



WP7 National Reports

The Impact of an Integrated Approach to Social Cohesion

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The Impact of an Integrated Approach to Social Cohesion

(Work Package 7 – French paper)

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I. Introduction and methodology

In France, the development of activation policies over the last decade has fostered the promotion of a linkage between formerly distinct policy fields (Barbier, 2006). This activation-friendly integration approach (Berthet, Bougeois, 2014) has been implemented through several processes: discourses reinforcing the importance of employment matters in other policy fields such as health or childcare, cross-sectoral projects, cross-sectoral organizations, conditionality over employment matters on social assistance benefits, coordination instances, and others. Nevertheless, implementation challenges arise, notably due to a discrepancy between the approach promoted by policymakers and the one developed by street level bureaucrats (see WP4 and WP6).

In this paper, we seek to analyse the effects of an ‘integrated’ social and employment policy in terms of social inclusion and well-being of the vulnerable individuals. We thus want to explore three groups of questions: How local experts perceive implementation process and evaluate it? Does everyday practice of these policies address specific problems of vulnerable individuals? How is it assessed by vulnerable individuals in terms of their impact on well-being, work prospects, participation in society?

A. The minimum income scheme: an integrated programme?

Choosing an innovative case amongst the three cities and the several organizational structures we met during the different parts of the project represented a difficult step. Indeed, from one city to another, some details differed. But no strong specificities that would make one case more innovative than another arised. As already demonstrated, even though a decentralisation process was launched in the 1980’s in France, the French landscape remains highly centralized with regards to employment policies. And the degree and nature of integration of social and employment policies does not vary, especially regarding the linkage between social and employment policies (the variation are on health and economic development¹). Hence, the choice was made to work on the stronger city (see WP3 and WP4):

¹ See Appendix 1

Case Studies	Regional classification	Regional labour market participation	Regional unemployment rate	Regional GDP
Compared to the National average (2008)				
Bordeaux	Very strong	Above	Below	Equal or less
Tours	Average	Equal or less	Equal or higher	Above
Montpellier	Under-performing	Equal or less	Equal or higher	Equal or less

Source: WP4

In the French landscape and with regards to integration matters, the case of the minimum income scheme (thereafter *RSA*) represented an innovative – or at least an interesting – policy to analyse. In theoretical frameworks, “innovativeness” refers to organisational arrangements and policies’ integration. Based on that definition, the *RSA* program is a good example of policies’ integration as it reinforced the link between social assistance and employment policies. Moreover, the follow-up provided in this framework has set up a ‘single referee’ system in an attempt to make the cooperation of several stakeholders clearer for the beneficiary’s sake. Both these characteristics (cross-sectoriality and the organizational structure) make the *RSA* program a case study that should enable us to grasp the consequences of the integrated approach promoted in France. However, it is not an exception or a unique case as it is similar in other cities.

Thus, in this paper we will focus on the people processing organised in the framework of *RSA* but we will also compare it to the way people are processed at the national employment agency in order to shed light on the divergences and convergences and to identify the facilitating and constraining factors.

B. People processing in the French landscape

At the local level, the support of long-term unemployed (LTU) relies on the share of beneficiaries amongst the several organizations involved. Some are dedicated to specific groups. Local national employment agencies are for all unemployed and jobseekers. In the latter, the profiling enables the orientation of the unemployed on the reinforced, guided or followed modality based on his/her distance from employment. According to the profile, some unemployed will be outsourced to other organizations.

The support of the minimum income scheme recipients, managed by the General Council, is singular: *RSA* recipients are profiled in one category (social-orientation or labour market integration orientation) by an ‘orientation desk’. This profiling will determine the

organization that will take his/her support in charge². In the project, the RSA was supposed to make the registration as jobseeker compulsory for all minimum income scheme recipients. However, as Barbier explained, “although it states a general obligation of recipients to look for work, the RSA Act envisages that recipients do not register at Pôle Emploi and exercise their obligations with other associations or units designated by the Départements’ authorities (Conseils généraux). This ambiguous provision is linked to the fear of communication of higher figures of unemployment”³.

The people processing thus relies on two (non-exclusive) principles: orientation and outsourcing. The orientation depends on a collective decision, while the outsourcing is often decided by the caseworker. The outsourcing system corresponds to a situation where another organization (partner or service provider) takes the unemployed in charge. The caseworker from the national employment agency puts the unemployed on an action, and he/she is then counselled for a limited period of time (more or less long) by another organization. The relationship between both organisations (the organization that outsources the unemployed and the service provider) is contractualised.

In discourses, the promotion of the individualisation of labour market integration paths and of tailor made services (see WP6) justifies the usage of outsourcing. Indeed, specialised services providers are called upon to adress specific obstacles (LTU for example). Outsourcing is also used when the issue to tackle is out of the intervention perimeter the caseworker or the organization has defined (for example, are childcare issues to be dealt with within the organization or not).

C. Description of selection of interviewees and other datas

In the framework of this work package (and the WP6), 16 interviews were conducted with both caseworkers and beneficiaries. This analysis is also based on interviews conducted in the framework of WP4.

Street level bureaucrats	
1	Employment national agency
2	Employment national agency
3	Employment national agency

² Indeed, as explained in WP6, groups that are targeting by employment policies (especially vulnerable groups) are distributed among different specialised organisations (Cap Emploi for disabled, Mission Locale for young). In the RSA case, recipients are sent to either service providers (private profit or non-profit organizations), either the national employment agency or social organizations depending on the distance from employment.

³ Barbier, 2010 :37

4	Employment national agency
5	Non profit service provider
6	Non profit service provider
7	Private service provider
8	Private service provider
9	Head of the local employment national agency
Beneficiaries	
1	LTU
2	LTU
3	LTU
4	LTU
5	LTU
6	LTU
7	LTU

Analyzing the implementation of the RSA requires meeting with several stakeholders as different organizations are in charge of the delivery of the service. Hence, we met caseworkers from the main organization in charge of implementing labour market integration policies (the national employment agency – *Pôle Emploi*), but also private service providers in charge of the delivery of the minimum income scheme follow-up. Often, in one organization there is one (or a few more according to the size and speciality of the organization) caseworker that is also a minimum income scheme referee. Consequently, we had to meet caseworkers from several organizations.

Regarding beneficiaries, we did not manage to get in touch with beneficiaries through the national employment agency. Caseworkers working in private organizations arranged our meetings with voluntary LTU that are minimum income scheme recipients.

Additionally, more interviews were conducted with street level bureaucrats in the framework of WP4 and of Clara Bourgeois's Ph.D. dissertation.

II. Activation of long term unemployed from the point of view of policy makers

In this part, two different LTU processing will be presented as planned by national and local policymakers. Then, drawing on the interviews and documentary analysis, we will present the way these local policymakers perceive and evaluate them.

A. Two typical processing of long-term unemployed in local organisations involved in activation policies

How are LTU processed? Who is in charge of their labour market integration? Who delivers the service? And last, but not least, how is the service framed?

The typical processing of minimum income recipients will be first presented with regards to the way it has been designed by policymakers (and not yet with regards to the way it is implemented – see chapter 3). Then, the following figure shows the typical processing organised by the main organisation (the national employment agency) for LTU.

Figure 1: The governance of minimum income recipients:

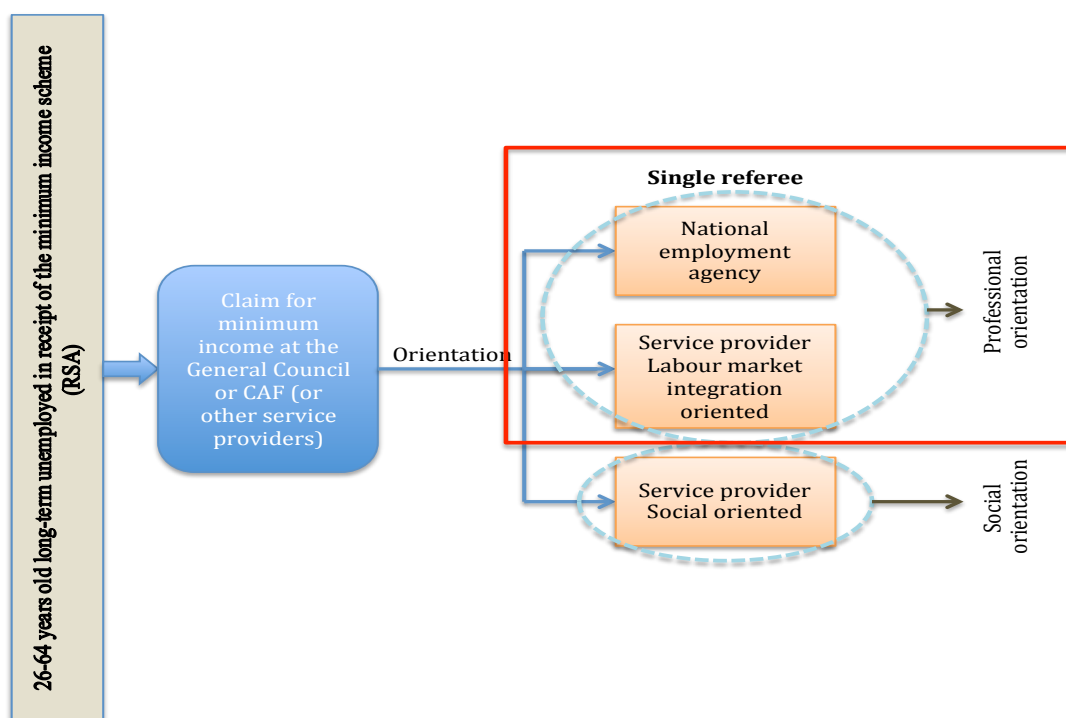
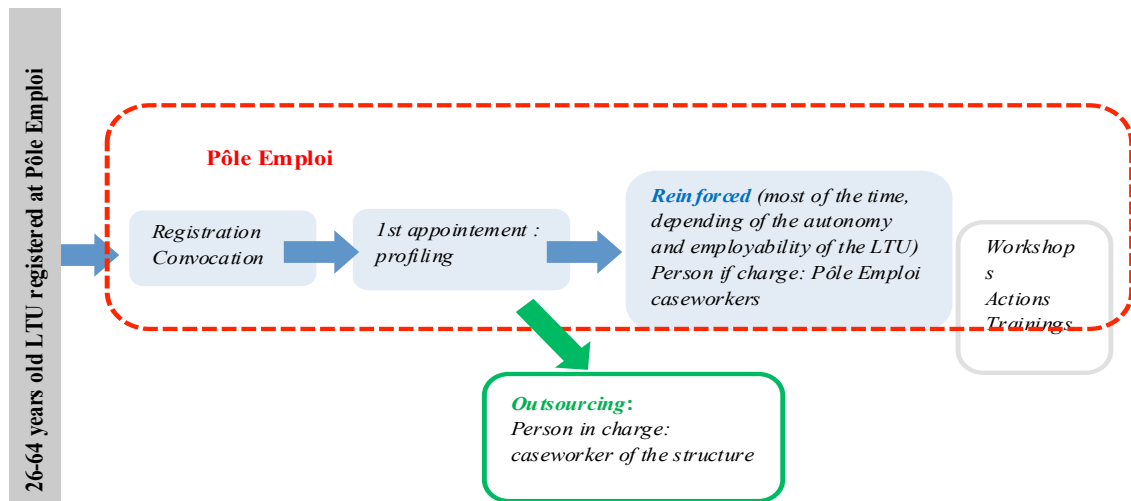


Figure 2: The governance of LTU:



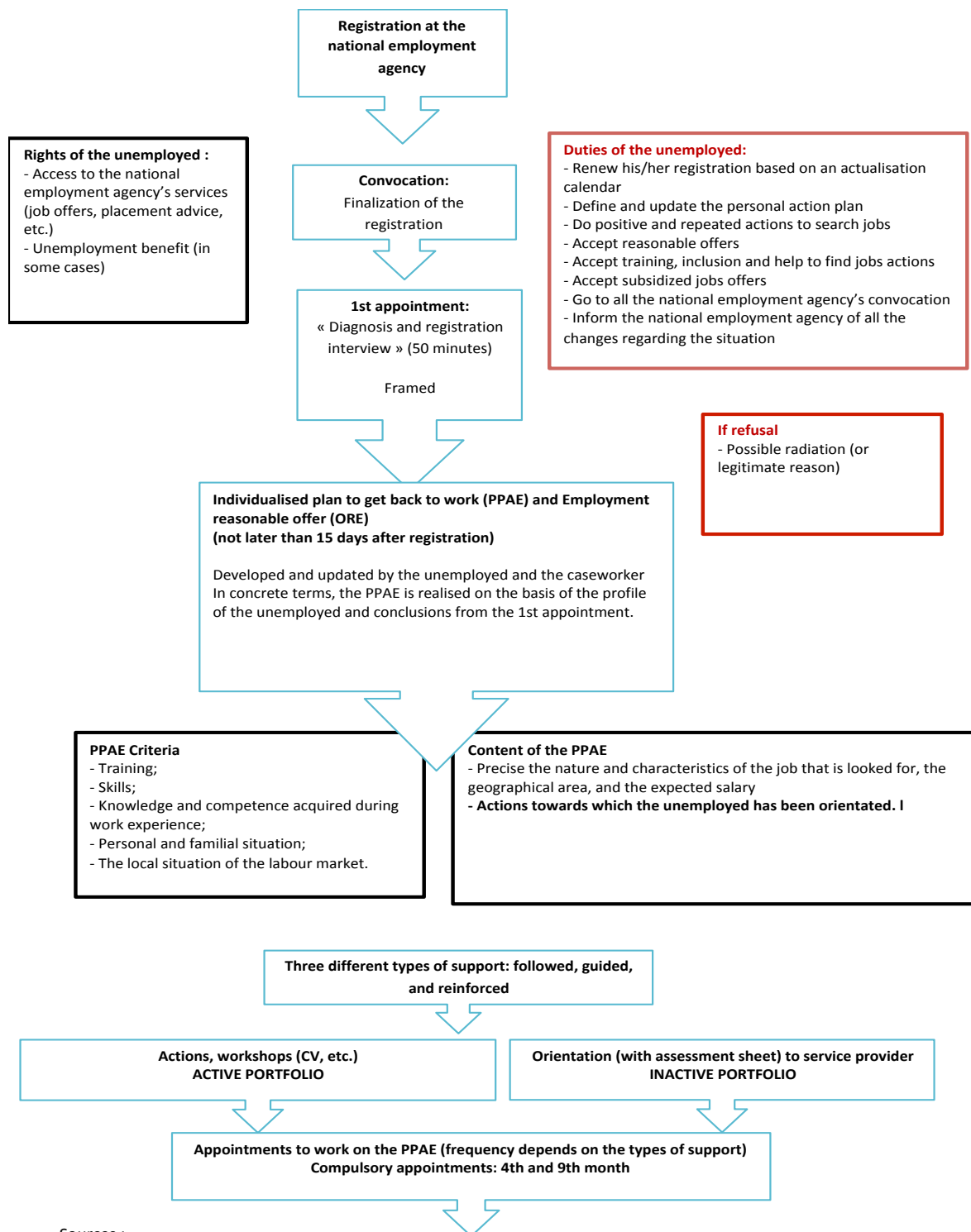
The “long-term unemployed” category can refer to a broad spectrum of situations and profiles. This category is defined by duration of unemployment. Some are minimum income recipients (when they are not entitled to the unemployment insurance anymore⁴). Following the individualisation trend and the distance from employment criteria to target unemployed (see WP6), different kinds of supports were set up and are provided by different actors.

LTU, as other groups targeted in employment policies, can be supported by both the national employment agency (as the central actor) and service providers. The process of outsourcing vulnerable groups to service providers has increased over the last decades, supported by different cooperation strategies.

At the national employment agency, there is a specific follow-up called ‘reinforced’ dedicated to unemployed that are far from employment (including LTU). Caseworkers in charge of this type of follow-up have less unemployed to follow in order to be able to meet them more often.

⁴ The length of time of the unemployment compensation varies with regards to the working periods and the age of the person. The maximum length for those that are less than 50 years old is 24 months. For those that are over 50 years old, it is 36 months. <http://www.pole-emploi.fr/candidat/la-duree-de-votre-indemnisation-@/suarticle.jspz?id=4118>

Figure 2: The follow-up at the national employment agency – people processing⁵



⁵ There is no formalized framework of the people processing organised by service providers.

Sources : Bulletin officiel de Pôle Emploi, 29 décembre 2011, n°123; Circulaire DGEFP no 2008-18 du 5 novembre 2008 relative à la mise en oeuvre du projet personnalisé d'accès à l'emploi et à l'offre raisonnable d'emploi; Entretiens avec les conseiller agence

Do these different kinds of support address specific problems of vulnerable individuals? In order to answer this question, it is important to know what policy areas of beneficiaries' life are taken into account, and which ones are not (or less). In this part, we will focus on both legal documents, and interviews of policymakers. Street level bureaucrats' and beneficiaries' point of views will later be developed. Nevertheless, it is of paramount importance to remind the strong impact their room for manoeuvre may have with regards to the issues that are tackled (or not) (see also WP6).

