

7. Employment Mobility: Online job search in the EU

Background

Mobility, an underlying principle of the EU, can have a number of potential benefits for the economy, society and the individual citizen. Employment or occupational mobility (i.e. mobility between jobs) and geographical mobility (i.e. between Member states and/or regions) can enhance economic competitiveness; potentially reducing the mismatch in supply and demand for labour across sectors and regions of Europe thus increasing the flexibility and adaptability of the labour market. Mobility can also lead to a better quality of life for individuals, for example leading to better pay and working conditions. Employment and geographical mobility are key aspects of fulfilling the Lisbon Strategy of making the EU “the most competitive and dynamic knowledge based economy with improved employment and social cohesion by 2010” (European Commission, 2002); and the importance of promoting mobility across Europe is evident within numerous legislative and practical initiatives at the local, regional, national and pan European levels.

However, mobility in Europe is quite limited (Eurobarometer, 2006). There are a number of reasons for this, including, lack of relevant skills, language, recognition of qualifications in different member states, access to health care, fragmentation of information and lack of transparency of job opportunities, finding a job for a spouse / partner, and a “weak mobility culture” (European Commission, 2002; Eurobarometer, 2006)²⁵⁴.

One strategy to enhance employment mobility is the provision of online job search services across Europe. Online job search can assist with increasing the transparency of job opportunities and collating all information about available positions into one place. Such services have the potential to increase the efficiency of the job market by increasing the number and quality of matches between employers and job seekers (Autor, 2001). For job seekers online job search can provide a convenient way to search for opportunities related to their skills and interests; for employers job search websites can be a cost effective and efficient way of recruiting staff. Online job search is one of the 12 citizen services that are measured in EC funded benchmarking activities; and was highlighted in the i2010 eGovernment action plan as a high impact, ePublic Service designed around citizens and business needs (European Commission, 2006).²⁵⁵

Online job search services in Europe

Online job search services have been created by the EC at the Pan-European level and each member state (or its regions) is responsible for providing a similar service to its citizens. There are two Pan-European online job search facilities facilitated by the European Commission: the European Job Mobility Portal (EURES)²⁵⁶ and the European Researchers Mobility Portal²⁵⁷. In 24 of the 27 member states, job search is primarily the responsibility of central government; and online job search is available in all member state. In Belgium, Italy and Spain the responsibility for online job search services is held either jointly between the national and regional level (Spain), is in the

²⁵⁴ See also mobility website: http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/skills_mobility/index_en.htm

²⁵⁵ Other services highlighted include social security services and services relating to studying abroad.

²⁵⁶ See the portal at <http://europa.eu.int/eures/home.jsp?lang=en>

²⁵⁷ See the portal at http://ec.europa.eu/eracareers/index_en.cfm

process of being decentralised to the regional level (Italy) or is based purely at the regional level (Belgium). An overview of these initiatives is provided in Table 4.

Table 4: Public online job search services in Europe

Country	URL	Level
Pan European (EURES)	http://europa.eu.int/eures/	EU
Austria	http://www.ams.or.at/	N
Belgium: Wallonia, Flanders, Brussels region	http://www.leforem.be/ http://www.vdab.be/ http://www.orbem.be/	R
Bulgaria	http://www.az.government.bg	N
Cyprus	http://www.pescps.dl.mlsi.gov.cy/	N
Czech Republic	http://portal.mpsv.cz/sz	N
Denmark	http://www.jobnet.dk/	N
Estonia	http://www.amet.ee/	N
Finland	http://www.mol.fi/	N
France	http://www.anpe.fr/	N
Germany	http://www.arbeitsagentur.de/	N
Greece	http://www.oaed.gr/	N
Hungary	http://www.afsz.hu/	N
Ireland	http://www.fas.ie/	N
Italy	http://www.borsalavoro.it/	R
Latvia	http://www.nva.lv/index.php?id=139	N
Lithuania	http://www.ldb.lt/	N
Luxembourg	http://www.adem.public.lu/	N
Malta	http://www.etc.gov.mt/	N
Netherlands	http://www.cwinet.nl/	N
Poland	http://www.epuls.praca.gov.pl/	N
Portugal	http://portal.iefp.pt/portal	N
Romania	http://www.anofm.ro , www.semm.ro , http://www.mcti.ro/888.html	N
Slovakia	http://www.upsvar.sk/	N

Slovenia	http://www.ess.gov.si/	N
Spain	http://www.inem.es/	R
Sweden	http://www.ams.se/	N
UK	http://www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk/	N

The features of online job search offered by member states and the EC tend to be quite similar. In general, they include: an online searchable database of vacancies for job seekers, additional guidance (e.g. about working in a different countries or career guidance), email alerts of jobs that match the users profile, facilities to post CVs to the website, the ability to manage job applications and in a small number of cases, such as in Finland and Malta, apply for jobs online. For employers the most frequent service offered is for them to publish and manage job vacancies and search the CV database, and to a greater or lesser extent have direct online contact with potential applicants. These online services are typically supported and complemented by job centres and call centres (European Commission, 2006b).

Success of online job search

Valuable indicators when measuring the success of online job search services include: usage statistics of the service, views about the usefulness of such services, sophistication / facilities available online, efficiency gains for businesses, efficiency gains for government, number of job matches and broader impacts on employment rates and occupational mobility. However, in the public sector the data available is limited; and predominately focuses on usage of sites, user views and the online features available on the website. In part this is due to the complexity of determining the role online job search plays within a whole range of employment services and mobility initiatives. Yet without improved indicators it is difficult to assess the value of online job search. In the remainder of this section the available data is summarised.

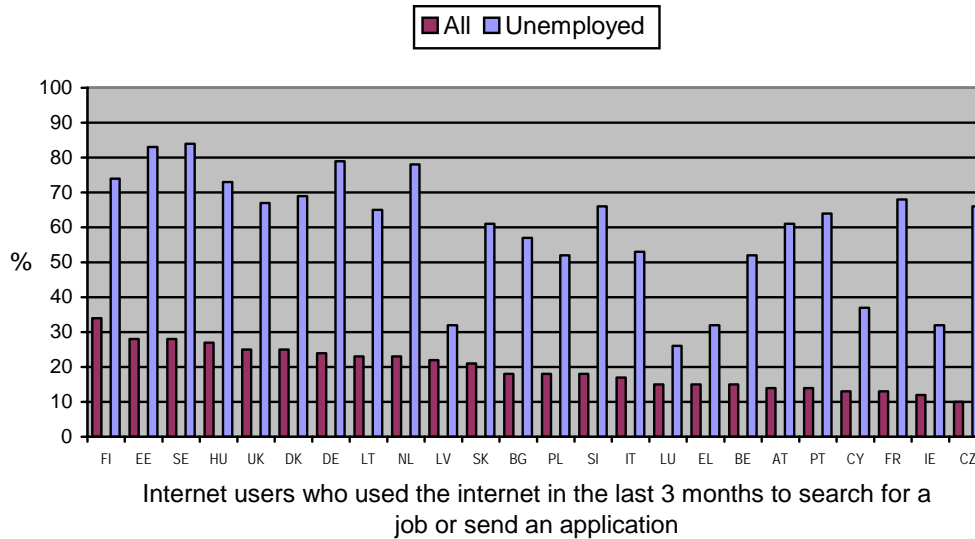
In terms of usage of online job search, in 2006 21% of Internet users in EU (25) had used the web in the last 3 months for looking for a job or sending a job application; and this figure rose to 67% for those who were unemployed (Figure 2)²⁵⁸. To put this statistic in context, 44% of Internet users had used the Internet in the last 3 months for interaction with public authorities, 49% of Internet users had used the Internet in the last 3 months for using services related to travel and accommodation, and 80% of Internet users had used the Internet in the last 3 months for finding information about goods and services (Eurostat, 2006)²⁵⁹. Thus, the proportion of Internet users who access this service fares relatively well when compared to other online activities but could be improved. However, this figure does not distinguish between rates of usage of government or commercial online job search nor between those who search for a job online and / or send a job application online.

From the available data online job search is a relatively popular eGovernment service. In a survey of EU(15) countries Internet users participants were asked about their preference for interacting with government for seven specific services (tax declaration, job search, request for personal documents, car registration, declaration to police and book search in libraries. Preference for online job search was the second highest, with around 58% of Internet users preferring to conduct job searches online as opposed to traditional methods (Graafland-Essers and Etedgui, 2003).

