

## Employment Services

### The Challenge

Employment services match job seekers with job opportunities and are thus central to a well-functioning labour market. They are provided both by government through their Ministries of Labour and/or by private employment agencies. Close collaboration between public and private employment services is important because it results in the most positive outcomes for the labour market as was demonstrated during the global financial and economic crisis that began in 2008.

**Public employment services (PES)** plan and execute labour market policies. Their major role is to cushion labour market transitions for workers and enterprises by:

- providing good information about the labour market;
- assisting with job search and providing placement services;
- administering unemployment insurance benefits;
- administering a variety of labour market programmes.

**Private employment agencies** also play an important role in the labour market. They provide an alternative means of job matching as their core service; they also offer training and up-skilling to meet employers' needs.

The ILO provides support and guidance to its member States in strengthening their public employment services, promoting the regulation of the activities of private employment agencies and encouraging productive cooperation between the two.

### The ILO Response

All ILO work on employment derives its current mandate from the Global Employment Agenda (2003) and the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization (2008). Public employment services have been recognized in the mandate of the ILO since its creation. ILO Convention on Unemployment, 1919 (No.2) recognized the role of employment services and promoted the establishment of national employment services in all member states. The role of the Public Employment Service was fully elaborated at the international level with the adoption of Employment Service Convention, 1948 (No. 88).

The increasing need to provide services to a rapidly expanding and flexible labour market has led to further development of private employment agencies. Recognition of their positive contributions led to the ILO Private Employment Agencies Convention, 1997 (No. 181) and its accompanying Recommendation (No.188). The 2009 Global Jobs Pact also emphasizes the important role employment services play in contributing to a sustained job recovery.

Both jobseekers and employers are customers of employment services, both public and private; and most national employment services are guided by an advisory body which reinforces the principles of social dialogue between government, employers and workers.



The ILO programme focuses on three inter-related areas: services, knowledge development and advocacy. These include:

- Conducting PES assessments in member States, identifying areas in need of strengthening, and supporting the development and implementation of technical cooperation projects to enhance employment services. Particular emphasis is being placed on services in Africa;
- Supporting post-crisis recovery plans following natural disasters or civil unrest. Emergency employment services are set up as an immediate response; in the longer term the ILO supports the development of sustainable public employment services;
- Providing technical training courses on public employment services, on career counselling to support the transition of youth from school to work, and on guidelines and policies concerning the regulation of private employment agencies;
- Promoting the benefits of cooperative efforts between public employment services and private employment agencies;
- Assessing how PESs could extend core employment services to workers and enterprises in the informal economy to help them in the transition to the formal economy;
- Drawing lessons from information collected on PESs' labour market programmes in response to the global economic crisis; and
- Strengthening the role of PESs in member States' efforts to improve the collection and dissemination of labour market information.

## Key Tools and Resources

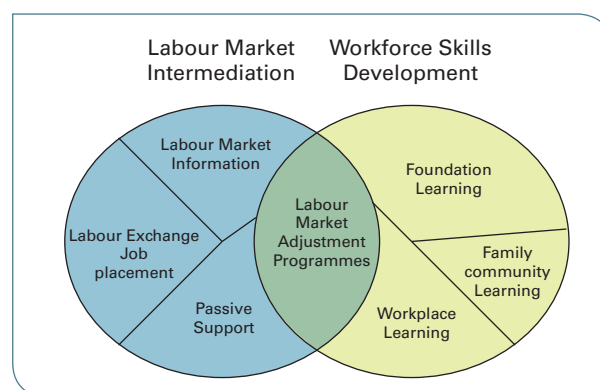
In addition to the above-mentioned ILO standards:

Thuy, P.; Hansen, E.; Price, D. 2001. *The public employment service in a changing labour market* (Geneva, ILO).

International Labour Office (ILO). 2003. *Guidelines for establishing emergency public employment services* (Geneva).

Hansen, E. 2006. *Career guidance: A resource handbook for low- and middle- income countries* (Geneva, ILO).

International Labour Office (ILO). 2007. *Guide to private employment agencies: Regulation, monitoring and enforcement* (Geneva).



**Donna Koeltz**  
Senior Specialist,  
Employment Services

Contact us:  
Skills and Employability  
Department  
Employment Sector  
International Labour Office  
Route des Morillons 4  
CH-1211 Geneva 22  
Switzerland  
Tel: +41 22 799 6111  
Email: [empskills@ilo.org](mailto:empskills@ilo.org)  
[www.ilo.org/skills](http://www.ilo.org/skills)