In Bordeaux⁶, the employment / vocational training nexus has been strongly acknowledged by all stakeholders involved (it is a strong national trend – see WP2 and WP4). The second policy field that is also strongly related to employment is the social one. The development of cross-sectorial conditionality that was reinforced with the creation of the RSA is a good example of the increasing link between both fields. The close relationship of vocational training and social assistance with employment policies was mainly initiated by national recommendations over the last twenty years. Policymakers and managers perceive both as key elements that are to be taken into account and addressed in order to enable the unemployed to be able to get back onto the labour market (social assistance) and to fit into it (vocational training). Then, childcare, housing and health were mentioned by policymakers as important fields to take into account. Yet, even though also promoted by national policymakers, the development of a strong relationship between these fields did not reach the same degree than vocational training and social assistance. As they are not prioritised, they are not on the agenda (nor national or local). Yet, at an organizational level, managers mentioned them more often. Indeed, as issues that strongly affect the ability of the unemployed to look for and find a job, they become crucial to address. Hence, the spheres of beneficiaries' life that are taken into account are numerous. However, taking them into account does not systematically mean they are addressed for all that. In France, the strong usage of outsourcing relies on the idea that peripheral hinders to employment (such as mobility, health, and many others) should be handled by specialised authorities (and not by the public employment service itself). Only training and social assistance (to a certain extent and only in the framework of the RSA) are

⁶ Most cities are similar with regards to the degree and nature of the cross sectoriality they promote. Indeed, it is mainly based on national recommendations and local entities do not seem to have developed a specific cross sectoriality with regards to employment policies. Yet, the degree of cross sectoriality may slightly differ from one city to another. See appendix

supposed to be taken into account simultaneously⁷. Other issues can be tackled but they are supposed to be handled by specific organizations⁸.

In order to get a service, the signature of a contract between the service provider and the unemployed is a compulsory step (see WP6). In the RSA situation, the contract depends on the organisation implementing the service.

Table 1 : Minimum income scheme contracts

<i>Referee organization</i>	<i>Contract</i>
Pôle Emploi	PPAE (labour market integration personalised plan)
Mission locale, local plan for inclusion and employment	CER PRO (Professional mutual commitment contract)
NGO's and other public organisations	CER (Mutual commitment contract)

After the unemployed's registration to Pôle Emploi, the first appointment occurs within the following days. As RSA recipient, the delay might be longer (a few weeks). But in this case, the unemployed is often already followed by an organisation. It is commonly agreed by both policymakers and street level bureaucrats that once the unemployed has registered and has been profiled, the first step is to develop a labour market integration path. In order to do so, caseworkers try to find adequate services in order to remove the main obstacles that hinder his/her labour market (re-) integration. Yet, even though there are numerous services for unemployed, all target a specific population. And among them, some are very quickly overlooked. It can make the orientation towards a service complicated. Hence, the service that is proposed to the unemployed is not always the one the caseworker would think as the most relevant. But sometimes, it is rather the one that is available and corresponds to the category of the unemployed. It shows that the unemployed can relatively quickly get a service, but that it might not be the most relevant one according to his/her need. Moreover, this ideal order of assigning services can be impeded by the identification of the obstacles (it might sometimes be difficult to identify the right obstacle). The price of the service does not

⁷ As explained in WP2, another exception is the *Mission Locale* that is a one-stop shop for youngsters that relies on a comprehensive and multidimensional approach.

⁸ However, as we observed in WP6, it also depends on street level bureaucrats' perception of their job.

seem to strongly affect the choice of the service. Yet, punctual services seem to be favoured (compared to long training for example).

B. Social and employment policies perceived by policymakers

Here, we seek to address the following question: how are the programmes targeted on LTU evaluated by policymakers?

Local policymakers put the emphasis on the fact that programs targeting LTU are mainly about (re) mobilizing the unemployed and putting him/her back in motion. In sum, these programmes' objectives are to make the unemployed active in his/her search for employment. Hence, the main impact on LTU seems to be behavioral rather than professional. Indeed, even though the promoted aim is labour market integration, the result (and sometimes the aim that is presented as being the most realistic) is to keep the unemployed active. This statement is corroborated by the fact that the evaluation of socio-professional inclusion of LTU is mainly measured with regards to the active behaviour of the unemployed.

In concrete terms, the support organised for LTU by the national employment agency is evaluated upon the following criteria: actions that are supposed to put the beneficiary into measures, training, and placement. Indeed, the follow-up and evaluation tools of caseworkers' counselling are the following: number of LTU put on a project/action, number of unemployed outsourced, number of job offers that have been sent to an unemployed and number of trainings. For service providers, the main criterion is the return to employment and/or putting the unemployed on a training program related to his professional project.

Until recently, the national employment agency was mainly an organization that orientates, rather than one in charge of counselling, which explains the criteria used to evaluate the provided services⁹. Yet, this might change over the following years because of 'Pôle Emploi 2015' (the new program of the national employment agency) and the effect of the new modalities framework (see WP6).

⁹ This task was previously fulfilled by another para-public agency (AFPA – *Association pour la Formation Professionnelle des Adultes*) and its body of career advisers. Some of them have been integrated in Pôle Emploi but not enough to support a widespread guidance and career advice. There is actually a hole in the fishnet concerning career counselling dedicated to jobseekers and salaries.

III. People processing from the point of view of street-level bureaucrats

In this part, we present the policies in practise and the way street level bureaucrats perceive the people processing, the governance structure and the organisational arrangements. Indeed, there is a difference between what policymakers planned and the policy in practise (Pressman, Wildavsky, 1984). This difference relies notably on the role of caseworkers in the implementation of public policies (Lipsky, 1980). This role is strongly related to their room for manoeuvre and their daily practises that questions their ability to adapt or change a policy. This analysis is necessary to grasp the reality of the policy and thus to understand the impact it may have on the beneficiary.

A. A comprehensive diagnosis

The diagnosis step is crucial in labour market integration services. In a period of increasing individualisation, it has become even more central as it enables street level bureaucrats to categorize the unemployed in order to provide a tailor-made service. Indeed, categorization represents the main strategy used to individualise the French employment public service: putting the individual into one category enables targeting and settling a specific programme to address the main issues this category can face.

We have previously presented what policy areas policymakers see relevant to connect in order to address unemployment. In this section we first present the issues that are included in an assessment of LTU's life situation and the problems that are ignored or even excluded as not being part of street level bureaucrats' interest and responsibility. Then, we will present the way street level bureaucrat perceive, analyse and evaluate their working tools for the purpose of work with LTU.

Criteria used to conduct the diagnosis are relatively similar between the different actors we met. However, the development and implementation of this diagnosis (how it is used, how are the different criteria identified and analysed) differ from one organization to another and/or from one caseworker to another. The convergence of the different approaches seems to be a particularity of LTU: all are based on the fact that there is a diversity of possible hinders, but also that LTU are confronted to at least one of these obstacles. In their situation, the diagnosis

is mainly about identifying those obstacles (and simultaneously identifying the professional project and/or options).

The main dimensions of the beneficiaries' profile the street level bureaucrat will take into account in his/her diagnosis are both personal and professional. The main ones are:

- Social skills: It tackles the reactivity and capacity of adaptation skills:

One caseworker explain that for those with “little autonomy, and maybe also unconfident with regards to taking more responsibility, well, for those people, they don't always have the possibility to adapt. Because we do have to adapt, (...) we ask more and more in terms of flexibility”.

- Personal / familial environment: what perception does the unemployed have of the labour market and of his/her unemployment situation?

“The lack of language skills, at first, the lack of diplomas, the lack of professional network, the familial environment... I am very sensitive on this point because I realised when I worked in another agency with very very difficult cases, that, sometimes, we had parents, or even grandparents that were also unemployed, ok? So, that, that is irreversible. The person has very much less chance to find a job if her/her familial environment does not work”.

- Language skills: French writing and speaking skills, communication skills (formal versus informal language)
- Diplomas, trainings and work experiences: what is their experience of the labour market (length, working hours)? To what job can they pretend with regards to their curriculum?
- ‘Peripheral hinders’: childcare, housing, health, and mobility.

Even when caseworker have solutions to overcome one - or several - of these hinders, they emphasize the difficulty to collect information: *“mobility, yes, but with the mobility programme, we have a good answer. So I tried to ‘jump on’ it, and I still try to take advantage of what seems to work. But then, we understand the reality, it helps measuring the situation, because, sometimes, people tell us some things and we realise that they said*

something else to the person in charge of the mobility programme. So, as we communicate well, it helps regulate the discourse and see what the real difficulty is ».

The conditions under which service providers and the national employment agency realise the diagnosis are not the same. Indeed, the diagnosis conducted by the national employment agency (therefore based on a universal service dedicated to all job seekers) is very broad; whereas the diagnosis realised by service providers is already more targeted. The RSA recipient has already been put into one category that corresponds to his/her program. Following this categorisation, he/she was orientated towards his/her single referee in charge of the counselling. The diagnosis is then less formal and more focused on obstacles that may hinder his integration onto the labour market. To illustrate this argument, we will first present the conditions in which the diagnosis is realised in the main employment service for LTU but also all other unemployed and job seekers. Then, we will present the conditions in which the diagnosis is realised in the framework of the RSA.

At the national employment agency, the diagnosis is timed. It occurs at the end of the first meeting: this registration meeting lasts 45 to 50 minutes in total.

“It is structured. So we have a limited time: 45 minutes, which is let’s say, timed because we have to click when the person arrives, and click when the person leaves our office. There are two major points to address: compensation and the project to get back on the labour market. So we need to register the person administratively speaking, so we have to check the management list in order to make sure he/he is a job seeker, to check his/her ID, inform him/her on his unemployment benefit, check his bank information, make sure we have all the documents for the file (...). We have to identify the jobs codes¹⁰ that correspond to what he/she is looking for, check the websites he/she uses to search, make sure he/she has a space on the website as job seeker, give him his/her unemployed card, explain him/her what it is, give him/her job offers, identify actions/ projects (...). For those that are the furthest away from employment, guide them towards organisations that may help them on the professional project (...) and insist on the need to update their situation

¹⁰ Codes ROME (as they are called in the french system) are the french employment codes. To one job is supposed to correspond one code.

because if he/she doesn't, he/she will be un-registered automatically. Well, all that in 45 to 50 minutes”.

Street level bureaucrats in charge of the implementation of the support organised in the framework of the RSA follow a less rigid framework for the diagnosis. The first formal diagnosis is realised on the basis of the file the unemployed sent to register as a RSA recipients. Then, once the beneficiary is being orientated to his/her single referee, the diagnosis is an on-going process:

“The first period is really dedicated to the production of a social diagnosis and to identify the hinders because the people that are sent to us have social hinders (...) so the idea is to take about two months to put all that down and then start resolution approaches”.

Thus, even though the first interview is dedicated to getting to know the beneficiary, diagnosing his/her, this step is neither formalised nor timed. The first meeting introduces both the street level bureaucrat and his/her way to approach the counselling, and the beneficiary (his/her project, his/her experience, his/her main hinders). This on-going process enables the street level bureaucrat to overcome the difficulty to grasp the real hinders encountered by the beneficiaries. For example, one street level bureaucrat explained that mobility is not only a matter of having or not a driving licence or a car, it is also and even more importantly a matter of the way the person perceives mobility and space. Hence, taking time to make the diagnosis thus enables them to understand the cognitive hinders and not only the material hinders that are the only ones often mentioned.

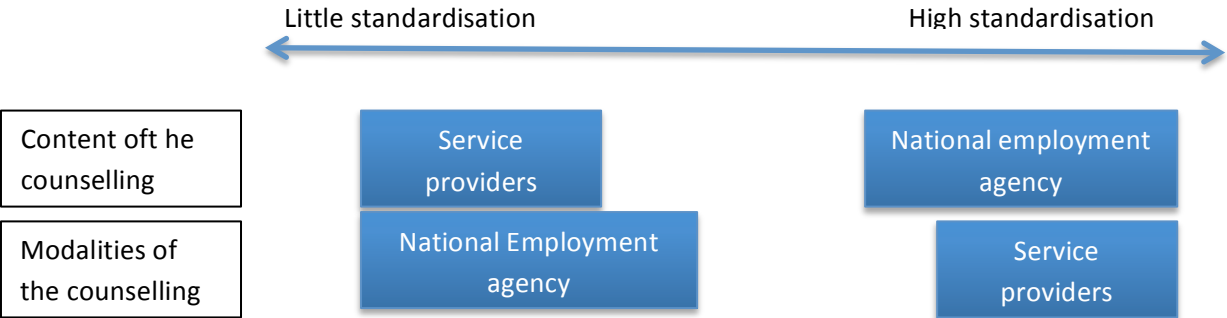
For all, the first interview is also a time of exchange between the beneficiary and the caseworker. This time is about getting to know the expectations of both actors and informing the beneficiary on his/her rights and duties through the contractualisation step. One of the specificity initiated in the framework of the RSA is the development of collective information to inform beneficiaries and initiate the counselling.

The tools are not similar from one organisation to another, or from one program to another. However, they take into account the same criteria. In that respect, they are relatively standardised. Among the service providers we met, the fact that they are in charge of providing a service on the basis of a contract with a financing and decision-making authority

put them in a position of providing, and not co-constructing the service. The content of the counselling (meaning what is being talked about, how are hindrances addressed, actions the beneficiary is orientated towards) is decided by the caseworker. When the counselling supposes an orientation on a service or other programme / action, this scope of action remains limited to existing actions. There is no formal frame of interviews even though caseworkers have to write a report after each meeting. However, the modalities (frequency of meetings, final objectives) are formerly defined.

In the national employment agency, the counselling is much more standardised, while the modalities are made more flexible over time.

Figure 3: Two approaches of individualisation



All meetings take place at the organisation’s office. Caseworkers implementing the RSA often receive the beneficiaries in order to preserve the privacy. Yet, some are in an open space separated by room dividers. In half cases, caseworkers do not have their own office but go from one office to another. In the other half, offices are assigned to one caseworker. These features depend on the organisation. It can be both a choice and a consequence of the building. Yet, privacy can represent a factor of non-take up (see chapter 4 on this issue).

B. Targeting: a facilitating room for manoeuvre

How do street level bureaucrat perceive and analyse their own working tools? Do they find these tools efficient to address the labour market integration of long-term unemployed? Has the program at stake in this report initiated an innovative way to tackle this issue?

The activation program at stake in this report relies on two pillars already presented: an orientation towards a single contact and the orientation on punctual and short-term actions. Once the single contact in charge of the path identified, the unemployed is supposed to keep this contact for his/her whole integration path. However, in practise, the unemployed often has several contacts. It can be because he/she is being followed by several organisations without telling one another, or because one caseworker is absent or changes occupation and transfers his/her 'portfolio' to another one. Hence, the unemployed can get into an orientation circle.

Street level bureaucrats, when working on the RSA, have more time dedicated to their counselling task than when working on the universal support provided by the national employment agency. Moreover, they are often specialised on vulnerable groups and therefore can focus on the programs, actions, trainings and methods targeted at these groups. In this context, the adaptation to the specific needs of LTU is facilitated. It is also facilitated by the fact that LTU is an official category, even if the precise definition is discussed and debated amongst the different actors that claim the speciality. Indeed, the categorisation of this group of individual has led to specific services and tailor-made actions. However, it also means that when one does not get into one category, it cannot benefit from the service, no matter it would seem relevant to the caseworker. Consequently, some caseworkers try to make their beneficiaries 'fit' into one category in order to access a service, which points out a gap between policies and policies in practise.

Moreover, in a time of promotion of individualisation, the need for flexibility in the counselling has been highlighted. As we previously argued, it can take different shapes (see figure 3): when room for manoeuvre is given on one facet of the counselling, another facet is constrained in order to maintain a certain equilibrium of control on the implementation and delivery of the service.

Moreover, the strong usage of cooperation in a multi-stakeholders framework (see WP4) usually takes two different shapes with regard to the service delivery: either the beneficiary is sent on one action by his/her contact that still manages his/her labour market integration path, or the beneficiary is outsourced to another organization that takes over the management of his case. In both situations, the communication has become more and more rigid and formalised. Even though it creates a kind of neutrality enabling all actors to work together no matter their

personal links, it can also represent an obstacle to communication that used to rely on informal relationships.

According to street level bureaucrats working on the RSA support, they appreciate having more room for manoeuvre in the way they decide to work than at the national employment agency's case managers. Yet, the heavy administrative work they have to do (reporting for example) can sometimes represent a burden, even though they manage to deal with it thanks to the timetable they manage:

“Reports... They are generated by software, so we just fill the little boxes (...). Our organisation advised us to fill it during the interview with the individual. (...) But personally, I don't work this way. I use the time for the unemployed, to look at him/her into the eye, not behind my screen. I take notes like old times.”

The other main constraint is the lack of new actions. Very often, LTU go from one action to another one. Names of the actions change, but caseworkers with a rather long working experience (about 20 years) explain that it remains more or less the same. On that point, they often agree with local policymakers' analysis that sheds light on policies' capacity to keep the unemployed active, but hardly ever lead to employment.

C. Overall assessment of activation system of LTU by street level bureaucrats

Caseworkers have expressed a relatively negative opinion of inclusion policies in terms of resources / dedicated means (number of counsellors, number of unemployed to follow, time). What feature LTU and RSA recipients is the importance of hindering factors. Caseworkers explained that some can be addressed and are taken into account in the labour market integration path. But some obstacles are so important (for example, if one does not speak French) or too far from the caseworker's skills and responsibilities (for example if one has addiction issues) that they often have to leave the unemployed aside without concrete solutions to overcome them.

