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Self-service on the web –Experiences and challenges from Norway

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This paper is a summary of the presentation made in Workshop II (Individual assessment of strengths and weaknesses of job seekers) on the EU-profiling-seminar in Nürnberg 12-14 January 2005.

Background

Aetat Directorate of Labour is the central level of PES (In Norway called Aetat) and is responsible for managing PES activities, following developments in the labour market and providing information and advice to the Ministry of Labour and Social affairs.

From spring 2004 job seekers needing to register with Aetat can do so themselves on the Internet, without being dependent on Aetats opening hours. Employers can register vacancies and search for candidates among all job seekers, not just among those who have chosen to place their CV on the net.

Aetat is organised with one central unit, The Directorate of Labour and approximately 175 local offices, spread around Norway. In addition Aetat offer service to prioritised groups with special offices than can offer expertise help, for instance to immigrants.

At the present we have unemployment of 3,6%-registered unemployed. The long-term unemployment (over 26 weeks) was in December 26% percent of all unemployed. In European and international terms the unemployment in Norway is very low. The number of registered vacancies is also low compared to some years ago, mainly because of reduction in employment to the public sector.

The present labour market policy has introduced a lower level of labour market measures than ten years ago. The implication of this is that we have to focus more on how to help jobseekers enter/re-enter the ordinary labour market.

The main strategy of Aetat in Norway

Aetats strategy in following up the individual job seeker is based on a stepwise approach in which Aetats effort and resources are based on the individuals needs.

First step is job seeking on the individual basis (self-activation). Aetats main task is to ensure easily accessible information about jobs and guidance.

Second step is personal follow-up on job search - involving motivation and focus on pro-active job seeking.

The third step offers labour market programmes linked to job practice and job qualification. Such programmes are primarily relevant to the long term unemployed, young people, immigrants and vocationally handicapped.

The Internet service

Aetat.no (PES Internet) is the most complete database of vacant positions in Norway. All advertised vacancies are included in the database. Aetat.no ranks between number 13 and 16 every month, as the most visited web site in Norway and it is the most popular database for vacant positions. In 2004 over 200 000 new vacant positions were registered. The CV-database is the largest in Norway and contains approximately 200 000 CV's, both unemployed job seekers and "job shifters" On aetat.no you will also find statistic on the Norwegian labour market, some also in English.

Active interaction of data between case register and Internet services

Aetat has expanded its offer to both job seekers and employers by building a bridge (online) between the closed internal case registry system (Arena) and the open Internet system (aetat.no). The new solution involves data from jobseekers and employers registered on aetat.no are also registered directly in the case-registry system. This is unique and has necessitated major changes both in IT-systems and working methods.

Information admitted to aetat.no or Arena is automatically updated in the other system. When a jobseeker registers, her/his data will automatically "pop up" as a task in the case registry system at the assigned local PES. The data transmission between aetat.no and Arena has proven to be very secure. By using aetat.no the job seeker is given control over the CV and what information they would like to present to potential employers.

The advertisements registered by the employers themselves, are manually checked by our Help Line centre, to check that they meet our standards. Aetat.no is a new arena for job seekers and employers to meet, and can be the first step on the way to a new job.

The self-registration system – possibilities and response

The first eight months, the number of self-registered new jobseekers is steadily rising. By the end of the year it reached 40%, and the objective for 2005 is set to 60%. In the job centres the jobseekers have access to computers and guidance.

Jobseekers can choose to present their CV anonymous. An anonymous CV will not have name, contact information or name of previous employers or schools. If the employer wants to contact an anonymous job seeker they can use a private area of aetat.no called "My page" or by contacting Aetat.

The jobseekers CV is automatically matched with vacant positions based on the information the jobseekers have given on their job-search profile. Job seekers can choose to be automatically informed by e-mail (job-mail) on new vacant positions, which matches their profile. Interesting vacant positions and different job-search profiles can be stored in "My page". Employers that are interested in the job seeker can make contact both directly to "My page" and by E-mail.

