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CONNECTING JOBSEEKERS AND EMPLOYERS AND MORE: THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF PES TO EU SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Abstract:

The paper discusses the role and the challenges before Public Employment Services (PES) of the European Union in contemporary conditions of dynamically changed economic and social environment. Recent trends on labor markets (in European and national Bulgarian scope) are analyzed outlining the general concerns nowadays and providing recommendations for adequate answers on national, regional and European level. The need of application of new approaches and models in organization and management of PES activities is concerned according to the current employment strategies in the EU and in Bulgaria. Special attention is paid to the ways of achieving effective impacts of the policies on the labor market through business modelling and services provision introducing innovative approaches and adding values in PES, particularly in the implementation of a strong and sustainable mediation. The adoption of a holistic approach for better management and continuity is interlinked to the good understanding of state-of-art and goals of improvement of activities in terms of quality, adequacy and expediency, all resulting in proper influence measures and effective implementation of policies on employment targeted to sustainable economic and social development.

Keywords:

labor market, employment, active policy, management, model.

JEL Classification: J01, J08

Introduction

The management of the labor market is closely linked to macroeconomic management. Across Europe, nations are facing the need to tackle the consequences of the financial and economic crisis and the search for new directions in its industry. Globalization puts pressure on Europe's competitive position. The need for prediction by the governments of proactive measures and planning to keep a sufficiently skilled workforce is more than necessary (Terziev&Dimitrova, 2015).

The dynamic changes of the social environment that determine the changes in attitudes and actions on labor markets and public service providers, face policymaking in the field of employment in the coming years with serious trials. Particular importance is assigned to the ability of the public employment services for vigorous action aimed at ensuring the maximum impact of policy on the labor market. Of public employment services is expected to handle both current and future challenges. Rapid response to changing conditions and the combination of short-term interventions with sustainable solutions require flexibility, organizational response capability and creativity. Evolution of bureaucratically oriented organizations with more flexible, open, market-oriented networks and structures requires intellectual and cultural change as the business model and management, and individual ways of working¹.

Social perceptions of the role of government agencies and public services change, many public employment services are facing uncertain political choices about their long-term funding and scope of its activities. Rapid response to changing conditions and the combination of short-term interventions with sustainable solutions require flexibility, organizational response capability and creativity. Public employment services needs ability and capacity to ensure maximum impact of policy on the labor market and therefore regardless of the variability of economic, social or financial circumstances.

Focusing on the concept of social inclusion, Europe 2020 laid the foundation for targeted measures to integrate into the labor market of people who are subjected to exclusion. Already in 2008, the European Commission recommended the establishment of strategies for social and economic inclusion of marginalized groups, which by its nature is a strategy for 'active inclusion', based on three pillars: adequate support, inclusive labor markets and access to quality support services, but so far the implementation of policies is weak.

In times of transformation aimed at achieving five key objectives for the EU in the area of employment, research and innovation, climate change and energy, education and combating poverty it is particularly important to find the right direction for creating jobs, stakeholders and society work together in coordination - an idea underlying the new vision of the social market economy for Europe in the XXI century - smart, sustainable and inclusive economy delivering high levels of employment, productivity and social cohesion.

¹PES 2020 Strategy.

It was concluded² that the active involvement of the EU concept is not accepted at national level and should be high priority with work programs and indicators to monitor implementation. Among the main issues addressed in the annual report for 2014 of the European foundation for the improvement of living and working conditions (Eurofound) are those associated with the transition from education to employment, combining work and training, job security, risk of unemployment, flexibility, mobility and social inclusion. The goal of „sustainable employment” is twofold: those who are outside the labor force to become part of it, and those who are part of it to be capable and motivated, i.e. improving the quality of work in a way that does not compromise the ability to work in the future. To achieve this a comprehensive institutional framework, an effective system of social protection and education system, providing knowledge and skills to meet the needs of the labor market are required. Social policy in the EU underlines the importance of social investment, social dialogue and social partnership to build capacity to deal with social problems and objectives and integration in the labor market and in society, which is necessary to ensure high quality public services.