Caseworkers working with LTU are often more sensitive to social issues as they are often confronted to unemployed that have social hindrances keeping them away from employment. They cannot ignore this issue. In terms of impact, the main effect of activation policies they highlighted is the fact that it keeps LTU active; it facilitates an effort to get into motion.

The usage of sanctions has not really been effectively implemented within service providers (only the main PES organisation – the national employment agency – has timidly implemented them).

What really makes the difference according to caseworkers is the time they have to realise their follow-up and counselling and the frequency of the appointments. The - even narrow - room for manoeuvre enabled by the lack of highly formalized and rigid framework in terms of content of the counselling facilitates the development of a good relationship between the caseworker and the beneficiary and enables a tailor-made support, perceived as highly necessary for LTU.

Yet, the standardisation of the reports and the rigidity of the communication amongst stakeholders constrain the share of information, especially with regards to peripheral hindrances that are less taken into account in some organisations.

IV. People processing from the point of view of long term unemployed individuals

A. Characteristics of interviewees¹¹

As already mentioned, seven interviews were conducted with long-term unemployed. Their individual profiles differed with regards to their professional experience and the kind of obstacles that hindered their integration onto the labour market. Yet, they were all selected by caseworkers following some criteria:

- All unemployed we met were minimum income recipients.
- They were all supported by a service provider that was not the national employment agency (even though many were still registered as unemployed at the national employment agency).
- All were considered as close to employment by the caseworker in charge of their follow-up.
- But all had peripheral hinders to address (childcare, health, mobility, housing). These hinders were relatively weak and already partly overcome for some as all were 'employable' according to their caseworkers.
- We met both men and women. All were over 30 years old.

In terms of education and working experience, the degree of qualification differed from one person to another. All have had working experiences in different fields (maintenance, trade, plumber...). It is interesting to note that women are very often orientated towards maintenance jobs.

The cause and types and of their social problems were often related to familial issues. Indeed, in 3 cases, women were left alone with young children, after a relatively long time of unemployment in order to look after the children, and no money in a non-supportive familial environment. In this situation, finding a job became difficult, as they did not have any

¹¹ See appendix 2

solutions to look after (or before) the children after kindergarten or school. There is also the accumulation of issues (housing, health, childcare). Other factors may hinder the labour market integration according to beneficiaries: age, level of training, lack of experience or lack of coherence in the professional path that may somehow discredit the unemployed.

In these different situations, unemployment resulted from hinders one could face. And long-term unemployment resulted from the difficulty to remove obstacles and, additionally (and consequently) the difficulty (made more and more complicated to overcome over time) to find a job after a long period of unemployment.

Facing a situation of unemployment, the lack of material resources and the difficulty to find a job led them to contact the employment public service. Moreover, it is often perceived as a compulsory step as it opens up rights to several services and benefits.

For long-term unemployed, even though those we met were not entitled to the unemployment benefit anymore but were entitled to the minimum income benefit, there is an emergency feeling. They expect concrete answers; they expect “*to find a solution*”.

None disagree to register as unemployed or minimum income scheme recipient and all referred to their referee and the integration process they initiated in ‘good’ terms. Even though caseworkers explained they sometimes have to deal with beneficiaries that are not motivated and only come to appointments to get financial benefits, we only met beneficiaries that were motivated and were involved in their labour market integration path. It is interesting to stress that all have had a strong history with labour market integration actors. As long-term unemployed, they have often been followed by different organisations / through different policies and by different actors. Consequently, as one mentioned: “*things repeat themselves*”, therefore unemployed often go round and round in circles. Out of the seven interviewees, only one seemed to have a clear understanding of the system.

They know the main actors, but their understanding of the role and working schemes remains relatively blurred. They know where to go and know where to find internet access for example, but they get mixed up with names of the organizations and programmes.

B. Reconstruction of encounters with PES & other organisations involved in delivery

As explained, long-term unemployed we met have had a long relationship with public employment services. Therefore, during our interviews, none were able to recall their first encounter with the PES. Some were able to remember their first meeting with the referee in the framework of the minimum income scheme. Yet, crossing this information with the one given by the caseworker, we realised that some elements were mixed up: who orientate them/told them to go in this organization (mixing up between a universal follow-up organised by the national employment agency and the follow up organised in the framework of the minimum income scheme), who is their single referee (some evoked other referees), etc. It once again sheds the light on a system where the unemployed can get lost.

As most interviewees explained, the first interview with caseworkers in charge of delivering the service in the framework of the minimum income scheme for long-term unemployed is focused on the profile of the unemployed and his/her professional objectives.

“Interviewer: what were the first questions that you have been asked? Interviewee: Our life, what we did, our life in general. Interviewer: Not only about employment? Interviewee: First of all, what we are looking for, our objectives. All that kinds of things and professional issues mainly”.

However, long-term unemployed don't always give all information, leading to a situation where some issues are left apart and not sorted out.

“Interviewer: You told me you have a little daughter and maybe a follow up on that point. (...) Interviewee: No, and I didn't tell my referee because otherwise, she could have suggested me, I don't know. Interviewer: Why didn't you tell her if it's not indiscreet? Interviewee: I don't know, she didn't take the liberty. I didn't either”.

They expressed different perspectives from caseworkers on that specific programme and caseworkers from the national employment agency. According to them, the latter often don't accept childcare issues as an explanation for unemployment.

The perception of conditionality depends on the unemployed degree of autonomy and his knowledge of the system. It also depends on the stakeholder in charge of the programme. Indeed, when unemployed are confronted to the national employment agency, they talk about a sword of Damocles with regards to the consequences of conditionality. Whereas in the framework of the minimum income scheme or other programs implemented by other organisations, the signature of a contract is mentioned as a formality. Some don't remember signing a contract; some others get mixed up between the several inclusion contracts they have signed over the years. For example, one person explained, "*the minimum income benefit is not conditional*". It shows that the sanctions that may arise from conditionality are not strongly emphasized and enforced. The relationship between the caseworker and the LTU is here based on a mutual commitment and respect, but not on threats: "*If you justify, no problem. But if you miss two appointments without prior notice... you have to be correct. If they are, you have to be too. It's a commitment*".

The scope for manoeuvre they have does not seem to represent an issue for LTU. Indeed, most of them expect the caseworker to handle the labour market integration path and do not ask for more voice. They feel there is a certain co-construction dynamic, especially on the choice of the professional project. The caseworker is the one taking decisions, but the unemployed is not passive for all that.

"I told my caseworker (about a subsidized contract) but she didn't want me to do it. Because honestly, if I would have done that, it would have been to have a contract, money, minimum of 700 euros or something like that, (...). I told her, maybe not the first day, but after four or five meetings. I told her and she said yes, yes, I wanted to talk to you about that, but it's too early. She told me why and I have to say, she was right".

While on the several programmes available, there is some scope of choice; there is less choice and possibility with regards to reorientation. Some jobs are often recommended without

taking into account the profile of the unemployed: several interviewees mentioned housework for example. The specialisation of caseworkers on one group (here long-term unemployed) hence seems to represent a facilitating factor to understand the profile, to diagnose it, and to take into account peripheral hindrances. Yet, it also seems to go along the specialisation on some jobs often recommended to LTU, but that don't always correspond to the variety of profiles one caseworker may meet.

One interviewee with a tertiary level (6 years of university) explained she was advised to look for housework because the caseworker "*knew this field, she encouraged to go there*".

Once the follow up launched, the LTU is asked to complete tasks by him/herself and/or with the caseworker. In the case of someone with a professional project: work on the curriculum vitae, find job offers, find contacts, and work on the network. Otherwise, the first task will be to work on the professional project (get information on jobs, etc.). There is very little use of tests and of skills assessments for this group of unemployed.

In sum, LTU expressed a common trust towards the caseworker they work with. Yet, it is to the caseworker to get the information that the unemployed will not always give.

"That's hers to tackle (personal) issues. Then, as I told you, if she doesn't, I won't tackle them either".

C. Assessment of everyday practice of policies in terms of impact on well-being, work prospects, participation in society

Long-term unemployed we met often make a difference between the several organizations they have been working with, and most especially between the national employment agency and other actors.

The people processing organised by policy makers is not clear for them. They do not understand what are the relationships between actors: who is a service provider, who is the financial organization, who is the single referee, who is the main authority in charge of their labour market integration path, and so on.

In terms of orientation towards one or another organization, they consequently remain relatively passive. They usually perceive orientation as a good opportunity to work on specific issues or in a different way that may help. Yet, their expectations remain low: *“I did many many actions that helped, I’m not saying it hasn’t. But, after all, they don’t give us what we really need because there is a labour market here. And many people will judge someone that does not have a diploma or else. You got to handle things”*. But, in several cases, their labour market integration paths correspond to an orientation path: they go from one organization to another one continuously.

As the entire system – and especially in the case of long-term unemployed with peripheral hindrances – relies on orientating the beneficiary towards specialised organization to remove obstacles, it often creates a blurred landscape for the beneficiary. They don’t get the difference between the organization in charge of their inclusion and the organization in charge of a specific service. Therefore, they often don’t know in which program they are, when one program or service ends, etc.

Indeed, even though the service provided in the framework of the minimum income scheme is targeted to long-term unemployed and caseworkers are more used to diagnosing peripheral hindrances and taking them into account, it does not mean they are able to address them. They often identify them and then orientate the beneficiary towards the most relevant organization in order to work on the obstacle (for example, housing or health issues).

Despite of this unclear people processing, LTU we met emphasized the high quality of the service provided in the framework of the minimum income scheme. The frequency of the appointments and the fact that caseworkers take into account their global profile are key factors to evaluate the organization of encounters. It enables a trustworthy relationship. LTU also feels that they are less pressured on time issues and that the workloads is less heavy than at the national employment agency.

LTU we met all preferred the service provided in the framework of the minimum income scheme than the one they had at the main PES organization. The reasons are the frequency of appointments, the availability of the caseworker, the way they are listened to, the way their obstacles are taken in account.

“It is more interpersonal. They are more into listening. It’s something else. It can’t be compared. Interviewer: What is the difference according to you? Interviewee: It’s a smaller organization. There is less people. We have a better follow-up here. The person really takes care of you from A to Z whereas at the national employment agency, we always meet with different people. They are always called and I think they have too many people to meet and that they can’t follow every one. Here, that’s different. No, no, you can’t compare.”

Currently, most LTU we met seemed relatively confident and motivated. The motivation is an important element as all raised it. It shows that the PES cognitive and behavioural expectations have been integrated. Nevertheless, they remain more pessimistic with regards to developing an interesting professional path. They opted for a financial approach, meaning that their objective (at least their short time objective) is to find a job that will initiate a new dynamic. Nevertheless, the childcare issue remained unsolved for all women we met. The only way to tackle it was to look for job that did not need early or late hours¹².

The support they received helped them to remain/become active in their search. It appears as a strong re-rallying element and as a good networking tool.

The main cost of free service is that LTU have to explain their life several times. The important number of actors the LTU meets reinforces it. It may lead to leaving information aside. *“So often, I will tell my story, I tell, tell again. It’s routine now! (...) You always have to explain, re explain, re explain, it’s tiring”*. A border is often crossed to tackle private life issues, making the unemployed uncomfortable.

¹² That point is of paramount importance as we showed in WP4 that childcare is one the issue that is the less taken into account by national policymakers, while we now see that it is one of the main hinder to labour market integration and that caseworkers do not have solution to address it.

The non-take up

Questioning the impact of activation policies on LTU raises another question: the non-take-up issue. Indeed, an analysis of the impact of services on LTU in terms of labour market integration and well being could be completed by an analysis of the reasons why some people that would be entitled to the service do not ask for it. In France, a debate on the non-take up of the RSA was initiated by academic researches over the last years, which led to several books and articles on the topic (for example, see Warin, 2012).

According to Okbani's analysis, "lack of knowledge or bad understanding of the minimum income scheme appears as the first statistical reason of non-take-up". She sheds light on several other possible factors explaining the non-take-up such as a "complex application process" and the lack of clear information, but also "psychological identification cost" and "stigmatization fear".

It corroborates and emphasized what LTU told us during interviews (complex system, lack of information). But it also adds some other possible impacts of the service as it was shaped by policymakers and implemented by street level bureaucrats that are related to stigmatization processes and represent a cost for unemployed..

Source: Okbani, 2013

Regarding the global PES system, LTU think that a more comprehensive approach could help them finding their way within this complex landscape. They notably highlighted the need for a single referee. It shows that the development of a single referee system that occurred over the past years have not reached its objective, and has not been properly implemented. They also mentioned a single file that would be centralized and available for all actors with the permission of the unemployed.

According to LTU, the people processing could also be improved if they would get information about all services / trainings available at the beginning of the support that would enable them to become more active in their labour market integration path (instead of letting the caseworker choose).

V. Conclusion

The impact of activation policies on long-term unemployed is hard to evaluate. That is why focusing on one specific programme and comparing it to the most common service provided by the main public employment service organisation appeared as the best way to highlight the several variables playing a role in the quality of the service.

Moreover, analysing the implementation of the minimum income scheme enabled us to have enough perspective in order to provide an analysis. Indeed, the follow up organised in the framework of the national employment agency has just changed, making it very hard to analyse with so little distance.

This analysis enabled us to shed light on the fact that there is an important discrepancy between the way the policy was planned and its results. Indeed, the objective of making the landscape clearer by establishing a single contact system has not yet been fulfilled. The landscape remains relatively blurred for LTU that are sent from one organization to another one. Yet, services they are provided seem to fulfil their activation objective as the main impact all agreed on is that it keeps/makes the unemployed active.

Moreover, the minimum income scheme reinforced the linkage between formerly distinct policy fields (social and employment). In that regard, the means and tools caseworkers have at their disposal seem to facilitate a comprehensive approach taking into account the several obstacles one may face in his/her labour market integration. Yet, based on WP6, one could argue that it relies on service providers' professional culture, and not only on the new policy framework. Nevertheless, the way the scope for actions is conceived by policymakers seem to maintain a room for manoeuvre with regards to the 'content' of the service, perceived as central in street level bureaucrats' work.

However, it is interesting to highlight that sanctions have only been really implemented to a very limited extent, especially by service providers. Hence, the understanding of the policy seems relatively adaptable. One manager explained that there is no strong pressure yet put on quantitative outcomes and sanctions in order to give time to caseworkers to integrate new paradigms. Therefore, it would mean that the change of paradigm goes first through the policy itself and then is supposed to spread over caseworkers.

In terms of well being and impact on the LTU, the services seem to maintain a relationship between the labour market and the unemployed. It thus represents a way to remain active and to reduce or limit the distance from employment. However, even though social obstacles are taken into account by the caseworker, they are not always addressed and overcome. In terms of well-being, caseworkers that have more time to follow the unemployed and can listen to the entire life story (meaning diagnose the peripheral hinders one may face) get build a trustworthy relationship and work on one's professional project. If caseworkers are too constraint by a rigid framework or cannot meet with the person on a regular basis, the relationship seems more complicated to develop, leading to limited results in terms of well being.

