



Bulgaria: Reforming the existing and designing of new measures for activating inactive persons and their inclusion in the labour market in Bulgaria
REFORM/IM2020/004

New ways to reach out to employers

Output 4 – Innovative policy design of active labour market policies (ALMPs)

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This note is based on a series of semi-structured interviews conducted with experts from Malta, Slovenia, and Belgium (Flanders). Without the participants' generosity this note would not be possible.

For the interview on Malta's job carving programme Olivia Farrugia participated from Malta's Public Employment Service (PES), Jobsplus together with Esmeralda Micallef Zarafa, Tania Azzopardi, and Katia Cortis from the Lino Spiteri Foundation (LSF).

Sandi Meke and Brigita Vončina of the Employment Service Slovenia (ESS) provided evidence on the ESS services to employers. Sabina Špehar Pajk (also from the ESS) and Brigita Vončina provided insights into Slovenia's *Learning Workshops*.

For the work on *Jobnet* and the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) at the Flemish PES, Vlaamse Dienst voor Arbeidsbemiddeling en Beroepsopleiding (VDAB), Karolien Scheerlinck, Amedee Audooren and Michiel Hermans, all from VDAB, were interviewed.

For the work of the Flemish NGO, Gespecialiseerd Team Bemiddeling (GTB), on job carving and job crafting, an interview was held with Sofie Meeuws.

This note was prepared by Judd Ormsby with guidance from Kristine Langenbacher in the OECD's Directorate for Employment Labour and Social Affairs.

In Brief

New ways to reach out to employers

Finding jobseekers suitable employment requires matching jobseekers with employers who will hire them. Hence, to support efficient matching of jobseekers and employers Public Employment Services (PES) must work closely with both jobseekers and employers. This note focusses on three different forms of PES engagement with employers, including case studies on each theme:

- PES provision of Human Resource (HR) services to firms.
- PES use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and advanced digital tools to connect jobseekers and employers.
- Intensive PES partnerships with employers to benefit vulnerable groups.

Within the first theme, this note looks at Slovenia’s delivery of HR services to firms as a case study. While almost all PES across EU and OECD countries could be said to deliver some mix of basic HR services to employers (e.g. through vacancy websites), the HR services to firms in Slovenia are particularly far-reaching. One in five counsellors at the Employment Service Slovenia (ESS) specialises in working with employers and every Labour Office contains a “one-stop-shop” for employers. Employer counsellors offer comprehensive HR services to firms that are tailored to firms’ individual needs. Counsellors work with the same employer for an extended period of time to cultivate good working relationships. A Customer Relationship Management (CRM) tool uses linked-government data to provide counsellors with comprehensive, real-time information on employers allowing counsellors to strategise their outreach plans.

Within the second theme, this note looks at how some PES use digital tools to automate the collections of vacancies. Then, this note takes an in-depth look at how the Flemish PES, Vlaamse Dienst voor Arbeidsbemiddeling en Beroepsopleiding (VDAB), uses digital tools to support matching. VDAB has two tools that use AI and other advanced analytics to better connect jobseekers with relevant vacancy suggestions. The first tool uses a rule-based matching algorithm to match jobseekers to vacancies. The second tool uses a broader set of information including people’s interests and an advanced AI algorithm to recommend a wider set of vacancies. More narrow rule-based matching is needed to follow-up on mandatory job-search requirements of benefit recipients, which are part of benefit-linked activation rules. The wider AI-based *Jobnet* tool compliments the first tool by offering a more diverse set of employer vacancies to jobseekers.

Within the last theme this note looks at three case studies that focus on intensive PES partnerships with employers to benefit vulnerable groups. Two of these case studies look at “job carving” – a practice where consultants engage with employers to create or “carve” new jobs that are suitable for less disadvantaged workers. The first case study on job carving looks at Malta’s delivery of these services to help employ jobseekers with disabilities through a public private partnership between the Maltese PES and the Lino Spiteri Foundation (LSF). The second case study, also on job carving, looks at the use of job carving and related practices by Gespecialiseerd Team Bemiddeling (GTB), a Non-Government Organisation (NGO) that supports the Flemish PES VDAB in matching jobseekers with disabilities. The last case study looks at Slovenia’s *Learning Workshops* programme. With Learning Workshops the ESS partners with social enterprises that hire workers from vulnerable groups and offer job coaches to provide in-work support to jobseekers.

New ways to reach out to employers

1. Introduction

Finding jobseekers suitable employment requires matching jobseekers with employers who will hire them. Thus, for the Public Employment Service (PES) to help jobseekers achieve higher living standards through greater labour market participation, it is important to work with jobseekers – the labour supply side – and employers – the labour demand side. Successful relationships can benefit both types of PES clients, employers and jobseekers.