²⁵⁸ This data was accessed from the Eurostat database in January 2007 which was last updated in December 2006. The first year the data is available is for 2005. In 2005 EU (25) 19% of Internet users had used the web for in the last 3 months for looking for a job or sending a job application; and this figure rose to 59% for those who were unemployed. Please see: <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu>

²⁵⁹ This data was accessed from the Eurostat database in February 2007 which was last updated in January 2007. Please see: <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu>

Figure 2: % of Internet users who used the Internet in the last 3 months to search for a job or send an application



Source: Eurostat, 2006.

In addition to the Eurostat data some public employment services do collect data on the usage of their websites, including data on: the number of unique visitors, number of job searches, the number of CVs uploaded and the number of vacancies available. As part of the study all 27 member states and EURES were contacted for this information; 8 of whom replied and 7 gave some or all of the data requested²⁶⁰: Belgium (Flanders region), EURES, France, Germany, Netherlands, Slovenia and the UK. This data is detailed at appropriate sections throughout this report. Other usage data can be collected from commercial online intelligence services, such as hit wise²⁶¹, which will also be referred to in the text below.

From the supply side, in the 7th measurement of electronic public services conducted by Capgemini²⁶² all EU27 countries apart from Luxembourg were given a stage 4 out of 4 rating for sophistication (CapGemini, 2007). Yet such measures are not indicative of use; and given the commercial context the 4/4 rating defined as, "The publicly accessible website managed by the service provider or by the administrative responsible level offers the possibility of an electronic supply of pre-selected jobs related to the given profile of the job searcher" is not in reality that sophisticated.

Why online job search is a good case study

Online job search services provided by government are a particularly interesting case for the Barriers study as they operate within a very competitive commercial environment. There are numerous commercial online job search services in Europe both at the pan European level and at the national level. The majority of these, such as Monster²⁶³ and StepStone²⁶⁴ offer citizens and

²⁶⁰ Cyprus (no data available)

²⁶¹ <http://www.hitwise.co.uk>

²⁶² This study focused on EU(27) plus Norway, Iceland, Switzerland and Turkey.

²⁶³ <http://www.monster.co.uk/>

²⁶⁴ <http://www.stepstone.com/>

businesses similar services to those provided by government, such as, online search, company profiles and a searchable database of CVs for employers although they tend to be more vibrant and “sales focused” compared to government websites. In addition, a high proportion of companies advertise vacancies on their websites that can be browsed by job seekers.

A second reason why online job search is a good case study is the possibility for technological innovation in this sector. The group of web-based applications commonly called ‘Web 2.0’ provide major possibilities for overcoming barriers to recruitment and job-seeking on-line. Examples include the growing number of business orientated social networking sites based on social networks (such as LinkedIn²⁶⁵, Passado²⁶⁶ and Doostang²⁶⁷) that enable employers to advertise jobs and search for appropriate applicants, whilst job seekers can find out about those who are hiring and identify existing contacts who may be able to introduce them to the employer they are interested in. Another “job 2.0” site, Jobster.com encourages users to make use of a range of services including posting a Youtube video on their personalized homepage. A third interesting example is the recruitment website Zubka.com, where users can earn a recruitment fee which can be in the region of several thousand pounds for placing their contacts into new jobs. Web 2.0 applications are relatively absent from e-government in European countries (NAO, 2007), but these private sector examples highlight what might be possible for government employment agencies in developing their on-line services and could provide lessons in using innovations of this kind to overcome barriers to e-government more generally.

In short, online job search in the EU is an important case for a number of reasons. First, it is a key priority of the European Commission. Second the commercial context within which public services are operated is a challenge facing governments in a number of areas; and third web 2.0 applications (that are increasingly common in the commercial recruitment sector) provide potential solutions to overcome barriers to eGovernment development.

The embedded case studies

In the discussion below barriers to successful online job search services are identified and ways to overcome these obstacles are explored via case study research which included document analysis and interviews with key stakeholders involved with each initiative. The three embedded cases of online job search are: EURES, the online job search services provided by Slovenia and the UK.

These three cases were selected as interesting examples of online job search services provided at the national and Pan European level. As the number and sophistication of Pan-European services increase it is important to explore the challenges and advantages of those already in existence. EURES is particularly interesting as it attempts to provide a service for all job seekers in Europe; and in its 13 year history has had to adapt to changing circumstances, such as the increase in EU member states, technological innovations and increased competition from the commercial sector.

As all member states have had to provide an online job search service and the vast majority of these have done so at the national level it is interesting to explore two different countries – Slovenia and the UK. There are similarities and differences between the two countries. For example, both have been rated as 4 / 4 in terms of online sophistication, have similar proportions of people using online job search services (see Figure 2) and have similar unemployment rates of around 6%²⁶⁸. On the other hand, they differ in terms of the average number of jobs citizens have had in their working life (the UK is higher and Slovenia is lower when compared to the EU(25) average); on their views about the positive effects of changing jobs every few years (the UK is lower and Slovenia is higher when compared to the EU(25) average) (Eurobarometer, 2006); levels of Internet penetration (UK is

²⁶⁵ <http://www.linkedin.com>

²⁶⁶ <http://www.passado.com>

²⁶⁷ <http://www.doostang.com>

²⁶⁸ Average figure and Slovenia data from Eurostat. UK data from NSO, UK. No Eurostat data is available for the following countries: Greece, Italy or UK.

higher and Slovenia is lower when compared to the EU(25) average (Eurostat, 2006); the size of the country; the date of joining the EU; and the legal context.

Each of these cases is explored in turn below.

Case Study: The European Employment Services (EURES)

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Definition of the case study

The European Employment Services (EURES) network was set up in 1994 to enhance job mobility across the European Economic Area (EEA) in accordance with regulation 1612/68. EURES is designed to support mobility within European labour markets by enhancing information and transparency about working and living in another country and providing information about the obstacles to increasing geographical and occupational mobility in Europe (e.g. problems with the recognition of qualifications from overseas or problems with transport networks in cross border regions). Thus, EURES can both be viewed as an instrument for decision makers and a service for citizens and businesses (COM 1998 - 413).

EURES has three main service aims: 1) to provide information, guidance and advice to individuals who are seeking a job within the EEA; 2) to aid employers who are aiming to recruit individuals within the EEA; and 3) to provide advice to employees and employers in cross border regions.²⁶⁹ Since 2003 EURES services have been accessed via the European Job Mobility Portal. Through the portal individuals seeking employment can look for jobs on the vacancy database, post their CVs that can be searched by prospective employers, find out information about the labour market, living and working conditions, and educational opportunities (provided by Ploteus – see <http://europa.eu.int/ploteus/portal/home.jsp>) in different countries. Businesses can advertise their vacancies on the website and can search CVs of job seekers.

The on-line portal is run alongside face to face and telephone services provided by EURES advisors, assistants and helpdesks that are based within national public employment services or other partner organisations.

Setting of the case study

The EURES network is one aspect of the mobility strategy within Europe; and is set within the wider political context of the Lisbon Objectives, the European Employment Strategy and the EC Action Plan for Skills and Mobility. Other initiatives to enhance occupational and geographical mobility include the European Health Insurance Card (2004), the EU Links and Information on Social Security Portal (EUISS) (2006); and the European year of workers mobility (2006).²⁷⁰

The goals of EURES are to facilitate transparency and the exchange of information about the job market in Europe and to provide information on the labour market to inform mobility strategy. As noted above these goals are not easy to achieve and EURES faces a number of specific challenges including: co-ordination of the network, co-ordination with other EC initiatives, competition from the private sector (e.g. commercial websites such as Jobpilot²⁷¹, Monster, StepStone and iWork²⁷²); and assessing and justifying the value of the network. This will be discussed in detail below.

The service is provided by the Directorate-General of Employment and Social Affairs at the European Commission. Membership of EURES is made up of regional, national and EU levels and includes the national public employment services (PES), trade unions and employers' organisations. At the EU level there are three key actors in the network: the EURES High level strategy group, the EURES working party and the co-ordination office. At the national and regional levels of the network there are four key actors: EURES managers, cross border co-ordinators,

²⁶⁹ See the portal at (<http://europa.eu.int/eures/home.jsp?lang=en>)

²⁷⁰ Workers mobility website: http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/workersmobility_2006/index.cfm

²⁷¹ <http://www.jobpilot.com>

²⁷² <http://www.iagora.com/iwork/index.html>

EURES advisors and often EURES assistants (i.e. front office staff from the public employment agency that provides EURES services (ECORYS – NEI, 2005).

The financial investment in the EURES network has been significant. The annual budget for 1996 and 1997 was 10.5 MECU (with an additional contribution from EFTS of 165.200 ECU in 1996 and 6 MECU in 1997 due to participation of Norway and Iceland). In 2000 and 2001 the budget was 11.6 million EUR and 12.46 million EUR respectively. In 2002 and 2003 the budget was 14.5 million EUR in each year (although only 85% was spent in 2002) and rose to 17.5 million EUR in 2004 and 2005 (in part to account for the growth of the network) of which 16.7 million was spent in each year (COM, 2007-116).

