nationally). The online tool allows jobseekers to examine labour market forecasts and job trends for over 200 occupations. Job shortages are provided by employment officers at the local level – this is aggregated at local, regional and national level and verified by other sources. Examples of similar tools were mentioned by Belgium-Flanders (VDAB)⁴ and the Slovenian⁵ PES.

Key to the successful development of such services is *strong links between PES and other organisations*, such as ministries or government departments responsible for labour market data, education and training provision, employers and other institutions at the periphery of people’s life/work transitions. Some PES have adopted an integrated approach to working with employers and partners (where employment counsellors develop relationships with partners as they require), while others adopt a differentiated approach (where specific engagement staff develop such relationships). Participants noted that each model had benefits for improving transitions – through the role of PES as a ‘conductor’ – according to what was best suited for the national context. The Belgian-Flanders PES (VDAB) recommended increasing cooperation by developing active relationships and increasing the visibility of strategic partners’ contributions to projects e.g. giving partners an ambassador role. Several PES mentioned challenges in the collaboration between the education department and employment advisers when it comes to providing career guidance services.

The outcomes of the workshop indicated that PES’s role in relation to career guidance does not just end once a customer has been activated in the labour market: *PES should have a continuing responsibility to support sustainable career development.*

Creating ‘spaces’

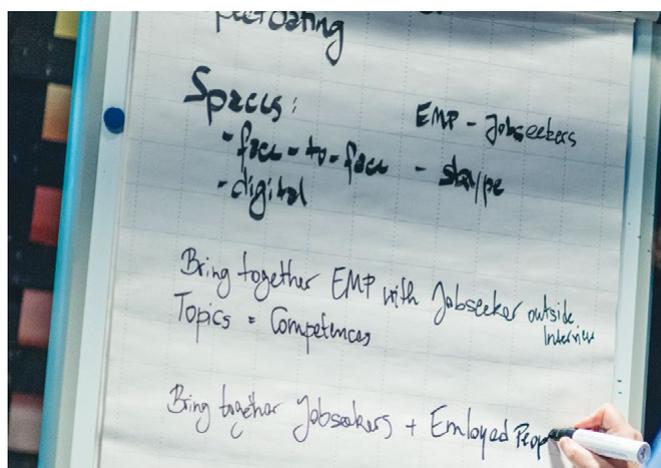
A discussion emerged during the seminar around the role that PES, together with partners, play in creating *spaces of development, connection and information* to support and enrich people’s relations and agency of their own careers, work and skills.

Participating PES questioned whether career guidance services were more effective and appreciated

3 <http://www.cite-sciences.fr/en/explore/learn/cite-des-metiers/>

4 <https://www.vdab.be/orientering>

5 <https://www.ess.gov.si/ncips/kam-in-kako>



Workshop flipchart

by customers if they were delivered by PES itself, or through other non-PES organisations or individuals. This included a discussion about PES's role in 'facilitating conversations' between different users of PES services. PES discussed the viability of utilising the skills of the existing workforce, or those at the end of their careers, to support those looking for work or to change careers. PES also discussed mentoring from those at the end of their career to those at the beginning of theirs. The Belgian-Flanders PES (VDAB) mentioned an experiment with a smartphone application (the Hi-APP) as part of a high-skilled mentoring programme to support highly skilled migrants in finding appropriate employment.

Equally, participants discussed whether such services should be aimed at specific target groups or open to all customers. This links to an outcome from the International Symposium in Korea, which recommended that PES should 'widen access to career development services' i.e. a non-exclusive approach to offering career guidance, linked to the need for multi-channel approaches in increasing access to services.

In addition, the concept of less formal 'spaces' was discussed by PES, where customers and employers can meet to discuss opportunities. Such spaces reflect modern ways of working and participants discussed ideas such as an 'employment café' or 'speed-dating', where employers or recruiters can meet with jobseekers without the pressure to offer jobs or prepare extensively. However, participants questioned the role of the PES in this concept – is it one of providing the meeting space? Providing 'facilitation'-type services? Providing a matching-type service? Possible challenges included potentially high costs for PES and the sustainability of

these spaces. The sustainability of the role of PES to provide this was also questioned. However, PES also considered that such concepts could promote a more dynamic and positive image of the PES, emphasising its 'holistic' role in providing support beyond those who are out of work, extending it to those who are in work. It may also support better links with employers.

Engaging with education providers

PES across Europe adopt different approaches to supporting or delivering career guidance in collaboration with education providers. In many countries, support to customers (or future customers) begins at an early stage – for instance, through multi-sectoral partnerships with schools to prevent early drop-outs from education, or to promote the acquisition of career management skills. Most PES make efforts to provide more holistic services when they connect into the school system, where they take a conductor role to coordinate a one stop shop approach that young people can tap into. While some PES offer more traditional guidance services, there have been efforts in recent years in several countries to bring different providers and views into schools. The difference in approaches stems from whether career guidance takes place on a continuous basis or at specific transitions point in schools. The latter also dictates the focus of the guidance.

