



**The European Commission Mutual Learning Programme  
for Public Employment Services**

DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion

**ACTIVATION AND INTEGRATION: WORKING  
WITH INDIVIDUAL ACTION PLANS**

**TOOLKIT FOR PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT  
SERVICES**

Helen Tubb

(May 2012)

# CONTENTS

<b>1. INTRODUCTION: THE CENTRAL ROLE OF INDIVIDUAL ACTION PLANNING IN PES SERVICE DELIVERY .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2. DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE INDIVIDUAL ACTION PLANS .....</b>	<b>3</b>
2.1 <i>Effective methods and approaches in developing individual action plans .....</i>	<i>3</i>
2.2 <i>Timing and targeting the use of individual action plans .....</i>	<i>7</i>
2.3 <i>Key features of individual action plans .....</i>	<i>10</i>
2.4 <i>The importance of training and development of employment counsellors in counselling, assessment and matching techniques .....</i>	<i>14</i>
2.5 <i>Cooperating with specialist services.....</i>	<i>16</i>
2.6 <i>Quality assurance: Monitoring the quality and impact of Individual Action Planning – need for further development?.....</i>	<i>17</i>
<b>3. EFFECTIVELY MONITORING AND FOLLOWING UP INDIVIDUAL ACTION PLANS .....</b>	<b>20</b>
3.1 <i>Two functions of monitoring and follow-up .....</i>	<i>20</i>
3.2 <i>Processes and methods of monitoring .....</i>	<i>22</i>
3.3 <i>The role of sanctions .....</i>	<i>27</i>
<b>4. STRIKING THE ‘RIGHT BALANCE’ IN THE ACTION PLANNING PROCESS .....</b>	<b>33</b>
4.1 <i>The two ‘hats’ of the employment counsellor .....</i>	<i>33</i>
4.2 <i>The human or digital face of the employment counsellor .....</i>	<i>35</i>
<b>5. CONCLUSIONS .....</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>6. REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>ANNEX 1 .....</b>	<b>41</b>

**Author:** Helen Tubb, GHK Consulting Ltd

*The information contained in this publication does not necessarily reflect the position or opinion of the European Commission*

This publication is commissioned by the European Community Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity (2007-2013).

This programme is implemented by the European Commission. It was established to financially support the implementation of the objectives of the European Union in the employment, social affairs and equal opportunities area, and thereby contribute to the achievement of the EU2020 goals in these fields.

The seven-year programme targets all stakeholders who can help shape the development of appropriate and effective employment and social legislation and policies, across the EU-27, EFTA-EEA and EU candidate and pre-candidate countries.

For more information see:

<http://ec.europa.eu/progress>

## 1. INTRODUCTION: THE CENTRAL ROLE OF INDIVIDUAL ACTION PLANNING IN PES SERVICE DELIVERY

Individual action planning is undoubtedly at the heart of PES service delivery. Individual action plans (IAPs) have become widely used by PES in the process of employment counselling and last decade has seen considerable progress in PES approaches towards individual action planning, with a greater focus on early intervention and ongoing monitoring and adjustment.

These developments reflect the Luxembourg Process and the policy priorities of the Europe 2020 Strategy, most notably [Employment Guideline 7](#) which calls for the strengthening of PES “with personalised services and active and preventative measures at an early stage.” They are also informed by the latest research regarding activation policies and strategies, including the effective and efficient allocation of active labour market measures (ALMPs) and links to social security frameworks in the different member states. Central to the OECD research, for example, is the principle that activation is based on mutual rights and responsibilities, both to promote transitions from welfare to work and to enforce benefit eligibility conditions. IAPs therefore provide a vehicle to implement the ‘rights and responsibilities principle’ by forming a contract between the employment counsellor and the jobseeker (Grubb, [Dialogue Conference presentation](#)). Wallis Goelen, Head of Unit at the European Commission, echoes this principle by referring to the essential role of IAPs in ALMPs. This role has become ever more important given the triple challenge facing PES in the aftermath of the economic crisis: budgetary cuts, fewer job offers and increased caseloads.

OECD research highlights the value of IAPs beyond its contractual function. Indeed, IAPs are increasingly seen as the result of a *dynamic* process, meaning that a range of interventions and other factors work to enhance the individual case management, such as the skills and profile of the employment counsellor and motivation levels and socio-cultural background of the jobseeker. In this respect, wider research on human behaviour and individual action planning in other professional circles (such as social work, career guidance and counselling) can provide relevant lessons and insights. Bimrose’s reference to theories on experiential learning, the ‘locus of control’ and the use of counselling techniques in individual action planning are a case in point (Bimrose, [Discussion Paper](#), pp.1-4).

This paper summarises the main findings and discussions of the Dialogue Conference on “[Activation and integration: working with individual action plans](#)” held under the umbrella of the PES to PES Dialogue Programme on 8 and 9 March 2012. It draws on evidence-based exchanges between PES managers, PES practitioners and representatives of the European Commission, the OECD and the academic community<sup>1</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> David Grubb, OECD; Jenny Bimrose, Warwick IER - Institute for Employment Research, UK; Regina Konle-Seidl, IAB - Institute for Employment Research, Germany

The paper focuses on the key aspects of the individual action planning process, from the initial design and development, through to the ongoing monitoring and follow-up. It places particular emphasis on the effective methods, skills and organisational frameworks underpinning the relationship between the employment counsellor and jobseeker and the impact of different approaches – especially the role of sanctions – on activation and integration in the wider labour market.

The paper is guided by the following questions:

- What are the core elements of quality, effective and efficient individual action planning by PES?
- When should PES resort to external partners and who are the best placed to provide complementary services?
- How to best cope with tensions in the concrete planning and monitoring process like balancing the requirements of rapid integration and sustainable outcomes, as well as support and sanctioning?

## 2. DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE INDIVIDUAL ACTION PLANS

### 2.1 Effective methods and approaches in developing individual action plans

***PES commonly emphasise client-centred approaches with the view to empower the jobseeker in the development of the IAP***

Although PES tread a fine line between being the ‘enabler’ and ‘controller’ (of the requirements for benefit receipt), in many PES, the focus of employment counselling is placed on the *empowerment* of job seekers. This approach is characterised by an emphasis on building trust, understanding and responding to individual needs and ultimately instilling ownership for the process depending on whether they are applying a directive or client-centred approach. In terms of counsellor skills and training, the empowerment of job seekers requires techniques which allow them to shift the locus of control to the individual job seeker. These techniques can help the job seeker to feel more ownership of the agreed outcomes and the action necessary to achieve these outcomes (Bimrose, [Discussion Paper](#), p.20). They may also help jobseekers to become more responsible and independent and develop their own career management skills.

A client-centred approach can be particularly important in those countries where a sanctioning regime is likely be less effective, either because benefits are not paid to jobseekers (or are only paid on a limited basis), or because benefits are paid almost indefinitely. In these circumstances, PES need to place an even greater focus on client-centred approaches as they are the only *real* avenue for motivating jobseekers and maximising labour market outcomes.

***Key elements of the action planning process are critical reflection, learning and holistic assessment***

A success factor in being able to empower job seekers is the application of a method of critical reflection and learning. Drawing on Kolb and Gibb’s theories, Bimrose states that in the “PES IAP context, the concept of experiential learning illustrates the learning processes of:

- Problem identification (that is, what is the main barrier to progression?);
- Making sense of the problem (that is, what did I do wrong?);
- Deciding what needs to be done to solve the problem (that is, what needs to be different?); and
- Moving to action ([that is], what do I need to do?” (Bimrose, [Discussion Paper](#), p.2).

An example of this concept can be found in the “Ali & Graham four-phase model” which the Irish PES uses for the guidance interview, as presented in Figure 2.1 below.

**Figure 2.1: Four-phase model for the guidance interview in Ireland**

<p><b>Clarifying:</b>          Introduction to the process          Information Gathering          Hearing the client’s story</p>	<p><b>Exploring:</b>          Building a contract          Exploring issues          Encouraging client to explore options</p>
<p><b>Evaluating:</b>          Challenging inconsistencies          Consider options          Prioritising options</p>	<p><b>Action Planning:</b>          Identifying necessary steps          Encouraging client to form a plan of action          Referral          Summarise &amp; Conclude</p> <p><b>(Ali &amp; Graham - Four Phase Model)</b></p>

Clarifying and exploring a jobseekers' situation presumes a *thorough* and *holistic* assessment of the job seeker, not only using profiling systems, but also advanced diagnostic methods and skills. Such an assessment forms a basis for building a contract with the jobseeker. Ideally, the assessment should seek to identify the jobseeker’s:

- Hard, soft and transferable skills and associated training needs;
- Relevant experience and its fit with labour market opportunities;
- Strengths and weaknesses, with a particular attention placed the ‘selling points’ that can be used to ‘market’ jobseekers to potential employers or work towards the accreditation of informal skills attained in previous employment;
- Career/job preferences;
- Decision-making styles and skills (and their consistency towards the employment aim);
- Personal circumstances such as child and dependent care responsibilities and geographical mobility; and

- 'Locus of control', which is an indicator of whether individuals feel they are the masters of their own destinies or not (Rotter, 1966, [Discussion Paper](#), p.3).

On the latter point, assessing the locus of control can be particularly effective in taking proper account of the cultural and social experiences of different jobseekers in the action planning process. For example, minority ethnic groups, women and people from deprived social backgrounds tend to have a more external locus of control, meaning they have a greater need for realistic goal-setting and being empowered to feel responsible for their own actions (Bimrose, [Discussion Paper](#), p.4). Interestingly, the PES in Ireland directly includes a measurement of the 'locus of control' in its management of the live register and initial assessment of the unemployed (Barrett et al., 2001, [Discussion Paper](#), p.4).

### ***Individual sessions with job seekers are more effective for individual action planning than group work***

The setting for the employment counselling is also worth consideration. Whilst one-to-one sessions are common practice, a few PES also use group sessions. Both Lithuania and Ireland offer initial support and guidance in a collective setting with the view to providing a forum to share information and facilitate the exchange of problems and experiences between peers. That said, whilst group sessions can be effective for giving information, and to some extent, underpinning 'self-help', the development of individual action planning most definitely requires *individual* sessions. This is confirmed by the experience of Slovenia where they found that the development of IAPs in a group situation was not as effective and are therefore moving towards more individually developed IAPs (Bimrose, [Discussion Paper](#), p.6).