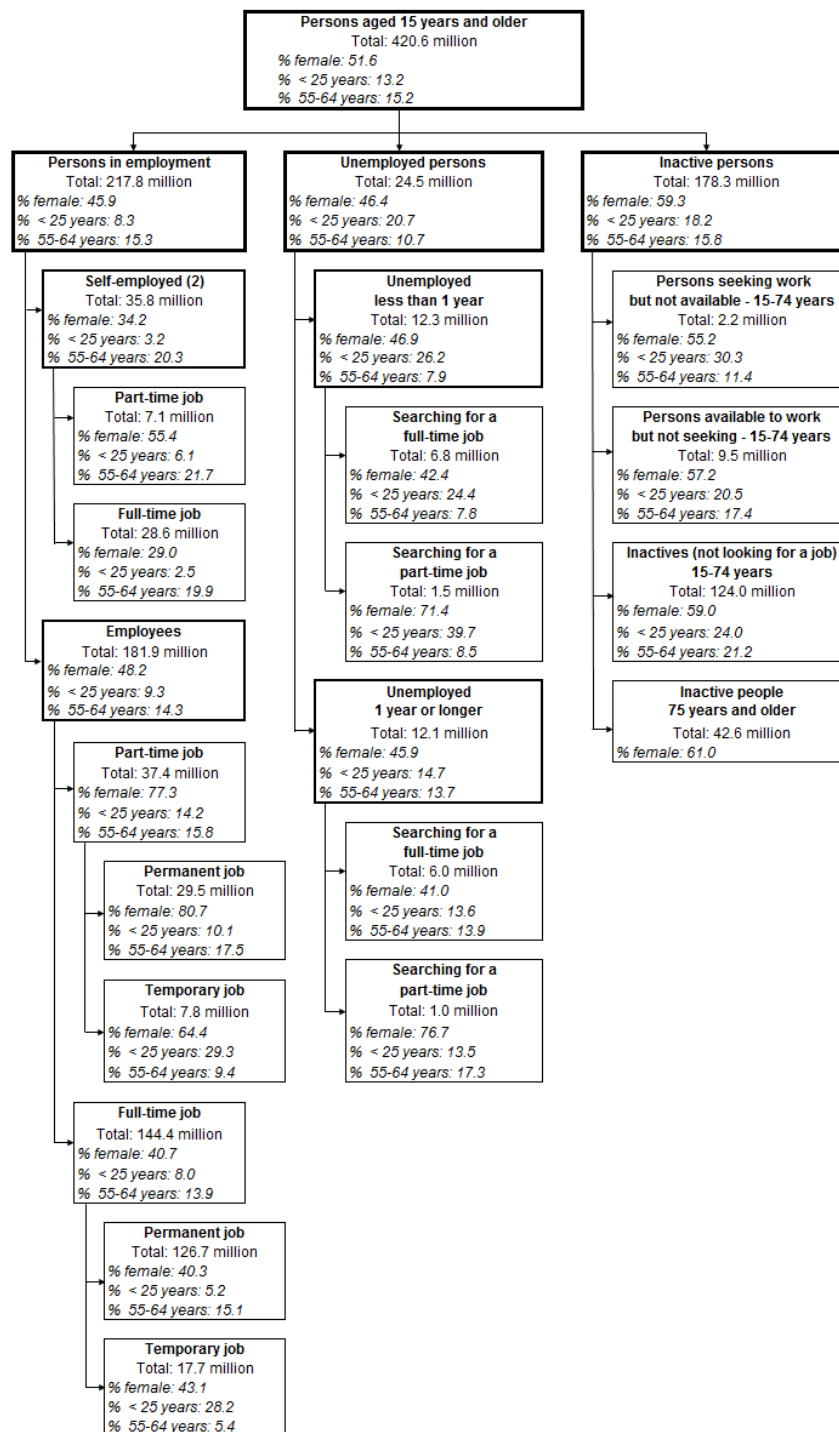
The strategy for the future approved by the European public services is in response to the challenges of the dynamic changes in the social environment and consistent with the requirements of the strategic framework for the development of the „Europe 2020”.The introduction of a common strategy does not mean that the operational consequences for each of the public employment services will be the same. It should not neglect the fact that in different countries there are specific conditions that have an impact on those consequences. And to respond flexibly and precisely to the numerous internal or external changes, public employment services are subject to conversion and renewal, according to the individual elements to ensure continuity. There is no doubt that cross-border cooperation in a European context offers many advantages in this respect. Regardless of national conditions, the striving to answer current and future challenges leads to significant changes in the role and function, contributes to transitions with a strong impact on the supply of services, and especially on the management model and operations’ implementation in public employment services.