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Appendix 1 :

Multi dimensional intergration in Bordeaux (WP4 comparatif)

	Bordeaux	
	Level of integration	Reasons
Professional training	Very strong integration: the Regional Council in charge of professional training is involved in most employment committees, and all refer to the duo “employment / training”	National trend: strong connection between employment and training Strong discursive focus on the link between both sectors carried out by the Chairman of the Aquitaine Region who is also the Chairman of the Association of French Regions, and fosters the increasing role of Regions regarding employment
Social	Strong integration both at NUTS 3 level (General Council), and at the city level (social project of the city)	National trend: strong connection between social inclusion and professional integration (cf. Barbier's definition of activation) Top-down cognitive and normative influences Global approach of the individual
Urban policies	Average integration: mentioned by few policymakers on specific measures (subsidized contracts, for instance)	Transversal policy field that can thereby represent a lever to tackle employment issues (urban policies as an instrument, notably used to address migrants' inclusion)
Housing	Average integration: few policymakers mentioned this dimension (which appears important for case workers). When mentioned, it is often related to services that focus on housing and that integrate employment issues (but not the other way around) No specific cross sectorial projects, but rather services that integrate both dimensions	Integration that mostly relies on the global approach of the individual Links between instances in charge of housing issues and employment policies that have not (yet?) resulted in common dynamics

Economic Development	<p>Relatively strong integration: most policymakers mentioned it as an important field that should be interconnected with employment. The <i>Maison de l'emploi</i> absorbed the <i>PLIE</i>, and orientates its strategy towards relationships with firms.</p>	<p>Some promote a shift from employment / social to employment / economic development, but not a common acknowledgement so far. The existence of the <i>Maison de l'emploi</i> and its focus on economic development can foster such connection. However, all actors did not acknowledge this organization as central with regards to employment inclusion matters. Economic development hence remains secondary.</p>
Health	<p>Weak integration: few policymakers mentioned this dimension. Rather acknowledged in a cognitive way as a necessary related sector, it does not result in the development of many concrete integrated actions.</p> <p>Mentioned by the case workers with regard to their global approach</p>	<p>Distinct instances, no strong common interest even though the spread of employment issues finds its way into health matters</p>
Childcare	<p>Weak integration: mentioned by few policymakers (the city) and some caseworkers. When mentioned, it is both as an important and difficult obstacle to resolve</p>	<p>Instances in charge of childcare issues usually belong to distinct units, far from employment matters.</p>

Appendix 2 : Table of interviewees

<i>Gender</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Qualification / work Experience</i>	<i>Hinders</i>	<i>Unemployed since</i>	<i>Cause of unemployment</i>
Men	30-35		Homeless Health	April 2012	Arrival in Bordeaux
Men	45-50	Technical training Plumber	Housing One small child Separated	2013	Worked overseas, return to France
Women	45-50	Master biology (Mali & USA) Hasn't worked for over 20 years to raise her children	Housing 2 children Separated	Fall 2012	Arrived in France to raise her children, divorced (husband overseas). She was host by her brother who died. Consequently, housing issues.
Women	50-55	No education House renovation for 25 years, grape-harvest	Health	Several registration in the past 30 years	Health issues
Men	30-35	Training in the metalworking industry	Health	First registration 2000. When younger, went to the Mission Locale	Accident Long inclusion path
Women	40-45	Has worked as a home help. Hasn't worked for a long time	Children	2010 (not the first registration as unemployed)	Hasn't worked for a long time
Women	40-45	Very active woman in the past: trade, receptionist	Children	2012	Her husband was a policeman and had to move from Paris. She followed him and didn't find work in the countryside and looked after his children. Then: divorce



WP7 National Report: Germany

The Impact of an Integrated Approach to Social Cohesion

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1. Introduction and methodology

This country report is part of the FP7 research project LOCALISE that analyses how local actors deal with the conflicts and dilemmas caused by integrated social cohesion policies in six European countries: Poland, Sweden, France, Great Britain, Italy and Germany. The project is divided into six empirical work packages (WPs) focusing on the practical implementation of active labour market policies. In Work Packages 2-5, we analysed different approaches to active inclusion at the local, regional, national and European level. For this purpose, interviews were conducted in three localities per country, with a focus on policy and governance-related aspects of active inclusion. WP6 and WP7 now turn to the individual level of active inclusion, investigating how caseworkers and other front-line officials provide active labour market measures to the long-term unemployed. For these two Work Packages, a second round of about 15 interviews was conducted in one of the previously-studied localities (in each country). In the German context, we chose to study the Eastern German municipality “EAS” more intensely during the second round of interviews.

This report is structured as follows. Section 1 gives an overview of the locality where the interviews were conducted and the selection of the interviewees. Section 2 then starts out the data analysis, presenting how local policy-makers plan and evaluate the provision of activation (based on data from the first interview round in 2012). In sections 3 and 4, policy-makers’ visions are then juxtaposed with the daily experiences of Jobcenter caseworkers (section 3) and clients (section 4) – based on the second round of interviews in 2013 – after which the final section offers some general conclusions.

(1.A) Description of the local entity

Let us begin by briefly introducing the municipality “EAS” where the second round of interviews took place in Germany. EAS had 230,000 inhabitants in 2013 and is situated in the German province of Saxony-Anhalt. EAS has suffered greatly from de-industrialisation since the collapse of the German Democratic Republic and now concentrates on the development of its service sector (e.g. call centres). EAS’s unemployment rate is still relatively high compared with the rest of the country (11.5% compared to 6.7% in December 2013), although the long-term unemployment rate has dropped drastically in recent years (now 38.9% compared to 36.3% in the whole of Germany; rates as of December 2013). The Jobcenter EAS served 10,500 uninsured “UB II”¹ clients in December 2013, about half of whom were long-term unemployed (5,085). EAS was chosen as the interview site for WP6 and WP7 from the three localities investigated earlier because in response to the relatively unfavourable labour market in EAS, the Jobcenter EAS has developed innovative local strategies and partnerships for reintegrating the long-term unemployed population into the labour market. More details on local activation partnerships in EAS are given in section 2. First, however, section 1.B addresses the national policy and governance context in which the local implementation of active inclusion policies is embedded in Germany.

(1.B) How local governance structures and organisational arrangements translate into people-processing

One particularity about the German UB II system is that although benefit administration and activation are the responsibility of local “Jobcenters”, many organisational features and implementation routines are similar across the country due to regulatory mandates in the Social

Security Code II (*Sozialgesetzbuch II*, abbr. SGB II). Hence, in order to understand how local governance structures and organisational arrangements translate into people-processing in the German context, an understanding of the national UB II legislation is first needed.

The UB II system in Germany goes back to the Hartz reforms of 2005 that merged social assistance (*Sozialhilfe*) with the former unemployment assistance scheme for insured but long-term unemployed people (*Arbeitslosenhilfe*). By merging the two systems, the Hartz reforms not only drew most former recipients of ‘charitable’ social assistance into the employment system, making them subject to job-search requirements under the motto of *Fordern* (a rough equivalent to ‘sticks’), but also gave them access to employment measures that had previously been restricted to insured claimants under the motto of *Fördern* (roughly equivalent to ‘carrots’). Today, the German UB II system is thus characterised by a very heterogeneous benefit population, ranging from people with multiple problems who have never worked to older people with a work-history of several decades who were made redundant, next to university graduates who are entering the labour-market for the very first time.

In order to accommodate the heterogeneity of problems that can be diagnosed among the UB II population beside unemployment proper, the Hartz policy reforms were accompanied by an organisational reform that created a new type of agency, the so-called “Jobcenters”, for tending to UB II clients. The Jobcenters are for the most part governed jointly by the Federal Employment Agency (FEA; *Bundesagentur für Arbeit*) and the municipalities (*Kommunen*) under whose aegis the social assistance scheme formerly fell. Staff members in these joint Jobcenters continue to be associated with their ‘old’ employers and receive work contracts according to either the FEA’s or the municipal employment scheme. In addition, there are now 108 so-called optional municipalities (*Optionskommunen*) running their local Jobcenters autonomously without the FEA as a partner. The rationale behind this organisational reconfiguration was that the FEA can bring a long experience with employment services (and established networks with employment service providers) to the Jobcenter table, whereas the municipalities can contribute a high degree of professionalism in dealing with more far-reaching social problems that hinder employment and must therefore be addressed before or while labour-market integration is pursued.

Another political rationale behind combining national (FEA) and local (municipal) expertise in dealing with long-term unemployment has been the expectation that employment services will have a greater effect if local actors have the discretion to appropriate national instruments and regulations to local labour market contexts as well as individual client cases. Therefore, the Jobcenter reform included a relatively large room for manoeuvre for Jobcenter managers to build networks with other public and private service providers, develop new activation and counselling instruments, and bundle employment and social services into unique parcels depending on each client’s situation and needs. More specifically, § 16a of the SGB II makes it possible to provide “holistic and comprehensive support” by linking job-insertion services with care offers, debt counselling, psycho-social counselling, drug counselling or counselling for alcoholics. In addition, the provision of employment services was made voluntary in the SGB II beyond the two basic services of job placement and educational counselling (§ 16 SGB II), which in practice means that individual caseworkers have a large discretionary space in granting activation measures to clients. However, besides this room for manoeuvre, the SGBII also introduced a number of monitoring mechanisms in order to ensure national service standards. Thus, all German Jobcenters are categorised into one of 12 types

depending on their local labour market context.² For each type, three performance indicators are measured and published every three months: “Reduction of need for assistance” (i.e. spending on UB II benefits), the “Job insertion rate”, and “Changes in the number of beneficiaries” (§ 48a SGB II). As we learned in EAS, these performance indicators are sometimes even handed down to the individual level, putting pressure on individual caseworkers to actualise higher job-insertion rates. As one caseworker in EAS reports:

You only hear, ‘Bad, the figures are bad, we have to do more’. Of course, this also depends on the team leader, whether he or she filters out this [pressure], which is not the case in our team. As I said, you’re only criticised for what you haven’t accomplished, but a corresponding ‘praise culture’ in the sense of ‘Wow, this looks good’ is missing completely higher up the ladder.

As we learned during the first interview round, however, the top management has a more benevolent view of performance indicators and how they are handed down to the street-level in EAS:

The targets are differentiated by team. Meeting the targets is challenging, they are not just plain vanilla. (...) You have to discuss in detail: How can we meet those targets, what do we do, what do we want to achieve. (...) So that the caseworkers get the chance to communicate their needs and also their practical experiences to the team leaders. (Jobcenter director, 67)

As a final remark, also the funding mechanisms behind activation measures have a strong influence on caseworker practices. In Germany, activation measures for UB II clients are financed out of federal funds (§ 46 SGB II), some of which are granted under specific national programmes (such as “Late Starters” and “Annual Rings”, see section 1.C) while others are broadly earmarked for specific purposes, although the Jobcenters are free to design specific instruments within those broader categories. This funding arrangement implies that Jobcenters have no incentive to save excessively on activation; in contrast, under the German cameralistic accountancy system, Jobcenters are incentivised to use up their entire budgets during one year – even if it means assigning clients to measures that are not necessary for them (as left-over budgets may entail lower federal budgets in consecutive years). Hence, one relatively frequent responsabilising practice in German Jobcenters consists in assigning clients to standardised ‘mass’ measures such as application trainings, as we will see in the empirical analysis.

To conclude, we have seen that the German Jobcenter system and the high flexibility of local Jobcenters and individual caseworkers in activating UB II clients facilitate tailor-made activation approaches. Hence, one might expect that the German Jobcenters are well-equipped to help unemployed people back into the labour market or to solve other problems in clients’ personal lives that stand in the way of regular employment. However, it should also be borne in mind that most activation instruments provided by German Jobcenters originate from the FEA’s long-established repertoire of instruments that was traditionally geared only towards insured clients whose only bureaucratically relevant ‘problem’ was unemployment. By contrast, services and contact points for vulnerable people who cannot immediately enter the labour market have traditionally exclusively been provided by the municipalities, for which reason inner-organisational governance structures in bringing these two different strands of service offers are crucial for effective implementation practices on the work-floors of German Jobcenters, as we will see in sections 2-4 below.

(1.C) Description of the selection of interviewees and other data used for the analysis

In concluding the introductory section of this report, a few words should be said about the recruitment of our respondents. In the second interview phase, the recruitment of our respondents proceeded largely via the Jobcenter management. After we had secured permission to conduct another round of interviews in EAS, a senior manager (whom we had already interviewed during the first interview round) arranged for interviews with eight caseworkers dealing exclusively with labour-market integration (rather than benefit administration), scheduled at about one-hour intervals over the course of two days. As requested, the senior manager took care to recruit a variety of caseworkers dealing with different client groups, more specifically

- under 25 year-olds, to whom special regulations apply – largely geared towards stricter treatment and hence stronger incentives to work (two respondents)
- under 35 year-olds without a secondary education, for whom a special federal programme has been set up to realise a secondary degree (“Late Starters” [*Spätstarter*])
- above 50 year-olds, for whom a special national programme has been set up to realise labour-market re-entry (*Perspektive 50plus: Beschäftigungspakte in den Regionen*; called “Annual Rings” [*Jahresringe*] in EAS)³
- single parents
- self-employed.

In addition, we spoke with two caseworkers who did not serve a specific target group. All interviews with caseworkers took place in the respective caseworker’s offices. In the empirical analysis below, caseworker respondents will be signified by the letter ‘A’ plus a random number.

Concerning the client respondents, we had requested that all caseworker respondents recruit one long-term unemployed client who had a meeting at the Jobcenter in the week that we were in EAS, and who would be willing to expend another hour on talking with us. In the end, only four client interviews could be realised because not all caseworkers were able to arrange an interview. For this reason and because we were not able to recruit unemployed respondents via different channels in EAS, we decided to recruit an additional four client interviews in the Northern German municipality of “NOR”. The latter interviews were again organised via one Jobcenter caseworker with whom we had conducted a pilot interview, as well as through an independent “Unemployment Self-Help Association” (*Arbeitslosenselbsthilfe*). Initially, we had some concerns that choosing unemployed respondents from two cities would jeopardise the validity of our research; however, since we found that client experiences were relatively consistent across Jobcenters and municipalities in our small sample, we no longer think that our mixed group of client respondents is problematic for the interpretation of the research results.

All interviews with clients in EAS took place in the Jobcenter building, in two cases with the respective caseworker being present. Initially, we had thought that the caseworker’s presence might again jeopardise the interview results because we were afraid that the clients would not dare to speak up if their caseworker was there with them. However, it turned out that the opposite was the case: At least the two clients with whom we conducted a group interview seemed to welcome the opportunity to voice their personal opinion in the presence of their caseworker. In NOR, one client interview took place at our university; one interview was conducted in a downtown café; and a last

group interview with two unemployed persons active in the Unemployment Self-Help Association took place in the organisation's headquarter. In the empirical analysis below, client respondents will be signified by the letter 'B' plus a random number.

Having hereby given an overview of our respondents and how they were recruited, let us now turn to the data analysis, and more specifically to the question how the local implementation of active inclusion policies is being coordinated and evaluated by policy-makers in EAS.

2. Activation of the long-term unemployed from the point of view of policy-makers

Section 2 of this report is based primarily on interview material that was gathered during the first interview round in 2012. In section 2.A, we use quotes from Jobcenter managers and other local stakeholders to shed light on the question how activation services are coordinated among diverse local welfare organisations, with the Jobcenter EAS serving as the nodal point of EAS's local active inclusion network. In addition, section 2.B adds a few remarks on how local stakeholders evaluate the provision of active inclusion policies in EAS.

(2.A) How policy-makers plan the typical processing of the long-term unemployed in local organisations involved in activation

As Figure 1 shows, local policy-makers everywhere in Germany plan the typical processing of the long-term unemployed in close collaboration with a variety of local welfare organizations and other actors. This is also the case in EAS: Social services are mainly provided by the municipality and other third-sector service providers. For-profit private providers are especially relevant in the area of employment policies and more specifically training (and to some extent in the provision of childcare). Also the chambers (of craft and industry/commerce, respectively) serve as training-providing institutions. Finally, all network threads converge at the local Jobcenter that is run jointly by the Federal Employment Agency and the municipality of AS, and that carries out not only job-counselling and placement services but also benefit administration.

We will give now an overview of the most relevant and most remarkable services in the city of EAS. We take into account placement services, advanced training, childcare and other family-related services, housing, as well as social and health services. The main problem to be addressed by the Jobcenter EAS is that many clients are long-term unemployed and have been out of the labour market for a very long time. One of the most dominant policy areas is therefore to include the long-term-unemployed into the labour market: *"What we must do and want to do as a city is to empower these people to take care of their lives again, in spite of all those [personal] circumstances"* (Director of the municipal sheltered work company, 40). Hence, the Jobcenter EAS offers training courses seeking to strengthen the self-confidence and self-presentation of clients. There are also sensitisation workshops for Jobcenter (and FEA) caseworkers, so as to enable them to work more efficiently and effectively with migrants.

As was already mentioned, placement services are provided by the local branch of the FEA (for UB I clients) and the Jobcenter (for UB II clients). Even the Jobcenter's placement procedures are largely

based on the long-standing routines developed by the FEA, as will be explained in more detail in section 3. Also the work-related activation instruments used by German Jobcenters are generally highly regulated and developed by the Federal Employment Agency in cooperation with other partners (such as training providers). Job placement takes place not only at the Jobcenter but also on the free market (via temporary work agencies) in EAS, but with a more narrow – and for-profit – outlook than in the Jobcenter, as the regional director of a sectoral training institute explains (69): “They do placement only, which means they only check where there are vacancies and which job applications might fit to them. But the job-seekers sometimes have other deficits or things that must be addressed – that the private temp agencies don’t do”. In earlier years, substitute workplaces (*Arbeitsbeschaffungsmaßnahmen*) were used on a large scale in Germany to activate the long-term unemployed. Since April 2012, however, national funding for substitute workplaces has ceased, with the focus having shifted to more individualised work placements. Some officials lament this trend because the most vulnerable groups have now become virtually non-reintegrable into the labour market. In addition, the lack of post-integration services is mentioned as hindering the long-term success of reintegration measures: “I wish that we had more opportunities regarding post-placement services. This is much more important than – or at least as important as – integrating someone into employment” (Jobcenter vice-director, 25).