### ***The importance of tailoring IAPs to the needs and nature of the individual jobseeker***

Looking across PES, there is clearly a strong emphasis on tailoring IAPs to the specific nature and needs of the jobseeker, with 'individual' being the defining word in IAP. This individualisation is firmly based on the quality of, and the time available for, the communication and relationship between the employment counsellor and the jobseeker, and as such, is very much at the heart of a client-centred approach. However, the individualisation needs to be 'structured' to some extent, not only to help to shape and steer the conversation with the jobseeker, but also to meet wider organisational norms and requirements. According to Bimrose, standards and principles of IAPs will reflect ministerial guidelines, but there is also scope to reflect organisational understanding of client needs and the process of employment counselling (Bimrose, [Discussion Paper](#), p.7). This point is backed up by Konle-Seidl who observes that case worker attitudes and working strategies significantly impact on job-finding possibilities (Konle-Seidl, [Discussion Paper](#), p.12-13).

## **Range of skills and strategies in the process of employment counselling**

The skills and strategies required for different approaches to IAPs are integral to the overall skills sets required for different approaches to interviewing. In other words, many skills (and some strategies) required for different stages of the interview will also be needed for IAPs and even different approaches to IAPs.

The key issue, here, is that skills can be used differently for contrasting approaches to IAPs...Other core skills for interviewing that can be used either in client centred or in directive approaches to IAPs include:

*Questions:* all questions are used to get information from the client/customer. Some types of questions can be used effectively to open up the dialogue between client/customer and career guidance counsellor. These are:

- Open questions (which encourage clients to express their thinking and feelings, for example, 'tell me about...' or 'can you say what you felt when that happened?'); and
- Exploratory or probing questions (for example, 'What stands in the way of you changing?' 'What is the worst that could happen?').

Other types of questions are used to gather specific types of information and are used to ensure interviewees are brief and succinct in their response. For example:

- Closed questions (useful for obtaining information and facts, for example, 'Did you know that would happen?' 'Do you expect to be offered that job?');
- Leading questions (where the action suggested by the career guidance counsellor is contained in the questions or where the questions require a particular answer, for example: 'So you're not going to attend the training course?').

A high level of skills in questioning techniques is needed for challenging:

- Challenging: to develop effective IAPs with clients/ customers, employment counsellors need to be able to challenge discrepancies; distortions; self-defeating behaviours; games, tricks and excuses. This needs to be done carefully – otherwise it risks provoking a defensive reaction in clients.

In addition to skills, employment counsellors need strategies for working with clients/ customers on their IAPs. These are more likely to be included in a client centred approach to IAPs and might include:

- Brainstorming – helping clients/ customers identity the different ways they could achieve a single goal. As many strategies as possible should be identified, however bizarre! Once a number of different options for action have been identified, then clients/ customer and employment counsellor review them collaboratively and try to select the best strategy (or combination of strategies) that is most likely to succeed.

- Self contracts – as a way of helping clients/ customers commit themselves to their goals. An agreement is set up, to which the clients commit. Some contracts identify specifically what clients are to do and indicate rewards for success and sanctions for failure. They can be particularly helpful in more difficult aspects of employment programmes as they help focus clients/customers energies.
- Feedback – one way of providing support and challenge. If clients/ customers are to be successful in implementing the IAPs, they need adequate information about how well they are performing. The purpose of feedback is not to pass judgement on the performance of clients, but rather to provide guidance, support and challenge. There are two kinds of feedback: confirmatory feedback – letting clients/customers know they are progressing successfully towards their goal and corrective feedback, letting clients/customers know that they have deviated from the agreed course of action and need to get back on track (Bimrose, [Discussion Paper](#), pp.15-17).

## 2.2 Timing and targeting the use of individual action plans

***Use of IAPs has developed significantly in recently years, although the timing for individualised planning can depend on target group, distance from the labour market and other factors determined at national level***

Across the member states, diversity remains regarding the jobseekers who are entitled to prepare an IAP, when they complete the IAP during the unemployment spell and the duration of their first interviews (Konle-Seidl, [Discussion Paper](#), p.7). The determining criteria are most commonly the age of the jobseeker, length of unemployment, type of benefit claim, as well as other factors regarding distance from the labour market. However, the application of such criteria clearly depends on the legal frameworks and organisational policies, structures and resources of individual PES. For example, in Belgium – Flanders, Flemish governmental policy stipulates that the short-term unemployed who are less than 55 and the long-term unemployed who are less than 50 must complete an IAP; for all other jobseekers, IAPs are completed on a voluntary basis. The Lithuania Labour Exchange places a greater focus on youth unemployment, with the pivotal age being 25 years: all those under 25 complete an IAP within three months of unemployment and all those above within six months.

The UK and Germany provide an interesting comparison: both PES require almost all jobseekers to complete an IAP in the very early stages of unemployment, yet the underpinning business models are somewhat different. In the words of Eamonn Davern (JobCentre Plus, UK), the approach of the UK PES is very much ‘resource driven’ whereby jobseekers have short, regular interventions which are cost-effective given the

rapid off-flows from the unemployment register.<sup>2</sup> According to Susanne Koch, the strategy of German Bundesagentur für Arbeit (BA) is firmly based on the principle that early intervention in the first month - even for individuals *prior* to unemployment – can help to rapidly overcome unemployment. Interestingly, BA has commissioned an evaluation to ‘test’ this principle and determine whether individual action planning should be timed differently and/or targeted at specific client groups.

***Some PES use more or less sophisticated profiling systems, which are linked in varying degrees to the individual action planning process***

Despite the diversity amongst PES, a frequent practice is the use of profiling to differentiate the types of services and measures offered, all of which underpins a more personalised (and potentially resource-efficient) approach to addressing the needs of jobseekers. However, countries differ in their profiling approaches and the way in which they link to the individual action planning process, which can in turn determine the *actual* degree of client segmentation and personalisation (Konle-Seidl, [Discussion Paper](#), p.3-5). In Bulgaria, there are four categories of jobseeker based on one’s chances of finding employment. All registered unemployed are expected to complete an IAP, but only the two categories that have the best chances are subject to profiling, which is used to generate a ‘portrait’ for individual assessment purposes and a ‘personal profile’ for presentation to employers. An alternative approach can be found in Germany, where in-depth profiling is part of the IAP process for all job seekers. That said, according to a recent evaluation, there are currently no direct links between the profiling results and the development of the IAP, which BA see as an area for potential development.

The Dutch PES have developed two instruments for profiling: the work explorer ‘Werkverkenner’, a predictor of job opportunities based on occupation and region, and the personal explorer ‘Persoonsverkenner’, a predictor of job opportunities based on personal characteristics. To develop the personal explorer profiling tool, the Dutch PES used research to identify the 9 characteristics considered to be the most reliable predictors of re-employment success. A copy of the personal explorer tool is provided in Annex 1 and more information on the piloting of the personal explorer is available [here](#).

Further information on profiling systems, which seek to assess the likelihood of an individual becoming long-term unemployed and their particular integration requirements, is available in the [report](#) from the PES to PES Dialogue Conference on Profiling Systems for Effective Labour Market Integration which was held in 2011.

---

<sup>2</sup> According to Eamonn Davern, frequent interventions mean that most people leave the unemployment register quickly. Even during the economic recession, 50% left within three months, 75% within six months and 90% within 12 months, all at comparatively low cost.

### **The Bulgarian 'portrait' – a profile made by the employment counsellor**

When an unemployed jobseeker is registered at the Local Labour Office in Bulgaria, they get information about the services and support they could receive from the employment counsellor. One of the elements of the registration process is the development of an IAP which assists the unemployed in his efforts to find a job by outlining the steps which should be undertaken. The approach of the employment counsellor is individual and client-centred, which is a prerequisite for improving the effectiveness of the services.

An important precondition for development of the IAP is the collection of information about the unemployed person and the preparation of the so called 'portrait'. This instrument is used for a more detailed assessment of the qualities and characteristics of the unemployed. The portrait contains additional information describing and evaluating skills, behaviour, physical condition and social background. Adding these details to the information from the registration form, the employment counsellor now has a more developed picture of the professional and personal characteristics of the unemployed person.

The aim of the 'portrait' is to highlight the positive features and abilities of the client in relation to the labour market on the basis of the evaluation characteristics and individual qualities. The emerging positive aspects, as well as the deficits are emphasised through the 'portrait'. The needs which have to be addressed adequately as steps in the IAP are also highlighted such as: motivation training, direction to suitable vacant jobs and enrolment for vocational training.

The 'portrait' is an effective instrument of the employment counselling services, especially when unemployment is high. In particular, it can help to identify additional skills of the unemployed person which enables him to be directed to alternative vacant jobs.

An indicator for the successful use of this instrument is the quick placement into alternative jobs. The main factors for this are the good professional background of the employment counsellor and the ability to analyse the collected information when interviewing the unemployed person in the course of the face-to-face meeting. It is also the basis for creating the 'profile' which presents the unemployed person to the potential employer.

### ***Some research indicates the added value of early intervention, but a broader evidence base is required***

Aside from a few experiments in Germany and Denmark which show a positive link between integration outcomes and early intervention, Konle-Seidl observes that there is a lack of research on the efficiency gains of early interventions and personalised

delivery models (Konle-Seidl, [Discussion Paper](#), pp.11-12). Clearly, this risks undermining the knowledge and understanding of PES managers when faced with the challenge of improving PES provision in the face of increased organisational pressures and budgetary constraints. The circumstances under which early intervention is most beneficial also need to be better understood to allow PES to minimise deadweight effects.

### **2.3 Key features of individual action plans**

***High quality IAPs should be individualised as far as possible, whilst maintaining a number of essential components***

The most important components of an IAP are as follows.

- Summary of the individual assessment, including relevant profiling results;
- Goals (or objectives);
- Steps towards the goals;
- ALMPs and other measures available to the jobseeker;
- Duties and commitments of both parties, the employment counsellor (and PES) and the jobseeker;
- Rights of the jobseeker;
- Rules and procedures concerning the application of sanctions;
- Information on the complaints and appeals procedure; and
- The individual action plan – all agreed steps at a glance.

### **The essential components of the IAP in Germany**

The individual action plan covers all agreements that were concluded with the client in a counselling interview. Thereby, it increases the transparency and commitment of the integration process.

The IAP is concluded between the employment counsellor and client following the first counselling interview.