Milestones in the development of EURES

1994: EURES network launched

2002: Reform of EURES

2003: Launch of the revised job mobility portal

2004: New member states and Switzerland joined the EURES network

2006: Launch of new online vacancy exchange system

2007: Bulgaria and Romania joined the EURES network

Adoption and implementation of EURES

There are three key documents that form the legal foundations of the inception and development of EURES. The overall framework for EURES, i.e., the structures and procedures for exchanging information, the computer system, the role of the members of the network and its co-ordination, were set out in regulation (EEC) 1612/68, part II and EURES was launched by the Commission in 93/569 in 1993. The legal base for EURES was reformed when the Commission updated this council regulation in 2002. In this act, the role of the EURES network as a key element of employment and mobility strategies of Europe was emphasised; and improvements in the roles and responsibilities of the actors within the network were set out. These changes included the creation of a High Level Strategy Group (HLSG) to encourage greater involvement and steering of EURES from public employment services and social partners, introducing measures to encourage mainstreaming of EURES into current PES activities; and integrating cross-border activities into national EURES organisations (ECORYS-NEI 2005). The third legal act, related to the second, was the EURES Charter (2003/C 106/03) that set out the operation of the EURES network in detail. For more details of the reform of the EURES legal base see COM, 2004-467.

The technology utilised by the EURES network has been subject to revision since the beginning of the initiative when two EURES databases were set up; one for working and living in Europe and the second for vacancies. At the start Euroadvisors had to manually add and modify vacancies; and over the years further developments have included the facility to provide more detailed information about each vacancy, the creation of a job classification system to facilitate searching, the development of a CV database for job seekers that employers can search and the replacement of the centralised database with a new decentralised system in 2005. The later developments for the decentralised system were set out in the 2003 EURES charter alongside the expectation that all partners submit all their national vacancies into this system. However, while the majority of EURES members had connected their national database with this new platform by the end of 2005 some missed the deadline. The next stage of technical development is focusing on the usability of the system, including personalised My EURES accounts, online newsletters, links between online CVs and EUROPASS and links with jobs on the European Researchers Mobility Portal. Indeed, some of these initiatives are already operational (COM 2007-116).

The 10 new member states joined the EURES network in 2004. Preparations for the enlargement of the network began in the latter half of 2002; led by the EURES co-ordination office in collaboration with the member states. A number of activities were conducted in readiness for the expansion, including training and recruitment of new EURES managers and advisors, the development of

appropriate technical systems, establishing infrastructures, developing the transitional arrangements for the free movement of workers and twinning each new member of PES with the PES of an old member state. Overall, the progress of the new member states has been good; new member states have been able to build on the experience of older members and the development and implementation of EURES in these member states has been rapid. Plans for the joining of Romania and Bulgaria have been in place since 2005 (COM 2007-116).

Impact of EURES

Four measures that can be explored are the number of visitors to the portal, the number of people who have found a job through EURES, the online visibility of the site (as measured by inlinks and outlinks) and the success of EURES in identifying barriers to mobility.

Usage of EURES is somewhat below what might be expected, given the original aims and level of investment in the service. The number of visits to the EURES portal in January 2005 was 541,790, fell to 435,340 in July 2005 and rose to just over a million in January 2007. These numbers made the portal one of the most popular websites maintained by the European Commission by 2005 (COM 2007-116); yet this is still not a high “hit rate” in comparison to national public employment sites and commercial employment services that operate on a European level. For example, Monster Europe has around 7.5 million hits per month.

In the past there were attempts to calculate the number of people who have found a job through EURES (both from online and offline services). In 1995, 1996 and 1997, 5,700, 9,505, and 22,729 people found a job via EURES. After this date no figures are reported as it was acknowledged that the data is unreliable; as it is based on self report estimates from EURES advisors, successful job seekers reporting back to EURES who are not obliged to do so, and does not reflect the indirect impact of EURES (e.g. through support, advice and information) (COM 1998-413).

One indication of a websites visibility is the number of links pointing to a site (inlinks) and the number of links pointing outside the site (outlinks). The more inlinks and outlinks a website has the more visible the website is in terms of being at the centre of social and informational networks – i.e. it is more “nodal” (see Petricek et al., 2006). When comparing EURES to other commercial European job search sites the site does not fare well. EURES has ? outlinks compared to 42 outlinks for stepstone.com and 19 outlinks for jobpilot .com. In terms of inlinks EURES has ??? compared to 787 and 816 inlinks respectively for stepstone and jobpilot. This data combined with the usage data analysed above suggests EURES needs to significantly improve its online presence.

The wider goal of EURES to assist in identifying and overcoming barriers to mobility is also relevant here. From the available data this seems to have been an indirect impact of the initiative. Many PES collect data on trends in the labour market and a number have set up bi-lateral recruitment projects between EURES members to counteract imbalances in the labour market (COM 2007-116).

Challenges and barriers faced

The Seven Barrier Categories

The Breaking Barriers Project, funded by the EC, identified and explored the key barriers to eGovernment in Europe. The project team proposed seven key barrier categories of obstacles to eGovernment progression. The categories are intentionally broad and tied to a multitude of more specific barriers relevant at different governance, institutional and jurisdictional levels. In summary the barriers are: leadership failures, financial inhibitors, digital divides and choices, poor coordination, workplace and organisational inflexibility, lack of trust and poor technical design²⁷³.

²⁷³ For more details about the Breaking Barriers to eGovernment project please see <http://www.egovbarriers.org>

From analysis of this case study four emerge as being relevant: leadership failures, financial inhibitors, poor co-ordination and poor technical design.

Leadership Failures: Leadership failures result in slow and patchy progress to eGovernment. There are two key barriers in this category:

- A lack of commitment for the EURES network by some partners: a lack of commitment can arise due to the different and competing goals of achieving national labour market strategy and fulfilling the aims of the EURES network (ECORYS-NEI 2005).
- Visibility of EURES: Awareness of EURES by employers and job seekers varies across partner countries (ECORYS-NEI 2005). While overall awareness of EURES is difficult to measure; based on the relatively small numbers of visitors to the portal and link analysis, online visibility of EURES is very low.

Financial Inhibitors: Financial inhibitors limit the flow of investment to eGovernment innovation. There are two related barriers in this category:

- The cost of EURES: EURES costs the Commission around 16.5 million EUR per year. This is a significant amount of money.
- No cost benefit analysis: There are limited ways to assess the effectiveness of EURES; and thus no cost benefit analysis has been conducted. There is no way of knowing if EURES is doing a good job or if mobility across Europe could be enhanced in other more cost effective ways.

Poor Coordination: Poor coordination across jurisdictional, administrative and geographic boundaries holds back eGovernment networking benefits. There are three main barriers in this category:

- A lack of co-ordination between EURES and other EC initiatives: the information available on EURES is also available in different forms on other parts of the EC site, thus EURES needs to co-ordinate with these other initiatives to eliminate duplication of effort and improve ease of use.
- A lack of co-ordination between EURES and commercial recruitment sites: there are a significant number of other online services that aim to facilitate match between demand and supply of jobs in Europe. It is important EURES positions itself within this wider context (ECORYS-NEI 2005).
- Delays in updating information on the portal due to the different languages in Europe: each country has to submit updates on living and working in the member state every 6 months. Yet there is a delay (sometimes of several months) in this information being published online due to the time taken to translate the information into all the different languages.

Poor Technical Design: There are four key barriers in this category leading to incompatibilities between ICT systems or difficult-to-use eGovernment services:

- Interoperability of IT systems: from interview data moving to the new decentralised system was a significant challenge due to differences in IT systems, IT providers / consultants, job classifications, national ID numbers and the use of different software in the different partner countries. Significant progress has been made but some issues still remain.
- Difficulties with search: employers and job seekers have experienced some problems finding jobs on the site due to differences in categorisation of jobs because keyword searches have to be in the appropriate language.
- Inadequate information on the portal: for some specific professions in some countries interviews felt there was a lack of detailed information on the portal.
- Poor online visibility of the portal: limited inlinks and outlinks means that EURES is not at the heart of online information and communication networks about online job search in Europe

Legal Issues arising from the study

In the Breaking Barriers Project eight legal areas were identified that underpin the seven barrier categories: Authentication and Identification, Intellectual Property Rights, Liability, Privacy and Data Protection, Public Administration Transparency, Relationships between Public Administrations, Citizens and other ICT actors, and Re-use of Public Sector Information. However, legal concerns did not emerge during this case study. Of the eight legal foundations the four areas that were thought to be most likely to arise were: identification and authentication, re-use of data, liability, and privacy and data protection. However, no significant issues became apparent. Privacy and data protection has been considered and the privacy statement is clear on the website; and a disclaimer regarding the quality of the vacancies on the site reduces liability issues for EURES.