Development and recent trends of labor market and employment policies

The analyses of 2014 data show that in the EU labor market is still determined by the economic crisis but there are some „signs of recovery” (Fig.1). The negative trend in unemployment has ceased but the discrepancies between national labor markets in member states are significant. This is the case in different member states too where there exist great differences between different regions. Looking at the data on fig. 1 the situation is very alarming about young people (<25 years old) and adults of 55-64 years.

²Eurofound (2015), Eurofound year book 2014: Living and working in Europe, Publication Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

Figure 1: Labour status of persons aged 15 years and older, EU-28, 2014



Notes: (1) Due to non-response, certain sub-totals may not exactly add up to the corresponding aggregate.
 (2) The self-employed persons in this figure also include family workers.
 Due to unavailability of 2014 data for Swedish population aged 75+, the most recent available results were used for needs of calculation of EU28 aggregates for inactive persons.

Source: Labour market and Labour force survey (LFS) statistics. Data extracted in April 2015. European Union Labour force survey- Annual results 2014. Author: Martin Teichgraber (Eurostat, Labour market)

In Bulgaria the economic development in 2014 and the growth of the GDP, the highest in the last three years, led to the stabilization of the labor market and allowed to recover positive dynamics in employment, after minimal growth in 2013. For the first time since 2008 several common trends of positive growth of industrial production, consumption and growth in employment has accumulated.

The main challenge today is to create conditions for increasing employment, reducing poverty and redressing social exclusion in a still unfavorable economic environment and negative trends on the labor market where labor supply exceeds demand and there is a mismatch between workers' skills and the needs of the ongoing restructuring of the economy.

The most common events and policy instruments affecting the labor market include:

- Information and counseling for young people and adults in all matters relating to the selection and change of profession, opportunities for training and employment.
- Assistance in finding employment and financial aid for employers and employees.
- Stimulation of professional training activities through continuing education, training, retraining and more.

These events are aimed mainly at regional and especially local labor markets and / or professional specialized labor markets and aim to bridge the imbalance in supply and demand.

The impact of government policy on economic and social development in a market economy is different and is determined principally of the market economy, the state of the economy and employment of the population. In a social market economy and high unemployment and inflation, government intervention in economic development and employment in particular is significant. Action affects mainly the promotion of employment or limiting the exemption of certain categories of the population, determining the amount of the minimum wage and some of the supplements thereto, working conditions, fund of wages, support to the unemployed to get back to work, etc.

Government policy on the employment of unemployed is usually divided into two groups of measures and programs - those of active and of passive policies. The essence of the first is in the boost employment and skills, and the second one deals with financial and informational support of the unemployed (benefits, labor offices, etc.). Active employment policy of the government and its specialized bodies could provide a number of measures and programs to promote employment of the population and employing a workforce of employers, job creation and others- both employed and unemployed. Measures and programs for employment, vocational training and qualification are paid special attention to in a number of strategic and program documents on European and national level.

Measures and programs which can benefit organizations are specific and are determined by the level of unemployment and the degree of imbalance of various private labor markets. Most often these include:

- Stimulation of different categories of unemployed and employers for their employment;
- Encouraging employers to create jobs and increase employment;
- Create temporary, so-called subsidized, employment for certain groups of unemployed by involving them in various programs such as temporary employment programs, youth employment programs, alternative employment program of social assistance to employment, training programs and others.