Generally, this first interview is conducted (up to three month) before unemployment starts.

Following Social Code III, the IAP contains:

- the integration goal;
- the integration activities undertaken by local employment agency;
- the efforts undertaken by the client (i.e. number and form of applications for employment); and
- the designated measures of active labour market policy (e.g. training measures).

The IAP is signed both by the client and the employment counsellor. A copy is handed out to the client, but the IAP is also stored online, also. In each follow up interview, the IAP is adjusted and renewed depending on the integration progress.

The success factors are as follows:

- the IAP is based on an intensive profiling;
- the IAP is individual, specific and easy to understand; and
- the effects of the individual IAP are monitored.

BA is currently investing in improving the IAP further. In a research project conducted by the Institute for Employment Research, the impact of timing, preparation and contents of IAPs for the client's integration prospects are being evaluated. Depending on the results of this evaluation, further improvements of the IAPs will be developed.

### ***The IAP must be signed by both parties, be clear for the jobseeker and have goals that are 'SMART'***

Beyond these components, the quality and effectiveness of the IAP can be enhanced by ensuring that the:

- IAP is signed by both parties – which not only gives physical form to the 'rights and responsibilities principle' and the potential for legal enforcement if needed, but also helps to manage the jobseekers expectations and motivations.

- Goals or objectives are ‘SMART – Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timebound’ – which is also critical in managing expectations, particularly from the point of view of agreeing steps and actions that are ‘stretching’, yet doable given the jobseeker’s particular circumstances.
- IAP is written clearly and succinctly, with an underpinning rationale – as Bimrose points out, a “high quality IAP does not need to be lengthy. A few key sentences or phrases can paint a clear picture of the individual client/customer and why they have chosen an agreed employment, training or personal development goal and how they intend to achieve this goal.” (Bimrose, [Discussion Paper](#), p.7).
- *IAP reflects the two main types of client group (those who are job ready and those who require more intensive support or training) and directly relates to the allocation of ALMP places, where appropriate – within the wider context of activation, if ALMP places are limited (and the IAP is not legally enforceable), the impact may be limited should the size of the client group requiring such intervention outstrip supply (Grubb, [Dialogue Conference presentation](#)).*

Differentiation between the two main client groups has implications for the work of employment counsellors, as well as for the activities to be agreed. This is clearly illustrated by the PES for Belgium-Flanders, VDAB. Following an initial screening, VDAB have two main client groups: ‘mediation clients’ who are immediately employable and receive guidance through email, phone and online tools; and ‘guidance clients’ who have potential difficulties in (re-)entering the labour market and undergo more intensive support with a VDAB counsellor. As see in Table 2.1 below, the actions in the IAP can end up looking quite different.

**Table 2.1: Typical actions for mediation and guidance clients at VDAB**

Mediation clients	Guidance clients
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commitment to respond to vacancies</li> <li>• Timing of mediation</li> <li>• Channel of mediation</li> <li>• Content of next meeting</li> <li>• Other actions relating to application of competences and preparation of CV</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Orientation, specialised screening</li> <li>• Guidance towards work</li> <li>• Training: vocational, application training, on-the-job training</li> <li>• Work practice, job coaching</li> <li>• Guidance towards specialised employment measures</li> <li>• Timing and details of action plan</li> </ul>

## **VDAB tailor-made approach: multi-stage guidance with mediation and intensive guidance**

In January 2010, in order to accommodate the increasing number of jobseekers due to the economic crisis, a new tailor-made approach for jobseekers was introduced in the VDAB, the PES for Belgium-Flanders. The main goal is a more efficient and effective approach towards the integration of the unemployed through a more differentiated model for guidance. The final goal of guidance remains finding a sustainable job. This new approach has to lead to better reach of all jobseekers and individual guidance adapted to the needs of the jobseeker.

To reach these goals the chosen approach includes:

- mediation towards vacancies from the point of registration;
- early detection of possible obstacles/problems and adapted guidance;
- tailor-made service, based on the profile and the needs of the jobseeker;
- optimal use of different communication channels (online, call centre, counsellor); and
- based on the local labour market situation: room for local accents in the approach.

The different possible steps in multi-stage guidance, depending on the needs of the jobseeker include:

1. Matching and sending job offers: automatic matching of the data in the personal files of jobseekers and recent vacancies. If appropriate job offers are found, these are immediately delivered to the jobseeker by e-mail, text message or letter.
2. Screening through data-mining or through requesting information from the jobseeker: for updating the personal file and following up the job applications of the jobseeker. The needs for extra help or other problems are detected. After screening, the jobseeker is referred to mediation or individual guidance.
3. Mediation: Jobseekers who are immediately employable are mediated towards a job. The focus is on job vacancies and results of application. This could be done by collective sessions and/or on individual basis. Mediation can be done face-to-face, by e-mail, phone and e-tools on a regularly basis (every two weeks).
4. Intensive guidance by a VDAB counsellor: for jobseekers who are facing obstacles to find work for instance by lack of technical competences, lack of experience, problems not related to the labour market and language. At first the problems for employment are identified at the intake. Then an individual action plan is created for guidance. This guidance is a planned, efficient and

flexible series of steps in a logical sequence to increase the jobseeker's employment opportunities. Possible steps are profound screening, training, on-the-job-training, job application training, personal skills training.

The new tailor-made approach in the VDAB shows the following results and success factors:

- the first contact with the jobseeker is earlier than previously: in 2011 93% of the jobseekers younger than 25 years is reached within the first 4 months of unemployment, 86% of all the jobseekers between 25 and 50 years has been reached within the first 6 months of unemployment
- higher reach of jobseekers with the same resources of staff and budget: in 2010 15% more jobseekers was reached with guidance or mediation, in comparison with 2009.
- not every jobseeker is getting the same intensive guidance as they did previously: shorter less time-expensive contacts are stimulated for those who do not need intensive guidance.<sup>3</sup>

## **2.4 The importance of training and development of employment counsellors in counselling, assessment and matching techniques**

The quality and the effectiveness of an IAP and the targeted allocation of scarce ALMP resources very much relies on the skills, experience and personal qualities of the employment counsellor.

There are a number of useful PES examples in relation to the training and development of employment counsellors. The Irish PES is notable insofar as it offers several graduate-level qualifications in adult guidance and counselling, linked to association of the Institute of Guidance Counsellors. Germany also offers a formal qualification for those counsellors dealing with jobseekers on unemployment insurance including training for employment counselling, profiling and matching. Other approaches can be found in Belgium-Flanders and Lithuania, where there is a programme of regular training and updates. Further information on the broader topic of job profiles and training for employment counsellors will be made available in a PES to PES Dialogue Analytical Paper due to be published in September 2012. Insights can also be gained from other professional circles which involve case management and individual action planning, such as social work, guidance and counselling. Many of the PES counsellors in Belgium-Flanders have in fact come from the social work sphere.

---

<sup>3</sup> Please also refer to the [Thematic Synthesis Paper](#) from the Dialogue Conference on [Profiling for effective labour market integration](#).

## **Ireland's approach to developing individual action plans (career path) with jobseekers through the Public Employment Service**

Ireland's Employment Service has, as its primary objective, to provide a range of employment services to unemployed job-seekers and employers through its national network of offices, its self-service facilities, on-line service, call centre and jobseeker mobile app. It aims to stem the flow of jobseekers into long-term unemployment through the provision of a client centred guidance service and more intensive guidance and counselling where required.

Career guidance is a one-to-one process that enables people to recognise and utilise their resources, to make career-related choices, and to manage career-related problems.

Employment Service Officers have the competency to use appropriate counselling skills in the guidance process, the heart of which are the core competencies of empathy, genuineness and unconditional positive regard. The specific skills required to provide client centred guidance include: active listening, clarifying, paraphrasing, setting boundaries, contracting, challenging, focusing, motivating, utilizing non verbal communications, probing, questioning, reflecting feelings, prioritising issues, structuring and summarising a session and reviewing progress. Officers also need to have a thorough knowledge of the labour market, understand how the labour market operates its trends and future direction and be aware of opportunities in training and education for clients.

The 3rd level training course (Diploma in Adult Guidance) provided for Employment Services Officers by the National University of Ireland includes the following modules: Psychology of Human Development; Perspectives of Work and Unemployment; Vocational Guidance; Professional Issues in Adult Guidance and Counselling; Theory and Practice of Guidance and Counselling; Group work practice; Research and Evaluation Methodologies; and Psychology of Work and Working Life. Since its inception in 1997 this two-year course has played a key role in the professionalisation of adult guidance in Ireland. Graduates from this programme are eligible for membership of the Institute Guidance Counsellors.

The Action Plan developed by the client with the Employment Services Officer would generally include actions such as pursuing a training/educational programme, attending a Jobs club, participating in a work experience programme or applying directly to employers for employment if agreed that the client is 'job ready'. Some clients may need to take other actions including using other social service or support agencies. The Employment Services Officer assists the jobseeker to identify the appropriate actions that will increase the individuals' probability of success in the job search. In order for the jobseeker to progress she/he needs to be clear on the next agreed steps and empowered to take ownership of their action plan. This client centred approach assists individuals to identify career options, make decisions on a

career path and implement the agreed action plan.

The success of the process is monitored by a monthly statistical report that provides information on the main outcomes for those who have been interviewed since the beginning of the year. This information is generated from the Employment Services Officers caseload records of interactions with those interviewed. In 2011, 65,446 clients attended for guidance through the National Action Plan referral system and 60% of these had left the live register by the end of January 2012.

## **2.5 Cooperating with specialist services**

***Partnerships with specialised public, private and non-governmental providers can play a valuable role in employment service provision, but tight monitoring and quality control is required***

In a number of member states, there is a recognition that certain types of jobseekers, above all those with more complex employability barriers (such as long-term unemployed individuals, people with social issues, etc.), can be more effectively assessed and assisted by organisations that can offer specialist services not available within the PES. This can be true of non-governmental organisations (such as those representing disabled individuals or certain ethnic groups) or private providers. The UK PES is a well-known example whereby long-term unemployed individuals or those at risk of becoming long-term unemployed (such as the disabled, drug users and ex-offenders) are referred to private or voluntary organisations which are paid based on labour market results. Whilst these organisations are free to use their own methods, they often utilise individual action planning in the endeavour to find sustainable employment for these hard-to-place groups.