There are many ways in which PES interact with employers. This note focuses on three themes:

- PES provision of Human Resource (HR) services to firms.
- PES use of AI and advanced digital tools to connect jobseekers and employers.
- Intensive PES partnerships with employers to deliver ALMPs that benefit vulnerable groups.

The NEA – like many PES – works with employers in each of these ways to varying extents. The NEA offers HR services to firms, including referring candidates to employers, offering employment mediation, the organising of job-fairs and the use of employer specific counsellors in some labour offices. The e-labour office provides online vacancy exchange, which job-seekers can search through using filters (e.g. by region, occupation, type of contract, and education and experience required). The NEA also offers Active Labour Market Programmes (ALMPs) that provide employment subsidies and trainings with most ALMPs involving partnerships with employers. In a series of interviews with employers from Bulgaria, employers working with the NEA spoke positively of their relationship with the NEA.¹

This note provides five international case studies across the three themes listed above. On the first theme this note looks at Slovenia's provision of HR services to firms which are particularly extensive. On the second theme, this note looks at the use of AI and analytical tools to match jobseekers to employer vacancies focusing largely on the use of these tools at the Flemish PES, Vlaamse Dienst voor Arbeidsbemiddeling en Beroepsopleiding (VDAB). On the third theme, this note takes two case studies – one in Malta and the other in Flanders – that look at “job carving” and related activities to make roles more suitable for people with disabilities. Finally, one more case study is given on the third theme and looks at Slovenia's *Learning Workshops* program – a PES partnership with social enterprises to support long-term unemployed people from vulnerable groups into work.

2. HR services for firms: Slovenia

HR services to firms include help with vacancy drafting, advertising vacancies, assistance in selecting candidates for interviews, assistance in understanding regulations and ongoing assistance with training employees. Slovenia's services for employers are particularly interesting to study. The share of newly

¹ These interviews were with a small sample of 22 employers most of whom have an existing relationship with the NEA.

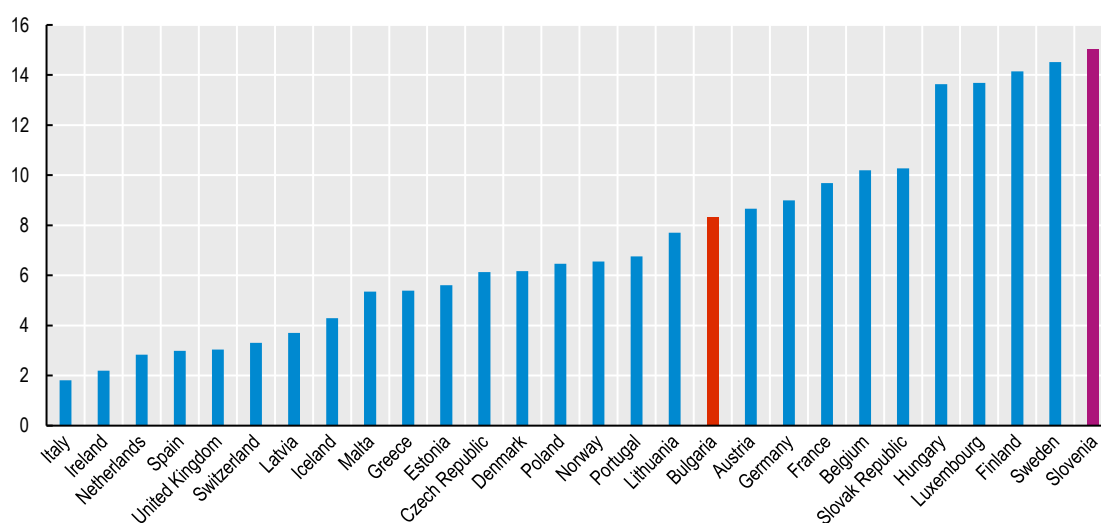
employed jobseekers who found work through the PES is higher in Slovenia than in any other country in the EU (Figure 1). Since employers are half the equation in an employee-employer match, it is perhaps not surprising that the HR services Slovenia offers to employers are particularly intensive compared with other countries.