Key points to future-proof career guidance in PES

- Support customers in their career and life transitions by developing strong links between PES and other relevant organisations and partners.
- Create new spaces that meet customers' needs and that can support improvements of the public image of PES.
- Be clear if services are provided for some / or for all – and how – and make best use of multi-channel strategies for greater accessibility.
- Continue developing strong partnerships with education providers. Monitor and evaluate to learn from good practices.

In this context, the Norwegian PES presented their 'NAV [Norwegian PES] tutors in Upper Secondary School' pilot project. The project seeks to address those (one in three) pupils in Norway who do not complete upper secondary school for a variety of social, economic and health reasons. The project places a PES tutor (part of the PES youth team) in a school for 50% of their time. The initiative aims to reduce the physical and mental distance between schools and work, as PES tutors are placed inside secondary schools. The tutor attends teacher meetings and has a drop-in office for young people to attend. The practice is based on the principles of providing interventions as soon as possible, taking preventative measures, and reaching out to young people by offering support and guidance services that are open to all. Since it was introduced in 2013, Norway has seen a consistent decrease in the numbers of school leavers (3.1% drop in 2014/2015).

One of the challenges emphasised by PES was the cooperation between education, career guidance and PES due to the professional competencies of career guidance counsellors versus that of employment counsellors. PES debated whether there was a need for a 'professional profile' for those providing career guidance, whether it be in school, PES, or other setting.

4. Lifelong learning and PES

On the subject of lifelong learning, discussions explored the experiences and challenges of PES as conductor, as well as PES engagement with employers. Participants also noted the challenges in motivating young people and adults for continuous learning.

PES support to lifelong learning

Lifelong learning plays a key role in responding to the challenges faced by citizens in the current labour market. PES highlighted the requisite of *raising awareness* about the importance of career guidance and lifelong learning, and stressed the need to increase ongoing cooperation and communication between different stakeholders and services providers across sectors, including public and private partnerships. *Agreed partnerships* that include defined roles and responsibilities for delivering and financing help are needed to strengthen PES in building a system of lifelong learning.

The Estonian PES reported that a new set of measures was launched in May 2017 to enhance the importance of lifelong learning. These measures aim to prevent unemployment by supporting skills upgrading, either through supporting University-studies, covering the costs of courses to obtain/refresh a qualification (partly or fully, depending on the target group), and supporting the improvement of Estonian language skills.

The Croatian PES presented their Lifelong Career Guidance Centres (CISOK Centres) established in 2013, with particular attention paid to the partnership-based model that is used to increase the availability and quality of lifelong career guidance services to all Croatian citizens. Particular emphasis is placed on young people, based on pre-identified needs. CISOK Centres use a customer-orientated approach to provide individual and tailored services to users based on their individual needs, providing a mix of different services (i.e. self-help, staff assisted, individual guidance...).

It was noted by several PES that a *political and legal mandate* (legislation, strategy and statutory mechanisms) were required to enable PES support for lifelong learning. In Croatia, the agreement for data exchange signed by the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Labour, PES and the Institute for Pension System is one of the project's strengths. The agreement allows CISOK Centres to identify possible needs and target specific groups by planning activities around their needs. The Danish PES has also reported tripartite agreements between the Danish government, trade unions and employer organisations to strengthen qualifications and guidance for jobseekers which are closely aligned with present and future qualifications demands from the labour market.

Allocating enough and well-placed resources for the identification of labour market and users' needs is important to enhance lifelong career guidance. For instance, the Croatian PES circulates questionnaires at primary and secondary schools to monitor students' professional intentions. The goal is to discover the potential and interests of young people, to provide them with guidance for their own career development and to develop or upgrade their career management skills. The questionnaire includes a section for teachers and doctors to fill in when students are facing health problems that may affect them in choosing certain occupations. The Lithuanian PES also uses group consultations for secondary schools pupils around

employability skills, choosing the right profession according to one's personal skills and abilities, and promoting self-employment within the 'Darbo klubas' programme.

Flexible methods to encourage lifelong learning

Encouraging people to follow training was highlighted as a challenge for most PES. The Austrian PES presented the 'Qualifikationspass', a tool to encourage further education for persons who have only finished compulsory school, by guiding them towards a diploma or a recognised training profession. The principle of this tool is to provide an ongoing guidance process through episodes of unemployment and employment, with a focus on raising qualification levels for those at the lower end of the qualifications spectrum.

Some PES reported using *voucher systems as a common measure to promote lifelong learning*. The service voucher is a wage cost subsidy to give people the opportunity to gain training. For instance, the Belgian-Flemish PES (VDAB) developed a successful career guidance vouchers system to make career coaching readily available to all employees with a career question/problem. VDAB also developed a training vouchers system to support low skilled people to increase their skills. In order to make best use of such resources, it is important to encourage people to undertake training that will lead to a job, based on jobs shortages. To that effect, the Belgian-Flemish PES produces a yearly list of occupations for which there is a shortage. The Dutch PES also reported using temporary training vouchers (2500 euros max.) to encourage training specifically for jobs that are in demand.