Relative influence of eGovernment challenges

The summary below gives an indication of the relative significance of the kinds of barriers EURES is facing.

- Political, administrative and organizational (35%): a lack of commitment to EURES by partners in some member states and difficulties with co-ordination between EURES, other EC initiatives and commercial job search sites are key issues to be considered.
- Legal (5%): the key legal issues such as privacy and data protection and liability have been considered and addressed by EURES.
- Financial (25%): EURES costs a significant amount of money each year yet the impact of the initiative is not known.
- Social and economic (10%): differences between national labour market strategy and the European mobility strategy can be problematic and language issues present a challenge to Pan-European initiatives.
- Technological issues (20%): technological interoperability and poor online visibility are key issues for EURES.

Overcoming the barriers

It is important to note that efforts have been and are being made to overcome these obstacles.

For example, in terms of raising the visibility of EURES many attempts and initiatives have been made to raise awareness. Initiatives at the pan European level include: working party recommendations to enhance the profile of EURES amongst employers in 2002 (COM 2004-467); recruitment fairs and company visits in 2004; the re-launch of the EURES ad hoc working group on Employers Services in 2005 (COM 2007-116); and the year of mobility in 2006. From the interviews it is apparent that significant effort is also made at national level in some countries. However visibility and in particular online visibility is low and this is a significant challenge. More attention to online presence and ensuring that the website is as attractive to users as commercial sites would be valuable.

Secondly, in terms of cost benefit analysis, there are more detailed measures of wider EURES activity (e.g. numbers of queries dealt with via telephone, email and in person in any given month (COM 2007-116)) which is valuable and would assist with a cost benefit analysis of the initiative. However, these are also problematic due to: the reliance on self report by EURES advisors, a lack of clear guidance over what "counts" as a query and inconsistencies in the way interactions with the public and employers are recorded. It is clear that some attempts have been made to evaluate the cost-effectiveness of the system which should be recognised yet more work is required on this complex issue. Indeed, interviewees were well aware of the inadequacies of the system and were very supportive of more moves to try to measure the value of the service but in a way that did not add excessive administrative burdens to any EURES stakeholders.

Thirdly, the co-ordination of the network has improved over time; and from the interviews it is the emergence of the informal networks amongst EURES actors that are perceived to be the most useful. Within these informal networks EURES actors exchange advice and support about a wide range of issues that can benefit both the running of EURES within that country and also the running of the national PES service.

Potential solutions to the barriers could include:

- A good EURES manager at the national level to overcome a lack of commitment to EURES (ECORYS-NEI 2005)
- The development of effectiveness indicators
- More strategic positioning of EURES amongst EC initiatives
- Collaborating with other (more visible) commercial operations
- Greater segmentation of the needs of different users of the site
- Improving the nodality of the site and making it as attractive to users as commercial websites

Conclusions

Thus, for EURES the three biggest challenges are to: raise online visibility; develop tools to analyse the costs and benefits of the service; and to improve co-ordination and the positioning between EURES, other EC initiatives and commercial job search sites. Despite the challenges EURES is one of the first pan-European services and provides a number of interesting lessons that can be utilised as the EC takes forward its i2010 eGovernment strategy to provide seamless public services for citizens and business across borders (COM 2006 -173).

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Case Study: Online Job Search in Slovenia

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Definition of the case study

The focus of this case is the online job search service provided by the Employment Service of Slovenia (ESS). Online job search forms a part of the ESS website (<http://www.ess.gov.si>) that is aimed at a number of target groups: the unemployed, individuals who wish to change their career, young people in education and employers. The ESS website as a whole offers citizens a number of services. For example, job seekers can find out information about social security benefits, scholarships and training as well as use the online job search facility. The online job search facility enables citizens to search databases with job offerings, register their details on the database and subscribe to receive email alerts specific to their skills and interests and upload a CV. Employers can post vacancies and search the CV database of candidates. This online facility is provided alongside call centres and local offices.

Setting of the case study

The employment policy in Slovenia is the responsibility of the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs (MLFSA) and the ESS. The ministry defines the legal framework and supervises policy implementation and the ESS is responsible for the delivery of the service. The ESS is an independent public institute that is financed by the state and is a mediator between supply and demand of the labour market.

The activities of the ESS were defined within the 1991 Employment and Unemployment Insurance Act (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia (OGRS), Nos. 5/91, 12/92, 71/93, 38/94, 69/98 and 67/2002). These activities are regulated by a number of laws and regulations directly affecting employment and are also regulated by other related areas: the Pension and Disability Insurance Act; the Health Care and Health Insurance Act; the Employment and Work of Aliens Act; the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment of Disabled Persons Act; the Education legislation (vocational guidance and counselling and education); the Labour regulations (redundancy, apprenticeships, labour contracts, inspections etc.); Social security (maternity pay, registration of insurance period in labour booklet, means-testing calculations, cadastral income, revaluation etc.); and complies with EU legislation.

The mission of the service is,

“to offer unemployed people professional assistance in obtaining work; to offer employers professional assistance in meeting their labour needs; to offer unemployed people and scholarship-holders effective protection of their rights and professional assistance; to work with professional institutions, providers of employment measures and social partners in developing the labour market; and to offer professional assistance to other legal entities and individuals in the areas of activity of the Service.”
(Annual report 2005)

To fulfil this mission the ESS engages in a number of activities including: job mediating and careers advice, implementation of unemployment insurance, issuing of employment and work permits for foreign workers, provision of national programme of scholarships for young people and conducting and disseminating research on the activities of ESS and the Slovenian labour market (Annual report 2005).

The ESS operates at the central, regional and local level. Citizens have direct contact with one of the 59 local offices that assist with employment, vocational and training and benefits guidance. The 12 regional offices provide support, monitor and evaluate the work carried out at the local level and the head office provides analytical, legal, personnel, financial and organizational support to the local

and regional offices. The ESS is managed by an administrative board and general director (made up of representatives from employers, trade unions, the council of workers of ESS and government officials) who are responsible for organization, management and expertise in the implementation of Employment and Unemployment Insurance Act, and of other laws and regulations which define the tasks of ESS.

The organisation of the offices is clearly defined²⁷⁴, with different departments having responsibility for different aspects of the service. For example, there are departments who are responsible for placement services and vocational guidance, legal affairs, scholarships, the computerised information system and organisation and development of the institution. Online job search is the responsibility of the central office.

The online job search service was developed because the ESS felt that the Internet was becoming an increasingly important channel for employment services; particularly as comparatively Slovenia were fairly quick to adopt the Internet. This was mainly the case for younger people in the mid to late 1990s in Slovenia but now the Internet is important for all age groups. It was felt that online job search would provide job seekers with more up to-date information that was accessible at any time and straightforward to use. Online job search forms part of a multi-channel strategy for job seekers.

All the development of the online service was conducted in house; and apart from a small number of specialised appointments (e.g. project manager and webmaster) the work was carried out by existing members of staff.

Interestingly there is another online job search site provided on the e-government portal of Slovenia (<http://e-uprava.gov.si>) yet this is a separate initiative to the ESS website²⁷⁵. This second initiative has also been rated as 4 / 4 in terms of online sophistication in 2007 benchmarking exercise (CapGemini 2007); and while there are some links between the two e.g. there are links to each others service and the ESS has provided information (e.g. FAQs) for the e-government portal the two remain relatively separate.

There are also significant numbers of private sector employers operating in Slovenia both at the global or European level and at the national level. The ESS has attempted to work with commercial employment services in two main ways: 1) the ESS puts out calls for tender for a range of activities they are responsible for (e.g. short courses, workshops) and private recruitment firms are sometimes awarded these contracts; and 2) private companies can set up a contract with ESS whereby they are paid if they find a job for a individual who is registered unemployed. The recruitment agency will also receive the typical finders' fee from the employer. The payment increases depending on the difficulty of finding a suitable placement for the unemployed job seeker. However, this second initiative has not been a great success as commercial providers argue they only make enough money from the long term unemployed or other individuals who are difficult to employ for it to be worth their time – yet these are not the people the companies who are paying for their services wish to recruit. The philosophy behind this approach is that ESS sees themselves not in competition with commercial providers – they just want to get people back into work as quickly as possible – it doesn't matter how. This is supported by the fact the ESS website contains links to other commercial job search sites.