### **Co-operation with a private provider in the UK**

A private provider operating in the UK and elsewhere provides an example of public, private and community sectors working together (Ingeus, 2008). IAPs are regarded as pivotal to services to clients. They are used as 'the engine' that integrates client information from other strands of the delivery process and provides a clear roadmap of where the client has been and where they are heading. With the initial profiling process providing information on potential barriers to progression (like housing, education, childcare, previous employment, etc.), the action plan pulls this information together and provides a realistic picture of the client's job goal and how this will be achieved. It is a dynamic, not static document, constantly changing in response to the changing circumstances and needs of the client.

One key feature of current action planning practice is the focus placed on the sustainability of employment. Another key feature is the co-production of the action plan, between client and adviser (often involving other in-house specialists, like health care specialists and/or mental health specialists or local specialist provision delivered by external partners). (Bimrose, [Discussion paper](#), p.14)

Moreover, other experts such as mental health practitioners and local specialist providers are sometimes brought in. However, in any case where PES services are being sub-contracted out, it is important to maintain a link to monitoring outcomes and ensure overall quality control. The IAP can provide a useful framework for this respect.

Despite the term IAP, it is acknowledged that the extent to which planned interventions are *really* individual depends on a number of factors, including:

- The ratio between counsellor and jobseekers (and therefore the time available to prepare and review the IAP for each individual)
- Level of training and skills of individual counsellors
- Legislative provisions relating to ALMPs which can also restrict the extent to which IAPs can be tailor made
- Labour market context, particularly the job opportunities available.

### **2.6 Quality assurance: Monitoring the quality and impact of Individual Action Planning – need for further development?**

As mentioned above, the quality and level of individualisation of IAPs depends on a number of factors including time and resource constraints and the level of training provided to employment counsellors. In addition, each counsellor develops individual relationships with clients, and despite any level of standardisation in "human" services such as these, factors of subjective assessment are also likely to play a role. Quality

control and equity of treatment are therefore important issues to be considered. Some PES are working with peer group comparison and assessment or quality control spot checks to deal with such issues.

### **Making individual action plans work: ensuring the quality of plans in Estonia**

The Estonian PES uses Individual Action Plans (IAP) to plan and carry out activities to help the jobseeker to find and take up a job. The PES is required to issue an IAP for every jobseeker within 30 days of registration (usually this is done at the second appointment with the advisor). Plans are reviewed/developed throughout the search period but at least once in every 3 months.

The process of drawing up an IAP involves assessment of the client (gathering background information on education, skills, work experience and job expectations as well as assessing advantages and obstacles in finding employment) and action planning. When planning actions, a strategic *roadmap* to employment is envisaged along with activities and steps to be taken to move forward (including referrals to vacancies, job search assistance services and ALMPs).

The quality of IAPs is monitored to ensure that plans are relevant to jobseekers (taking into account their talents and barriers) and are oriented to employment. Twice a year a sample of IAPs representative of all the regional PES offices is reviewed and assessed. The first assessment was carried out in 2011; the second round is currently under the way.

A specialist team in the head-office reviews the agreed aspects of IAPs and assesses these on the scale of 1 to 4 points. The aspects which are scrutinised include, for example: accuracy and consistency of background information; assessment of advantages and barriers to employment; overall approach and coherence of the plan; relevance of planned activities; and reporting on progress. Points are awarded to regional employment offices according to their results.

Quality of IAPs is one area of quality indicators/targets set out by the PES. In 2012 the overall target is 3 points out of a maximum of 4 points. In 2011, the average result of all the regional offices (i.e the baseline against which future progress will be measured) was 2.78. Feedback from this exercise has been discussed with regional managers and employment advisors to improve the quality of plans. Relevant topics have also been incorporated in in-house training and seminars. The results of the second assessment are unfortunately not available yet, however, preliminary feedback suggests that progress has been made in many aspects of IAPs.

### **The quality assurance procedure for individual action plans in the German PES**

As a precondition for good quality counselling interviews and IAPs, the German PES has implemented a range of general and specific quality assurance measures:

1. The counselling competencies of all caseworkers have been improved by intensive training in counselling methods and practice. Good counselling competencies are the basis of good interaction with the clients and the development of an appropriate IAP.
2. Good framework conditions also contribute to a high quality of counselling and resultant IAP. One important condition is the allocation of sufficient time and a second is ensuring that the interview is undisturbed. In order to ensure this, the caseworkers have only scheduled interviews and incoming telephone calls are redirected to a service centre.
3. The IAPs are developed by the client and the caseworker together during the counselling interview. To save time and minimise interruptions of the conversation, the caseworkers get optimal IT support. Amongst other things, different text modules which can be integrated into the IAP are available. These text modules reflect the applicable law and can be individualised. This contributes to a high quality of IAP.
4. In addition, there are several activities undertaken to monitor the quality of IAPs. The heads of the local placement teams are in charge of regularly reviewing the grade of individuality and the comprehensiveness of the IAPs. Any problems with quality are discussed in quality circles.
5. Furthermore, there are monitoring activities conducted by central units and by the internal audit unit. Quality is checked using the data from the IT system and additional support is provided if quality deficits are detected.

### ***Comparative, longitudinal research is needed on the effectiveness and efficiency of different types of IAPs***

A final word on the effective development of IAPs comes from Bimrose: overall, there is limited evidence on the impact of different types of IAPs. Comparative, longitudinal research is required to make clear and robust conclusions on the effectiveness and efficiency of different action planning approaches (Bimrose, [Discussion Paper](#), p.20).

### 3. EFFECTIVELY MONITORING AND FOLLOWING UP INDIVIDUAL ACTION PLANS

#### 3.1 Two functions of monitoring and follow-up

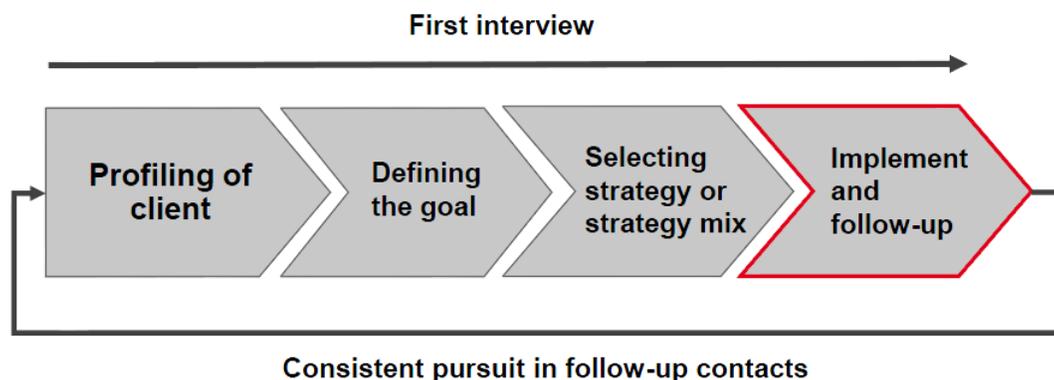
***The support function is highlighted in the dynamic follow up of action planning, although control and sanction also clearly plays a role***

Over the last decade, there has been increasing emphasis amongst PES on the value of regularly monitoring and following up jobseekers once they have developed their initial IAP. This emphasis has two distinct functions:

- *Support function* - to guide and support jobseekers in their pathway towards activation and integration as part of a process of *dynamic* action planning.
- *Control function* - to check jobseekers' compliance with the rules and regulations relating to job search and activation measures and apply sanctions where necessary.

Although these two functions are evident in all PES, the support function clearly prevails, with the share of jobseekers sanctioned being rather low, at around only 10% (Konle-Seidl, [Discussion Paper](#), p.8). This tendency seems to be a natural continuation of the more supportive, empowerment-based approaches which PES are aiming at in the initial development of the IAP, as outlined in Section 2. It is also illustrated by the four-phase model of the German PES where the development forms a *continuous loop* for the review and adjustment of the IAP and ongoing support of the jobseeker.

**Figure 3.1: Four-phase model of the German PES – a continuous loop**



### **The German 4-Phase-Model – in four steps to integration into the labour market**

The 4-Phase-Model (4PM) defines the processes followed by the placement officers in client-centred integration work. Placement as well as counselling activities are oriented along this process.

4PM is based on an intensive profiling focused on the strengths and potentials (weaknesses) regarding the target profession (phase 1). The analysis of strengths considers vocational qualifications, skills and abilities. The analysis of potentials reveals facts that stand in the way of integration and should systematically be improved as part of the integration work. This approach distinguishes between placement-relevant needs which reside either in the client's person (e.g. health restrictions) or in his/her personal environment (e.g. family situation).

In the 2nd phase, the placement officer and the client based on the profiling result agree upon a realistic labour market goal. In the IT system VerBIS, ten different goals are electable (e.g. „employment subject to social security contributions in the regular labour market in the area of residence”).

After defining the labour market goal, in the 3rd phase placement officer and client together choose the strategy or strategy mix to reach this goal in detail. In the IT system, different strategies for the detected combination of strength and potentials are provided. Depending on the goal and the detected needs, for example there are strategies for “acquiring a vocational qualification” or “acquiring/improving the German language”. Also, the local employment agencies are free to define their own strategies related to local needs and possibilities.

In the last phase (“implementation and follow up”) the integration strategy becomes part of the individual action plan, which contains the agreed next integration steps both sides have to conduct.

So far, all four phases are accomplished in the first interview and documented in the IT system. In each follow up interview the progress is evaluated and all four phases are conducted again. This means that the employer counsellor and client review the profiling, the definition of the goal and the selected strategy and change them if needed.

The success factors are as follows:

- 4PM does not restrict the employment counsellor, but gives assistance by providing a well defined corridor for integration work.
- Different from the approach taken before the 4-Phase-Model was implemented, the profiling now is based on the target profession (not on the last profession conducted before unemployment). In the earlier approach there was a risk of working on weaknesses not relevant for the target profession, if it differed from the last profession conducted. Therefore, in 4PM the profiling aims at the target profession.

- Because 4PM is very flexible, it can be used in the integration process for all clients. There is no need to use other systems even for (so called) special target groups.

### 3.2 Processes and methods of monitoring

***The trend amongst PES is towards more frequent and continuous monitoring, although this cannot be directly attributed to the supporting or controlling aspects of the action planning process***

The processes of monitoring and follow-up of IAPs vary significantly between member states in terms of the:

- Frequency of monitoring;
- Monitoring indicators; and
- Method of reporting progress and adapting the IAPs.