Some PES *offer on-the-job training* along with training services offered by external consultants. Here, the Greek 'pay-back' programme (LAEC) promotes investment in training. Employers are obliged to pay a percentage of every employee's gross salary (0.45%), which can be taken back if they invest in specific training to their employees.

In discussions, participants emphasised the need to make the interface between career guidance and acquisition of transition/career management skills more explicit. Due attention needs to be paid to adult career guidance and lifelong learning, the promotion of adult career and transition management skills, employability and upskilling, and the role of PES in this process.

Engaging with employers

In developing a Lifelong Learning system, *engaging employers* is as crucial as it is challenging for most PES. For this to happen, it is important to find a common language and mutual understanding of the two sides. Participants were aware that, in order to get employers involved, PES need to be seen as a *trustworthy and qualified* partner which knows and understands their needs.

The Danish PES uses 'in-enterprise counsellors' to overcome distance to employers. The counsellors in the jobcentres have daily contact with employers and can assist with both recruitment, vocational training and identifying future needs. In addition, the Danish PES has put in place a mobile one-stop shop for employers, which provides a single point of contact for employers to make it easier to get a coordinated service from the employment system. The one-stop shop is called job service Denmark and is a broker between companies and jobcentres.

Promoting positive experiences can help improving the relationship between PES and employers. Here, the Finnish and the Dutch PES have developed an



Key points to future-proof lifelong learning in PES

- Raise awareness of the value of career guidance and lifelong learning among stakeholders and the public, and ensure there are adequate resources to do this. Consider a voucher system to promote lifelong learning if appropriate for the national context.
- Define the roles of partners within partnerships and ensure a political and legal mandate exists to underpin support for lifelong learning.
- Engage with employers and take steps to enhance the reputation and trustworthiness of PES among employers.
- Ensure PES staff have a common understanding of the labour market and encourage knowledge transfer and exchange.

‘employer ambassador’ role. The general approach of this measure is to provide employers with the experience from counter parties, giving them a real and closer view of how positive working with the PES can be for them in the field of recruiting and training staff.

Transferring knowledge across PES employees, both in terms of labour market information and employers’ needs can improve employer engagement. There is often a knowledge gap between specialised PES staff visiting companies and employment counsellors who contact employers for / through jobseekers. To that effect, the Slovenian PES has created a database to share labour market information on an ongoing basis for PES staff to be up to date.

Finally, PES noted that some employers’ reluctance to get involved in the process of training and lifelong learning remains a barrier. In particular, sectoral interests can hinder PES finding a common agreement with employers.

5. Taking the learning forward

The following recommendations for improvements to PES were suggested by policy-makers, experts and stakeholders in the seminar:

- While PES are aware of the changing nature of work, they could use their awareness more proactively – particularly in terms of collaborating with the education sector and when supporting lifelong learning priorities.
- PES need to continue to be innovative, practical, adaptive, cooperative, and experts in their fields in terms of Career Guidance, Counselling and lifelong learning.
- PES need to have quality information and statistics (e.g. labour market data) and use it to make services more efficient.
- PES need to develop new kinds of spaces for career guidance, where PES can be conductors, enablers, partnership enablers and assume a ‘bridge building’ role.
- PES should make better use of existing tools, or cooperate on the development / refinement of common tools, rather than reinventing the wheel (for instance with skills profiling tools to validate skills, or skills deficit tools for basic skills).
- There is a need for PES to have a stronger focus on users’ needs (customers and employers) and take account of their perspective in a customer-driven approach.

- PES should to a larger extent be using evidenced-based outcomes, research and evaluation to influence decision-making about new initiatives.
- PES are encouraged to increase their awareness of the Upskilling Pathways Recommendation⁶.
- PES are also encouraged to engage with the Vocational Skills week 2017 (20-24 November 2017). Please see: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=1261>

Further areas for collaboration or mutual learning were discussed:

- Participants expressed an interest in further exploring the theme of employers, and the question of connecting career counselling with labour market demand in a way that also widens the methodologies used in career guidance.
- Discussions highlighted a desire to discuss and better understand the kinds of management systems that are required for PES to deliver good career counselling.
- Finally, lifelong career paths and bridge-building approaches were mentioned as possible elements for the future Toolkit (expected publication in autumn 2017).

⁶ The ‘Upskilling pathways’ Recommendation is part of a package of measures proposed by the ‘New Skills Agenda for Europe’ in 2016. It was adopted by the Council on 19 December 2016. The Recommendation targets adults with a low level of skills and aims to help them to acquire a minimum level of literacy, numeracy and digital skills and/or a broader set of skills by progressing towards an upper secondary qualification or equivalent (level 3 or 4 in the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). Member States may define priority target groups for this initiative depending on the national circumstances. The Recommendation identifies four stages for the validation process (identification, documentation, assessment and certification) and proposes a set of principles for Validation of Non Formal and Informal Learning arrangements. For instance, among other aspects, these refer to the need to link validation systems to National Qualifications Frameworks and to credit systems, and to support validation by appropriate guidance and counselling.

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