The ESS has been involved in the EURES network since 2004. In 2005 there were 7 trained EURES advisors who provided 13,691 information and advice sessions for 6,605 job seekers, 3,282 employers and 3,804 other clients. A total of 951 job seekers from other EU members were referred to job vacancies with employers from Slovenia (Annual report, 2005). In 2007 there were 4 advisors. While there are concerns about certain professions e.g. doctors, nurses etc who are already lacking in Slovenia moving to other countries; the EURES arm of the ESS network promotes job flows both to and from Slovenia and is well integrated within ESS.

²⁷⁴ See <http://www.ess.gov.si/eng/Introduction/Organization.htm>) for more details of the organisational structure

²⁷⁵ More details about e-employment on the eGovernment portal are available ePractice. Please see: <http://www.epractice.eu/cases/317>

Milestones in the development of online job search in Slovenia

- 1991: Employment and Unemployment Insurance Act
- 1995: The ESS website set up in 1995
- 1997: Job vacancies published online
- 1999: Further additions to the ESS website (e.g. CV database added)
- 2003: ESS website interface re-designed.

Adoption and implementation of online job search

As noted above job vacancies began to be published online in 1997; and then in 1999 ESS developed online job search services to include the CV database and email alerts. As privacy is an important issue for Slovenian citizens there is an option for those who wish to upload their CVs to remain anonymous; i.e. employers cannot contact them directly but the job seeker is informed via email that an employer is interested in them and then it is up to the job seeker to contact the company. In 2004 further development took place in order for the national database system to fit with EURES.

In Slovenia, employers are required by law to notify ESS of all their job vacancies²⁷⁶ and these appear on the boards in the local and regional employment offices. ESS will publish job vacancies online and in other media such as newspapers and teletext at the employers request; and around 67% of employers choose to do so. At this point employers are also asked if they would like their vacancy to be added to EURES. Those who submit a vacancy online are automatically given a unique id number for the vacancy that will be used when reporting who got the job (for health insurance purposes etc) and can use their unique business number to register a vacancy.

As noted above the development of the website was done in house as the costs were too high for the ESS to employ outside experts. A lead on the website was employed who was responsible for the day to day implementation and running of the website, along with analysing and reporting on progress; and a small number of other technical experts were employed. All other tasks were carried out by existing members of the ESS central office team. Now the online component of ESS is perceived as part of the daily routine. If a big change to the online service is planned then a working group is set up to plan the development and implementation of the new initiative.

In 2005 ESS received SIT 6,161,719,000 (25,712,398 EUR) from the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs for the operation of the Service. There is not a dedicated budget to the online service – it forms part of the operational budget; and because the online service is integrated it is difficult to separate out the specific costs involved.

Future plans for the online job search are based around making the service far more personalised to the individual user, linking the back and front office more closely, making the interface as user friendly and personalised as possible and enabling job seekers to interact with ESS purely online if they chose to do so (whilst keeping all other channels open). Later this year there are plans to enable citizens and business to use digital certificates as opposed to username and password to gain access to the system.

Impacts of Online Job Search

As discussed in the introduction the impact of online job search is hard to measure. In 2005, ESS helped 53,857 unemployed people find work. Yet the contribution of online job search to this statistic is difficult to determine. Below the following indicators are summarised: online sophistication, usage, and awareness and usefulness of the service as perceived by job seekers.

²⁷⁶ Exception: Article 24 of the Employment Relationship Act

As noted above, in terms of online sophistication, the service has been rated as 4/4 in the 6th and 7th measurement of electronic public services conducted by Capgemini.

Table 5: Statistics on interactive job-search pages on ESS web side (<http://www.ess.gov.si>)

Month / 2006	Job Vacancies (JV)			Subscriptions to e-mail JV notices (JV information e-mails)			Job seekers CV (on-line CV)				Inquiry among job seekers		
	Average No of JV published per day	No of inquiries among JV	No of inquires among JV per day	No of new sub-scriptions	No of active sub-scriptions	No of e-mails sent	No of newly entered CVs	Active* job seekers - CVs			No of entered CVs - passive	No of inquiries	No of e-mails to anonymous job-seekers *
								anon*	non-anon*	Total			
January	977	418,825	13,510	2,269	8,475	33,900	458	455	544	999	27,261	243	102
Feb	1,228	384,154	13,719	1,667	8,424	33,696	366	423	578	1,001	27,530	189	38
March	1,216	450,741	14,540	2,249	8,809	35,236	442	479	606	1,085	27,900	215	31
April	1,205	336,997	11,233	1,485	8,485	33,940	280	402	504	906	28,359	144	22
May	1,205	402,459	12,982	1,810	8,654	34,616	302	438	494	932	28,737	276	157
June	1,433	366,068	12,202	2,131	9,177	36,708	298	480	486	966	28,952	209	244
July	1,239	370,072	11,937	1,797	9,642	38,568	277	658	674	1,332	28,931	191	239
August	1,239	265,462	8,563	1,765	9,711	38,844	310	761	789	1,550	28,918	230	661
Sept	1,587	n.a.	n.a.	1,601	9,745	38,980	337	904	973	1,877	28,909	239	417
October	1,623	n.a.	n.a.	1,635	9,691	38,764	294	1,167	1,249	2,416	28,252	197	497
Nov	1,383	n.a.	n.a.	1,493	8,735	34,940	237	1,516	1,499	3,015	28,252	180	160
Dec	1,383	n.a.	n.a.	924	8,725	34,900	190	1,527	1,513	3,040	28,252	125	60
Total		2,994,778		20,826		433,092	3,791					2,438	2,628
Average	1,310	249,565	12,336	1,736		36,091	316	768	826	1,593	28,354	203	219

* Job seekers can present themselves in an anonymous or non-anonymous way. If employer is interested in an anonymous job-seeker (can't see his/her personal data), the application will send an e-mail to the job-seeker with info on employer. Job-seekers must choose the period for advertising his/hers CV (maximum 1 months), with possibility to prolong the period before its expiration.

In 2006, usage of online job search services in Slovenia was slightly lower than the EU(25) average; 18% of Internet users had used the web for in the last 3 months for looking for a job or sending a job application; and this figure rose to 66% for those who were unemployed (Eurostat 2006)²⁷⁷. Usage of the ESS website specifically is growing annually. In 2005 the ESS website received a daily average of 48,698 page hits to the Slovenian pages of the website, an increase of 49.5% on 2004. This figure rose to 61,764 in 2006 (the number of unique visitors are not collected).

²⁷⁷ This data was accessed from the Eurostat database in January 2007.

Job seekers can subscribe for suitable job alerts by a weekly email. In 2002, an average of 16,982 email messages was sent out per week (Annual report 2002). By the end of 2002, 12,364 jobseekers had registered with site, which allows jobseekers to enter data about themselves which is searchable to by future employers. Data for 2006 is provided in Table 5.

In addition to collecting usage statistics ESS carry out an annual survey of a sample of individuals who are registered unemployed. In order to reduce the burden on citizens only four questions are asked to which they could reply yes or no. They are:

1. Do you have a possibility to access the Internet regularly?
2. Have you heard about the ESS web site?
3. Have you visited the ESS website to find information?
4. Have you already searched for a job by using the ESS web job search? (added in 2004)

In 2000 the positive responses to each of the three questions were as follows: 1) 26%; 2) 52%; and 3) 13%. These figures have steadily increased. In 2004 the response was 34% to question 4. In 2006 the responses to the four questions were: 1) 65%; 2) 86%; 3) 56%; and 4) 47%.

Challenges and barriers faced

The Seven Barrier Categories

Overall, the online job search service provided by ESS has been a successful initiative and few challenges have been identified. The Breaking Barriers Project, funded by the EC, identified and explored the key barriers to eGovernment in Europe. The project team proposed seven key barrier categories of obstacles to eGovernment progression. The categories are intentionally broad and tied to a multitude of more specific barriers relevant at different governance, institutional and jurisdictional levels. In summary the barriers are: leadership failures, financial inhibitors, digital divides and choices, poor coordination, workplace and organisational inflexibility, lack of trust and poor technical design²⁷⁸. In this case two emerged as significant:

Financial inhibitors: Financial inhibitors limit the flow of investment to eGovernment innovation. There was one key barrier within this category:

- No cost benefit analysis: there are limited ways to assess the effectiveness of online job search in Slovenia and it is difficult to assess the cost of the initiative; thus there is no way of knowing if online job search is a valuable delivery channel.