The self-service system has made it possible to send the employment status forms that your unemployment benefits are based on, directly to Aetat through the Internet. These forms are required to maintain benefits.

In the first 7-8 months of self-registration, Aetat has seen the same variation on user groups as expected from the national surveys on general Internet use. Usage varies a lot with age and

education level. Persons with high education are usually more active Internet users, regardless of age.

For young people, Internet is the normal communication form for all service aspects, information, school etc. The Internet services give PES credibility among young jobseekers.

Jobseekers, who can't use Internet, can have problems orienting themselves in the labour market: find jobs, contact/search for employers and apply for jobs. PES needs to give special service to these groups.

An increasing number of employers are using Internet as a part of their recruitment strategy. They put out vacancies and have a system for receiving CVs from jobseekers. For employers the new self-service is an offer to reduce costs of advertising. The numbers of users are increasing, but still the majorities use the more established channels.

Users response

The far most popular part of aetat.no is the job database, CV-base and possibility to register employment status, electronically, 60-70% of the unemployed are pleased with and frequently use these services. The career guidance and test are however not so popular. This means that Internet not yet can provide the same service as the job centres does on these services.

Most jobseekers are very pleased with the opportunity to register for unemployment benefits/allowance (every two weeks) on Internet. In the user survey, 75% reports that they prefer to use their home computer.

Of the employers who have used Aetat as a recruitment channel, 52% consider Internet as a part of the recruitment strategy in the future. The employers that already use aetat.no, are very pleased, 88% report satisfaction with the possibility to register vacancies. 71% are satisfied with the CV-base.

New law regulating public labour market services

The new legislation will be put into force in July 2005. It states the right for every jobseeker to get an evaluation of their need for services when they register. The right is only to an evaluation, not to receive certain labour market programmes.

The individual evaluation is a mutual agreement. Aetat have used similar agreements several years for some of the more prioritised target groups.

Jobseekers in need for extensive service will be evaluated for passing a solution to occupational rehabilitation (as before). Aetat is from 2004 given the right to consider the whole process leading to rehabilitation, which earlier was divided between National Insurance service and PES.

Self-evaluation will be standardised as a part of self-registration

When the jobseekers have answered a set of standardised questions, the evaluation result is automatically given. Of course this will be controlled the same way as the other self-registered information.

When the result of the evaluation is "ordinary job seeker service", this result will be automatically accepted. Any other result requires an assessment from the PES staff.

In addition to this, Aetat is actively seeking improvement of assessment tools, both light version and more psychologically based tests. The light versions of these tools are considered very useful for the new united welfare organisation.

Reported advantages from self-registration

Improved individual service: Old routines were based on job seekers filling in a form with CV information. The form was filled in before the first interview with the caseworker. The information was then registered in the case registry system, by Aetat caseworkers, after the first interview. Job seekers now register the CV information themselves and get a unique code, which gives access to private pages of aetat.no. "My page", where she/he can update CV, register for benefits, store private job seeking filters etc.

Improved job focus: PES personnel are working mostly guiding people in filling in CV, registration of qualifications and job possibilities. For active job seekers the self-registration means no extra waiting time, and frustration on the capacity of the job centres. It puts focus on CV and job seeking activities. The first contact between Aetat and the job seeker (within three weeks) has now got a good basis for individual guidance and focus on CV-quality and job seeking activities.

New organisation of public work and welfare services

The Parliament has asked the Government to consider a reform on the co-ordination of the Public Employment Service, the National Insurance Service and the Social Welfare Services.

The objective is to increase the number of persons working and engaged in other activities, and reduce the number of people dependent on different benefits.

The Government will put forward a proposal to the Parliament by spring 2005. In this process it will be natural to consider using profiling tools to focus better on the target groups. This new organisation of the welfare sector in Norway will be one of the main challenges to PES and the employment services in Norway the next years.