While the employer services offered in Slovenia have not been subject to rigorous evaluation, evidence from other countries suggests they can be effective. For example, a Randomized Control Trial (RCT) studied the effect of a revamp of the French PES, Pôle Emploi's, HR services to employers. In the trial, Pole Emploi counsellors were trained to better market existing services and provide more intensive support with filling vacancies.² Rigorous evidence from this RCT quantified the effect of the pilot: finding a 24% increase in vacancy posting with the PES and a 10% increase in permanent contract hires of registered jobseekers (Algan, Crépon and Glover, 2020^[1]). Slovenia offers intensive HR services to firms (although these have not been evaluated with a counterfactual impact evaluation). To help give Bulgaria a better understanding of practices in another country, the rest of this section reviews Slovenia's services as an in-depth case study.

The rest of this section outlines Slovenia's approach and the efforts Slovenia has made to provide better service to employers in recent years.

Figure 1 Share of newly employed who found work through PES

Share of newly employed who found work through PES, 2018



Source: LFS, OECD staff calculations

2.1. Slovenia offers a full range of HR services

A decade ago the Employment Service of Slovenia (ESS) did not have employer specific counsellors and employer satisfaction with the ESS was lower than today. Further, a labour legislation change in 2013

² The pilot changes studied were in 2014 and were later rolled out more widely. The existing services that counsellors were trained to highlight to employers included vacancy drafting support, and posting vacancies and viewing CVs on the PES website. New services were offered to vacancies selected for “reinforced recruitment services”. These included, pre-selection and pre-screening of candidates for interview, support with running interviews, and additional post-hiring support including subsidies and trainings (Algan, Crépon and Glover, 2020^[1]).

meant that not all vacancies in Slovenia would be listed with the ESS any longer.³ Against this background, the ESS decided to change the way it engages and delivers services to firms and prioritise increasing engagement with employers.

Interactions between employers and the ESS typically begin online, although, in addition to online communication, employers can contact counsellors at local offices which function as one-stop shops for employers (European Commission, 2018^[2]). When employers post vacancies they can request more support and specify the type of service they would like. Employer counsellors aim to follow up with the firm within 24 hours to learn more about the vacancy and agree on a tailored strategy for filling the vacancy. For example, if the firm has many vacancies to fill, the counsellor may organise “speed dating” or a job fair. The range of services that could be offered include support with vacancy drafting, support with hiring strategies, referrals and pre-screening of candidates, information on hiring foreign non-EU workers and support in hiring workers from EU/EEA/Switzerland. These services are offered for free to all employers and take up is high.⁴ 64% of the time when an employer posts a vacancy they request additional support. Among temporary work agencies take up is particularly high with these services requested in around 85% of cases.⁵

Employer counsellors lie at the heart of Slovenia’s employer strategy

Employer counsellors are the most important input at the ESS for successful employer-PES relationships. In the past, without employer specific counsellors, employers felt like they were passed from person-to-person as they tried to access different services. Now the ESS tries to have employer specific counsellors work with the same employer, ideally over a long period of time. To do this the ESS has around 80 employer specific counsellors or around one counsellor working with employers for every four counsellors working with jobseekers.⁶

Employer counsellors have a different role and that at times requires a different set of skills compared to counsellors for jobseekers. When recruiting employer counsellors, the ESS looks for people that show a strong interest in working with employers. In training employer counsellors, the ESS has used an external provider to run a five day course on working with employers, managing relationships and teaching sales and negotiation strategy.⁷ The ESS also holds regular (2 – 3 times per year) events for all employer counsellors where the ESS presents on key topics and counsellors network and share knowledge with each other.⁸ These differences aside, employer counsellors still have the same qualifications and job-titles as counsellors working with jobseekers and many trainings are the same for both groups (e.g. trainings on assertive communication, how to conduct an interview, stress management, IT skills etc.)

³ Following the change private sector vacancies did not need to be listed with the ESS. However, the public sector as well as businesses entities owned by the state are still required to list vacancies with the ESS (OECD, 2016^[10]).

⁴ There is an exception for firms not in good standing, with such firms excluded from using these HR services. For example, these firms may not have paid taxes, not paid their employers, or not fulfilled their obligations on a previous ALMP programme.

⁵ The statistics quoted in this paragraph are for the first five months of 2021.

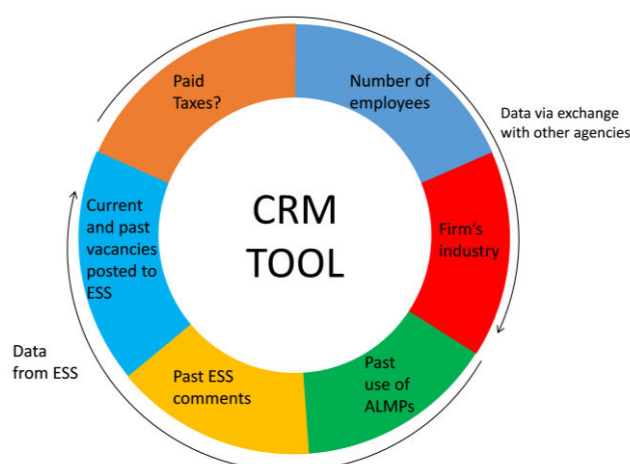
⁶ For comparison Bulgaria has about 1 046 counsellors working with employers and 1 170 working with jobseekers (and some more who work with both). In correspondence the NEA said they aim to ensure staff are interchangeable so that when needs change staff serving one client group (employers or jobseekers) can be assigned tasks serving the other client group.