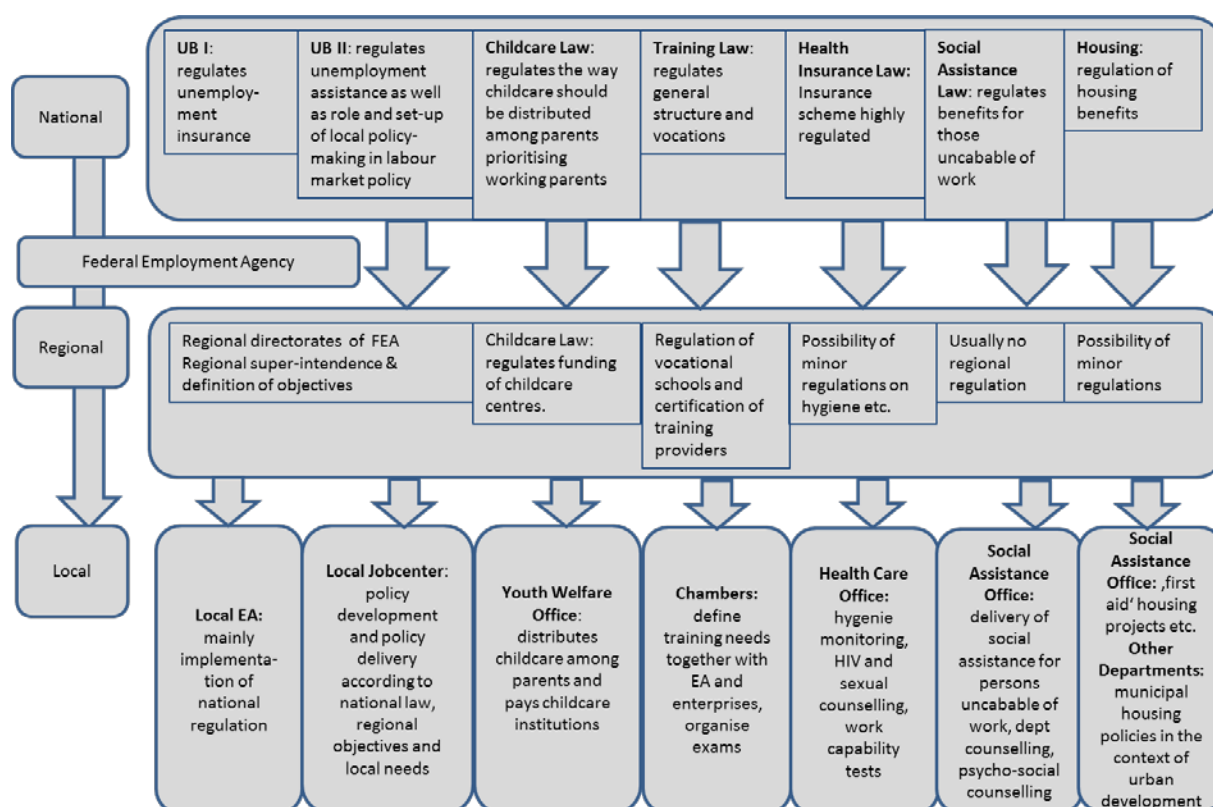


Figure 1: The Institutional context of integrated social and employment policies in Germany.

(Source: WP4 Country Report on Germany by Katharina Zimmermann, in collaboration with Patrizia Aurich)

In the area of youth policy, the Jobcenter EAS has been cooperating with the youth welfare service since 2006/2007. For instance, the city of EAS has installed “Family Coaches” giving extensive support to families, children and young people on benefits. The executive director of the Social Department (40) emphasises that the case managers (*Fallmanager*) of the Jobcenter – whose caseload is lower

than that of regular caseworkers and who can therefore counsel clients more intensively – must work closely together with other agencies in order to increase the chances of a placement success:

From my point of view, case managers should be given the opportunity to develop projects together with the providers, rather than just procuring them via tenders.

To combat unemployment that results from lack of motivation to work and/or qualifications, social services are one of the main local policy pillars in the city of EAS. In 2012 when we conducted our first round of interviews, the city of EAS was experimenting with so-called “route cards” (*Laufzettel*) enlisting various service providers that an unemployed person should visit, and that clients could use on a voluntary basis to show to their caseworkers that non-directly work-related problems were being tackled. As a controller at the Social Assistance Office (48) describes it,

In practice, we had these so-called route cards in order to enable feedback cycles. We made formal arrangements on how to deal with personal information, because of course you must take into account data security here. Our goal has always been to set a low threshold for the client, so that during a conversation with the caseworker or case manager, the insight might appear: ‘I need help with this’. But it was also made very clear: If they want to use our placement services, they must also become active themselves.

Furthermore, the city of EAS is taking measures against college or apprenticeship dropouts, offering advisory and placement services. Finally, civic work – a type of substitute work – is still used in EAS in spite of the stop on federal funding in order to provide more chances to people with very low qualifications or complex life problems. As the director of the municipal sheltered work company (7) puts it, “*We try to make the work as realistic as possible. At least in terms of what we ask from the employees in their daily work, but not in terms of the necessary qualifications or performance. I mean, there is no question about it, these people are either too low-skilled or not skilled at all*”.

Another aspect of local active inclusion policies in EAS is that childcare is discursively constructed as being necessary primarily for bringing unemployed people back into work. However, currently there are still many single parents who have problems to find a job because they cannot find a place at the day-care centre – a problem that was unknown in EAS until 1990, i.e. in the former German Democratic Republic. Finally, housing is not perceived as a central issue for local policy-making in EAS. As in many Eastern German cities, there is enough living space, although there seems to be some need for building more affordable public housing. There are also services for people who have problems with housing, e.g. in relation to debt:

In our city, it’s like this: If there are rent arrears, we can refer the client to the Social Assistance Office. They check to what degree those debts can be covered. If it happens several times, this is not possible just like that, but if it happens only once, there are possibilities, for instance when it comes to heating and electricity bills. (Controller at the Social Assistance Office, 76)

As all of the above examples show, the city of EAS is taking a rather holistic approach to social policy implementation. Thus, integrated service provision is regarded as a self-evident necessity by city officials in EAS: “*If someone suffers from an addiction, there are often other obstacles to work, because such people often have debts, limited social networks, (...) sometimes they are even homeless*” (Controller at the Social Assistance Office, 60). In order to work with and help such clients, multi-dimensional services are essential according to the same respondent: “*Short distances if*

possible, telephone numbers should have been exchanged, an e-mail address should be ready” (141). And further:

By cooperating with the addiction counselling centres, we profited from their procedural knowledge – where can I apply for what – so feedback was possible (...). Of course it was voluntary and personal information could not be transferred without the client’s consent, but we got feedback (...): What is the state of the drug counselling, or was it terminated. (48)

For the future, the same controller at the Social Assistance Office says that more cooperation is needed between individual caseworkers and private providers (*Träger*) in order to establish systematic contact procedures. The focus should not only be on the client but also on the entire household because “the Jobcenter can offers something that is empowering and simultaneously demanding, but the entire family or household must go along. We have often experienced that measures fail when a young person or household is still integrated in different systems” (Controller at the Social Assistance Office, 149). With this in mind, section 2.B now adds some final comments on how local policy-makers and other stakeholders in EAS perceive the performance of the Jobcenter in reintegrating long-term unemployed people into the labour market (or even society more generally).

(2.B) How local policy-makers evaluate the impact of social and employment policies on the social inclusion and well-being of the most vulnerable groups

In this brief section, we answer the question how local policy-makers and other stakeholders evaluate the impact of social and employment policies on the social inclusion and well-being of the most vulnerable groups. More specifically, the question is whether local active inclusion policies succeed at addressing the specific problems of long-term unemployed people. According to a strategy-planner at the Social Assistance Office (259), more cooperation and service integration is still needed:

I think this is the greatest challenge for the future: That you don’t fund something out of pot A here and something else out of pot B there, but that you try to build a holistic strategy. Yet we are still quite at the beginning with this. Because only few support programmes cover multiple target groups or benefit systems.

Another challenge that local policy-makers see in the integrated provision of activation services is that cooperation does not go far enough yet between public and private actors:

Only one time, I and my team succeeded in jointly developing a measure with a provider, namely for addicted youngsters. We experienced that as very effective. (Controller at the Social Assistance Office, 117)

To sum up, the biggest challenges to integrated service provision in EAS seem to consist in fragmented, cameralistic funding mechanisms and a lack of integrated network collaboration among the Jobcenter and other stakeholders involved in active inclusion, according to the local policy-makers and stakeholders interviewed for WP4.

3. People-processing from the point of view of SLBs

Having discussed the local approach to active inclusion of the city of EAS, section 3 now turns to the question how individual street-level bureaucrats put active inclusion into practice. Subsection 3.A discusses the formal and informal problem definitions used by Jobcenter caseworkers, followed by a discussion of actual activation practices in subsection 3.B. Subsection 3.C concludes with an account of how Jobcenter caseworkers in EAS assess the suitability of their formal working tools for activating unemployed clients back into work.

(3.A) Diagnosis of the life situation of the long-term unemployed by street-level bureaucrats

In order to contextualise the informal problem definitions used by Jobcenter caseworkers in EAS, it is necessary to first give an overview of the standard national people-processing techniques in the German context. For this purpose, section 3.A discusses the formal problem definitions contained in “VerBIS”, the FEA’s IT platform that is used by all German Jobcenters. Also psychological tests are briefly discussed as a second standardising influence on the discourses and practices of German Jobcenter caseworkers. Finally, it will be discussed how caseworkers assess the overall effectiveness of the UB II activation system.

The profiling system “VerBIS” of the FEA: Which life problems are included/excluded?

As was mentioned in section 1.B, most German Jobcenters are joint ventures between the Federal Employment Agency and a municipality. Therefore, all joint Jobcenters use the FEA’s IT system “VerBIS” as a standardised tool for collecting client data and structuring client interventions. Whenever a client first applies for benefits or returns to the Jobcenter after more than six months, a new client profile must be created. Following the IT interface on the computer screen, the caseworker begins by analysing the client’s so-called ‘strengths’ (*Stärkenanalyse*) and what is euphemistically called ‘potentials’ (*Potenzialanalyse*), which means that any existing obstacles to work or activation are to be identified and stored in the form of ‘action requirements’ (*Handlungsbedarfe*). Strengths and potentials can manifest themselves in four formal categories:

1. **Qualifications** (“Primary qualifications”, “Vocational qualifications”, “Professional experience” and “Language skills”)
2. **Capacities** (“Intellectual capacities”, “Job-relevant health restrictions”, and “Work and social behaviour”)
3. **Motivation** (“Initiative/work attitude” and “Readiness to learn/retrain”)
4. **Circumstances** (“Personal circumstances”, “Geographic mobility”, “Housing situation”, “Family situation [including care responsibilities]” and “Financial situation”).

After all categories and sub-categories have been discussed and the caseworker has entered the relevant information into the IT system, the resulting client profile is automatically allocated to one of six profile categories that indicate the prospective timeframe of activation. These are:

INTEGRATION PROFILES:

Market profiles (*Marktprofile*): No action requirements. Labour market integration prospects: up to 6 months.

Activation profiles (*Aktivierungsprofile*): Action requirements in the category “Motivation”. Labour market integration prospects: up to 6 months.

Improvement profiles (*Förderprofile*): Action requirements in one of the three categories “Qualifications”, “Capacities” or “Circumstances”. Labour market integration prospects: up to 12 months.

COMPLEX PROFILES:

Development profiles (*Entwicklungsprofile*): Action requirements in one of the three categories “Qualifications”, “Capacities”, or “Circumstances” plus one additional category (or strong action requirements in the main category). Labour market integration prospects: above 12 months.

Stabilisation profiles (*Stabilisierungsprofile*): Action requirements in the category “Capacities” plus at least two additional categories (or strong action requirements in the category “Capacities”). Labour market integration prospects: up to 12 months.

Support profiles (*Unterstützungsprofile*): Action requirements in the category “Circumstances” plus at least two additional categories (or strong action requirements in the category “Circumstances”). Labour market integration prospects: above 12 months.

Depending on the type of profile, the caseworker then selects a feasible goal for activation or job-search in the second phase of the FEA’s client-processing cycle. These goals are grouped into four standardised categories:

1. Employment in the regular labour market
 - a. Local employment
 - b. National employment
 - c. International employment
 - d. Mini-job, midi-job, temporary employment
 - e. Self-employment
2. Employment outside of the regular labour market
3. Primary/secondary/tertiary education
 - a. Local secondary education (apprenticeship)
 - b. National secondary education (apprenticeship)
 - c. Primary/tertiary education (school/university)
4. Stabilisation of existing employment/self-employment

If a regular job is chosen as the goal for activation and if the client has a market profile (meaning that immediate labour market integration is possible), the caseworker can use the computerised client profile to immediately run a nation-wide search for job openings in the FEA’s job database. Otherwise, the third phase of the FEA’s client-processing cycle consists in selecting one or more strategies for bridging the gap between the client’s status quo and the identified goal of activation. It should be noted that all four official goals of activation relate to employment or education in the German Jobcenter system – a genuinely lacking capacity to work does not exist in the logic of the

German UB II system. Table 1 gives a brief overview of the possible activation strategies associated with various action requirements according to the official FEA documentation (Bundesagentur für Arbeit 2013, pp. 18-9).

Table 1. Activation guidelines for German Jobcenter caseworkers (own translation).

CATEGORY	ACTION REQUIREMENT	ACTION STRATEGY
Qualifications	Primary qualifications	Obtain school diploma
		Prepare apprenticeship
	Vocational qualifications	(Further) vocational training
		Obtain vocational degree
		Graduate management
	Professional experience	Authentication of international degrees/qualifications/certificates
		Enable professional experience
Obtain/improve German language skills		
Language skills	Obtain relevant foreign language skills	
Capacities	Intellectual capacities	Test capacities
		Improve capacities
		Obtain employment adequate for health status
	Relevant health restrictions	Test capacities
		Improve capacities
	Work and social behaviour	Obtain employment adequate for health status
		Accustom to working life (daily routines)
Motivation	Initiative/work attitude	Strengthen work/social behaviour
	Readiness to learn/retrain	Change perspectives
Circumstances	Personal circumstances	Improve readiness to learn
	Geographic mobility	Level out individual competitive disadvantages
	Housing situation	Increase mobility
	Family situation (incl. care responsibilities)	Stabilise housing situation
		Make or expand child care arrangement
	Financial situation	Make or expand care arrangement for family members
Overarching	Optional and irrespective of identified action requirements	Stabilise family situation
		Stabilise financial situation
		Job placement
		Move into sustainable self-employment
		Check cooperation/own initiative
Decentral		Terminate or reduce benefit eligibility (for employed/self-employed)
		Local strategies

Before turning to the question how the formal categorisations in VerBIS influence the activating practices of Jobcenter caseworkers, a second standardised way of assessing clients in German Jobcenters is briefly discussed below, namely psychological tests geared towards establishing whether clients possess the intellectual and work-related skills required for a certain (re)training measure or education.

Psychological tests

As caseworker A7 (25) told us, only joint Jobcenters use standardised psychological tests because such testing procedures have been long-established by the ‘vocational psychological service’ (*Berufpsychologischer Service*) of the FEA. Since three of our eight client respondents reported to have taken the test, our impression is that psychological tests are used rather customarily by Jobcenter caseworkers before granting longer and/or expensive educational measures to clients. This impression is further supported by caseworker A5’s (12) statement about educational trajectories for clients under 35:

All young people under 35 without a professional degree should be encouraged to get one. If the client agrees and a suitable option is found, we pave the way for that. We start with a psychological test and if the result says, "OK, he is able to finish this education, he has a certain IQ", we are ready to roll.

However, we also got the impression that psychological tests are sometimes used as an implicit tool for denying expensive activation measures to 'non-promising' clients. As caseworker A7 (25) explains:

Of course there are many [customers] who pursue a utopian goal. (...) With a history of cancelled activation trajectories, and then they sit here presenting me an offer for a driving licence for heavy vehicles (...) at the price of 12,000 Euro. Which of course requires certain intellectual capacities. (...) Thank God we still have the possibility to consult the psychological service in these cases.

As the FEA reports on its website, the test is conducted in groups but the forms are customised to each client, depending on the skills that would be required for a particular training course, education, or job (such as commercial skills, technical skills, or artisan skills).⁴ Most questions have to be answered on a computer screen, but some questions are also distributed on paper. After the test has been completed, a psychologist discusses the test results individually with each client. The test results are also forwarded to the responsible caseworker, who then can base his or her activation decisions on them.

The following types of tests or test elements are offered by the FEA's vocational psychological service:⁵

1. Capacity tests
 - a. Tests of general cognitive skills
 - b. Tests of specific cognitive skills
 - c. Tests of specific job-related skills
 - d. Tests of knowledge taught at schools
2. Personality tests and tests of personal interests.

The sample questions given on the FEA's website are strongly reminiscent of a regular IQ test, pertaining to logic (identifying systematic relations between shapes, words and numbers), visual thinking, mechanical problems, and maths.⁶

Our three respondents who took a psychological test describe the testing procedures as follows:

B3: Took the test in order to be admitted to a retraining course as an office clerk (duration: 2.5 years). The test contained questions about maths and logical thinking, as she recalls it. She had to take the test at very short notice (3 days) because the course had already started. B3 passed the test and was admitted to the retraining measure.

B5: Took a psychological test twice in order to assess her ability to complete a training course as an assistant nurse (duration: 200 hours, i.e. five full-time-equivalent weeks). B5 had difficulties using the computer, although she claims to have understood the questions well. B5 failed the test twice, hence the qualification was denied her.

B6: Took the test in order to be admitted to a retraining course as a painter and decorator (duration: 2 years). The test contained questions about German, maths, logical and visual thinking, as he recalls it. He was notified of the test two months in advance and was able to prepare for it. B5 passed the test and was admitted to the retraining measure.

Having hereby given an overview of the way in which formal categorisation procedures (profiling and psychological tests) are used in German Jobcenters for making clients ‘legible’ to the bureaucracy, the following subsections now turn to the question what this legibilisation means for the caseworker-client relationship and caseworkers’ mental images of clients. In a first step, we discuss the structuring influence of official profiling categories on conversations between caseworkers and clients in German Jobcenters. In a second step, we then address the degree to which the client perceptions of caseworkers are shaped by formal profiling procedures.