In the active employment policy a number of measures and opportunities for employment and preparation for it are included from which certain groups of unemployed can benefit. Basically these are the unemployed who experience difficulties to find a job because they are not sufficiently competitive, are not preferred by employers for one reason or another, and this practice leads to their discrimination on the labor market: young people without work experience, persons with disabilities, people with fewer opportunities (disabled) and retirees of working age, long-term unemployed without professional training and others (women, ethnic groups, young people, adults) (Terziev, 2015a). With this set of measures and programs the government with the cooperation of social partners (unions and employers) and public funds, the state budget or international programs could encourage employers to hire different groups of unemployed to create jobs for them, even temporarily, but with a guaranteed income in the form of wages, social insurance and the opportunity to prove their professional, employment and personal qualities.

Policies and programs of the government in the field of employment and unemployment are of interest to organizations in several ways:

- opportunity to hire relatively cheap labor in conditions of high unemployment;
- to benefit from a series of measures and programs to assist in the recruitment of certain categories of unemployed (young people without work experience, long-term unemployed and others), where the majority of the funds for salaries are borne of the above-mentioned sources, that is much cheaper to hire certain categories of labor;
- to use the offered tax breaks and interest in hiring and/or increasing employment in the organization, which is in fact increases its efficiency by reducing costs and others;
- to prepare, train or retrain unemployed or threatened by unemployment at the expense of external sources.

The active programs and measures are the subject of increasing interest and comment not only because expectations for tangible effects, but also because of the relatively significant financial resources necessary for their implementation. The problem of efficient spending has greater sharpness in the current situation of limited social spending.

Building capacity to conduct regular monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of the active policy is among the priority tasks in the European Employment Strategy. In practical evaluation of active programs and measures researchers often face various problems stemming from their multi-purpose and multi-faceted nature; lack of a unified and well-established methodology for assessment, measurement errors and lack of adequate statistical information, incl. the fact that it is objectively impossible to track persons and the "benefits" of participation in such programs. Conducted studies over more than a hundred different active research programs give ambiguous and often conflicting results on their effectiveness (Terziev&Dimitrova, 2015). The results are strongly influenced by the peculiarities of the country, the time and manner of implementation of the programs.

There was an understanding that employment policy is more economic than social problem or the solution to the problems of high unemployment and poverty is economic, not social policy (Terziev, 2015a). In fact, employment policies include macroeconomic and regional policies, but most often they have a more regional character expanding to programs that reflect the socio-economic priorities of different regions. Promotion of business and mitigating pro-social problems is one of the main guidelines. The actions are aimed at:

- support the construction and operation of small and medium-sized enterprises, particularly in areas in need of diversification of the economic structure (industrial areas in decline, depressed rural areas);
- employment projects and restructuring of manufacturing plants mainly in regions with high unemployment and the risk of exacerbation of social problems;
- creating entrepreneurial and innovative environment (construction of cooperation networks, regional marketing and distribution of information, supporting the creation and functioning of the market and technological infrastructure, business services, improving the quality of human resources, improving the quality of the environment as general condition for increasing the investment attractiveness, etc.).

The strategic objective of employment policy is to achieve full and productive employment of capable and willing to work. Targets and specific tasks for the realization of this goal are related to the development of the economy by achieving a perfect match between demand and supply of labor, the creation of job opportunities for everyone, and enterprises - to increase their competitiveness and efficiency. In a market economy labor market size, rate of employment and unemployment of the economically active population is determined by the labor market, by market mechanisms regulating demand and supply of labor.

The specific objectives of the policy of labor and employment in particular depend on many circumstances. Proceeding from the consequences of unemployment could be formulated theoretically several main objectives:

- preservation and protection of the human resource as the most important element of the productive forces of each country;

- inclusion of new generations to the values of work and labor morality;
- socially equitable division of labor in society;
- comply with the principle that ensures security and the balance understanding that the leading factor is labor and social benefits only replace or supplement income from work;
- preservation of social peace in society;
- solving employment problems not at the expense of higher inflation;
- solving the problems of employment and unemployment through the efforts not only of state, but also of local communities and voluntary associations.