⁷ This course was run in 2018 and viewed favourably by the ESS although they have not yet run it again as they feel they have not had enough new staff join to make it worthwhile.

⁸ Topics have included labour law, employment of foreign workers, “green” jobs, and employer incentives.

To manage its network of employers well, ESS employer counsellors must know about the previous interactions the employer has had with the ESS. Similarly, in order to reach out to new employers counsellors must know where the firms are and what they do. To help employer counsellors in their work the ESS has an in-house built Customer Relationship Management (CRM) tool. It uses information from the ESS but also links in data collected by other government agencies (Figure 2). Data from within the ESS helps to retain and share organisational knowledge on employers while external data helps with outreach. For example, counsellors can see all employers in Slovenia, and they can filter by firms that have not been in contact with the ESS as well as by firm location and size. Data on non-payment of taxes or staff, and on which employers have not met past ALMP obligations are useful for excluding services to bad actors.

Figure 2 A Customer Relationship Management (CRM) tool helps ESS staff work with employers



Source: Author's compilation

3. Advanced digital tools for matching

Advanced analytical tools can allow PES staff to do more with less. The use of analytics in Public Employment Service delivery has a long history and is an area of rapid change in recent years. Indeed digitisation in PES began as far back as the 1960s when data was stored on mainframe computers (Pieterson and ICF, 2019^[3]). In more recent times, more data, more computational power, and advances in the techniques available to analyse data have combined to provide many novel uses. On the employee side many PES now use sophisticated machine learning and predictive analytics to profile jobseekers based on the probability of being unemployed for long periods (Desiere, Langenbucher and Struyven, 2019^[4]; OECD, 2018^[5]). These profiling tools help to tailor more intensive and more personalised services to those at higher risk of long term unemployment.

Advanced digital tools are not confined to the jobseeker side of PES business. Digital tools are automating more of the process to collect job vacancies for jobseekers. For example:

- The Netherlands and Austria both work with a contracted partner to “crawl” the internet for vacancies.
- Sweden has a project in development that partners with the largest job advertisers in Sweden to gather all jobs in one place.⁹

⁹ <https://jobtechdev.se/en/docs/projects/joblinks/>

- Finland is working on increasing its use of APIs to get more vacancies from Private Employment Agencies.
- The Flemish PES, VDAB, has tools that allow large employers and private employment agencies to automatically upload large numbers of vacancies at once with more than 80% of vacancies uploaded in this automatic fashion.

In a particularly innovative example, France has a model that forecasts which companies are likely to post vacancies (based on past recruitment trends) before the companies have posted the vacancies.¹⁰ The tool has a publicly available webpage that any jobseeker can use to identify companies with a high likelihood of having recruitment needs in their profession and then follow up with the company to apply for a job.¹¹

Collecting more vacancies provides more options for PES clients and hopefully increases the chances that they find a job. However, more vacancies can also increase search costs for jobseekers and their counsellor. Beyond using digital tools to automate the process of collecting vacancies, or using profiling tools to understand jobseekers, digital tools can also help with directly matching jobseekers to vacancies by making it easier to search vacancy databases. The Flemish PES in Belgium, VDAB, is particularly advanced in using digital tools for matching. The rest of this section looks at their approach.

3.1. VDAB uses AI to suggest job vacancies to jobseekers

VDAB has two tools that recommend vacancies to jobseekers. The first tool uses a rule-based matching algorithm that is transparent in its recommendations, although takes a relatively narrow view of what jobs are suitable for clients. The second, uses an AI algorithm to consider a wider range of vacancies for a client and makes recommendations based on what clients are most likely to find interesting. The rest of this section describes VDAB's approach.

¹⁰ <https://labonneboite.pole-emploi.fr/>

¹¹ Jobseekers are provided with contact details of these firms and encouraged to “cold-call” the firms with unsolicited applications. In a very transparent way of working all of the source code for the tool, La Bonne Boit, is available on the code sharing website Github. Indeed this practice is used in other countries to encourage innovation, for example Sweden has code for some tools available in this manner.