The frequency of monitoring depends on a number of factors, most notably client/counsellor ratios and regulatory frameworks. To cite some examples,

- Lithuanian PES draws up an IAP for one year, after which time it is fully reviewed. The IAP can also be adjusted in the interim if the jobseeker's situation changes.
- The Belgian-Flemish PES monitors more frequently and on a more routine basis; indeed, they cite the regular review and adjustment of the IAP as a success factor in the action planning process.
- Another model can be found in Germany where adjustment every six months is required by law. However, in practice, the IAP is reviewed at every jobseeker interview and the time period between these interviews varies (from a few weeks to four months) depending on the client's profile.

It is difficult to create a clear linkage between the frequency of monitoring and the emphasis which can be seen to be placed on controlling versus supporting aspects of the PES work.

- *Stressing supportive approach* - in some countries, frequent and early monitoring is part of a strong supporting *approach* (Estonia, Germany, Ireland); and
- *Predominance of controlling function* - in other countries, the emphasis is on *controlling* by short, regular meetings primarily to monitor job search activity or other aspects of compliance with the action plan (UK). Overall, the trend has been towards more frequent and continuous follow-up.

Frequent and short face-to-face interaction currently remains favoured in the UK as a result of research indicating that off-loads from the claimant register diminish as the interval between visits to PES offices increases. The face-to-face approach can also help to motivate or 'enforce' delivery of the IAP insofar as jobseekers have to prove and

talk about their active job search, something that is more difficult to evidence and be held accountable for when registering online.

### **Action Planning in the UK**

The UK PES system combines a strong Work First approach with encouragement of individual responsibility and self-sufficiency with personalised assistance tailored to meet the needs of individuals. All customers must attend the PES office at least every two weeks to confirm their job search activity with a counsellor. Customers with more barriers to finding work, or those unemployed for longer periods, attend more in depth and frequent interviews.

At an initial meeting an advisor will conduct a customer diagnostic interview which determines the level of assistance provided. All customers are required to complete and sign a Jobseekers Agreement before they are able to claim unemployment benefit. This document details the steps that they will take to look for work. Many customers will be managing their own job search for the first three months of unemployment. Those who do not succeed in finding work after this initial period move to directed and then supported job search. A minority of customers still unemployed after longer periods of unemployment, nine months or a year, and some of those with the most significant barriers to employment, are referred to private welfare to work provider organisations. These groups take over responsibility for counselling and receive payments for moving clients into employment.

At the initial meeting the jobseeker's employment history, qualifications, and skills will be discussed. The adviser will assess the jobseeker's barriers to the labour market. Customers are assigned into Red, Amber, or Green groups. This approach helps the adviser manage their caseload according to how much support each customer needs: in-depth, support and advice, or light touch assistance. Advisers can increase the frequency of meetings beyond the minimum requirement of attending a PES office every two weeks for those who need extra support.

All customers will also complete a Jobseeker's Agreement at this first meeting. As well as documenting what steps the jobseeker will take to seek work and increase their employability. It also sets the parameters for the jobs they will seek. Jobseekers with specific skills or professional qualifications in demand in the local labour market may restrict their search to their usual sector or salary level for a maximum of thirteen weeks. After which, along with all other jobseekers, they are expected to look for any job available within 90 minutes travelling time of the PES office. Part of the Jobseeker's Agreement is the Action Plan – the steps that the jobseeker will take in order to secure employment. It will also capture what steps the adviser will take to support them. For customers who need more support this may include drawing their attention to vacancies during interviews, or identifying skills training for them. Customers receiving benefits may be referred for short time work focused training where this is necessary for them to access jobs; this is for a maximum period of thirteen weeks. The action plan provides a record of the jobseeker's progress and their commitment to the actions set down. Action plans

summarise discussions between the jobseeker and adviser, ensuring that information can be quickly retrieved again. This is especially useful if there has to be a change of adviser, though this is avoided where ever possible.

The customer must identify what job goals they are aiming for, match their capability to their goals, and then plan how to achieve these with help from the adviser. Each step is recorded, assigned a target completion date, progress discussed at the fortnightly meetings. Actions must be SSMART: Specific, Stretching, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timebound. A jobseeker is required to take at least three active steps a week to look for work, and confirm this to an adviser. If an adviser feels that a jobseeker is not complying with their responsibilities, they can refer the case to a Labour Market Decision Maker who will decide whether or not a sanction should be applied, based upon the facts of the case and guidance on decision making. Sanctions can be fixed (1, 2, 4 or 26 weeks withdrawal of benefit), or variable length (1 to 26 weeks), depending on the condition which has not been met. Sanctions will get longer if a customer has received them before. Failure to attend an advisory interview, training or employment programme, or failure to comply with a direction from an adviser can result in a fixed sanction. Leaving employment voluntarily, refusal of employment and losing employment through misconduct can result in variable length sanctions.

If a customer is long-term unemployed (12 months for age 24 plus, 9 months for younger people) or at risk of becoming long-term unemployed (e.g.: with a disability, a drug user, ex-prisoner), they are referred to the Work Programme where private and voluntary organizations, who are paid to get them into a job, and keep them there. Providers have the freedom to use their own methods. They will likely draw up an action plan for jobseekers to help them into work, and to stay in work, but at their discretion and according to their own internal guidelines. Work Programme customers must still attend the PES office every two weeks to demonstrate that they are looking for work. If they fail to comply with any actions directed by the Work Programme provider they can be referred to the PES for consideration of a sanction as described above.

The UK system emphasises a Work First approach, requires customers to prove that they are engaged in active job search, and promotes self reliance where ever possible. This ensures that many people find work quickly on becoming unemployed, 50% currently get new jobs in 13 weeks, and 75% in six months. This means that PES resource can be directed towards those most in need of more in-depth support and who have not been able to help themselves. This cost – efficient strategy ensures 90% of customers re-enter employment within a year. The remaining group with the most significant barriers are referred to the Work Programme.

***It is important to use a range of indicators, underpinned by clearly defined goals and steps in the IAP***

The PES are broadly similar in identifying indicators that help to determine the progress of jobseekers in meeting the goals of their IAPs. As explained in Section 2, it is important to clearly and realistically define steps required to meet these goals in order

to have a firm basis for implementation and hence monitoring. In the UK PES, jobseekers are required to undertake - and provide evidence for - three steps per week, in other words six steps every time they register for benefit at the local PES office. A typical step could be a job application, CV preparation, registration with an employment agency etc. PES have also pointed out the value of using a range of indicators, particularly in cases of jobseekers who are not yet 'job ready'. In Ireland, for instance, looking into childcare options or support for psycho-social issues could class as a valid 'step' towards integration.

***Effective monitoring provides an opportunity to regularly evaluate the needs of the jobseeker and offer more specialised or intensive support, where needed***

On the issue of support, PES actively use the monitoring points to determine whether additional or specialised support is required. In some cases, this may entail formally changing the status or profile of the jobseeker in order to give access to these support measures. In other cases, the process is simply part of the ongoing review and support of the individual jobseeker. The Lithuanian PES, for instance, offers group consultation, motivational seminars and psychological counselling if the need arises during the annual (or more regular) review. Looking at other PES, such as those in the UK and Belgium-Flanders, there are cases where the specialised support is delivered by a third party, either a private provider or a non-governmental organisation. This approach can offer access to more specialist expertise which may not be available in-house (providing of course that there are sufficient monitoring and quality controls in place, as previously discussed in Section 2).

***Greater consideration could be given to monitoring and follow-up after placement, although this is limited by the current resource constraints of most PES***

An interesting feature of the UK model is that the external providers are remunerated on the basis of the number of difficult-to-place jobseekers they place and the length of time they stay in the job; the more permanent the employment, the higher the remuneration. By necessity therefore, the external providers have to monitor and follow up the jobseekers even after they have been placed and it is clearly in their interests to maintain this contact for a sustained length of time. Whilst this is not common practice, it has raised an important area of discussion between PES and academics on whether there is a need for post-placement monitoring and follow-up. Konle-Seidl, argues that follow-up services after placement should be given more importance in PES service delivery (Konle-Seidl, [Dialogue Conference presentation](#)). Current resource constraints may limit the extent to which such longer-term monitoring can be taken forward at this present time. Nevertheless, it remains an important factor when considering the difficulties of ensuring more sustainable employment versus rapid integration, an issue which is discussed further in Section 4.

***PES are moving towards online monitoring, whilst having to be mindful of the impact on the psychological contract between the PES and jobseeker and the evidence requirements of active job search***

In order to make best use of increasingly scarce resources and to bring services closer to the individual, some PES tend to place more emphasis on electronic or telephone channels for monitoring. This approach is most developed in the Netherlands, which seeks to direct 90% of its interactions with jobseekers to the online channel by 2014. Although driven by substantial budgetary cuts, this approach is also founded on the Dutch PES's argument that online systems can help to develop the IT skills of jobseekers – an argument that fits well in a country where Internet penetration is very high at 90% and is also echoed in Estonia.

**The “e-werkcoach” in the Netherlands**

In the Netherlands, strong emphasis is being placed on shifting PES delivery and in particular individual action planning and follow-up to the online channel and sophisticated systems have been developed and are constantly being expanded to achieve the desired shift of 90% of interaction to the online channel.

In future this will mean that only individuals with the most significant problems and greater need for face to face interaction will receive this form of assistance. In the first three months of unemployment all job seekers only have access to online services and are required to register their profile online. Efforts are under way to integrate profiling into this process to assess which individual may require further (face to face) assistance in future because of a high risk of long-term unemployment. All other job seekers are assisted by a so-called “e-werkcoach” who follows their progress on line. The profiling process creates a set of agreed tasks, with the online system regularly reminding job seekers of their tasks, responsibilities and consequences of non-compliance with the IAP. Such a system clearly requires a renegotiation of the psychological contract between job seekers and the PES as it places more emphasis on the autonomy of the job seeker and also places more trust in them to comply with the necessary actions. The system is constantly being developed to provide links between IAPs and the ALMPs being offered.<sup>4</sup>

Other online systems can be found in Belgium-Flanders, Germany and Estonia, all of which demonstrate different degrees of integration between the action planning process, profiling and other PES services.