Public employment services are gradually developing activities of the active employment policy:

- recruitment, including informing on jobs and working conditions, vocational guidance, motivation and professional qualification targeted to employment in commercially available jobs;
- stimulation of self-employment and entrepreneurship;
- implementation of programs and measures of state policy regulating the labor market;
- implementation of specialized control over the observance of laws and other normative documents in the field of unemployment insurance, payment of cash benefits and others.

Organization and management in PES: goals and opportunities

The main task of public employment services (PES) is to contribute supply and demand match on the labor market providing information, placement and active support services³. PES function in a network of more than 5 000 local employment offices throughout Europe with more than 100.000 staff offering services to job-seekers and employers. Besides different structuring in different countries their mission is the same regarding:

- easy access to the labour market - comprehensive and detailed information on available jobs and job-seekers, and on related matters of interest; a wide range of active services to assist in job searches and staff recruitment;
- access to more comprehensive services to meet individual needs;
- a range of quality services to enterprises mediating between their needs and labour market conditions, partnership with employers to achieve the economic and social objectives of integrating workers into the labour market.

PES are partners to EURES (The European Job Mobility Portal) in the facilitation of mobility across national borders on the European labor market.

³EURES. The European Job Mobility Portal.

The European network of Public Employment Services is established to maximize efficiency of public employment services (PES). It embraces all 28 EU countries, Norway, Iceland and the European Commission. The aims of the network are the following⁴:

- compare PES performance through benchmarking;
- identify evidence-based good practices and foster mutual learning;
- promote the modernization and strengthening of PES service delivery, including of the Youth Guarantee;
- prepare inputs to the European Employment Strategy and the corresponding national labor market policies.

In last few decades the European labor market is experiencing significant challenges connected to ageing population trends, entrance into a new digital era and all embracing processes of globalization. The Europe's problems regarding increasing threats of long term unemployment and extremely high levels of youth unemployment impose the need of significant changes in the way of functioning of public employment services making them more client-oriented and more flexible services functioning in accordance to the approaches in Europe 2020 addressing structural unemployment and social inclusion⁵.

Employment incentives and training dominate the types of active labor market policies offered by PES to young people, the long term unemployed and the 50 + age group. PES targets are typically linked to action planning with fewer targets linked to active measures⁶. PES 2020 Strategy is focused on an activation policy with sustainable outcomes considering transitional labor market and adaptation of their business model. The modernization of Public Employment Services (PES) has been an essential element of the European Employment Strategy⁷. Economic shocks, demographic and technological changes lead PES to processes of restructuring in basic organizational and financing model, human resources, types and methods of services provision, active labor market policies. Two trends are observed in the business model⁸:

- a trend for increasing the role of PES in the activation of a broader client base
- a trend towards increasing decentralization of PES.

The striving after development of more results-oriented services requires elaboration of measures concerning economic and social efficiency. Current measures in EURES and in member-states are output-focused and the measurement of the effectiveness of EURES needs improvements. Monitoring should go further of activity and outputs and include consideration of results – a proposal based on the practices in PES⁹.

⁴European network of Public Employment Services.

⁵Annual Report of the European Network of Public Employment Services. June 2014 - June 2015.

⁶Assessment report on PES capacity. July, 2015.

⁷Small Scale Study on PES Business Models. June, 2014.

⁸*Ibid.*

⁹PES performance measurement systems and geographical labour mobility. Final report. Client: European Commission, DG EMPL, C4. Rotterdam, London, 15 May 2012.

The necessity of application of new approaches and models in public employment services for achievement of social efficiency lead to the creation of a model for effectively implemented social policy in the sphere of labor market and employment through determination of the main technological processes in the implementation of activities in Bulgarian Employment agency (Terziev, 2015b). For that purpose, defining and making concrete the activities and the stages contained in them and implemented by Directorates "Labor office" (Table 1), a model is proposed which is focused on the achievement of satisfaction and containing instruments for rationalization of managerial decisions, provision of quality in administrative services and increasing the effectiveness of the conducted social policy.