The structuring power of profiling procedures

The term “structuration” goes back to Anthony Giddens (1981) and denotes the power of ideational structures to reproduce themselves in the ideas and actions of individual agents. Hence, when we speak of the structuring power of the profiling categories used by German Jobcenters, we imply that profiling procedures serve as cognitive lenses through which caseworkers perceive individual clients and select certain behavioural responses. Over time, as these cognitive lenses become more habitualised and hence less elastic, it becomes increasingly difficult for individual clients to disprove caseworkers’ standardised mental templates (and thus elicit non-standardised behaviour). For this reason, it is important to pay close attention to the profiling procedures on which caseworkers’ client perceptions are based, and how they shape the caseworker-client interaction.

The German Jobcenter caseworkers we interviewed implicitly or explicitly acknowledged the structuring influence of the profiling categories of the VerBIS system on their conversations with clients. This is illustrated particularly well by the following quote of caseworker A7 (13-15) who used to work with insured UB I clients at the FEA before switching to a Jobcenter and hence a UB II caseload:

In the UB I system, (...) certain client responsibilities are also set, but (...) how to fulfil them is up to the client. Here, this tends to be different because you must identify different action requirements (...). It is an advantage that we work with the same software in both benefit systems, because the conversation structure and where to fill in what (...) is the same. We have different activation offers (...), not least because they are funded from completely different sources. (...) The possibilities I have to support clients are different from the UB I system (...) where most [clients] are recently unemployed, so that there are also less problems in the social and family sphere, that’s simply a reality. Or maybe they’re just less open about it, they look for work, enter a new job, end of story. Whereas here, you get to know more because much more information must be disclosed in order to receive UB II benefits. In the UB I system, you only have to say where you have worked and how much you earned, but nothing about the housing situation – which automatically becomes known here, for instance.

As this extensive quote illustrates, client conversations in German Jobcentres are strongly shaped by the information caseworkers must fill into the VerBIS system, and hence by the profiling categories used by VerBIS. In this context, it becomes particularly relevant that caseworkers hardly ever fill in a blank sheet when meeting a new client because clients are either referred to them by a different caseworker (who has already carried out one or more profiling rounds) or by the express counter responsible for client intakes, as was reported in section 4. This means that whenever caseworkers start forming a mental picture of a new client case, this case has already been framed in terms of formal problem definitions that leave non-official problem categories unaddressed. As caseworker A2 (14) explains:

The intake happens downstairs. They check what clients are capable of, what the status quo is, CV and all, school diplomas etc. And we carry out the follow-up talk, that is our first conversation so to speak. We browse through the client profile once more: Ok, what can they see themselves doing, what do they want.

As several caseworkers report, any first conversation with a new client therefore has as a central goal to form a coherent mental picture bringing together what is already stated in the existing preliminary profile and what the flesh-and-blood client sitting in front of them is communicating verbally (and non-verbally). In the words of caseworker A7 (23):

Usually, (...) I then say, "Well, we don't know each other yet. I will try to get a quick overview based on the things that have already been filled in", of the impression I get about personal data, social relations etc., (...) what you did previously etc. And I give the customer the opportunity to engage with me right then, to tell me whether there is something else, whether I have understood something wrong, or maybe something has been filled in incorrectly. Such as, sometimes it says they have a driver's licence when in fact they don't.

In line with the formal profiling categories, the mental image or problem perception that caseworkers seek to obtain during a first client encounter revolves around the client's "Strengths" and "Potentials" operationalised in the form of "Qualifications", "Capacities", "Motivation" and "Circumstances", as was explained above. To begin with, the **Qualifications** category focuses mostly on clients' professional qualifications and language skills, as is exemplified by the following quote of caseworker A2 (10) who works with young clients under 25:

The educational level of most of our clients is unfortunately not very high. Many do not have a high-school diploma and are also not interested in getting one now, or they are simply not capable of getting one.

It is noteworthy that caseworkers generally link the question about skills directly to the question "what somebody wants" (A2, 57) because job-search or activation trajectories for which clients are not motivated are deemed unlikely to be crowned with success: "If I can't change their basic attitude, even a driver's licence won't get them into work" (A7, 29).

When German caseworkers talk about clients' **Motivation**, it is striking that motivation is generally discussed as a personality trait or personal state of being rather than as related more narrowly to a particular profession or activation trajectory. Without exception, all our caseworker respondents draw up a verbal spectrum between clients who are motivated to work and know what they want, and clients who are not motivated to leave the UB II benefit system at all, as is illustrated by the following quote of caseworker A8 (41):

You have (...) highly motivated customers, they submit countless job applications per month (...), more than you'd ever ask of them; and then there are others who need – sorry for putting it like this – three kicks in the bottom for one single job application.

Another striking observation that emerges from our interview data is that caseworkers seem to have very different perceptions of where on that spectrum most of their clients dwell. Crudely speaking, our impression is that caseworkers with a lower caseload (such as the so-called case managers or *Fallmanager* in the German UB II system) tend to have a relatively positive image of clients' work and life motivation, as do caseworkers responsible for a relatively easy-to-reintegrate target group (such as self-employed). For instance, caseworker A8 (dealing with a low caseload of clients above 50 years) says about "problematic customers who have an excuse for everything": "But as I said, these

are isolated cases” (43); and caseworker A3 who specialises in self-employed clients makes the assessment that:

There are always exceptions, even in our target group: [Customers] who lack motivation, who dismiss every suggestion you make. (...) But in general, (...) we cooperate well, we click well – probably also due to the frequent appointments we have here. (37)

In addition to target groups and caseloads, caseworkers’ own personality traits may also play a role in their client perceptions. This is illustrated by the following quote of caseworker A5 (68) who takes great professional pride in her work:

Customers who completely refuse to cooperate – we have those, too. But it happens less with me, I would dare to say.

When it comes to the issue category **Circumstances**, a first observation we gathered from our interviews is that German Jobcenter caseworkers unequivocally embrace the official policy discourse that complex obstacles to work must be taken away before a client can enter paid employment because they find this idea confirmed in their daily practice:

Of course you must always check if a normal job placement trajectory is feasible (...) or whether there is something you must first address, because otherwise the whole placement process will fail. (A6, 32)

In line with official action strategies as represented in Table 1, the main types of circumstances identified by German caseworkers as hindering labour-market reintegration are family circumstances, addiction, debts, and limited mobility. However, we also gained the impression from our interviews that not all circumstances are seen as equally surmountable in individual cases. In other words, the official “Circumstances” category seems to have practical limits in daily application because the impossibility to reintegrate certain clients into the labour market is not foreseen in the official action guidelines. The following four interview titbits – all of which pertain to family circumstances – illustrate in an exemplary fashion that caseworkers react differently to obstructing factors in a client’s environment depending on whether those obstacles are seen as ‘curable’ or not:

Extrinsically caused personal crises are seen as ‘curable’: *Of course I cannot embark on a job-search trajectory with someone and say, “Let’s (...) get you into work” if I know he’s newly divorced or he’s currently not allowed to see his child (...), of course that weighs heavy on someone like that, of course he won’t have the mind to apply for jobs (...). That’s why we must first mitigate such personal circumstances, in the sense of finding solutions (...), in order to put him back in the mind of applying for jobs. (A8, 35)*

Extrinsic structural factors are seen as ‘incurable’: *Even in office jobs, in warehouses, everywhere there are shifts. But I can’t work shifts if I’m a lone parent with no one to take care of my kids outside of the regular working hours – it’s not possible. That’s a very big problem, very very big. (A5, 44)*

Intrinsic socialisation is sometimes seen as ‘curable’: *There are some stranded creatures (...), young people with more negative than positive baggage because they come from dysfunctional families or because life just didn’t take the direction they wanted in the (...) first ten years or so of their life. Also for them, we are there. (A5, 12)*

In other cases, intrinsic socialisation is seen as ‘incurable’: *One third manages to be successful in life [if they have a problematic educational and social background]. Thus, parents have a big influence on the future development of their children. (A4, 9-12)*

Finally, in the **Capacities** category even more than in the “Circumstances” category, German Jobcenter caseworkers speak of ‘incurable’ individual-level or structural factors that lie outside of the activating logic of the German UB II system. For example, caseworker A6 (87) laments that the current labour-market environment no longer has a place for people with low mental capacities:

We also have many customers with a very low IQ. But there are no jobs for [such] customers (...). In times of the GDR [German Democratic Republic], they would simply have been given a broom [to clean], but we don't have those [jobs] now. At the most, there are the 1-Euro-jobs, but they don't count as work, that's not [labour market] integration for us.

At another point during the interview, caseworker A6 (91) refers to a tension between nation-wide job-search requirements and the mental incapacity of some clients to be mobile in their job-search:

Many of them couldn't manage to live anywhere else. Normally you'd have to say, they must look for jobs everywhere in Germany, but some cannot even read a train schedule. They can't leave the city, that's way too complicated for them. Some are even unable to find their way to us. If you tell them, 'Go to the main office in [name] street', that's an immense challenge. And these people won't be taken on anywhere else in Germany.

As these examples show, the “Capacities” category again differs from the first two formal problem categories in VerBIS (“Qualifications” and “Motivation”) because its empirical application often brings to the surface unsurmountable obstacles to work that cannot be ‘cured’ by Jobcenters in the current competitive labour-market environment. This is also evinced by the following quote of caseworker A7 (31) who mentions health issues as impeding employability: *“There are people where I say, I can go out of my way, the customer can go out of their way, it simply won't work because [...] they're ill and sometimes in a wheelchair”.*

To summarise, as we have seen above, the official categories of the FEA's profiling system VerBIS have a strong structuring influence on how caseworkers and clients interact in German Jobcenters. Especially regular caseworkers (job consultants – *Arbeitsvermittler*) with high caseloads do not have the time to discuss each client case in great length; therefore, they rely to a great extent on information filled into VerBIS by other caseworkers or intake personnel. However, we also saw above that caseworkers organically appropriate the FEA's four profiling categories in daily practice. For instance, the “Qualifications” category is often used to unearth more generally what a client ‘wants’ in life, because only if such a vision exists are retraining measures and other educational instruments deemed feasible. Also the “Motivation” category seems to be interpreted in a slightly more comprehensive fashion than foreseen in VerBIS, namely in terms of a personality trait rather than as pertaining more narrowly to the motivation to work. Also, we saw above that caseworkers' judgement of the motivatedness of clients seem to differ structurally between regular caseworkers and case managers.

The two remaining profiling categories discussed above – “Circumstances” and “Capacities” – differ from the categories “Qualifications” and “Motivation” in so far as they sometimes make visible the practical impossibilities of realising labour-market integration in spite of an official policy discourse mandating caseworkers to look *“primarily ... at strengths, not at weaknesses”* (A2, 73). As caseworker A6 (68) estimates, only about *“five percent”* of her clients are close to the labour market – *“the lion's share are very far removed”*. Also caseworker A7 (35) reflects:

There are less and less [clients] with whom you can really score a success. (...) It's either those without motivation or those who are not able, simply can't [work]. Yes, and then there's a few in between.

Hence, in contrast to the formal policy discourse that 'individualises' the problem of unemployment, caseworkers recognise the existence of structural factors that hinder employment besides individual ones, leading to an at least partial re-appropriation of the "Circumstances" and "Capacities" profiling categories in daily application.

(3.B) Activation: Addressing the problems of the long-term unemployed

With these broader considerations in mind, let us now turn to the concrete interaction between caseworkers and clients in German Jobcenters as reconstructible from our interviews. In this section, we briefly describe the administrative cornerstones of client-processing in German Jobcenters, followed by a more extensive discussion of the activation procedures and instruments used. The first crucial point to take note of in this regard is the difference between regular casework (*Arbeitsvermittlung*) and case management (*Fallmanagement*) in the German Jobcenter system. The caseload of case managers normally seems to be around 70-80 persons whereas regular caseworkers have up to 450 clients in EAS (cf. A7 [31]; A6 [28]; A5 [68]; A8 [35]), for which reason it is nearly impossible for regular caseworkers to counsel clients intensively. As caseworker A2 (47) puts it,

We also have the so-called case management. They take care of people with very heavy problems, drug addiction, debts and so on, without a permanent place of residence. (A2, 47)

Meetings with a case manager are more frequent and longer than in a regular counselling trajectory, and clients have the opportunity to get follow-up appointments quickly. Once a client has switched from regular casework to case management, he or she may stay in case management for up to two years. Once that time is over or when complex barriers to work have been durably removed, clients are transferred back to a regular caseworker in order to enable more clients to receive intensive counselling. In a nutshell, the differentiation between casework and case management in German Jobcenters implies that a deliberate organisational boundary is created between more standardised and workfarist interventions in the 'normal' casework system, and intensive individualised counselling in the special case management system.

A second observation we made in EAS is that caseworkers responsible for different target groups tend to focus on different types of interventions. For example, caseworkers responsible for young people under 25 ("U25") have a special focus on education and training. Also internships are used relatively routinely for this age group, even in foreign European countries (one U25 caseworker told us about a provider offering internships in Hungary, Spain, Greece and Mallorca, where young people receive English lessons and train to develop a daily routine and take responsibility at a workplace). Lone parents are another special target group that is structurally discriminated in the labour market and therefore has a special need for retraining programmes or wage subsidies, as caseworker A1 (76) expresses who is part of the Jobcenter-internal programme "ANA – Not leaving lone parents alone" (*Alleinerziehende nicht alleinlassen*):

I'm not sure if only giving financial incentives to employers is the solution. A rethinking is needed. (...) A mother is to a certain extent also an organiser. You have to acknowledge that she is able to coordinate and organise things. But that kind of understanding is lacking and if you have a labour market full of

potential employees, she will be excluded from the start, even if she is 100 times more qualified. (...) So a societal rethinking concerning lone parents is direly needed. After all, (...) this is a large group.

Sometimes, special client groups with implicit special activation approaches are created not by Jobcenters themselves but through federal programmes making extra funds available for certain target groups. Currently, one of these groups are people above 50 years of age (“Ü50” or “50+”), for whom a national programme entitled “Perspective 50+” (*Perspektive 50plus: Beschäftigungspakte in den Regionen*) has been installed:

This federal program is called “Perspective 50+” and throughout Germany, there are 78 employment packages, depending on the region. In larger regions, there are sometimes two packages. In our region, (...) we have the employment package ‘Annual Rings’. For each region and package the name is different, or they do not use a special name - only ‘50+’. (A8, 12)

However, even within the age group of 50+, differences in activation approaches are prevalent because only clients close to the labour market are taken into the ‘Perspective 50+’ programme. As caseworker A8 (14) explains,

Someone with a lot of health issues or other private problems is not interesting for us. Because we want to give people a helping hand who have been actively looking for work for some time and who only need a little bit of extra help to get back into work.

Another example of a federal programme creating a new specialised target group is the programme “Late Starters” (*Spätstarter*) geared towards helping people under 35 without a secondary education. In our sample, caseworker A6 is responsible for this special group of clients: “Currently, I am responsible for the project ‘Late Starters’. We strive to guide customers below 35 towards a secondary qualification” (5). Finally, a last target group that the Jobcenter EAS created independently consists of self-employed clients. Such people turn to the Jobcenter for support if they do not earn enough to make a living (A3, 3) or if they plan to become self-employed in the future. In such cases, the first step a caseworker will undertake with the client is to investigate whether the business model behind the client’s self-employment is sustainable. If not, the caseworker will counsel the client to terminate the self-employment and find regular work, or

For example to turn the self-employment into a part-time activity (...) – so there are numerous available options and we try to identify them together with the customer, we try to find a solution together and so far, this works well. (15)

Another possibility for self-employed clients is to participate in a training course about self-employment offered in cooperation with the province of Saxony-Anhalt and the Chamber of Industry and Commerce (A3, 25). In summary, as we have seen above, the degree of standardisation versus individualisation of activation measures in German Jobcenters depends not only on whether a client is counselled by a caseworker or case manager, but also on whether a client belongs to a certain pre-defined target group (in EAS: U25, lone parents and self-employed, plus two target groups tending to federal programmes – U35 and Ü50). Our careful assessment is that the procedural target group approach used by virtually all German Jobcenters can be helpful for developing specialised expertise and tailor-made counselling approaches for the client groups in question. However, the target group approach also has a negative flipside, namely that clients categorised as ‘normal’ receive only standardised and workfarist job-search assistance although they, too, might be in need of more

specific advice. As client B5 (9) puts it, *“I have said under tears, ‘Handicapped people have rights, but I have no rights’”*.

Beside a watershed between basic and intensive counselling on the one hand and target group specifications on the other hand, a third factor leading to differentiated interventions in German Jobcenters is the legal discretionary space of caseworkers: *“We have discretionary space in virtually all procedures we can or must apply. Whether it’s about activation measures or funding – everything, basically”* (A5, 65). Also caseworker A8 (23) talks about the large discretion he has in his work:

Our daily work consists almost entirely of discretion. (...) It’s at the discretion of every caseworker whether someone will get a refund for posting job applications (...) or is granted a voucher for a private job counsellor.

