

COMPETENCY AND LEARNING DEVELOPMENT FOR JOB BROKERS IN THE EU

EZINE: ISSUE 3



Job Broker

Welcome to the third issue of the Job Broker's E-zine

The Job Broker project aims to develop and design a new programme and network to support the newly-emerging occupational profile of the 'Job Broker' in Europe. Together 8 European countries will develop and validate jointly a 'new' curriculum programme which contributes towards improving the quality, efficiency & relevance (attractiveness) of vocational education and training (VET) to the needs of the labour market. By working towards the validation of a Curriculum Programme it will help VET providers in the EU to increase their success rate in securing sustainable jobs for the job-seekers. In addition, through the standardisation of competencies within the role of the Job Broker, the project will foster the mobility of these skilled professionals.

Richard Parkes is the Founder and Director of Rinova, the UK partner on the Job Broker project. Rinova developed the Erasmus+ Job Broker application and act as the coordinators of the project. An interview with Richard was recently published in a trade publication in Austria - and we thought it was so interesting that we would share it with all our partner countries!



Richard Parkes

Interview with Richard Parkes

Richard, you successfully managed a lot of labour market and work-related projects within the EU. What are the main differences in the approaches to get job-seekers into work?

That is a big subject! So much can depend on whether labour markets policies are driven by the politics of the 'stick' or the 'carrot'. By the 'stick', I mean policies that reduce unemployment benefits and social welfare levels to 'encourage' people to take lower-paid jobs; or that place sanctions (reducing or removing unemployment payments) on unemployed people

who are judged to not be trying hard enough to find a job. By 'carrot', I mean the design of active labour market policies that invest in improving job-seeker skills (both the 'soft' skills and job-related skills) and ensure the involvement of companies in their design so that provision is relevant, current and responsive to labour market needs.

Three years ago you and your company developed the idea of the "Job Broker"? What exactly is a Job Broker?

Typically, Job Brokers work directly with employers to identify the job opportunities that they have - and match these opportunities to local unemployed job-seekers. Job Brokers work

– directly - at the 'interface' between companies, the job-seekers, and the funded service (i.e. the VET scheme, college course, or public employment service).

What is the difference between a Job Brokerage and Employment Agencies?

An employment agency is normally a job-finding or recruitment service available for anyone with relevant skills. They are normally commercial services (i.e. they charge the company, or the person or both) and are not at all restricted to unemployed people, usually working with people who are 'job ready'.

A Job Broker specifically works in a context where public money is being invested to support job-seekers who:

- are facing certain barriers to getting a job due to their unemployment;
- are long-term unemployed and need particular assistance –either re-training through vocational education and training (VET), 'soft' skills development, job-finding skills etc
- may also have specific characteristics and /or face labour market discrimination. For instance, they may be disabled, from minority or migrant communities, or be carers/women returning to work after families; they may have been made redundant from an industry and do not have transferable skills - or they may be young people who have never worked.

But we have always had VET schemes and public employment services for unemployed people. So how did the Job Broker idea come about? Why is it necessary?

Surprisingly many VET schemes for job-seekers in Europe do not designed to require direct engagement with companies. In many VET organisations and job counselling contexts, often those that are training or advising unemployed people do not themselves have any responsibility for dealing with companies or employers directly. This is where the Job Broker comes in.

Also things are changing due to the arrival of 'payment by results' systems. For instance in the UK it is now commonplace that providers are only paid for the job-finding services when the job-seeker has achieved a job – and nothing, or very little, if they do not. Also, further payments may follow if the job is 'sustained' (e.g. for 6 months or even for up to two years).

Funding job-seeking services based on the level of 'results', or job outcome, rather than the 'process' (i.e. the type or duration of the service offered) has very many, radical implications for the operation job-seeking services – far too many for me to go into here. However, one direct consequence of is that it has forced

providers to place much more emphasis on finding - and keeping - jobs for their clients. This in turn creates new and different demands on the staff working in these services – in fact it creates new occupational profiles which require new combinations of skills to be effective at work.

Although this approach has been extensively and radically applied in the UK more than anywhere else in the EU, we are beginning to see elements of it appear in the public funding systems in a number of other European countries. These developments can affect many professions, including:

- Public Employment Services advisers
- Job counsellors
- Careers advisers
- Tutors and trainers in VET organisations and colleges responsible for helping (unemployed) trainees find jobs

As a result, we designed the Job Broker Erasmus+ project to share experience and solutions. In particular, we are working together as eight countries to develop a common European approach that will identify the issues and respond by designing and testing a new curriculum programme to support those that are finding that they are needing to become Job Brokers.

Project progress until now

The Job Broker partners completed pilots in all participating countries, with carefully selected professional Working Groups, involving over sixty stakeholders and Job Brokers. They tested the online curriculum Job Broker programme, and the outcomes were presented in the Dissemination Conference in Larissa and also in the Multiplier Events in every participating country. The partnership succeeded in developing the Learning Materials and the overall Curriculum Program.



Dissemination Conference in Larissa



First ancient theatre, Larissa

The Dissemination Conference in Larissa, Greece was held on the 12th of July. Many of the European partners presented to over 60 regional stakeholders. In fact more than 200 stakeholders have attended workshops and conferences since the summer at events in different partner countries to discuss directly with the partners the outcomes of the project so far.

By the end of October every project partner had already hosted a Multiplier event aside from Spain (which follows in November). In Reykjavik, Richard Parkes was the key note speaker of the Conference, as in Larissa. He attended as the guest of VMST, the partner from Iceland, and had the opportunity to meet with a number of stakeholders. A formal meeting was also organized with the University of Iceland within the academy, School of Social

Science, as their representatives have shown interest in offering a diploma course in Job Brokering connected to the faculty of Social Work and the faculty of Social and Human Sciences built on the Job Broker curriculum.

Next Steps

The Project partners are currently working on how the curriculum can be adapted and ultimately be accredited for a qualification, or a credit towards a qualification. Soon we will be starting our work on a self-directed learning guide, which will be a resource that will support Job Brokers in Europe who wish to develop their skills in a structured way but who do not have access to a course or a peer development group.



Multiplier event in Reykjavik, Iceland



Group picture in Larissa, Greece

Next meeting in London

The next project meeting, the penultimate one, will be held in London, UK and will be hosted by Rinova. This will happen on the 30th of November and the 1st of December 2017. In London the project partners will mainly be focusing on the Assessment and the Validation of the Job Broker Curriculum Program so it can lead to Accreditation in Europe and where appropriate, it will be considered for ECTS.

Contact Information



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