Table 1. Main processes in labor offices of Bulgarian Employment Agency

Process	Goals
Information and consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure equal access to information and services and provide different access channels. • Fast and quality customer service by providing a clear, easy to understand, complete and accurate information and explanations. • Uniform flow distribution of persons seeking for a job and directing them to obtain services to staff competence. • Fostering independent work habits and search of useful information through various information sources. • Directing the attention of customers to use alternative sources of information (web-site, e-mail, kiosks, town halls, libraries, etc.).
Registration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registration of the individual for the subsequent use of services by LOD. • Fast and quality service by providing a clear, easily understood, complete and accurate information, explanations and forms necessary for the registration of persons. • Collecting complete and accurate information about the persons seeking for jobs and storage with a view on its repeated use and updating. • Faster inclusion of seeking jobs on the labor market, by offering suitable vacancies on the day of registration. • Reduce unevenness of the flow through even distribution of the various contingents for subsequent visits to labor brokers.
Placement - working with job seekers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide information on available vacancies in order to quickly realize on the labor market. • Display the characteristics of the seeking jobs in order to improve and facilitate the selection and recruitment vacancies. • Increase the number of hired throughout unemployed persons by encouraging them to participate actively in the labor market. • Supporting employment of the unemployed, by assessing the shortage of skills, counseling and referral to training for acquiring professional qualification, technical or social skills, and skills for independent job search. • Supporting young people under 29 years of age for employment and / or inclusion in the training. • Development of an individual plan for finding work for the unemployed in an optimally short term.
Placement - working with employers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expanding the scope of employers using the services of directorates "Labor" by:

Process	Goals
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of active, personalized service to each employer and the grounds that providing employment for job seekers; • Preliminary analysis of business performance and segmentation, depending on their economic activity and capacity for announcement of vacancies in the LOD. • Increasing vacancies in order to more opportunities for job seekers through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active contacts with employers announcing vacancies; • Proactive contacts with employers and proposing appropriate profiles of job seekers, even without the vacant job. • Achieving full specification of vacancies for subsequent fast and qualitative selection and recruitment of job seekers.
<p>Implementation of programs / projects for employment and training</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide employment to unemployed persons in an disadvantaged position on the labor market. • Increasing the employability of unemployed people by involving them in programs for employment and training. • Increasing the number of the hired among unemployed persons through their inclusion in existing employment programs and training. • Helping the unemployed to start their own business. • Encouraging employers to participate in existing programs / projects for employment. • Acquisition of permanent work habits by job seekers, reducing their dependence on the social assistance system and their return to the labor market.
<p>Implementation of measures for employment and training</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Methodological and technological unification of LOD's activity related to the implementation of active employment measures: • Inclusion of employers in training measures and employment; • Increasing the employability of the unemployed through participation in active measures for training and employment; • Providing employment to unemployed persons disadvantaged on the labor market; • Encouraging entrepreneurship among the unemployed; • Promoting mobility of unemployed persons with a view to finding a job in another place. • Promoting unemployed, subject to monthly social assistance, who start work • Improving the organization of activities. • Improving the quality and efficiency of services for the unemployed and employers.

Source: Authors' own study

The proposed new instruments for improvement of effectiveness of work of public employment services focus on an algorithm of spending resources and assurance of the necessary flexibility of the process model (Table 2). This study presents opportunities for rationalization of management solutions for effective social policy based on a process model of directorates „Labor Office”, defining processes and based on detailed metric measurement of activities in the Bulgarian Employment Agency with the objective of standardizing and defining the necessary resources provision of processes (Terziev, 2015b).