Box 1.1. An internal AI team has helped VDAB develop cutting edge PES analytics

VDAB's use of AI and analytics is impressive; they have not one but two advanced digital tools to help with matching. One of these tools, Jobnet, won the Innovative E-government Award and the ICT/digital project of the year award. In addition the PES has developed several other advanced analytical tools. Including their Distance to the Labour Market profiling tool and Jobbereik which shows employees how their competencies map to different occupations and provides the competence gaps they need to fill in order to move into different roles.

These results are achieved by hiring specialist talent to work in teams dedicated to improving VDAB's use of analytics and AI. VDAB started an "innovation lab" in 2014, the team now has 30 staff including Data Scientists, Data Engineers, Project Managers, Business Solutions Professionals and "DevOps" employees. VDAB also has an ethical review board that oversees the work of the analytical tools that they create. The development of Jobnet took approximately 18 months from early 2017 until 2018, with around 4-5 full-time equivalent staff working on it over this period. Most of the development work goes into organising and cleaning the data, which VDAB is constantly working to improve. Such a large investment may not be suitable for all PES, but VDAB certainly demonstrates what can be done with advanced analytics.

Source: More information on the history of VDAB's innovation lab can be found in European Commission (2017), The VDAB's innovation lab, Publication Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/807dae77-2657-11e7-ab65-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

A rule based model provides narrow but transparent recommendations for jobseekers

VDAB's first model focuses on matching people based on their dossier information (including their competencies and their preferred jobs and regions) and the skills required for a vacancy. The model uses information on jobseekers occupation, education, location and competencies and matches this to job vacancies where employers must also provide information on the competencies they seek. This tool is available for direct use by jobseekers, however it is also used by counsellors. Indeed, when counsellors need to compel a jobseeker to apply for a job as part of benefit eligibility criteria they use this tool as it can transparently and quickly identify suitable vacancies from those on VDAB's webpage (around 200 000 on VDAB's website as of 7 July 2021)¹².

An AI based algorithm takes a wider perspective when recommending vacancies

When jobseekers and counsellors want to take a wider view of what jobs might be suitable (including those that potentially go beyond a jobseekers competencies), they use a more sophisticated, if less transparent tool, called Jobnet.¹³ Jobnet uses information on jobseekers, their own and similar profiles job viewing history, and the characteristics of job vacancies to show clients "top recommendations" of vacancies they might be interested in. This is analogous to how video and music streaming platforms use AI to predict what content viewers will want to see or listen to. Jobnet uses as much information as possible to help

¹² <https://www.vdab.be/vindeenjob/vacatures?sort=standaard> accessed 7 July 2021.

¹³ After this note was finalised for the Bulgarian authorities, VDAB have adopted a successor to Jobnet, called Talent API which is a more transparent AI matching tool. Whereas Jobnet relied on one big deep learning model, the upgraded approach, Talent API, uses multiple separate models for different aspects of job matching characteristics (skills, languages, preferred jobs etc.). This allows separate matching compatibility scores across these different domains to be shown which makes Talent API's recommendations more transparent than Jobnet's.

predict what jobs a jobseeker might be interested in. This includes jobseekers': work experience, competencies, desired jobs, desired work schedule, drivers licences, age, and even the type of email domain they use (e.g. gmail, yahoo etc). Similarly the model uses extensive information on the job vacancy including: the company posting the position, the competences asked for, the description of the role, the work schedule, the desired candidate, and location of the role.

Especially important are the jobs that jobseekers have clicked on or saved to apply for. The deep learning model uses these clicks and saved jobs to “train” itself – essentially using the information on job vacancies and jobseekers to try and predict whether people will click or save a job. The jobs are then ranked and jobseekers (or their jobs counsellor) can quickly see the most relevant suggestions based on the model. When users click on a job they have the option to see suggestions of similar vacancies. As users engage more with job search, the model is able to provide more relevant suggestions based on the vacancies they engage with.

Introducing such an innovative tool naturally comes with challenges. One challenge during the development phase was getting buy-in for the project. This required reinforcing the message that the tool is designed to assist counsellors not to replace them. Another important problem to solve was making sure the model was not biased (and will not be perceived to be biased). This means sensitive variables or variables perceived as inappropriate to use in the model are left out. For example Jobnet excludes gender and nationality so as not to recommend job vacancies based on these characteristics. Similarly VDAB tests its models for bias (e.g. checking that Jobnet does not recommend more part-time jobs to women).