However, whatever the nature and level of sophistication of the online system, it is important to acknowledge that a move towards online delivery requires a renegotiation of the ‘psychological contract’ between PES and jobseekers, towards much greater

---

<sup>4</sup> For further information, please see the [Thematic Report](#) from the Peer Review on Multi-channelling and the [report](#) from the follow-up study visit on PES and e-services in the Netherlands.

responsibility and autonomy on the part of job seekers, as discussed further in Section 4.

A specific method is used in Malta which also requires regular visits to PES offices, but utilises fingerprint technology to record attendance and triggers the delivery of a printed record of their obligations under the IAP and the support available to them.

#### **Use of fingerprint technology to monitor job seekers in Malta**

In Malta each PES office is equipped with fingerprint technology. Job seekers are required to attend PES offices on a regular basis. Upon entering the job centre their fingerprint is scanned and on the basis of this scan a printed record is delivered which reminds them of the activities they are required to perform as part of their action plan, but also informs them of initiatives and measures being provided by the PES which are available to them in a given time period. The technology maintains a record of the printed information delivered. Therefore, in case of the malfunction of the system, proof can be provided of the exact record of the information delivered (in case a job seeker has not complied with suggested actions and argued that he/she was not informed about them). This is supplemented with meetings with employment counsellors to assess progress and amend the IAP where necessary.

### **3.3 The role of sanctions**

***PES have broadly similar reasons for sanctioning, although they tend to vary in the degree of enforcement – which in itself still remains relatively low***

Albeit less frequently applied, the control function of monitoring plays an important role in the monitoring and follow-up undertaken by PES, particularly within the framework of PES regulations governing benefit receipt.

The rules and procedures for applying sanctions vary significantly between member states, including in terms of the:

- Reasons for sanctioning; and
- Severity and duration of sanctions.

The main reasons for sanctioning relate to the actual process of developing the IAP, as well as the implementation of the IAP, as follows.

*Development of the IAP: commitments and interaction with the PES*

- Failure to attend a PES meeting/interview;
- Missing early registration requirements;
- Refusal to sign an IAP; and
- Refusal to respond or come to the PES when written notice is sent.

*Implementation of the IAP: active engagement in job search and employability measures*

- Refusal of a reasonable job offer;
- Failure to attend a job interview;
- Insufficient personal effort or not actively searching for a new job (according to the steps and deadlines in the IAP);
- Refusal of participation in or quitting of ALMP measure; and
- Voluntary quitting a job or losing employment through misconduct.

Although the political debate is often dominated by questions of what may be defined as a ‘reasonable’ job offer in situations where any suitable job has to be accepted by law (link to previous qualifications, distance to travel to work etc), statistics on sanctions demonstrate that *refusal of a ‘reasonable work job’ is only one reason sanctions are imposed. The other main reasons include failure to attend a PES meeting/interview and take part in agreed measures.*

Konle-Seidl’s research shows that the degree of enforcement varies from one country to the other (whilst still remaining on the relatively low side overall). The research results are summarised in Table 3.1 below.

**Table 3.1: Sanction practices in selected countries**

Country	Benefit claimant	Sanction rate in %*			Length of benefit suspension	
		2007	2008	2009	Min	max
Austria	UI	2.2	2.3	2.1	6 weeks	8 weeks
Germany	UI	1.8	2.4	2.2	1 week	12 weeks
	Welfare UB II	3.2	3.7	3.6	10% cut for 3 months	60% - 100% (U25) cut for 3 months
Denmark	UI/cash benefits	12 (2005)			2-3 days 33% cut for 3 weeks	26 weeks 67% cut for 20 weeks
Switzerland	UI	5,4	6,2	5,7	1 day	60 days
UK	UI/UA	10 (4/09-3/10)			1 week	26 weeks

Source: Konle-Seidl, [Discussion Paper](#), p.9<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Calculations based on figures provided by national PES. Figures for Denmark are taken from Svarer (2011). \*Sanctions imposed in relation to unemployed claimants (yearly average);

### ***Sanctions need to be gradual, clear, fair and immediate***

The above table demonstrates a common and effective PES practice, which involves staggering the sanctions. As the discussions with PES specialists and researchers have shown, sanctions work best if the length and level of benefit suspension is progressive according to the type of non-compliance and/or the client profile. For example, the UK PES applies sanctions of fixed length and variable length based on the type of 'misdemeanour.' Sanctions can also be longer in duration for those who repeatedly fail to comply. More generally across the PES, sanctions tend to be higher for welfare clients due to the stricter eligibility criteria (for example, there is a stricter requirement for accepting a job) (Konle-Seidl, [Discussion Paper](#), p.8).

Other observations from PES specialists are that sanctions need to be:

- *Clearly expressed and communicated* – ideally, this means that the terms and procedure for sanctioning are feature in the *signed IAP*;
- *Fair* – in order to reflect what can be reasonably expected given the circumstances for different client groups and allow for discretion when good reasons for non-compliance arise (e.g. transport strike preventing attendance at a job interview); and
- *Immediate* – an unnecessary delay in deciding on and applying a sanction can undermine the impact of the sanction on the jobseeker's behavior and the credibility of the employment counsellor and PES.

### ***The impact of sanctioning directly depends on the benefit and wider tax regime***

It is self-evident that a sanctioning regime can clearly only help to change behaviour in situations where jobseekers are in receipt of benefits. As a result, in countries like Bulgaria and Estonia where benefits are not paid to certain jobseekers or only for a limited duration, the potential impact of sanctioning regimes is restricted. On the opposite end of the spectrum is Belgium-Flanders where benefit is paid almost indefinitely, which clearly undermines any motivational value that could be gained from threatening to withdraw payments. Consequently, in these and similar circumstances, PES need to place an even greater focus on client-centred approaches as they are the only *real* avenue for motivating jobseekers and maximising labour market outcomes.

It is also worth noting that the appropriateness of a sanctioning regime is dependent on the wider tax system, particularly in terms of whether benefit payments are financed by basic taxes or individual contributions to an unemployment insurance fund. In the latter case, unemployment benefit can be seen more as a personal right, rather than a social benefit. The German PES addresses this issue by differentiating between the two systems: unemployment insurance jobseekers are subject to sanctions if they do not

---

*Sanctions due to non-compliance with mutual-obligation requirements; sanctions for voluntary quits or missing early registration requirements like job-to-job rules are excluded).*

apply for or accept a suitable job, where as other jobseekers can be sanctioned at an earlier stage if they do not sign the IAP.

***Research indicates that sanctions lead to rapid integration, but not necessarily quality and sustainable employment; as the main reason for sanctioning, greater clarity and reflection is needed on what constitutes a 'suitable job'***

The issue of sanctioning raises the wider policy question of how different regimes affect activation and integration in the short to longer term. Some research carried out on the impact of more controlling (instead of supporting) regimes shows that while such approaches may lead to more rapid integration, the employment outcomes are often less sustainable. Moreover, international evidence indicates that whilst sanctions increase the probability of finding regular employment, more recent evidence from Switzerland and Sweden reveals that sanctions negatively affect the quality of jobs that the unemployed obtain under the threat of a benefit cut (Konle-Seidl, [Discussion Paper](#), p.13).

The above research is relevant to discussions on what constitutes a suitable job, which is high on the political agenda. According to Grubb, activation strategies should focus on a good match, not any job, in the first six months. After six months, it is realistic to treat any job as suitable (Grubb, [Dialogue Conference presentation](#)). Approaches on this issue vary widely across Europe. For example, in Ireland, highly-skilled or recognised professions are exempt from accepting any job for an extended period of time.

Ultimately, it is widely recognised that a good match must be the first priority as this is important for achieving sustainable employment. Whatever the approach, the definition of 'suitability' and its link to the application of sanctions needs to be made clear, particularly in relation to the achievement of wider labour market outcomes.

**Bulgaria: what is a “suitable job” and does the unemployed jobseeker really have choice in the options?**

Every employment counsellor aims at counselling and directing the unemployed jobseeker in a way that he would be able to find a suitable job. But what in fact is a “suitable job”? The criteria for determining this are described in the Employment Promotion Act and the description says that within 18 months from the date of the registration, this is a job, which:

- Corresponds to the education and qualification of the person, as well as with his health condition, age, gender, provided that the latter is a condition for the due performance of the respective job.
- Is offered in the place of living, town or village, or within a distance of 30 km and provided there is suitable public transport available.

A leading priority for every employment counsellor is to direct the unemployed jobseeker to a suitable job. Every meeting begins with a review of the announced vacancies and in case a suitable job presents itself, the unemployed person is directed to it. In this case, the PES applies the directive approach as the main aim of the employment counsellor is job placement. If the unemployed person presents proof that this job is not suitable for him any more (for example, a teacher, who has health problems and does not want to work as a teacher despite such a vacancy being available), the employment counsellor applies a client-oriented approach and directs the unemployed to vacancies which are more desired by the jobseeker.

After applying for a vacancy and if the result of the submitted CV and interview is negative, the unemployed and the employment counsellor agree other steps for supporting the unemployed person in enhancing his skills for finding a job. If the unemployed person has an interest and readiness to accept another job, the employment counsellor reviews his leading skills and desires. On the basis of this portrait, a profile is made and it is then submitted to the employer.

The fulfillment of the aim for finding a suitable job is measured by the number of successful mediations over a fixed period of time. Information is retrieved from the national data base. Factors which influence the process of finding a suitable job are objective and subjective as the level of unemployment, the number of vacancies in the labour market, the qualification of the employment counsellors and the quality of the consulting services provided by them and others.

***Further research is needed on the links between sanctions and the motivation levels of different client groups***

PES discussions indicate another caveat to the application of sanctions beyond the fact that they do not necessarily deliver quality, sustainable employment. Clearly sanctions have a crucial role to play in enforcing PES interventions, where needed, but they nevertheless need to be 'moderated' in order to avoid putting individuals in severe financial hardship. Any sanction regime which has a strong 'bullying effect' and cuts well-meaning people off from benefit is counter-productive and undermines the overall mission of PES. As such, there is a need for further research into how different groups of job seekers can be motivated (or de-motivated) by different types of sanctions. Such factors need to be better understood.

## 4. STRIKING THE ‘RIGHT BALANCE’ IN THE ACTION PLANNING PROCESS

By examining the main elements of the action planning process, two important cross-cutting issues emerge. These issues not only affect the way in which the IAP is developed day to day, but also how the PES more broadly plans and organises its service delivery. Above all, they require striking a delicate balance between different and sometimes conflicting approaches to the action planning process, particularly for employment counsellors.