A fourth factor that reinforces the third and is a source for differentiated activation approaches in German Jobcenters is the large range of measures available to caseworkers in the German context. Besides regular job counselling, at least 16 types of instruments were mentioned in our interviews that we will briefly discuss in the following paragraphs. To begin with, a wide array of counselling offers is available for clients with complex obstacles to employment, such as

- (1)** a family coach (i.e. a professional working closely with entire families to improve their home situation and familial relationships);
- (2)** debt counselling;
- (3)** addiction counselling (for alcoholism, drug abuse, compulsive gambling etc.);
- (4)** social-psychiatric counselling;
- (5)** legal counselling (e.g. on pension rights or patient’s provisions), and
- (6)** preventive health programmes related to physical fitness or nutrition because

there are many clients whose life world has become very small after having been unemployed for so long. They are trapped in a vicious cycle and might eat only fast food. We want to show them that there are other possibilities. And that this can have an effect on your overall well-being. (A8, 37)

A second group of measures is geared more towards building up job-related capacities, such as:

- (7)** driving skills;
- (8)** job application skills;
- (9)** or professional qualifications. According to caseworker A6 (55), application trainings are used relatively frequently (as will be explained in more detail below) but clients rarely request those types of services on their own:

It is very, very rare that someone requests an application training out of their own initiative. Only new customers maybe, who just started receiving benefits. (...) Where we do have customers requesting certain measures is in the area of qualifications, though.

Professional qualifications are often procured in the form of individual modules, meaning that only specific skill trainings are added on top of an existing qualification. Complete re-training courses are also an option but must be certified by the Federal Employment Agency: *“Occupational re-training courses (...) are degree-orientated and take between one and two years (...) whereas modular trainings take only six to nine month. We have a welding module, for example”* (A5, 14). Other popular areas for retraining are *“warehousing, logistics, commissioning, vehicle licences, teaching, IT, hotel sector and gastronomy”* (A5, 8).

Besides specialised counselling and training, German Jobcenters also have several types of on-the-job trainings or employer incentives on offer, such as

- (10)** substitute jobs geared towards building up a daily routine or testing out which education one would like to pursue (the latter only for young people);
- (11)** internships (for young people even in foreign countries, as was mentioned above);
- (12)** work trials in which an employer can test out a candidate for one or two weeks for free (including “refunds for travel costs or work clothes” (A7, 19);
- (13)** wage subsidies where the Jobcenter pays up to 50 % of a person’s wages for 12 months or even longer for people above 50, with the employer having to employ the person further for at least the same duration after the wage subsidy has ended (A8, 49/51); and
- (14)** so-called civic work, i.e. substitute workplaces in the public sector:

This is for very long-term unemployed people (...). They carry out substitute tasks in additional workplaces that would normally not exist. For example, they might walk through the city in pairs and look for damages in road covers and pavements (...). This helps the building authority to make more targeted repairs, which in turn saves money but doesn’t take regular jobs away from regular workers. (A8, 8)

It is called “Red Jackets” here in EAS. People who ride on public transport to help passengers with impairments. Helping people with walking frames or wheelchairs onto the trams. (A8 [group interview], 103)

Finally, caseworkers have a number of auxiliary measures at their disposal such as

- (15)** refunds for travel costs, job applications or working tools; and
- (16)** assisting clients with finding a childcare facility – which seems to be a specialty of the municipality of EAS:

In EAS there is an agreement with the mayor: Everyone who has found a job or apprenticeship and has formal proof for that immediately receives a place at a day-care centre. Even if it means that other people who are not in work or education lose their place. (A5, 46)

As the above discussion has shown, the large variety of activation instruments available to German Jobcenter caseworkers leads to much variation in the treatment of long-term unemployed clients, reinforced by other factors discussed earlier. However, before turning to the next section where caseworkers’ views on active inclusion practices are discussed in more detail, a (fifth and) last factor should be mentioned here that contributes to a relative standardisation rather than differentiation of measures in German Jobcenters, namely the German cameralistic funding system that incentivises Jobcenters to use up their entire activation budgets before the end of the fiscal year in order to demonstrate high demand and thus avoid shrinking budgets in consecutive years. As caseworker A6 explained to us, for instance, some activation measures are purchased in bulk at the beginning of the fiscal year:

Every year, we have to make a plan. Each department estimates their likely demand for activation measures. (...) And then there is also always a correction from above. That we have to purchase some more measures or placements, for instance. (A6, 53)

In some cases, the number of procured placements for activation also depends on public tendering rounds:

There is a tender for a fixed, pre-defined number of participants. (...) And the provider with the best offer wins it. And because there's a set price, (...) we may have to or be pressed to fulfil a quota of 50 participants per week, because the provider has been paid for those 50, whether they are there or not. So we have an incentive to fill up those places in order to make full use of our resources. (A3, 53)

As a result of these bureaucratic necessities, caseworkers sometimes have to assign bulk measures (such as application trainings) to clients without this being particularly useful for the client, as caseworker A6 (51) reports:

Sometimes these measures don't fill up. And then there are orders, 'Select some people, the measure must fill up'. And then you have to try to find a good match, of course. (...) But if I know a client has already completed three application trainings, (...) I certainly won't send him there a fourth time. But such orders exist, 'The measure must fill up, we have paid for it'. They don't want to waste money.

This statement shows that it is sometimes a tightrope walk for caseworkers to weigh the needs of their clients against legal demands. Nevertheless, caseworkers generally do their best to find a suitable activation measure for a particular client:

If I say, 'You will attend this measure (...)', that will have no effect. We have to work together with the customer. The measure has to fit the customer. If that is not the case, such an activation measure will backfire. (A5, 8)

To conclude, section 3.B has discussed five factors that contribute to diversified or standardised interventions in German Jobcenters. Generally speaking, high caseloads (within the regular counselling system) and a cameralistic budgetary system contribute to standardisation, whereas differentiated counselling approaches (caseworkers/case managers), special target groups, legal caseworker discretion, and a broad range of activation instruments contribute to more individualised interventions. Hence, our overall conclusion from this section is that the one-stop-shop "Jobcenter" agencies are organisationally well-equipped for providing tailor-made services; however, in practice, scarce staff resources (to be funded by the municipalities and the FEA) and cameralistic federal funding mechanisms may counteract the smart organisational Jobcenter design.

(3.C) Overall assessment of the activation system for the long-term unemployed by street-level bureaucrats

To conclude section 3 on local active inclusion practices in EAS, section 3.C now adds some last remarks on how caseworkers assess the overall effectiveness of activation for long-term unemployed clients. In our interviews, three positive aspects of the UB II/Jobcenter system were enumerated by our caseworker respondents. To begin with, caseworkers had a positive view of their high level of discretion, which allows them to tailor activation measures individually to each client's needs:

In principle, we are quite free and if you are daring and use the right arguments, you can go in many directions. So, there is a certain freedom where I can really work individually with clients. (A7, 75)

The second point caseworkers find positive about the UB II system is that they have many different instruments at their disposal. As caseworker A5 (102) puts it:

In SPD [German Social-Democratic Party] times, we didn't have such good social policy instruments. (...) Now with Mrs Merkel at the top, it's different. They invest a lot, I must say. That's how we experience it.

We currently have so many measures at our disposal that it almost becomes difficult to keep track. (...) I keep all of them in a folder so that I can look up there: What might fit the client? It's dizzying. But otherwise, (...) we really have many instruments that make sense, as long as you use them correctly.

Finally, as caseworker A8 (group interview, 47) mentions, at least intensive counselling trajectories in which the caseworker receives regular feedback from clients have the potential to trigger learning processes not only among the clients but also among caseworkers – leading to a better understanding of, as well as a more holistic perspective on, activation:

That's what's so exciting – that a development process takes place not only for the clients themselves (...), but also for us, for our work. We realize: This IMQWA is like a small pilot project within "Annual Rings". (...) How do you coordinate and integrate so many things, to make the system as a whole work.

However, besides these positive points, our interviews also yielded several difficulties at the systemic, policy and governance level that might infringe on the effective implementation of the SGB II regulations according to German Jobcenter caseworkers. At the **systemic level** (referring to national and global labour market trends), the following points were mentioned in the interviews, all of which make it structurally more difficult for UB II clients to find work:

- Disappearance of low-skilled jobs:
(see under "Capacities" above)
- Low wage-level:
Our clients are less motivated because of the low wages here in East Germany. I have one family, both parents work in the low-wage sector ... and they still need benefits – just think of it. It's incredible. (A5, 72)
Of course I have people sitting here who tell me, 'That's all nice and well, but look what I would earn, (...) it's less than UB II'. (A5, 74)
- High job demands in terms of flexibility (see under "Circumstances" above) and physical fitness:
Food franchises are booming. (...) [In these shops] there is only a small corridor, 30 cm wide. They might approach us, 'Please send us some job applicants'. (...) Later the employer calls me and says, 'Why did you send me this person – he was too fat, he does not even fit in here!' or something like that. That makes us look like complete fools and it also makes me feel sorry for the client. (A8, group interview, 65)
- Formal qualifications count more than real skills (especially after the German reunification):
We notice many new day-care centres appearing, and also in the area of elderly care there are plans to recruit assisting personnel ... for talking to the elderly, sitting on a bench with them, watching the birds (...). But if you propose someone who really wants to do that kind of work and who has the ambition to do it, they always say, 'They are not qualified in this area, I can't employ them'. (A8, group interview, 83)
- Structural discrimination of lone parents and UB II recipients by employers:
I can't force an employer to take on a lone parent with three kids. That's a problem. (...) If they are not even invited for a job interview, that makes it very difficult. (A1, group interview, 40)
According to the employer service, employers prefer UB I clients to UB II clients. (...) Some of them simply have had bad experiences, they don't take our UB II clients anymore. (A6, 73)

Also at the **policy level**, German Jobcenter caseworkers identify a number of factors that hinder a smooth functioning of the UB II activation system. These are:

- Deliberate low-wage policy:
Of course, the employers have understood: ‘Let’s take two people on for 20 hours [per week], and let them get the rest from the Jobcenter’. That way, [the employers] pay less ancillary labour costs because they know that if you employ someone (...) between 450 and 800 (Euros), ancillary labour costs are lower (...). And all of this is facilitated by the State. (A7, 67)
- Lacking childcare facilities:
We want to start activating them, but there’s no childcare facility. (...) These are obstacles. (A5, 46)
- Incongruences between benefit systems:
Our medical service said: ‘Permanently work-incapacitated’, a young man. But of course the pension fund said ‘No’ because they have their own doctors. What then? (A7, 33)
- Legacies of a past ‘dependency culture’:
After receiving UB II for so long, only very few of them still have the energy and motivation to say, ‘I want to get out of this’. Especially those (...) that were taken care of by the old Social Assistance Offices (...) – they are not going to succeed anymore. In singular cases, we might be able to pull them out, but then you really have to work with them non-stop. (A6, 93)

Finally, at the operational **governance level**, i.e. the level of the Jobcenter organisation, German caseworkers specifically mention three points that should be improved to make activation services for the long-term unemployed more effective:

- High caseloads:
Of course, someone with a caseload of 400 customers cannot look deeply into a single client case, that’s simply impossible. They can’t get a detailed picture of the personal circumstances, it really doesn’t work. (A8, 35)
- Lack of time:
If you’re unlucky, there are 10 people in front of your door. Then (...) the quality of the first interview will suffer because you must hasten. (A6, 32)
Some clients, we really must take by the hand (...), you really must work closely with them. But you can’t do that with everyone, our working time does not allow that. (A2, 26)
- Frequent caseworker changes:
I recently had a customer – a colleague had moved to West Germany (...) and her customers were distributed among everyone. (...) For this reason, I had him here for the first time and he said, ‘[name], every time I’m seeing someone else. No offence, but to whom am I supposed to open up here?’ And you know, if you then look into [the file], you really see that there is no clear strategy. (...) Everybody looks at it differently. (A5, 58)

To summarize, as we have seen in section 3.C, German Jobcenter caseworkers overall assess the one-stop-shop structure of the Jobcenters as adequate for activating long-term unemployed clients, although they also see a number of systemic, policy and governance obstacles that might hinder a successful reintegration of vulnerable clients into the labour market. In the following section, we now give the word to our long-term unemployed respondents themselves, asking how they perceive the process and effects of activation in the German context.

4. People-processing from the point of view of long-term unemployed individuals

The final empirical section of this report consists of three parts. In section 4.A, we discuss in more detail who our client respondents were and how they describe themselves. In section 4.B, we present how those clients experience their regular encounters with Jobcenter personnel. Finally, section 4.C concludes with some policy recommendations voiced by our client respondents.

(4.A) Characteristics of the interviewees

Interestingly, most of the characteristics that our client respondents ascribed to themselves correspond with the formal profiling characteristics discussed in section 3, which proves either the strong structuring power of the VerBIS profiling system or the ‘true-to-life’ character of VerBIS, or both. For instance, several clients talk about their qualifications or rather, their lack thereof: *“I went back to school to get my secondary school diploma [Hauptschule – year 5 to 9]), and then I hoped that I would also be able to get my [Realschule – year 5-10] diploma”* (B6, 25). Concerning qualifications, a specialty in EAS (as in the entire former German Democratic Republic) is that many qualifications obtained in the GDR are no longer valid in today’s united Germany:

That’s why there are many, I call them failed existences, due to the reunification period and post-reunification period. All of a sudden, we had many clients with the most fantastic degrees, they were top academics in the GDR, but today, their degrees are worth nothing. (B4, 77)

Another problem related to qualifications is that only formal qualifications count on the job-market as opposed to practical work-experience, as client B4 (14) describes it: *“I have a very hard time finding regular employment although I have done a lot in my life, but I lack the formal qualifications”*. Also client B5 (8) exclaims: *“I know, I don’t have the degree, but I can do it!”*.

When it comes to motivation, it is noteworthy that in contrast to caseworkers who often complain about the lacking motivation of long-term unemployed clients, the clients in our interview sample describe themselves as doing their utmost best to find work, as is illustrated by the following titbits (although it should be noted that due to a certain selection bias in our sample, we probably did not get to speak to the most ‘unmotivated’ clients):

You try, one wants to work (...). Not sit at home all day, clean and be a mother and housewife, you also want to be in touch with people outside and do something for yourself, for your own feeling of self-worth. (B1, 16)

I don’t want to appear as a loser in front of my kids – ‘sits around all day, puts stuff in [application] folders, drinks coffee’ – that’s impossible. I wasn’t raised like that, my siblings aren’t like that – both of them work. So, that’s utterly impossible. (...) I don’t want [my kids] to say one day, ‘Mom also did it like this’. (B1, 79)

And I begged to get just any job. I would like to continue working with old people. Two months later, I get an invitation by the AWO (...) – ‘We have a work contract equivalent to 165 Euro [per month] for you’. I said, ‘I take it, I’ll take anything, if only I can work’. (B4, 84)

I don’t want to just sit around at home, that’s nerve-racking. (...) I’d rather have a job and do something sensible than to sit around here doing nothing. (B2, 228)

The “Circumstances” profiling category is also implicitly addressed by clients’ self-references, in three variants. Firstly, age is cited especially by the “50+” client B4 (14) as an obstacle to employment: *“I don’t have a driver’s licence, and then there’s also my age”*. Secondly, the two single mothers in our sample strongly reiterate that whereas being a lone parent should not matter for labour-market chances in theory, it very much does so in practice. As client B1 (14) explains: *“Most [employers] are reluctant when there are three kids or more. (...) They think the kids might be sick a lot and the mother will more often be at home than at work”*. Also client B3 (88) confirms:

And then you’re told, ‘Oh, so you have a child, how old is the child? When it’s sick, is someone else there and will you be flexible?’ That’s what you get to hear a lot as a lone parent. ‘You have a child? – No, thank you’.

As a third personal circumstance that is seen as relevant for employment by the clients themselves, B6 (30) acknowledges how his past as a drug addict and criminal estranged him from a ‘normal’ life:

Well, I was a criminal. Addicted to drugs. I had much to answer for. Went to jail and got a shorter sentence because I went through therapy. And then I realised: ‘I can’t go on like that. (...) I have to work, and I want to work. To have some structure’.

Also client B5 (23) refers to alcohol addiction among some unemployed people, but stresses that the group she identifies with – namely, unemployed immigrants – differs sharply from such ‘losers’: *“We have clear minds”*. In fact, this statement is the only instance in our interviews where a client (or caseworker) mentioned a life situation (i.e. immigrant status) that could potentially pose an obstacle to employment but that is not addressed by the VerBIS profiling categories, although the Jobcenter EAS informally acknowledges this special target group by offering caseworker trainings for learning how to communicate effectively with migrants.

As a final point, it is interesting to see that in contrast to the profiling categories “Qualifications”, “Motivation” and “Circumstances” that clients use habitually to refer to themselves in our interviews, the profiling category “Capacities” does not appear at all when clients talk about themselves. Hence, our impression is that clients experience the former three categories as relevant in their own job-search efforts and personal interaction with employers, whereas the latter category is not perceived as directly work-related by the long-term unemployed themselves.

(4.B) Reconstruction of encounters with the Jobcenter

After discussing the degree to which long-term unemployed clients have internalised (or not) the official discourse on individual causes of unemployment, section 4.B now turns to the question how clients experience their personal encounters with Jobcenter staff. The period of intervention starts with the client’s first contact with the Jobcenter at the express counter. There, clients are assigned a number and when they are called up, they can voice their concerns at this counter. In most cases, clients have two concerns in this situation: On the one hand, they must fill in an application for unemployment benefits; and on the other hand, benefits are conditional on making an appointment with a caseworker geared towards reducing benefit dependency and finding a job as quickly as possible. In most Jobcenters, caseworkers are responsible for either benefit administration or job-search assistance and counselling – not both of them combined.