4. Intensive partnerships with employers to support vulnerable groups

The previous sections reviewed examples where the PES tries to work better with employers in ways that might benefit *all* of their jobseekers. However, a PES can also tailor services and outreach to employers in ways that aim to help *specific* target groups of jobseekers. This section reviews three case studies of initiatives that seek to work better with employers to help vulnerable workers into jobs. The first two case studies – one on Malta and the other on Flanders – review practices that involve changing the way employers organise tasks to support jobseekers with disabilities. The last case-study looks at a programme in Slovenia “Learning Workshops” that works with social enterprises to place vulnerable jobseekers, matching jobseekers with mentors inside and outside the company to help them succeed.

4.1. Job carving in Malta and Flanders

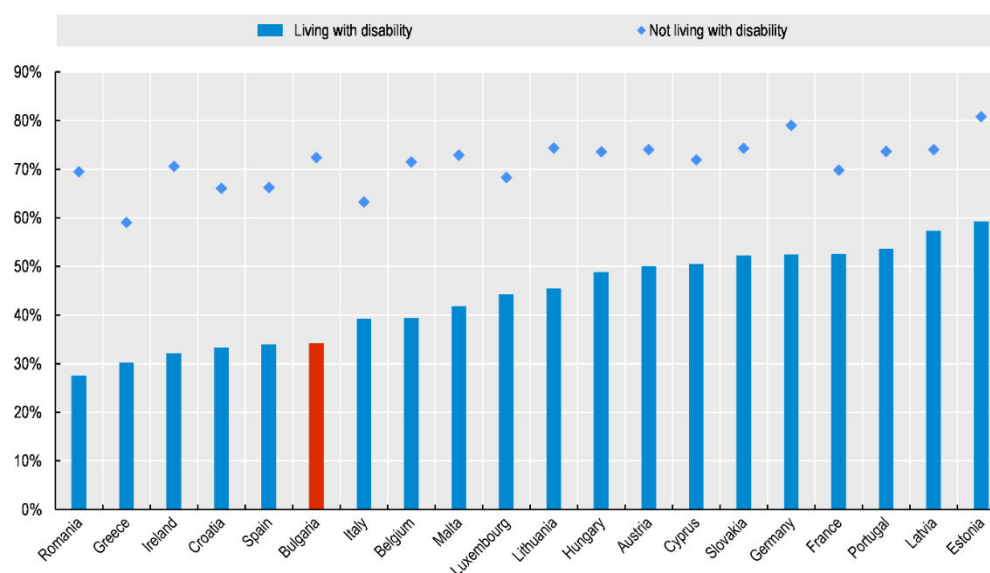
People with disabilities suffer lower levels of employment than do the general population (Figure 3) and are often a priority group for PES. But people with disabilities can have quite specific needs and employers may not know how best to address these. Further, employers may overlook workers with disabilities and not see the potential value they can add to their company. By changing employers’ perspectives or helping employers address barriers facing workers with disabilities, say by re-arranging job tasks, the PES can create a match that benefits both groups.

“Job carving” is one example where employment consultants visit firms and make jobs more suitable for vulnerable groups. Definitions vary but definition is that job carving is the practice of “rearranging work tasks within a company to create tailor-made employment opportunities for all people, but especially for people with reduced work capacity” (Scoppetta, Davern and Leonard, 2019^[6]). It can be applied to creating new jobs for the unemployed, but also for changing the tasks of the already employed.¹⁴

¹⁴ There are related terms in the literature, for example “job crafting” refers to a bottom up approach where individuals redesign their own jobs (Scoppetta, Davern and Leonard, 2019^[6]) and others, including GTB use the term “Job

Figure 3 Employment rates are lower for people with disabilities

2019 or latest year



Note: Employment rates are a percentage of working age population with non-missing disability data. Disability is measured by people who report a chronic health problem that limits or severely limits their activities. Data is from 2019 except for Italy and Ireland where the data is for 2018. Shown are 20 EU countries for which there are sufficient survey responses. The Survey of Income and Living Conditions (SILC) gives slightly different employment rates compared to the Labour Force Survey (LFS).

