



DENMARK

THE DANISH PES DEVELOPED A HANDBOOK TO PROVIDE JOBCENTRES WITH BEST PRACTICES AND A FRAMEWORK FOR IMPROVING EMPLOYER RELATIONS AND SERVICES.

Handbook on employer relations and services¹

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The 2014 employment reform highlighted the need for PES to focus more on improving their relations with and services to employers. The Danish PES therefore created a handbook that collected best practices from Danish jobcentres and provided a model and methods for jobcentre leaders to use for developing their employer relations and services.

The creation of the handbook involved a bottom-up, user-driven process, where municipalities and labour market partners were consulted throughout. The handbook aimed to provide a common framework to be used by all jobcentres, so that employer services are based on the same principles. The Danish PES received a good level of engagement, and jobcentres have shown strong commitment to implementing this model.

Name of the PES

Danish PES (Danish Agency for Labour Market and Recruitment (STAR))

Scope of measure

National

(a pilot project or a national reform)

When was the practice implemented?

2017

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

In 2014 Denmark introduced an employment reform aimed at supporting jobcentres in providing a professional and consistent service for private enterprises. The intention was for companies to experience the same level of service, irrespective of which jobcentre they have contact with, and ensure better coordination across municipalities. This is especially important given that Denmark is decentralised and local jobcentres have the autonomy to carry out employment initiatives directed towards employers. The reform outlined that PES should focus more on employer services by implementing relevant initiatives. There was no specific guidance on how to do this, so the Danish PES decided to engage jobcentres and ask them to identify best practices. This led to a project in six municipalities, where the Danish PES collected best practices and tried to develop employer services within jobcentres. In order to make this information relevant for all municipalities, the project team decided to create a handbook that would bring all of the best practices together, and provide a model for jobcentres on how to improve employer relations and services.

Some municipalities were already developing services which were heavily focused on employer contact; it was felt that there was a need to broaden this model, with the Danish PES subsequently beginning work on producing the handbook.

Which organisation was involved in its implementation?

The following organisations were involved in the implementation of the practice:

- ▶ The Danish PES was responsible for creating the handbook and had constant dialogue with municipalities to collect best practices and receive feedback.
- ▶ Facilitators were hired from an external company to facilitate the consultation process with jobcentres.
- ▶ 'KL – Local Government Denmark' (KL), an interest organisation of the municipalities in Denmark, was a strategic partner. They were involved in organising a seminar with municipalities which focused on the handbook, as well as in the distribution of the handbook.
- ▶ The Danish PES engaged employers and other labour market partners in the development and dissemination of the handbook through seminars and forums.

Which groups were targeted by the practice?

The handbook is targeted at jobcentres, in particular at management level as they develop the strategy on employer services. Jobcentre leaders have the power to make changes within their organisations, and the handbook provides them with guidance on how to make this happen.

¹ Internet: <http://star.dk/da/Indsatser-og-ordninger/Virksomhedsservice-og-rekruttering/Virksomhedsservice/Ny-metodehaandbog.aspx>

