

First ILO-WEC webinar: 17 June 2020
Covid-19: Taking stock of the impact on Employment and Employment Services –
Highlights and key takeaways

1.0 Experiences and learnings

- The ILO analysis shows that economic recovery post-Covid19 will be slow and job recovery might be even slower. On-line service (sales and delivery) will remain strong, but other services (e.g. tourism) may continue to struggle. It is also time for investing in health and care systems -- which are known to create decent jobs.
- The impact on employment is unprecedented, threatening decent work and equality. Especially vulnerable workers including informal workers, young workers and workers without adequate social protection coverage are exposed to significant risk. We need to prevent the scarring effect on all those that have lost their jobs by getting them back into work as soon as possible. Young people deserve a particular focus to avoid the creation of a “lockdown generation” with a high rate of young people not being in employment, education or training.
- PES have been impacted as one of the main providers of benefit payments and short-term work allowances among other labour market support measures to workers and businesses. Many PES were handling the increased procedural pressure whilst managing change in their own institutions due to adjusted service and staff relocation requirements in the pandemic. WAPES seeks to support PES in delivering their services by facilitating the exchange of best practices.
- Many PES, particularly in developed countries, established dedicated online portals where jobs were posted and jobseekers applied. Further services like guidance, information and placement support were moved online too.
- PrES activities have been hit significantly; but the experience is two-sided. Hours worked by agency workers and agency work turnover significantly dropped following the outset of the crisis. This immediately exposed many PrES to continuity risks. At the same time PrES were able to re-allocate vast numbers of workers from sectors in decline to essential sector in immediate need. Various government responses to enable employment services to continue to operate supported this effort.
- In several countries, for example France and Italy, the government has eased the conditions to hire agency workers by extending the maximum length of assignment and removing the waiting period between assignment renewals. This is facilitating and speeding up the reallocation of workers between sectors.
- During the crisis public and private employment services rallied to respond and offer support to jobseekers and employers through joint efforts. This included public-private collaboration as well as intra-industry pooling of jobseekers and vacancies.
- Social Dialogue in the agency work sector, and bipartite social funds in particular, played a crucial part in mitigating the impact. In Italy, for example, employers in the agency work sector and trade unions came together to allocate and distribute funds to cushion drops in incomes of agency workers and allow them to care for family. In The Netherlands the bipartite employability fund provided training vouchers to displaced agency workers. The pre-existence of regulatory and

social dialogue infrastructures for the private employment services sector helped cushion the blow.

- Service portfolios of employment services are changing. Managing career transitions and adjusting skills will be even more crucial than before and with a stronger focus on helping groups which might get more distant from the labour market, like older workers.

2.0 Policy Implications

Promoting partnerships and collaboration for employment services

- Continue promoting the common goal of all employment services and providers to get talent into decent employment by managing transitions and careers.
- Recognize public-private partnership of employment services as one of the key responses to the economic downturn and the increase in un/underemployment and to strive for a job-rich inclusive recovery. Covid-19 provides the opportunity for Public and Private Employment Services to further strengthen their collaboration and pool their labour market expertise.
- Local partnership solutions and service specialization are going to be crucial in supporting employment services delivery in times of reduced budgets and fragmented service portfolios.
- Countries should create an appropriate regulatory infrastructure that enables quality public and private employment services and decent work.
- Acknowledge the pre-existing social dialogue in the agency work sector that allowed a bipartite response to mitigate the crisis and will continue to be a backbone for decent agency work now and for the future.

Strengthening operational tools and delivery mechanisms

- Ensure gathering of timely and quality data on the impact of the pandemic for an informed policy response. ILO and WEC to collaborate in this area.
- Capitalize on the ILO's policy toolbox containing conventions and recommendations on public and private employment services and decent work
- Focus on vulnerable groups and encourage their employability, for example young people, during this new crisis to avoid further structural unemployment, poverty and informality.
- Design blended services catering to the fact that digitalisation will play an important part in the delivery of both public and private employment services and, at the same time, appreciating that face-to-face staff, like career advisors, will remain an integral component of employment services.
- Employment services to play a more active role in the development of the workforce's digital skills.

- Continue the exchange of best practices and learnings taking into account success factors in employment service delivery.

3.0 Further information

- The ILO is publishing a research brief on the impacts of Covid-19 on global supply chains including hardest hit sectors like the apparel industry.
- WEC can provide a compendium of best practices regarding public-private partnerships for employment services.
- The ILO has just launched a survey to collect data on how PES are using digital services, including in emerging and developing countries.
- Audience suggested to further research on how employment services deal with health pandemics and which tools they use to guide job seekers in crisis times.