Source: EU-SILC, OECD staff calculations

Job carving in Malta

The Lino Spiteri Foundation (LSF) implements job-carving for people with disabilities. The LSF was set up in 2015 as a public-private partnership between Jobsplus (the Maltese PES) and Empower (a private company). Jobsplus clients with disabilities are referred to the LSF, with the LSF providing a range of intensive services to jobseekers and employers.¹⁵ The LSF therefore functions as a PES specifically for those with disabilities. Part of the motivation for setting up the LSF in 2015 was to help employers meet quotas related to the number of employees they have as Malta had newly begun to enforce a law that requires all firms with more than 20 full-time employees to have 2% of staff be people with disabilities. In 2020, 236 people with disabilities were placed in employment with LSF support. Across these roles more than 80% stay in their job and about 52% of workers supported by LSF are placed into carved jobs. Funding for the LSF and its activities comes from Jobsplus and the European Social Fund (ESF).

design” to distinguish between “carving” a role for a specific individual and a more intensively re-“designing” the workflow to re-arrange tasks within the company (e.g. reassigning tasks away from high paid doctors towards lower paid nurses). Indeed, the term job-crafting goes back at least until the 1990s (Griffin, 1996_[11]) and as noted in one recent review, the term is often defined slightly differently by different authors (Ho, 2018_[12]). For simplicity, this note applies the “job carving” term broadly to refer to all of these activities and where appropriate distinguishes between top-down, bottom-up and re-designing/reallocation of tasks.

¹⁵ Not all jobseekers with disabilities will require LSF services which tend to be for those with lower education or who are otherwise further from the labour market. For example, a lawyer with a physical disability may not need the services of LSF.

Much like a typical PES that serves all jobseekers, the LSF has staff who specialise in working with employers. At the LSF they are called Corporate Relations Executives (CRs) and these staff are primarily responsible for carving new jobs. Job carving is implemented from both a top-down and bottom-up approach. At a top down level Corporate Relations Executives (CRs) work with employers to “carve” jobs that might be suitable for a typical client (without having someone specific in mind). For example, a CR might be working with an accounting firm and observe that accountants spend much time on simpler administrative tasks and duties that could be done by a receptionist. A new position can be created at the firm for an administrative assistant that may be suitable for a person with disabilities. This can benefit the employer too as wages of administrative assistants are lower than accountants. At a bottom up level counsellors design roles for a specific jobseeker or the jobseeker might make a suggestion. These ideas can be exchanged in frequent meetings between CRs and the Profiling and Guidance Executives who work with jobseekers. As an example, a LSF client might want to work as a security guard but not be able to stand for very long periods of time so the LSF could reach out to a security firm to carve a job that has reduced working hours or breaks. While the LSF often prefers to work from a bottom up perspective with a specific individual in mind they find a mix of approaches is effective.

Good relations with employers are key to job carving. The LSF thus puts substantive effort into employer outreach and engagement. Jobsplus maintains a register of all companies in Malta which is shared with LSF. Every year CRs use this register to contact every firm in Malta with more than 20 employees – about 1 400 companies in 2020 (The Lino Spiteri Foundation, 2020^[7]). While some employers seek out LSF for support, in the vast majority of cases LSF reaches out to employers to begin a working relationship. Job-carving is just one offering provided. Indeed, the LSF supplies full HR services for free to firms.¹⁶ Notably, LFS also helps in the removal of a worker when the job is not working out and in such cases will ideally try to find a replacement for the firm.

Further complimentary support available to support jobseekers with disabilities in Malta includes:

- Sheltered employment training offered by Jobsplus, funded through the ESF.
- Pre-employment trainings offered by Jobsplus (or externally) for jobseekers, funded through the ESF.
- Post-employment on the job coaching offered by the LSF: around 200 clients received on the job support in 2020, funded through the ESF (The Lino Spiteri Foundation, 2020^[7]).
- Employment subsidies for firms who hire workers with disabilities: including a 25% wage subsidy, a waiver of social security contributions, and in some cases a 155 Euro per week subsidy for up to 156 weeks through the Access to Employment scheme, funded partially through the ESF (Jobsplus, 2021^[8]).

Job-carving in Flanders

GTB delivers various types of “job carving” and “job crafting” activities in Flanders. Similar to the Jobsplus/LSF relationship in Malta, GTB is a non-profit organisation in Flanders that works very closely with the Flemish PES VDAB to serve jobseekers with disabilities. Like LSF it effectively functions as a PES for people with disabilities. Jobseekers with disabilities come from VDAB to GTB (about 11 000 per year) which offers more specialised support. GTB is closely integrated with VDAB: it receives 95% of its funding from VDAB and shares the same building and the same IT infrastructure. GTB has over 400 staff and is growing as the government pushes activation of people with health issues.

¹⁶ Including support with vacancy drafting, screening of candidates and supporting with interviews (depending on employer preferences. This is similar to what the ESS does in Slovenia (see Section 2.) except in this case tailored to working with firms to hire workers with disabilities.