Poor Coordination: Poor coordination across jurisdictional, administrative and geographic boundaries holds back eGovernment networking benefits. There was one barrier in this category:

- A lack of co-ordination between ESS and the e-gov portal: there is another online job search site provided on the e-government portal of Slovenia yet this is a separate initiative to the ESS website.

Legal issues

In the Breaking Barriers Project eight legal areas were identified that underpin the seven barrier categories: Authentication and Identification, Intellectual Property Rights, Liability, Privacy and Data Protection, Public Administration Transparency, Relationships between Public Administrations, Citizens and other ICT actors, and Re-use of Public Sector Information. Legal issues did not seem to significantly effect the development or implementation of the online job search service. In terms of liability, the website states that all information provided on the website is the responsibility of the job seeker or employer and from interviews it appears that there have been no reports of misuse of

²⁷⁸ For more details about the Breaking Barriers to eGovernment project please see <http://www.egovbarriers.org>

the service. In terms of authentication and identification currently all job seekers and employers must register to use the service and are given a username and password. There are plans to move to the use of digital certificates both for employers and citizens later this year. Privacy of users is respected; as job seekers have the option to post anonymous CVs on the website.

Relative influence of eGovernment challenges

The summary below gives an indication of the relative significance of the kinds of barriers ESS is currently facing.

- Political, administrative and organizational (30%): coordination and management of the initiative within ESS appears strong, yet greater coordination between the job search on the e-gov portal and the service provided on ESS could be beneficial as could developing relationships with the commercial sector
- Legal (5%): the key legal issues such as privacy and data protection and liability have been considered and addressed by ESS.
- Financial (45%): the costs and the impact of the initiative are not known.
- Social and economic (5%): user needs are clearly considered throughout this initiative.
- Technological issues (15%): this initiative has benefited significantly from developing the service in house; yet greater interoperability between the front and back office and the use of digital certificates may be presented new challenges for this case.

Overcoming the barriers

The cost benefits of the online service are extremely difficult to determine given the lack of information about the resources allocated to the initiative. However, there have been some valuable attempts to measure the impact of the service via collecting some usage data and the use of a short survey since 2000. Indeed, representatives from ESS confirmed the difficulties of measurement of impact of online job search and were interested in ways this could be overcome. One future possibility that was explored was to “track” a sample of registered unemployed job seekers who gave their permission to do so. However, interviewees stressed the need to find ways to develop indicators that did not put additional burdens on the user of the services; and felt the nature of the web makes it difficult to measure and control activities on it. For some, there was too strong a tendency to measure cost effectiveness which may not always be possible or appropriate with online services.

From document analysis and interviews there appears to be good management and coordination of activities relating to online job search within ESS; and the development of the website in house which was a decision primarily made for resource reasons may have in fact had a significant benefit ensuring involvement of members of staff, an incremental approach and the development of a service that met the needs of ESS and perceived needs of users. There are some connections with commercial companies which could be built upon and there is also a relationship between the e-employment service on the e-government portal and the ESS website. However, currently there are two government sites that provide a similar service. It is possible there may be future collaboration between ESS and the e-gov portal. Although some interviews from ESS felt that as users can link to each service it is not a problem; improved co-ordination could increase efficiency and usability for job seekers and employers.

Potential solutions include:

- The development of effectiveness indicators
- Further development of partnerships with the commercial sector (as ESS have records of all vacancies they are in a strong position to do so)
- Greater co-ordination with the eGovernment portal of Slovenia

Conclusions

Overall, online job search in Slovenia appears to be progressing well; two current issues are the development of cost effectiveness indicators and co-ordination between the ESS site and the eGovernment portal. Future plans, to adopt the use of digital certificates for authentication and identification and greater personalisation of services may pose new challenges. Yet this case provides a number of valuable characteristics that may be of benefit to others developing similar services in other Member States.

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Case Study: Jobcentre Plus

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Jobcentre Plus is an agency of the UK Department of Work and Pensions, providing services via a national network of around 750 local offices, call centres and the Jobcentre Plus website at www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk. It has an administrative budget of £3 billion and employs around 70,500 staff. Jobcentre Plus was formed in 2001 out of the Employment Service and the Benefits Agency, so has responsibility pertaining both to jobs and benefits. Explicitly, the aim of the agency is to:

- Put more people into paid work
- Help employers fill their vacancies
- Give people of working age the help and support which they are entitled to if they cannot work

On-line Job Search

The job search section of the site is concerned with the first two of these aims. It accesses an 'Internet job bank', a national database of vacancies with around 400,000 vacancies. Its target audiences are jobseekers, employers and providers.

Registered employers can submit, amend and close vacancies on the site on-line through Employer Direct online which was launched in May 2005. These tend to be the larger employers, who apply to be an 'approved user' via the Government Gateway and there are various statutory requirements such as complying with disability rules, which is difficult for smaller employers). Other employers use an 'Employer Direct' telephone call centre, which were established in 2000. By 2007, about one quarter of jobs put up by individual employers go up on-line, the remainder through a call centre. The proportion registering on-line is growing (the original assumption was 10 per cent which was achieved by August of the service's first year) and obviously is much cheaper for Jobcentre Plus, so is marketed via a national sales team and advertising in trade publications. Jobcentre Plus do not charge employers.

Jobcentre Plus also runs a job warehouse (launched as a trial in 2004), with a facility for organisations that have large numbers of vacancies to feed them into the Job Bank in a single bulk upload transaction. There are 30 partners regularly uploading vacancies including recruitment agencies, job boards and NHS England and around 140 other more intermittent users. Vacancies are also supplied by the European Employment Service. The system is still a business trial, but the number of jobs notified by the Job Warehouse is now consistently more than those notified direct by employers via Employer Direct. In March 2007, for example, a record 641,000 unique vacancies were uploaded (although there may be some duplications with Employer Direct).

Jobcentre Plus lacks the facilities for jobseekers provided by other countries, such as Slovenia. It does not have a CV bank, for example, although the possibility has been discussed and agency staff are aware that other European countries have them. It is not regarded as a priority for the target audience of the agency; staff believe that people who are able to post their CVs on-line are those most likely to get jobs anyway. The lack of this facility to some extent excludes the site from further development using Web 2.0 facilities (allowing employees to post video or audio clips, for example).

Impacts of Online Job Search

Usage of the online services of Jobcentre Plus is impressive in comparative context. The site is the seventh most used job search site in Europe, with around 2 million visitors a week and 7.8K job

searches a day. Of public sector sites, only the German site Bundesagentur fur Arbeit (4.1 million users) and the French ANPE site (2.6 million) get more traffic. Monster is the clear leader in Europe with 7.5 million (ComScore), although less dominant in the UK, where it receives only 4 per cent of market share, making it the third most used job site behind Jobcentre Plus and Total Jobs (Hitwise). Traffic has increased over 90 per cent in the past year. It is the most visited jobs site in the UK with 13 per cent of the total market. Of these visitors the vast majority (88 per cent) are looking for jobs.

However, visibility of the website could be improved. An experiment was conducted with Internet users in the UK to explore where people go when asked to look for job information online. In an experimental setting participants were asked the following question “You are planning to move to Manchester and are looking to find a job there (as a shop assistant in a supermarket) before you go. Can you find a list of shop assistant positions available in Manchester? Participants’ had to use the Internet as their information source and their online behavior was tracked. Half the participants could use open search and half were required to use the UK gov portal direct.gov.uk. Of the participants in the “open search” group almost all used Google to begin their search and ultimately only 15% found the answer on a government site in the UK. Thus, from this study it appears that the visibility of jobcentre plus as compared to other online sources is relatively low.

From a user perspective, customers are generally satisfied with the overall service provided by Job centre plus (Sanderson et al. 2005); and in another survey conducted by the agency 90 per cent of customers are satisfied with the web site. However, while the website was considered user friendly it did not have a significant impact on efficiency success of job search in 2002 (GHK 2002a)

Jobcentre Plus personnel observe a distinctive market for Jobcentre Plus, as noted above. The type of jobs on Jobcentre Plus tend to be office work, factory work, drivers and other manual and blue collar jobs, rather than more professional posts. Research by the NAO in 2006 supports this view where professional higher paid jobs are underrepresented and lower skilled lower paid jobs are over represented by Jobcentre Plus –inline with the customer base for the service. Jobcentre Plus feel however, that there is ‘no point in taking trade away from specialist sites such as the Guardian’ and that these other jobs are well covered by private sector sites.

The role of JobCentre plus within the overall labour market is also apparent when examining the different levels of support for job seekers provided by Jobcentre Plus depending on the individuals’ skills and past employment history. For example, customers with a poor employment history are anticipated to have a reliance on Jobcentre Plus channels and New Deal provision for finding a job; and are likely to need help to improve job seeking skills. In contrast, customers with a good employment history, who have been out of the labour market for a while (e.g. a parent returning to work) are expected to search for a job using a mixture of Jobcentre Plus and external channels, including job points, Jobseeker Direct, newspapers and websites (NAO 2006).