<p>What were the practice's main objectives?</p>	<p>The handbook was developed with the intention of providing jobcentres with good practices and methods for implementing employer services and improving employer relations. The Danish PES wants to respect jobcentres' autonomy and recognises that the initiatives implemented across jobcentres can vary, and that they might not use every best practice available. The handbook therefore provides a framework with four operational objectives for employer relations and services – employer contact; internal organisational cooperation; citizen contact; and cooperation between municipalities; by developing these four components, jobcentres can provide good services to employers.</p> <p>By taking the core elements of the framework, jobcentres can develop their own solutions which are tailored according to what works best for them. The aim is to ensure that a common framework is used by all jobcentres and employer services are based on the same principles. The best practices selected for the handbook are related to this model and its four components outlined above. Developing good employer relations and services will then lead to employer satisfaction and long-term job creation. However, if only one of the four components is developed, then the long-term goals cannot be fulfilled.</p>
<p>What activities were carried out?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The Danish PES developed the four components of the framework – employer contact; internal organisational cooperation; citizen contact; and cooperation between municipalities – based on knowledge gathered during another project which looked at the factors that lead to good employer services. ▶ A bottom-up and user-driven process was used to collect the best practices, by engaging labour market partners and users. Networking meetings were held with municipalities and jobcentre leaders to collect information for the handbook from its future users. During these meetings, jobcentres shared their experiences and best practices. ▶ During the writing process, the Danish PES produced newsletters and articles on the best practices for their website, so that people could follow the project as it progressed. This provided a method for securing continuous feedback on the best practices selected during the writing process. ▶ Such feedback was also collected by organising workshops, networking seminars and forum groups with employers and other labour market partners, where they discussed the handbook. These partners provided input and followed the project throughout. This was an ongoing process which lasted one year. ▶ The Danish PES created a set of cards for jobcentre leaders to use with PES staff when discussing what the centre can do differently and improve on. ▶ The Danish PES also plans to translate the handbook into English.
<p>What resources and other relevant organisational aspects were involved?</p>	<p>Funding was allocated from the PES budget to the project as part of the employment reform. No additional central government funding was allocated to the PES budget for this. The funding for the external facilitators was accounted for in the financial plan of the project. All other elements of creating the handbook, including its design, was done in-house using the budget allocated. The Danish PES did not need to fund any additional capacity for the jobcentres to implement the handbook, as centres were willing to use their own available resources.</p>
<p>What were the source(s) of funding?</p>	<p>PES budget</p>
<p>What were the outputs of the practice: people reached and products?</p>	<p>The outputs included the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The handbook was published online and disseminated at the national level through newsletters, LinkedIn, official government channels, and jobcentres. A letter was also sent to all mayors by the Ministry of Employment with a copy of the handbook, and KL also supported the dissemination process. ▶ After the handbook was published, a conference was organised with local government authorities. This included a session where the Danish PES presented the handbook to participants. ▶ The model from the handbook was used to facilitate a workshop with jobcentres and labour market partners, where they had a high level discussion about the model and how to measure employment services on a broader level. Networking meetings also took place with jobcentre leaders where they could seek advice on how the handbook could be used. ▶ The handbook was translated by the European Commission into English.

What outcomes have been identified?

The handbook is considered by the Danish PES to be a very good project in terms of the level of engagement received, both politically and at the local level. The Danish PES expected that a lot of effort and resources might be required from jobcentres to use the handbook, and that the PES may have to fund extra capacity to facilitate this process. However, jobcentres welcomed the handbook and were very happy to receive information on tools and methods that can help them develop employer services. They were therefore prepared and willing to use their own available resources to implement the model. This was important for the Danish PES given the limited budget available. The Danish PES also received positive feedback from jobcentre leaders on the supplementary cards, which were considered to be useful for working with PES staff.

The Danish PES is monitoring the use of the handbook through the website by checking the number of downloads, and has conducted a survey with the jobcentres on their use of the handbook. Results showed that 63 % of respondents (125) knew about the handbook. In regards to jobcentre team leaders, the main target group of the handbook, almost all had heard of the handbook (96 %). Most of the jobcentre team leaders have also used the handbook for improving their employer service (85%). Survey results also showed that the themes most useful for team leaders are employer contact (57 %), cooperation between municipalities (39 %) and strategy for employer service (35 %).

The handbook is often used at team meetings (46 %) and/or at meetings between different leaders in the jobcentre (42 %). For over half of respondents (55 %), the handbook has provided them with new knowledge on employer service. Similarly, for around half of respondents (52 %), the handbook has contributed to a higher competence level, and 63 % have a higher motivation for working with employer service after using the handbook. For 19 % of respondents, the handbook has contributed to changes in the organisation of the jobcentre, and 56 % consider the handbook to have contributed to a better employer service.

Overall, each jobcentre uses the model differently by focusing on different aspects, and not every best practice is suited for them. Nevertheless, they are aware of the special importance of knowledge sharing and have provided positive feedback on the model and the framework it provides for building employer services and relations. By helping them to create their own solutions, the handbook project has helped to create a sense of ownership in the jobcentres.

What are the lessons learnt and success factors?

The following are some of the most important lessons learnt and success factors of the practice:

- ▶ The most important lesson learnt from producing the handbook has been the importance of having a bottom-up and user-driven process. Engaging partners and users in the design process from the beginning was essential, as users had the opportunity to express their views, share their experiences, and tell the Danish PES how they can best benefit from the handbook.²
- ▶ Given the differences in local practices between jobcentres, it is important to involve different views and interests so that every jobcentre can relate to the overall message.
- ▶ Having a bottom-up, user-driven process was even more important in securing commitment from jobcentres, without needing to fund extra capacity. Having a project where jobcentres are engaged can therefore give better results for less money.
- ▶ It was also important that there was not one single person in charge of using the handbook in jobcentres. Instead, all leaders within a jobcentre had to be engaged. This meant the success of the handbook was not dependent on one person.

² There are no current plans to update the handbook. The know-how from the handbook, and the best practice, are used and updated in other areas of the Danish PES, but the handbook is not intended to be updated.



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