

Let's talk jobs!

The modern world is experiencing fundamental changes. In particular, the globalisation and the impacts of the demographic change will lead to more volatile labour markets. Is it possible that the members of the European Union face the great future challenges successfully in order to help the EU becoming a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy? Yes, I am convinced they can!

According to the EUs' growth strategy for the coming decade, the Union has set ambitious objectives reached by 2020, among them employment. In my opinion, the most demanding challenge the EU has to face is to achieve an employment level of 75%.

I believe that the Member States can achieve this ambitious goal by working closely together and learning from each other in a structured way. Relying upon the European Public Employment (PES) network, the institutionalised association of European Public Employment Services, I believe that this new cooperation structure strengthens Member States especially the coordination of their strategies and measures to tackle unemployment. By "Benchlearning" - a systematic, formally structured and facts-based mutual learning process among the PES - the PES network established an approach to realize this.

Taking into account the contextual changes European Public Employment Services will be confronted with, we have to focus stronger on the demand side of the labour market as employers are facing increasing recruitment difficulties. It is becoming more and more difficult for employers to cover their staff requirements. Especially small and medium enterprises often need to be supported intensively by the public employment services. Therefore, the members of the PES Network are aware of the relevance and aim to enhance the cooperation with employers constantly. Employers are playing a crucial role for the economy in general as well as for an effective work of the PES, which is to provide the required personnel and to integrate the job seekers into the labour market at the same time.

The visibility of the PES Network as well as the role of the PES in the member states needs to be improved. The European Employers' Day is an excellent option to inform the people, partners and stakeholders about the PES in general. At the same time it shows, that the PES is not an "abstract construction" but a well-functioning organisation that generates a measurable contribution for the European labour markets. Having a closer look on the network: the total number of the staff is more than 350.000 people distributed over 6.400 offices, with more than 2 million vacancies. The PES Network can be regarded as the largest human resources development network in Europe!

Different labour markets need different strategies and approaches to tackle unemployment. This is no contradiction to a successful European-wide cooperation of the PES, it is a logic complement.

The European Employers' Day is carried out in April 2016 for the first time.

During the European Employers' Day employers throughout Europe are contacted by the employees of the Public Employment Services within all Member States (including Iceland and Norway) with this message: Let's talk jobs!

The importance of the employers as a most relevant target group for the PES shall be highlighted by the European Employers' Day. Every member state focusses on national priorities and on the special needs of the local labor markets. On this thematic time frame the European PES organize activities like personal or telephone or online-contacts, job fairs, thematic information forums, seminars or workshops, employers' breakfast combined with communicative actions and involve partners and stakeholders like employers' organizations, NGOs.

The results of the successful Flemish PES Employers' Day exceeded all expectations in 2015: within one day, the Flemish PES challenged the public opinion about its position for employers. By closing its offices for one day, getting out of the protected environment and getting into the enterprises for informing as much SMEs as possible about the PES services and benefits was a clear statement to employers: Over 26.000 small and medium-size enterprises were reached within one day personally!

Politicians, the public opinion and all stakeholders in Flanders were deeply impressed and shared their appreciation on social media, radio and television. The Flemish PES succeeded in positioning itself as a reliable, flexible and helpful organization as well as making a statement that employment services can offer win-win-solutions for SMEs.

I believe that a successful implementation of the European Employers' Day has a long term effect and a unique outcome: the European PES reach more than 150.000 employers in Europe by this dedicated action!