There used to be a 1973 convention which said that each country had to have a job bank, so that it was legally required for the state to advertise all jobs to the state (not in the UK) – and actually in countries like France and Germany most jobs still are, although this is no longer a legal requirement. Britain withdrew from the convention so it was never a requirement here, and this legislative change has a legacy in that a lower percentage of jobs are advertised via state agencies.

A selection of vacancies are uploaded from the job bank of Jobcentre Plus to EURES – employers choose whether they want their jobs to be advertised there. There is a slight dilemma here, because the more jobs are advertised abroad, the more UK jobseekers are having to compete with jobseekers from other countries. But Jobcentre Plus cannot currently break down their usage statistics by country, so they do not know how many of their users come from abroad.

Challenges and barriers faced

The Seven Barrier Categories

The Breaking Barriers Project, funded by the EC, identified and explored the key barriers to eGovernment in Europe. The project team proposed seven key barrier categories of obstacles to eGovernment progression. The categories are intentionally broad and tied to a multitude of more specific barriers relevant at different governance, institutional and jurisdictional levels. In summary

the barriers are: leadership failures, financial inhibitors, digital divides and choices, poor coordination, workplace and organisational inflexibility, lack of trust and poor technical design²⁷⁹. Of the seven barrier categories four barriers were of importance to this case: financial inhibitors, digital divides and choices, poor co-ordination and poor technical design.

Financial inhibitors: Financial inhibitors limit the flow of investment to eGovernment innovation. There are limited ways to assess the effectiveness of online job search in the UK and it is difficult to assess the cost of the initiative; thus there is no way of knowing if online job search is a valuable delivery channel.

Digital Divides and Choices: Digital divides and choices are barriers that occur where inequalities constrain and fragment eGovernment take-up. In this case, unemployed people are less likely to use online services provided by Jobcentre Plus than others who use Jobcentre Plus to move to another job (Coleman et al. 2002). The introduction of 9,000 touch screen kiosks in 1,000 job centre offices between April 2001 and February 2002 may increase access to Internet services. However, from a staff perspective the kiosks are not that efficient and have been mixed reviews (GHK 2000b)

Poor Coordination: Poor Coordination across jurisdictional, administrative and geographic boundaries holds back eGovernment networking benefits. In line with current UK eGovernment strategy, the current Jobcentre Plus job site is going to close, and parts will move to the citizen and business portals, direct.gov and business link, while Jobcentre Plus will retain a corporate site. Job Centre Plus will continue to host the job bank, jobs warehouse and Employer Direct Online (there is a big hosting structure) but direct.gov will move its current pilot for accessing these services into full operation. Jobcentre Plus are concerned that their branding and market recognition will be lost particularly as some parts of the site will move to business.link (which only covers England, a further complication) and others to Direct.gov.

Secondly, the motivation for not providing a facility for jobseekers to post their CVs seems to arise from a lack of co-ordinated thinking across the agency as a whole. Jobcentre Plus do offer people help through leaflets and in their local offices with preparing CVs. There would seem to be scope for simultaneously providing an on-line service for posting CVs and offering jobseekers help specifically geared to using it (along the lines of tax Internet cafes in Chile, for example). Under the current arrangement, there must be many employers (particularly smaller ones) who want to search for employees and their options are only to use private sector sites. So UK jobseekers using Jobcentre Plus are excluded from consideration for these vacancies.

Finally, the jobs warehouse is a good example of collaboration widening the scope of the public sector job search facility. However, there does seem good scope for extending it, particularly given the dominance of Monster as a private sector leader across Europe. The current arrangement is clearly exacerbating the segmentation of the jobs market in the UK, noted above, with the public sector site in general providing lower status, lower paid jobs than private sector sites.

Poor Technical Design: Poor technical design barriers lead to difficult-to-use eGovernment services and/or incompatibilities between ICT systems. The inability of users to upload CVs to the site is problematic, as users are at a disadvantage compared to those who use other commercial websites. Developers of the initiative should consider what technical features need to be available on the website to benefit and attract users. Poor online visibility of Jobcentre plus is a further barrier to encouraging increased usage of the site.

Legal issues

In the Breaking Barriers Project eight legal areas were identified that underpin the seven barrier categories: Authentication and Identification, Intellectual Property Rights, Liability, Privacy and Data Protection, Public Administration Transparency, Relationships between Public Administrations, Citizens and other ICT actors, and Re-use of Public Sector Information. There were no significant legal issues that affected this case. As there is no cv facility then this reduces issues around privacy

²⁷⁹ For more details about the Breaking Barriers to eGovernment project please see <http://www.egovbarriers.org>

and data protection. There is a clear legal disclaimer of the website²⁸⁰ that covers copyright, the information on the site and the information on external sites.

Relative influence of eGovernment challenges

The summary below gives an indication of the relative significance of the kinds of barriers Jobcentre Plus is currently facing.

- Political, administrative and organizational (35%): coordination within Jobcentre plus, between Jobcentre plus, direct.gov and business link, and further collaboration with the commercial sector are key issues to consider
- Legal (5%): legal issues such as privacy and data protection and liability have been addressed by Jobcentre plus and tend not to be that much of a concern
- Financial (20%): the costs and the impact of the initiative are not known
- Social and economic (15%): digital divides are important to this initiative both in terms of enabling people to access the online site and ensuring those who use Jobcentre Plus are not a disadvantage to those who use commercial job search sites
- Technological issues (25%): Jobcentre plus needs to explore the possibility of adding additional features to its website in order to encourage usage of the site and increasing effectiveness. Online visibility also needs to be improved.

Conclusions

The UK case provides an example of public-private collaboration, which is clearly expanding the range of opportunities available on the Jobcentre Plus site and increases its competitiveness. However, there is clear potential for extending such co-operation. A distinctive feature of the UK case is the perception of a clearly demarcated target market for the public sector job search service, which has resulted in a widening gap between what the site provides for jobseekers and what private sector facilities provide, which seems likely to work against such further collaboration in the future.

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²⁸⁰See <http://www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk/JCP/Aboutus/Legal/index.html>

Box: Zubka.com

Zubka.com enables people to refer their past colleagues, friends and other contacts for jobs and get rewarded if their referrals are successful. Referrers can sign up for free and get paid a fee between 6-8% of the starting salary of the person referred. Hirers can pay to advertise their jobs directly to the network of Zubka Referrers - at a third to a half of the fees typically charged by recruitment companies. It was launched in September 2006 by David Shieldhouse and Armando Ruffini. David Shieldhouse had the idea for Zubka, after being inspired by the growing interest in web 2.0, the increasing investment in online business, a significant amount of experience in the recruitment industry and the book, *The perfect store: Inside eBay*, by Adam Cohen.

The concept has been supported by the findings from a 2006 YouGov survey commissioned by Zubka which concluded that: 1) around 66% of people had referred someone to another job opportunity; 2) 89% of these referrers did not get compensated for this service; and of the 11% who did many received a very small prize e.g. a bottle of wine; and 3) around 50% of the time these referrals actually led to jobs (which is far higher than the success rate in traditional recruitment agencies). Thus, Zubka replicates what is going on in everyday life but rewards people for their actions. The UK recruitment industry amounts to around 30 billion EUR and Zubka can facilitate the redistribution of some of this wealth.

In March 2007 there are around 250 jobs on the website with around £600,000 (840,000 EUR) of rewards available. In November 2007 there were around 1200 jobs with around £3, 000,000 (4.2 million EUR). The types of jobs available on Zubka range from an office manager to a CEO. From the perspective of the founders of Zubka, the site is intended for everyone and anyone could be recruited or be a referrer. They believe that being a Zubka referrer is likely to have different implications for different people. For some, Zubka could change lives. For example, an individual could give up their job and work as a referrer full time for others it could be an occasional activity that pays for a holiday and / or viewed as a game with big prizes.

Challenges for Zubka.com

Given the global context and the nature of Zubka there were a number of legal issues that needed to be addressed. Zubka has a set of terms and conditions both for hirers and referrers that are very stringent and clear. Individuals have to agree to them before they sign up. One issue was how to pay referrers who are from across the globe? (They are paid a gross fee). A second key issue was how to create a system that is self regulating as when Zubka grows and is dealing with billions of transactions it is no longer possible to chase up individual cases (see future section below). The employment and recruitment agencies act in the UK is not applicable to Zubka as referrers are not providing a full service. Also, in practice, hirers simply do not use recruitment agencies that have provided them with a poor service more than once – they don't look to the recruitment agency act.