Table 2. Schematic presentation of the model

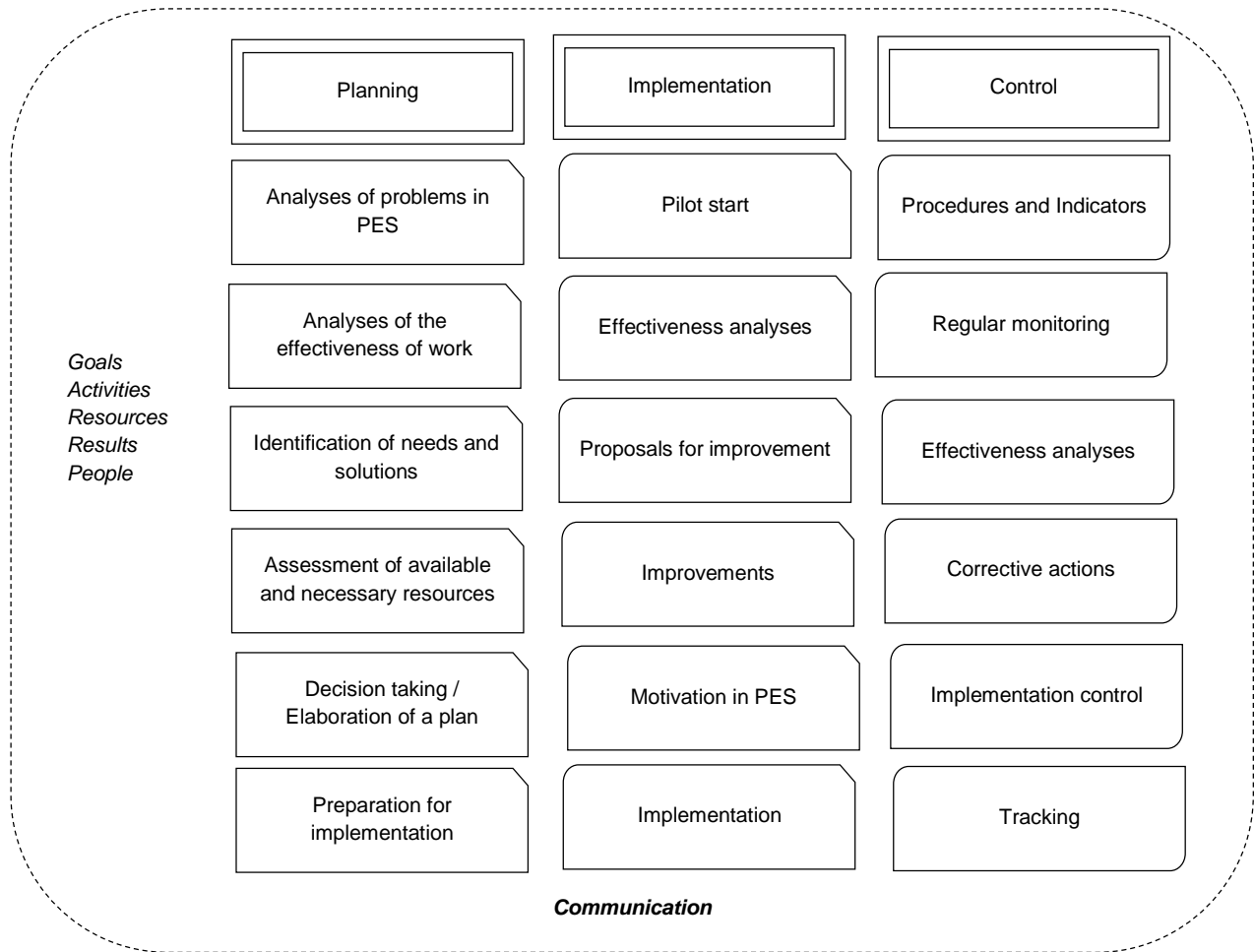
Input	Process	Output	Result
Physical resources <i>Quantity</i> <i>Quality</i> <i>Time schedule</i> <i>Value</i>	Efficiency Expenditures per unit of service Coefficients	Quantity Quality <i>of service</i> <i>of the way it is rendered</i> Cost	Mission implementation Financial sustainability Expenditures / Benefits
Financial resources <i>Quantity</i> <i>Time schedule</i>		Clients satisfaction	Clients satisfaction

Source: Authors' own study

Optimization, quality and efficiency improvement can be accomplished with the use of complex and systematic approaches that take into account available resources and capacity needed in the construction and improvement new tools to streamline management decisions, effective management and control. The presented model to determine the required capacity is a flexible tool for better management of activities in different labor offices by providing the necessary human resources and their use in the most efficient manner. The model allows consideration of the initial conditions which are bound to the policies and objectives of the Employment Agency and gives opportunity to develop different scenarios based on different starting conditions and assumptions in different labor offices. The application of the process model of work in terms of the main activities (in particular training and qualification, implementation of programs and implementation of measures) provides opportunities for optimal use of available resources and improve the capacity of work, and hence the efficiency of the social policies by providing tools for analyses, evaluation of alternative scenarios, rationalization of management decisions and standardization.