### 4.1 The two ‘hats’ of the employment counsellor

#### ***Employment counselors need training, support and guidelines in order to balance their supporting and policing roles***

A clear message from PES is that employment counselors often have to wear two hats: on the one hand, their role is to support, enable and empower the jobseeker in the development and ongoing progression of the IAP; and on the other, they are expected to control, police and potentially sanction the jobseekers if they deviate away from the IAP and the achievement of broader policy priorities. In many ways, these two hats mirror the dichotomy of the client-centred and directive approaches previously mentioned. However, as explained by Bimrose, they can create real difficulties and ethical dilemmas when translated to individuals in their daily work.

“A purely client-centred approach to counselling is slightly at odds to a more directive approach. Many career and employment counsellors feel more comfortable adopting an approach to their practice that places the best interests of their client/customer at the centre of their practice, rather than simply implementing policy requirements. Herein lies something of an ethical dilemma for practice, with little support typically available for practitioners to resolve the issues that arise from the tensions inherent in trying to reconcile the two approaches” (Bimrose, [Discussion Paper](#), p.10).

PES have highlighted the number of success factors in softening the tensions faced by employment counselors. These include:

- Drawing up clear description of the role of the employment counsellor, including its scope for action and its limits.
- Drawing up clear guidelines to help employment counselors to make difficult and sensitive decisions in relation to jobseekers and wider PES objectives.
- Providing regular and targeted training to employment counselors on subjects such as stress management, ethical practice, decision-making, self-awareness and assertiveness.
- Providing regular support to employment counselors on an individual or group basis. The Irish PES, for example, offers psychological support and peer group sessions for all of its counselling staff.

### ***Delegating the decision for sanctions to a third party has pros and cons***

The dilemma faced by employment counsellors can be particularly acute in relation to the application of sanctions. Counsellors tend to see themselves as enablers, wishing to assist jobseekers in making positive and sustainable transitions, whereas political emphasis can be on rapid transitions achieved through a sensitive balance between the 'carrot and the stick' - with the stick implying a recourse to sanctions. In the context of more difficult labour market conditions with more scarce employment opportunities, this balance becomes even more difficult to strike.

PES address the pressures of sanctions in a number of ways. In the UK and Belgium-Flanders, the decision to apply a sanction is delegated to a third party, either within or outside the local PES; in the UK, it is the Labour Market Decision Makers (LMDM) based in the Benefit Centres, and in Belgium-Flanders, it is the National Employment Office (NEO) which is distinctly separate to the PES. The advantage of this approach is that the responsibility for penalising the jobseeker is taken away from the employment counsellor who can then focus on their role of friend and confidant.

However, the experience of these two PES (as well as reactions from other PES) shows that it is not as clean cut. According to research, delegation to a third party does increase re-employment rates, but by necessity the rate of sanctioning is higher (Konle-Seidl, [Discussion Paper](#), p.13), which may or may not make economic sense vis-à-vis the additional administrative costs of delegating decision-making. Moreover, depending on how the delegation is handled and communicated, the employment counsellors risk being seen as deceitful and lose credibility – irrespective of whether the third party's decision to sanction has been partly influenced by the views of the employment counsellor or not. In the UK, the employment counselors refer the jobseekers to the LMDM and therefore the final decision is informed by their guidance. In Belgium-Flanders, the counsellors' recommendations are generally not followed by the NEO and the process for sanctioning is lengthy, with frequent appeals, which undermines the credibility of the PES. Interestingly, the new government reforms in Belgium-Flanders are now seeking to address these difficulties.

### ***The sanction regime needs to be clear, transparent, rapid and flexible***

To conclude, there are clearly pros and cons to integrating or separating the employment counsellors' role when it comes to sanctioning. Whatever the approach taken, it needs to ensure that there is:

- *Clarity and transparency concerning the different roles of PES and third party staff* – this needs to be clearly explained and understood by jobseekers to manage their expectations of the employment counsellor when it comes to sanctions.
- *A rapid response to failure* – the longer the process for considering a sanction is drawn out, the more PES staff lose their credibility.
- *Some degree of counselor discretion over whether to apply or refer jobseekers for sanctions, providing it is underpinned by clear guidelines* – such discretion helps the process of sanctioning to take account of the complex circumstances

of jobseekers, without going as far as to encourage ‘counsellor favoritism.’ The Estonian PES has a measured approach whereby counsellors are free to make decisions for the first round of sanctions. There is then less scope for discretion and more supervisory intervention for subsequent sanctions.

## **4.2 The human or digital face of the employment counsellor**

In this modern, digital age, it is unsurprising that PES are increasingly turning towards electronic and telephone modes of service delivery, alongside the more traditional face-to-face contact. This trend is not only advantageous from a cost-efficiency point of view, but is also driven by motives of increasing the speed, access and integration of PES services overall. Whilst this trend leads to a much wider debate about multi-channelling in PES, one that is addressed in the [Analytical Paper](#) on “Multi-channel management: recent developments in PES and e-government (2011)”, it does highlight specific challenges in relation to employment counselling and IAPs.

***The online development of IAPs can offer efficiency gains, but this needs to be moderated to take account of clients who lack IT skills or need intensive, face-to-face support***

One principal consequence of the move towards online delivery is the renegotiation of the ‘psychological contract’ between employment counsellors and jobseekers. If the jobseeker is no longer required to come to the PES office and meet with the counsellor in person (or at least, not as often), they naturally have much greater responsibility and autonomy for the development and implementation of their IAP. The feedback from PES is that this shift of responsibility needs to be carefully moderated to take account of the needs and circumstances of specific client groups. This moderation can take place in a number of ways:

- Profiling and customer segmentation in the initial stages can help to identify clients who need more intensive counselling, which is better served through face-to-face rather than online channels. This is the case for the “intensive guidance” clients in the Belgian-Flanders PES who receive more direct and in-depth support from employment counsellors, whilst still having access to the online tools and systems.
- Giving jobseekers the flexibility to choose their preferred method, even if some methods may be ‘encouraged’ more than others. For example, jobseekers in Germany can draft their IAP via the VerBIS online system before their interview with the employment counsellor or wait until the interview itself.
- Taking account of the language requirements of the clients. Some PES have commented that they have significant numbers of legal migrants or ethnic minorities who are less fluent in writing the national language. If these individuals are not seen in a face-to-face setting, their full potential may not be reflected in the IAP and hence their employment opportunities undermined.

- Taking account of digital divide issues, not only in terms of developing IT skills, but also providing easy access to computers and other related facilities. Admittedly, this issue relates to all aspects of PES service delivery and consequently is explored in more detail in the [Analytical Paper](#) on “Multi-channel management: recent developments in PES and e-government” (2011).

### **The VerBIS system in Germany**

The IAP is created using the IT system VerBIS. There, the structure of the IAP follows the mandatory contents mentioned in the earlier case study. For the integration goal, the agency’s activities and the client’s efforts input masks are available, where the caseworker (employment counsellor) can fill in free text. In the first input mask, the labour market goal is documented. The caseworker can choose to adopt it from the profiling result.

In the following input masks, to give the caseworker more assistance in formulating the agency’s integration activities and the client’s efforts, individual adaptable text modules, e.g. for widely used ALMP measures, are offered in VerBIS. The caseworkers can use them by simply putting a tick. Individual adaptable means that the caseworker is free to add text parts to the modules or change them partly after transferring them to the IAP. If the caseworker uses the text modules and if so which of them, lies in his own responsibility.

Additionally, the validity date of the IAP (max. six month) and the date of the next appointment are laid down. Finally, the caseworker can choose from text modules the instructions about legal consequences to be displayed in the IAP.

For the placement officers, the IT-support is very important. By this means, they do not have to spend much of the interview’s time on preparing the IAP using the computer. This is necessary for a positive course of the counselling conversation.

### ***Partnership arrangements can provide opportunities to test out and maximise the opportunities of online development of IAPs***

An interesting development is the link between PES partnerships and integration of innovative online systems. As Bimrose explains:

“There is a growing movement towards different forms of partnership to deliver services to unemployed clients, which not only involves the private, the public and the community sectors, but supports the transfer of innovation across organisational contexts. A feature of different models of partnership in the future is likely to be greater integration of technology in all aspects of service delivery. This would support higher levels of interaction and synergies amongst professionals in different sectors, but there are implications for workforce development and certain risks are associated with a greater integration of technology in the development and delivery of IAPs. For example, the digital divide represents a challenge – ensuring that the most disadvantaged in

society are not further excluded by having only limited access to their own electronic record of their progress towards the goal of sustainable employment.

In the PES context: a private provider operating in the UK and elsewhere...uses the action plan as a dynamic and constantly evolving document, which is held online. Since the Work Programme operates through an extensive partner network, the online system ensures coherence of support provided to clients. The online system is fully integrated, so that advisers can see (in real time) inputs and modifications from other professionals.” (Bimrose, [Discussion Paper](#), p.21)

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

In terms of final conclusions, it is useful to refer back to the guiding questions of the conference and highlight some concrete messages for each.

*What are the core elements of quality, effective and efficient individual action planning by PES?*

- Counsellor training and counsellor/client ratios suitable for the client target group to allow for effective action planning and regular monitoring;
- Early intervention based on profiling and a holistic assessment of individual strengths and weaknesses, with a direct link between the profiling/assessment and the development of the IAP;
- Use of empowerment-based approaches which put the jobseekers in charge, drawing on methods of critical reflection and learning;
- IAPs that are signed by both parties and structured around 'SMART' goals;
- Improved efficiency through effective use of proven online tools, whilst taking account of digital divide issues;
- Clear, fair, graduated, immediate and dissuasive sanctions; and
- Established systems for quality assurance of the IAPs.

*When should PES resort to external partners and who are the best placed to provide complementary services?*

- When the PES needs:
  - More intensive or specialised forms of employment counselling or wider expertise in the health and social sphere, particularly in relation to supporting the long-term unemployed or socially disadvantaged groups; and
  - Innovative tools and systems, which are not available or cannot be cost-effectively developed in house; and
- All types of specialised public, private and non-governmental organisation are potentially suitable and the decision very much depends on the organisational, political and legal framework of the PES concerned. However, whatever the type of organisation, strong partnership arrangements are needed, including robust monitoring systems and quality controls.