The future of Zubka

Despite only launching in 2006 there has been a significant amount of interest in Zubka and by the beginning of February 2007 Zubka had received a multi-million pound investment from Benchmark. Zubka are currently redeveloping the technical platform so it can deal with millions more referrers and recruiters. This is important to improve the success rate of referring prospects. In early 2007 problems occurred as there were not many jobs on the site; so the fit between the prospect and the job was not as good as it could be. This issue was further exacerbated as people were learning how to use Zubka. Yet these problems are diminishing as the number of jobs available on the site increases and users become more experienced. In the future there are plans to introduce a rating system for hirers and referrers in a similar way to eBay. So those who are good get the most attention – a kind of Darwinian approach. The system will also use Artificial Intelligence to determine who are the good hirers; so if a company tends to always rate referrers negatively yet the referrer always gets good feedback then the system will identify hirers who are saying people are no good but then hiring people independently of Zubka. The result will be a self regulating community; responsibility then rests with the individual. There are also future plans to work with other online job search sites and to franchise out Zubka to ISP providers.

Conclusion

These three case studies – the UK, Slovenia and EURES at the pan-European level – combined with private sector evidence highlight the most important barriers to the development of public sector on-line job search. The most important relate to co-ordination issues, particularly the issue of collaboration with the growing private sector market in this field. Financial issues are also important,

with respect to the difficulty of evaluating the costs and benefits of online job search services. The implications of these difficulties is a growing gap between public and private job search services, with equity implications.

Our case studies revealed a number of co-ordination problems with the development of on-line job search. First, with respect to levels of government, online job search requires ways of working that crosses existing government jurisdictions, administrative and departmental boundaries. A lack of co-ordination between these different groups can have implications for online job search services at all levels from the regional level to the Pan-European level. For example, EURES depends on the willingness of national administrations to upload their job offerings onto the database and the case had to address the challenges of matching jobs and cvs that were in different languages and formats. To some extent, EURES is in also in competition with national on-line job search services, as in the two country case studies discussed above.

Second, there is an often un-met need for co-ordination between government and business. Clearly, government agencies face strong competition from private sector players in this sector. Although some agencies (such as the UK Jobcentre plus) claim that there is no point in competing with specialist players in the field, public agencies do face a dilemma; if they don't compete, then a bifurcation opens up between the type of jobs that are advertised on their sites, which tend to have lower status and less professionalized jobs than commercial sites.

Third, the UK case highlights an additional co-ordination problem, between central portals and employment agencies. Moving job search services onto the Directgov portal may actually reduce visibility of the service and further exacerbate public/private differences in job search capability. Directgov is a relatively 'low-tech' solution and it may be even more difficult for the employment agency to innovate with on-line job search in the future.

Co-ordination and competition challenges are particularly evident in terms of the visibility of such sites to the general public. In a survey of EU(15) Internet users' awareness of the availability of online job search was quite low (Graafland-Essers and Etedgui, 2003). If the phrase 'working in Europe' is keyed into Google's search engine, EURES (nor any other public sector site) does not appear in the first 20 search results, beyond which most Internet users do not look. Failure to promote online search facilities may further affect the usage of public sector online sites both by citizens and commercial companies.

Another barrier which was important comes into the category of **financial inhibitors** – that is the difficulties we identified in establishing the costs and benefits of providing online job search services. Commercial online job search can raise revenue in a number of ways, for example, through charging companies to advertise their vacancies on the website or placing advertising links on the portal. What cost benefit models are governments using, and if, as is typically the case this service is developed alongside face to face and telephone channels what costs are involved in implementing and maintaining these initiatives?

Another piece of data which could be important to measuring the performance of on-line job search but is difficult to collect is the extent to which there is a 'culture of mobility' across countries; citizens' choices about changing jobs should be taken into account. While occupational and geographic mobility is positive for the economy; views amongst citizens about the potential benefits of changing jobs every few years varies significantly. In Denmark and Sweden the percentage of people who think that changing jobs every few years is good for people is high (72% and 79% respectively) compared to respondents from Belgium and Estonia where less than a third believe this to be the case (Eurobarometer, 2006). How do such views influence usage of online job portals?

Other issues, particularly legal ones, have shown themselves less important in the field. Utilising the eight legal foundations analysed within the barriers study there were four areas that were anticipated to cause difficulties: identification and authentication (e.g. to log on and register to the website); re-use of data (e.g. is it used, what could it be used for, useful for tracking success of policies, where to market, development of new strategies); Liability (who is responsible for the content); and privacy and data protection (linked to re-use, who can access the cvs, how easy is it, are privacy statements on the website)? Privacy and data protection were mentioned by interviewees, but did not arise as a major issue. In general we did not find lack of trust to be a major barrier to the development of on-line job search. EU Citizens tend to prefer eGovernment services

which do not require them to provide a lot of personal information and job search has been identified as one such service (Graafland-Essers and Etedgui, 2003). But it could be that in the future, concerns about misuse of personal data or other breach of privacy may inhibit uptake of eGovernment services. As the level of sophistication of online job search portals grows and citizens are encouraged to place CVs online that can be searched by potential employers a lack of trust may become more of an issue. Indeed, advice to citizens planning on using online job search facilities is now available²⁸¹.

In general therefore, the usage figures of public sector on-line job search services may be impressive in comparison with other e-government offerings, but there is great scope for improvement. As job search moves almost exclusively on-line for a significant sub-section of jobseekers, then public sector agencies must either compete or collaborate or both if they wish to remain as significant players in the field. Given the significant investments that are being made (particularly in EURES), there is a strong need to overcome the problems with evaluation noted above, with difficulties in measuring both the costs and benefits of on-line job search.

A key implication of the co-ordination issues we have identified is the emergence of digital divide issues, in terms of a growing gap between the type of jobs that are offered on public sector and private sector job search sites in those countries where companies are not obliged to advertise their jobs with the Public Employment Service. As job search in the private sector moves to an ever increasing degree online, this gap means that those without Internet access are likely only to have access to public sector sites, which also offer other channels. Such disparities will have the effect of limiting the number and the type of jobs these individuals can identify and the number of employers who are likely to approach them. Citizens without Internet access will also be excluded from other potential advantages for citizens using online job search, such as greater convenience and the ability to search according to specific criteria (Freeman, 2002). In the UK, this process is somewhat of a vicious circle, as the perception of the government agency's clientele prevents some developments from taking place.

Solutions

There seem to be three solutions to the barriers we have identified. First, collaboration between public and private agencies is one way of ensuring that job seekers at the less professional end of the market have access to the same pool of jobs as other users. Although some government employment agencies show an understandable reluctance to overlap with the provision of specialist job search agencies, it maybe that doing so is the only way to avoid the growing gap between public and private provision. The jobs warehouse developed by Jobcentre Plus is a good example of how collaboration can work, and there would seem to be a good argument for such provision being extended. Duplication in advertising of jobs can be viewed as collaboration rather than competition - as to some extent the sites will always serve distinct markets - opening up the possibility of applying for a wider pool of jobs for traditionally 'public sector' applicants.

Second, the potential for newer technologies, particularly Web 2.0 applications, is clearly under-exploited in this area of e-government. Private sector sites show what can be possible, with Zubka providing the most radical example of innovation. If private sector agencies continue to innovate at the same rate while public sector agencies lag behind, this gap will widen. It seems likely, for example, that in the future prospective applicants will be able to post video clips and other supporting material, with obvious attractions for prospective employers. The next step would be the conducting of preliminary interviews on-line, reducing the costs of job seeking for both employees and employers and with particular potential for increasing mobility across national boundaries, in line with EU aims. If public sector agencies fail to innovate in response, then a significant subsection of jobseekers will be excluded from this increased potential for mobility. They need to build capacity for such innovation into their systems, for example by maintaining the bandwidth necessary to transmit audio and video clips.

²⁸¹ For example, see <http://www.worldprivacyforum.org/resumedatabaseprivacytips.html>

Third, there could well be benefits for public sector agencies in providing support for jobseekers to use on-line services. Agencies like Jobcentre Plus already provide help for jobseekers in how to prepare cvs and job applications. If such support were geared at on-line applications, some of the equity problems noted above might diminish. Such a move could be cost effective, as once jobseekers can use on-line provision, they are less likely to need assistance and more likely to find jobs. As job search moves on line and innovation in this area increases (with employers able to view video clips of potential applicants and to conduct interviews on-line, for example), then tackling such problems will be of increasing importance, otherwise they will be exacerbated by technological innovation in this fast moving field.

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