Considering the underlined need of effectiveness in decision taking, implementation and control current study makes a proposal of a model of increasing the effectiveness of management of PES as presented on fig.2.

Figure 2: Model for raising effectiveness of management in PES



Source: Authors' own study

The model concerns goals, activities, resources, results and people in the stages of planning, implementation and control. Starting with problem analyses and analyses of effectiveness of work in PES, the needs and some solutions are identified, available and necessary resources are estimated before decision taking, elaboration of a plan and preparation of activities to implement. The implementation is foreseen to start first in pilot offices and thus provide opportunities to make analyses of the implementation, make some proposals for improvements, improve and motivate the staff before the overall implementation. The key point in the model is the control which requires the adoption of a procedure, incl. indicators for measurement of efficiency in particular, conducting regular monitoring activities, assessments of effectiveness, undertaking some corrective activities if needed (e.g. change, add something or stop the implementation), control over the whole implementation and tracking out the “late” effects.

Conclusion

The features of the economic development and the possible impacts on the labor market gradually becomes an inseparable part of the process of policy making on the labor market. In the early periods of the development of labor market its policies are aimed primarily at tackling the effects of economic reforms on employment, while now the

policy of labor market has pronounced its active character and is aimed at influencing processes or the formation of behavior among target groups according to pre-planned targets. Functioning labor market in the country is adequate mechanism of the market environment and policy increasingly based on existing relationships and interactions between the periods of development of the economy and the labor market.

In the development of the labor market in recent years the policy focuses more active actions to support the restructuring of the workforce and increase its mobility. The predictability of economic developments and the effects on employment is not high and still remains within the short-term events, but not with an extended character. The development of models to predict the needs of the workforce is imperative for a closer link between the policy of the labor market with periodicity in the dynamics of the economy. The adequacy and timeliness of the policy are crucial for the effective support of the changes in the parameters of labor market and economic development. The reporting of the time delay effects and changes in its duration should not be ignored in order to develop preventive measures for timely response.

Contemporary changes in economic and social environment pose a number of challenges before public employment services and development and implementation of social policies. New realities on labor market and dynamic environment require adequate actions, rational and timely decision making and optimization of work. In direct relation with the implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth is the introduction of a common strategy for public employment services in the EU, reflecting the intensification policy with sustainable results consistent with the challenges of social environment, provoked by the labor markets. This does not mean that the operational consequences for each of the public employment services will be the same. It should not be overlooked that in different countries there are specific conditions that have impact on those consequences. And to respond flexibly and precisely to the numerous internal or external changes, public employment services are subjects to conversion and renewal, according to the individual elements to ensure continuity, available in different member states.

The adequacy of responses by institutions on the labor market is directly related to technologies used at work and applied models to rationalize decision-making and to improve the quality of services provided. Improving processes and the quality of the administrative services in the Bulgarian employment agency, taken as an example, is seen as a prerequisite for effective implementation of employment policies. A solution is the application of a process model of work in the labor offices taking into account the necessary resources (in terms of time required to perform certain actions) and determining the required capacity. The model discussed in the paper is a flexible tool for better management and efficient use of human resources.

Current study goes further and offers a model for raising effectiveness of management in PES through the application of a three-stage process of decision taking, implementation and control considering the need of a good substantiation of activities undertaken and the availability of "late" or following effects which should be analyzed

too and relevant actions undertaken subsequently for increasing or reducing impacts. The focus is on the result-based implementation and monitoring for effective management in PES and successful realization of active policies on labor market and employment.

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