GTB performs a variety of job carving and related activities. Job carving is used to rearrange tasks at a firm to make a role suitable for a particular jobseeker. Job coaching can be offered to new people in roles along with “job crafting” where GTB works directly (i.e. a bottom-up approach) with employees to help make their job easier and more suitable. GTB sometimes refers employers to other organisations that offer a more intensive process of “job design” where staff review all of the tasks at an employer’s workplace (not just those of one particular role) and seek to rearrange many roles to create more and better jobs for workers. This “job design” process however is too resource intensive for GTB to provide themselves.

As with the LSF in Malta, GTB, places a strong emphasis on employer outreach. GTB has its own employer specific counsellors that conduct outreach services to employers. While some employers will hire workers with a disability for non-profit reasons, many employers want to know how workers with disabilities can benefit them. GTB trains its staff in sales and marketing, beginning with a two day workshop, and gets counsellors to take the employers perspective and consider “what problems keep your employers up at night” so they can propose solutions where GTB’s jobseeker clients can help employers in a win-win situations. GTB has also recently started offering support with vacancy drafting to help firms write more inclusive job advertisements.

Common targets of GTB for outreach include:

- Companies with past interactions with GTB.
- Fast growing companies.
- Companies that have had vacancies listed for more than six months.
- Companies that have problems GTB knows how to solve (e.g. companies with high rates of burnout can often benefit from “job carving” or “job crafting” exercises that improve worker’s jobs).

GTB identifies these attributes of a company from a combination of different sources including through reading traditional and social media (e.g. LinkedIn), but most especially through having an in-depth conversation with the employer themselves. Where possible, GTB looks to meet employers in person and get to know them, so they can understand their problems and tailor solutions to this. Similar, to Slovenia, the GTB uses a CRM tool to track details of employers and see what past interactions they have had with an employer. This can help to serve as an icebreaker when they call a firm as they can mention past contact with GTB instead of “cold-calling”.

4.2. Learning Workshops in Slovenia

A final example of working well with employers comes from a small-scale ALMP in Slovenia. “Learning Workshops” is a pilot programme that has been running since 2018 targeted towards vulnerable groups of jobseekers in Slovenia. The programme consists of a six month on-the-job training period, followed by six or twelve months of additional subsidised work. During the on-the-job training programme participants are supported by two mentors: one is an employer “internal” mentor who is an existing employee of the company that primarily helps with “hard” vocational skills needed to do the job; the other is an “external” mentor whose support is more with “soft” skills (Figure 4).

Figure 4 Learning workshops in Slovenia



Source: Author's compilation

Disadvantaged jobseekers are paired with two mentors to support them

Programme participants have high barriers to labour market integration. 74% of the participants were long-term unemployed, 33% had a low level of education, 20% never had a job, and 32% were people with disabilities. Only 7% were eligible for unemployment benefits, while most participants are recipients of social assistance benefits. The programme has included Roma as a target group although only nine Roma have participated in the programme so far.

The training period is intensive. Internal mentors are existing employees of the firm and their role is to develop participant's vocational skills so that they learn their new job. Internal mentors must devote at least 60 hours per month or 34% of the workday to working with participants and internal mentors can only train a maximum of two participants at a time. Whereas internal mentors provide participants with on the job know-how, external mentors focus on developing participants soft-skills. These external mentors are not PES staff - they can be psychologists, therapists, a work coach, an expert in work rehabilitation, or another suitable person. The external mentor is recommended by the employer and the ESS confirms them. External mentors meet twice per month with their clients for two hours and these sessions are private and one-on-one.

Given how intensive the training by the internal mentor is, strong buy-in from employers is crucial for the success of the programme. All employers in the programme must come from a social enterprise background, which means they must be formally recognised as either an employment centre, social enterprise, or a company recognised for employing people with disabilities.

Monitoring statistics show the programme is on track

By 2022, the "Learning Workshops" programme aims to have 1 000 people participate in the training component with 250 (25%) anticipated to move into the subsidised employment phase. The programme is on track to deliver these targets. Currently 629 people have participated in the training and 174 (27.4%) of these have moved through the subsidized employment phase. About 20% of participants were employed following the end of the programme. The ESS considers the programme as a success and is seeking more

funding to continue the programme until 2027, with expansion conditional on the amount of funding received.

Beyond basic monitoring statistics no counterfactual impact evaluation of the programme is being conducted. Without this it is somewhat difficult to perform cost-benefit analysis of the programme. These costs are substantive too, with total funding including overheads at 10.69 million euros or an average of 10 690 per participant.¹⁷

¹⁷ This calculation divides the total cost of 10.69 million euros by the intended 1 000 participants, noting that only 25% of the participants are expected to continue from the initial 6 month learning phase of the programme to the subsidised employment phase.

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