*How to best cope with tensions in the concrete planning and monitoring process like balancing the requirements of rapid integration and sustainable outcomes, as well as support and sanctioning?*

- Clear descriptions of the roles of PES and other third party staff in the action planning process, particularly in relation to sanctions;
- Clear guidelines on the procedures for sanctioning, including the scope for employment counsellor discretion;

- Sanction regimes that are clear, transparent and fast-acting, with some degree of flexibility;
- High levels of counsellor training and support to allow for the effective use and implementation of the action planning approaches, including the tensions and ethical dilemmas that sometimes arise; and
- Further research on the impact of early intervention, sanction regimes and different action planning methods on labour market outcomes.

Overall, the main findings and discussions from the Dialogue Conference reinforced the pivotal role played by IAPs in the modernisation of PES and provided further food for thought in the ongoing development and improvement of IAPs within the context of PES personalised services.

For further information, please refer to the materials from the [Dialogue Conference](#).

## 6. REFERENCES

- Barrett, A., Whelan, C. T., & Sexton, J. (2001). *"Employability" and its Relevance for the Management of the Live Register* (ESRI Series Policy Research Series 40). Dublin: ESRI.
- Bimrose, J (2012), [Individual Action Planning: Resolving the tensions and maximising impact in European PES?](#) Brussels: DG Employment, Social Affairs, and Equal Opportunities
- Kolne-Seidl, R (2012). [Monitoring and Follow-Up of IAPs and their outcomes in selected EU countries](#) Brussels: DG Employment, Social Affairs, and Equal Opportunities
- OECD. (2007). Activating the Unemployed: What Countries Do. In OECD (Ed.), *OECD Employment Outlook* (pp. 207-242). Paris: OECD.
- OECD. (2005). Labour Market Programmes and Activation Strategies: Evaluating the Impacts. In OECD (Ed.), *OECD Employment Outlook* (pp. 173-208). Paris: OECD.
- Rotter, J. B. (1966). Generalized expectations for internal versus external control of reinforcement. *Psychological Monograph*, 609(1), 1-28.

## ANNEX 1



### Items Persoonsverkenner (Personal Explorer), 4 mei 2012

Brouwer, et al. (2011). Eindrapportage Projectvoorspellers van Werkhervatting: een onderzoek onder werklozen in Noord-Holland. Groningen/Amsterdam: Rijksuniversiteit Groningen UMCG/UWV Kenniscentrum.

UWV: [rineke.maan@uwv.nl](mailto:rineke.maan@uwv.nl), [harriet.havinga@uwv.nl](mailto:harriet.havinga@uwv.nl), [wouter.hijkema@uwv.nl](mailto:wouter.hijkema@uwv.nl)

item	Dutch	English
1	<b>Leeftijd</b>	<b>Age</b>
2	<b>Aantal jaren gewerkt in laatste functie</b>	<b>Number of years worked in last job</b>
3-4	<b>Problemen met het begrijpen van de Nederlandse taal</b>	<b>Difficulties understanding Dutch language</b>

item	Dutch	English
	<b>Visie op terugkeer naar werk</b>	<b>Perception of finding work</b>
	Geef aan in hoeverre u het met de volgende uitspraken eens bent.	<i>Indicate whether you (dis)agree with the following statements</i>
5	Ik denk dat het lang zal duren voordat ik werk vind	<i>I think it will be a long time before I find work</i>
6	Ik ben vaak afgewezen, ik verwacht geen werk meer te vinden	<i>I am often rejected, I do not expect to find work anymore</i>
7	Ik verwacht snel een baan te vinden op eigen kracht	<i>I expect to find a job soon on my own</i>
	Antwoordalternatieven: 1. zeer mee oneens 2. 3. 4. 5. zeer mee eens	<i>Response alternatives</i> <i>1. strongly disagree</i> <i>2-4</i> <i>5. strongly agree</i>
	Berg, N, van den, Geuns, R.C. van & Rij, C. van (2007). <i>Monitor Re-integratie WW'ers</i> . Amsterdam: Regioplan Beleidsonderzoek.	

item	Dutch	English
	<b>Te ziek voelen om te werken</b>	<b>Perception of being too sick to work</b>
	Geef aan in hoeverre u het met de volgende uitspraak eens bent.	<i>Indicate whether you (dis)agree with the following statement</i>
8	Ik voel mij te ziek om te werken	<i>I feel too sick to work</i>
	Antwoordalternatieven: 1. zeer mee oneens 2. 3. 4. 5. zeer mee eens	<i>Response alternatives</i> <i>1. strongly disagree</i> <i>2-4</i> <i>5. strongly agree</i>
	Berg, N, van den, Geuns, R.C. van & Rij, C. van (2007). <i>Monitor Re-integratie WW'ers</i> . Amsterdam: Regioplan Beleidsonderzoek.	

item	Dutch	English
	<b>Job Search Behavior (actief benaderen werkgevers)</b>	<b>Job Search Behaviour (active approach of employers )</b>
	U ziet een aantal activiteiten. Hoe vaak bent u de afgelopen maand met deze activiteiten bezig geweest?	<i>Please answer the following questions, indicating how often you have undertaken the mentioned activities during the last month</i>
9	Ik heb sollicitatiegesprekken gehad met werkgevers	<i>Have you sent cover letters to employers with reference to available positions?</i>
10	Ik heb gebeld met werkgevers	<i>Have you telephoned a possible employer?</i>
11	Ik heb werkgevers bezocht	<i>Have you visited a possible employer (Wanberg, 2002)?</i>
	Antwoordalternatieven: 1. (bijna) nooit 2. soms 3. vaak 4. zeer vaak	Response alternatives: (almost) Never Rarely Occasionally Very frequently
	Blau, G. (1994). Testing a two-dimensional measure of job search behaviour. <i>Organizational Behaviour Human Decision Processes</i> , 59, 288-312.	
	Wanberg, C.R., Song, Z. & Hough, L.M. (2002). Predictive validity of a multidisciplinary model of reemployment success. <i>Journal of Applied Psychology</i> , 87, 1100-1120.	

item	Dutch	English
	<b>Werkzoekintentie</b>	<b>Job Search Intention</b>
	De volgende vragen gaan over het op zoek gaan naar betaald werk. Geef aan in hoeverre u het met de stellingen eens bent.	<i>The following questions ask about finding a paid job. Indicate whether you agree with the statements.</i>
12	Ik ben van plan de komende maand er alles aan te doen om werk te vinden	<i>In the next month I intend to do anything I can to find a job</i>
13	Ik weet hoe ik deze maand kan proberen werk te vinden (open sollicitatie, rechtstreeks contact, advertenties op een bepaalde internetsite of in een bepaalde krant kijken, etc.).	<i>I know what to do to try to find a job this month (open application, direct contact, place advertisements on the internet, look in specific newspapers, etcetera)</i>

14	Ik ben zeer gemotiveerd om de komende maand werk te zoeken.	I am very motivated to look for a job in the next month.
	Antwoordalternatieven: 1. zeer mee oneens 2. 3. 4. 5. zeer mee eens	<i>Response alternatives</i> 1. <i>strongly disagree</i> 2-4 5. <i>strongly agree</i>
	Blau, G. (1994). Testing a two-dimensional measure of job search behaviour. <i>Organizational Behaviour Human Decision Processes</i> , 59, 288-312.	

	<b>Externe variabele attributie</b>	<b>External variable element</b>
	Geef aan in hoeverre u het (on)eens bent met de volgende uitspraken.	Indicate whether you (dis)agree with the following statements
15	Ik denk dat je voor het krijgen van een baan vooral geluk moet hebben	Getting a job depends on sheer good luck
16	Ik denk dat je voor het krijgen van een baan vooral op het juiste moment op de juiste plaats moet zijn	Getting a job is mainly a matter of being in the right place at the right time
17	Ik denk dat de meeste mensen een baan vinden door de invloed van iemand anders (kruiwagens)	Most unemployed people who have got a job had someone 'pulling strings' for them.
	Antwoordalternatieven: 1. volledig mee oneens 2. 3. 4. volledig mee eens	<i>Response alternatives</i> 1. <i>strongly disagree</i> 2-4 5. <i>strongly agree</i>
	Gurney, R.M. (1981). Leaving school, facing unemployment, and making attributions about the causes of unemployment. <i>Journal of Vocational Behavior</i> , 18, 79-91.	
	Furnham, A., & Rawles, R. (1996). Job search strategies, attitudes to school and attributions about unemployment. <i>Journal of Adolescence</i> , 19, 355-369.	

	<b>Werkvermogen</b>	<b>Work ability</b>
	Met de onderstaande vragen wordt een indruk verkregen van uw werkvermogen. Met werkvermogen wordt bedoeld de mate waarin u zowel lichamelijk als geestelijk (psychisch) in staat bent om te werken.	<i>Some of the following questions are about your work ability. "Work ability" means the extent that you have the physical and mental (psychological) ability to work.</i>
	<b>Algemeen Werkvermogen</b>	<b>General Work ability</b>
18	Als u aan uw werkvermogen in de beste periode van uw leven tien punten geeft, hoeveel punten zou u dan aan uw werkvermogen op dit moment toekennen? (Kies slechts 1 rondje)	<i>If you give ten points to your work ability in the best period of your life, how many points would you give to your work ability at this time?</i>
	Antwoordalternatief: 1. niet in staat om te werken 2-9 10. werkvermogen in uw beste periode	<i>Response alternative 1 not able to work 2-9 10 work ability in the best period of your life</i>
	<b>Lichamelijk Werkvermogen</b>	<b>Physical Work ability</b> (this factor is added at the request of UWV, no predictor in the analysis)
19	Hoe beoordeelt u uw werkvermogen op dit moment als u kijkt naar de lichamelijke eisen die het werk aan u zou stellen?	<i>How would you rate your work ability at this moment, if you look at the physical requirements of your work?</i>
	<b>Psychisch Werkvermogen</b>	<b>Mental Work ability</b>
20	Hoe beoordeelt u uw werkvermogen op dit moment als u kijkt naar de geestelijke eisen die het werk aan u zou stellen?	<i>How would you rate your work ability at this moment, if you look at the mental requirements of your work?</i>
	Antwoordalternatieven: 1. zeer slecht 2-4 5. zeer goed	<i>Response alternatives 1 very bad 2-3 4 very good</i>
	K. Tuomi et al., <i>Work ability index</i> . Finnish Institute of Occupational Health, Helsinki (1994).	