In EAS, the intake interview is conducted with the first caseworker who is available. It takes place after the first contact at the express counter. The caseworker checks the main facts about the client's situation and places him or her with a personal adviser fitting the client's target group description, e.g. people above 50 years of age, people until 35 without a secondary education, young people below age 25, lone parents, people with health-impairments, or self-employed persons. For uninsured unemployed people without any of these specific features, assignment to a caseworker takes place according to postcodes and the first letter of the family name. If it turns out during the activation process that clients have multiple problems and therefore require intensive counselling, they can be referred to a so-called case manager (*Fallmanager*) whose caseload is much lower than that of regular caseworkers (*Integrationsfachkräfte*). During the first consultation between a caseworker and a new client, the personal situation of the client is discussed as well as the client's vita and the last job he or she had. The caseworker analyses the strengths and weaknesses of the client and enters the relevant information in an IT platform provided by the FEA, called "VerBIS". On the basis of this so-called client profile, additional activation measures may then be discussed. To give an example of such a remembered conversation:

My caseworker asked me which jobs I could see myself doing and which ones I cannot imagine at all. And then we pondered together. My caseworker asked me what kind of retail job I would prefer: electronics, hardware, or grocery store. I told her directly: grocery store – never ever! You don't have a chance of promotion there at all. And the only thing you ever do there is to stock shelves. Yet what I would like to do, as a salesperson or retail merchant, is to talk to customers. Preferably also about something that I have expertise in. (B6, 74)

The client profile created during the first session is very important for the consecutive activation steps as well as for a client's future within the Jobcenter organisation, because when caseworkers change, other caseworkers will build up on the already existing profile. Clients have to be called in at certain time intervals. In most cases, these intervals depend on the target group, more specifically the group's size or set of problems. For example, young unemployed people must be invited more often, just as persons with multiple problems tend to be called in more frequently so that counselling can be more intensive. Emergency meetings are generally also an option, yet at the discretion of the individual caseworker. Once a complete client profile has been established in VerBIS, caseworker and client are meant to sign a so-called individual "integration agreement" (*Eingliederungsvereinbarung*). This integration agreement is one of the important instruments in the work of caseworkers because creating it gives structure and direction to the interaction with the client: "Do we want to put this into the integration agreement? Or don't we? Do you think you can manage it like this?" (B6, 62). As this quote illustrates, caseworkers typically create the integration agreement together with the client. The client has the opportunity to gauge what may be possible to accomplish until the next meeting. Only if a client refuses to be activated, caseworkers turn to the legal possibility to make certain requirements mandatory by way of an administrative act (*Verwaltungsakt*). However, as one of our caseworker respondents reported, only action strategies whose success is not dependent on voluntary client participation or the personal motivation of the client tend to be mandated in this way, for example a certain number of job applications per month ("for example, then we put in there: three self-selected job applications per month" [A2, 61]).

Notwithstanding the conversational nature of the creation of the integration agreement, the agreement thus has the status of a legal contract between client and caseworker. It lists the most

important rights and duties that each side must adhere to. After a client responsibility has been set, the client is legally required to fulfil it – otherwise, sanctions ensue, as will be described in section 7. Our client respondents generally perceived the integration agreement as a practical and reasonable instrument, but:

As I hear from some other colleagues, for example, (...) their caseworkers put into the integration agreement that they must write ten job applications within three months. What's this, that's not motivating, is it? It's more like, 'Do it like this and then we're done with it'. But that's not helping, is it? (B6, 66)

Another aspect about the integration agreement that one client respondent reported as problematic is that the integration agreement does not contain all information which the caseworker has entered into the IT system: *"They also write down their own opinion about it"* (B6, 64). Related to this is the criticism voiced by client B6 that it is very hard to switch to a different caseworker if the "chemistry" is not right and no productive working relationship ensues. In order to be transferred to a different caseworker, one would have to go through the Customer Response Management department and file an official complaint (B4, 22-27), from which many clients shy back:

I find it a pity that one cannot change one's caseworker without a lot of effort, from which many people shy back. But sometimes, the chemistry simply isn't right from the start. (B6, 133)

Hence, at least the clients in our sample think that it is a matter of luck to get a friendly caseworker: *"No. I have to say that I am very satisfied with my caseworker. Stroke of luck"* (B3, 117).

However, in concluding this section, it should also be mentioned that working as a caseworker at a Jobcenter is not an easy job because some clients are temperamental and tough. Discussions can escalate and caseworkers sometimes find themselves in unsafe situations (A7, 75). Difficulties may also arise when caseworkers are much younger than their clients because in such cases, it may be hard for a caseworker to be taken seriously:

Sometimes it is very hard for me when I have a very young caseworker in front of me. They do not know the past as I do [a reference to the reunification period in Germany]. This very young person - he is as old as my granddaughter - told me that I do not show enough initiative, and that enrages me. (B4, 18)

Section 4.C will now give more details on how clients subjectively evaluate being 'people-processed' by Jobcenter personnel.

(4.C) Assessment of every-day policy practices in terms of their impact on well-being, work prospects, and participation in society

We conclude section 4 by discussing how clients experience profiling procedures as well as the effects of activation on their personal lives. At the end of section 4.C, a number of policy recommendations voiced by our long-term unemployed respondents are presented.

How do clients experience being assessed?

In general terms, we can distinguish two types of client statements about being assessed in our interview material: (a) statements pertaining to the personal interaction of clients with their caseworkers, and (b) statements about the UB II system more generally. As to (a), several clients (and also caseworkers) mention that how formal profiling procedures come across depends crucially on

the personality of the caseworker applying said procedures. The central issue here seems to be whether a caseworker manages to apply the profiling categories in an organic, ‘human’ manner so that the client feels acknowledged as a human being and individual, as is illustrated by client B4 (33):

If you already put pressure on yourself and then someone [says], ‘You show too little initiative’, then – I do want to, but why... I mean, I had been doing an internship for four weeks. I worked at a nursery home (...) with 150 people, that was assembly-line work and I was completely exhausted in the evenings. (...) And after those four weeks, of course I had no applications. And then he said, ‘You must nevertheless apply’. I said, ‘But when should I do it, it’s simply impossible’. (...) The man had not made a mistake in fact, I know he had to ask me that, but I missed – a certain sensitivity (...). He certainly did everything correctly and I’m sure it was the way it was supposed to be, but he just did not take into account the individual person, you know, because everyone is different. Some people don’t take things like that to heart; he had realised that I... He did apologise to me at last and said, ‘I still see great potential in you’. But I did not see any potential anymore at that moment, I just wanted to leave. (33)

The following three quotes give examples of how clients react cognitively when they do not feel ‘seen’ as an individual by their caseworkers:

- Trying to convince caseworkers of one’s ‘worthiness’:
In the beginning, I had to beg a lot at the Jobcenter. (...) That I’m really motivated and I’m really willing to do a lot. (...) And then I first did a substitute job. And I really gave my best, to prove to them that I’m really willing. And I believe it was only then that they opened up and said, ‘Yes, OK, we’ll see to it that we find funding for you’. (B6, 36)
- Rationalisation of one’s own shortcomings as causing distanced caseworker behaviour:
With many caseworkers, I haven’t been satisfied. Even before my time in jail, there were many problems. I feel that they often close off. But I also think that I myself contributed to that. I chose the crooked path myself, right. And maybe that’s part of the reason why they were so distant and didn’t want to help me. (B6, 42)
- Non-cooperation:
I had taken over this client and it said here [on the computer screen] that he was not motivated, did not cooperate and had not showed up several times, there were only negative remarks. So I talked to him. I turned this thing here [the computer] around. I said: ‘Look how my predecessor categorised you. I don’t know you, I would like to talk to you about that’. (...) And I said, ‘Do you have an idea why she categorised you like that?’ And he was able to explain it to me. I even understood it somehow, I turned the whole profiling around. He hadn’t received a single measure that he found to make sense, that fit him. He had not been listened to and he did not feel ‘seen’. (A5, 64)

As to (b), several clients expressed dissatisfaction with the profiling procedures not on an inter-personal basis, but on a systemic basis, as the following quotes show:

- Certain arbitrariness of procedural regulations:
It happens regularly, once or twice per year, that a new order is issued to be stricter with people, have them write more job applications or reduce their housing costs, and other things like that. Some of the Jobcenter staff also know this, they realise that this is to a certain degree simply ridiculous. (B7, 103)
- Formal/informal age categories create artificial boundaries for activation measures:
The problem was that I couldn’t find a provider (...). Because I’m above 25, right, so many providers immediately block off and say, ‘No, above 25, if you haven’t achieved anything until that age, why should we try again now and invest money’. (B6 [age 28], 76)
- Opinions on the psychological test are mixed:

B5 (10) – feels that she failed the test because it was computerised: *“Doing it with the computer was complicated, that was new for me”*. B5 is bitter that the test prevented her from getting an internship in a social profession (as a care assistant).

B6 (80) – finds the economic cost-benefit calculation behind the test sensible: *“I thought it made sense that they did that. To find out whether it would pay off. Who is cognitively capable, right. Whether someone can do work for which you need some brains.”*

Having hereby addressed how UB II clients experience being categorised according to formal profiling procedures, we now turn to the question how clients experience the effects of activation in the German context.

How do clients experience the effects of activation?

When discussing the effects of activation, two types of activation measures should be taken into account: counselling by caseworkers or case managers, and other measures taking place outside of the Jobcenter such as work trials, training courses, etc. In general, the clients we talked to seemed satisfied with the counselling they received. For instance, client B2 (224) says: *“They talk to you and take into account the individual person. They don’t say, ‘This is what has to be done’”*. Also client B6 (62) recounts:

For instance, when it came to making the integration agreement, (...) she really reflected together with me: ‘Should we put this in there, shouldn’t we put it in there, do you think you can manage it like that?’

However, most client respondents also told us that they had ‘heard other stories’ from friends and acquaintances as well, such as client B3 (94):

It always depends on the caseworker. (...) I have so far always been lucky with my caseworkers. I have also heard different stories, though. But in my case, everything went well so far, I’d say. (...) They also sent job offers to my home when they had found something. I really received intensive counselling here, I have to say.

In addition, not all client experiences reported to us were positive. Thus, client B5 (6) says that until she was transferred to a case manager, she received no help to improve her German or obtain a secondary school diploma – *“after two years, I stopped pursuing a high school diploma”*. Client B5 (17-18) also reports to have sometimes been *“speechless”* about caseworker demands, for instance when a caseworker asked her to commute 50 km for a cleaning job although she had three children and worked in the mornings: *“They should be helpful, identify new options rather than just cutting benefits while sitting in their warm nest”*. Client B5’s experience of having received personalised counselling only once she was transferred to the case management system is further reiterated by client B6 (50), who also remarks that he experienced intensive counselling only from a case manager (because case managers have much lower caseloads than regular caseworkers). This supports our overall impression that tailor-made counselling/activation is only the rule in the case management part of the German UB II system, with the activation approaches of regular caseworkers being much more standardised and workfarist.

In a nutshell, clients report of both positive and negative experiences with job counselling. The same is true for activation measures taking place outside of the Jobcenter. Several clients refer to ‘useless’ application trainings – apparently the emblem of bulk measures that many clients perceive as low-quality – as is exemplified by client B4 (36):

I have already completed many training measures, also half a year of civic work and things like that, it all didn't get me very far in the end. It was always the same, all the time learning how to write job applications. After a while, we were able to write applications backwards, forwards (...) but with no effect.

However, we also heard stories of life-changing experiences triggered by activation trajectories. For example, client B4 (58) told us enthusiastically about the personality development she underwent at a sheltered workplace:

I learned more about myself, and now it no longer annoys me when new people arrive because I know my own weaknesses of character. (...) I don't judge people anymore as I used to, they are not for me to judge, I know this now. I never judged them openly, but inside. Sometimes, new people were coming in and I put them in a box because I didn't know how to deal with them. Now I have realised (...), I have to work with them for eight hours and if nothing happens during that time, what's it to me what they are like when they go home? But it took time for me to learn this.

Client B4 (38) also was happy about the “new skills” she could learn at the sheltered workplace which she found “very interesting” – a sentiment that is shared by client B6 (26):

We [caseworker and client] said, 'Let's do an internship'. So I did an internship at the Toom hardware store, and it went very well immediately. Yes, and they liked me there, so we thought, 'Let's try to do a retraining course there'. And that also worked out immediately. Yes, and I'm very satisfied with it.

As a final positive example, client B3 (3) reports how the Jobcenter granted her a retraining measure that will allow her to combine work more easily with her childcare duties:

I'm a lone parent and a trained shop assistant. But that's difficult with the working times, that's why I have stayed at home for a long time, which is depressing of course. And now I got the opportunity to do a retraining course (...) as an office clerk, and I'm very glad about it. Because the working times aren't as extreme.

However, in spite of such activation successes, several clients underline that successful activation does not automatically entail successful reintegration into the labour market. As client B5 (31) paraphrases the employers she met over the years: “I'm sorry, you are too old. Sorry, are you German? No high school diploma, no chance”. Besides private employers putting a limit to Jobcenters' endeavours to put long-term unemployed clients back into work, some clients themselves also relativize the expectation that Jobcenters are responsible for their own happiness and societal integration. As B5 (28) phrases it, “The Jobcenter is not my life”. And client B3 (91-92) adds:

I don't think about it on a daily basis, no. I have my appointment, I get it in the mail or I get it right away when I'm here, then I come here, we discuss everything, she checks if she has any job offers for me, she prints them out for me and once I'm out of here, I switch to a different mindframe. Then this here is over and normal daily life resumes.

On the other hand, there are also clients who have internalised the pressure to look for work to such a degree that they reportedly dread mail from the Jobcenter on a daily basis:

They are permanently under pressure. Here, we have a saying: 'Only an empty mailbox is a good mailbox'. Because it means you have no mail from the Jobcenter. (...) It's really like that, you get home – 'No, not again! What do they want from me this time?' And it never stops. (B8, 117)

Policy recommendations from the point of view of LTU

By way of a preliminary conclusion, we end the empirical analysis of this report by stating a number of policy recommendations pertaining both to the policy level and governance level, as expressed by our long-term unemployed respondents. In terms of policy changes, the following (both implicit and explicit) policy recommendations appear in our interview material:

- Install higher wage requirements:
You'd have to raise wages, it's as simple as that. Also here in East Germany. (B3, 86)
- Lower restrictions on temporary employment:
After that one year, my contract was prolonged for another year. (...) But after those two years (...) they would have been required to give me more hours. So what did they do? They simply took me off the duty roster, put in someone else and in order to prevent me from seeing who it was, they didn't even enter a name. And that was it – I was out. (B4, 86)
- Facilitate the authentication of diplomas/ease formal qualification requirements:
I went to school for 10 years, (...) did an apprenticeship for two years, I'm a railwayman, I've worked 13 years as a transportation merchant. (...) But when I sometimes mention this today, I get the reply, 'Well, that means you're an auxiliary worker', because none of this counts anymore. (B4, 14)
- Build more childcare facilities:
Of course, if the child is really sick, Mommy or Daddy must stay at home. But when they just have a cold or cough, where they lie in bed and play or draw a little, if one received subsidies to pay for someone to take care of the kids at home, I think that would be good. (B1, 63)

Finally, at the governance level, the following recommendations were voiced by our client respondents:

- More privacy during intake:
When you sit there, you have to pull a number, right, then you sit there with a lot of people. And you hear a lot, right. And (...) I would say that Jobcenters should handle this a bit more discretely. (B6, 60)
- Count the time spent on job-search as job-search activity:
It would be nice if there was a form where we could fill in how much time we have spent at the computer looking for jobs. (...) Because when there are no vacancies, there are no vacancies. (...) Otherwise, it might look like (...), 'has only two applications'. But I can't prove that I have spent six, seven hours at the computer doing good work. (B4, 31)
- Less frequent caseworker changes:
What disturbs all of us a little bit, but I'm sure it's not the fault of this particular organisation, is that during the intake, we had a caseworker whom we could really get to know. But in this last nine months, there were many, many caseworker changes. I have the fourth or fifth caseworker now, and it doesn't work well like that. (B4, 18)

5. Conclusion

To conclude: This report has covered many aspects of the practical implementation of active inclusion policies in one German city (EAS). Not only policy and governance aspects were discussed in detail, but also the individual experiences of caseworkers and clients, in order to shed more light on the question how active inclusion is given shape in daily practice, and with which effects for long-term unemployed citizens. In the concluding part of this report, we now review the discrepancies

between policy and practice that emerged from our empirical analysis, as well as their effects in citizens' lives.

(5.A) Discrepancies between the way policies are planned and their implementation

Two different kinds of 'policy vs. practice' lessons can be drawn from the material presented above. First of all, we would argue based on our research that the organisational design of joint FEA-municipal Jobcenters in Germany is very well suited for integrating vulnerable unemployed citizens into the labour market, or at least bringing them closer to paid employment. Not only do the Jobcenters have a broad range of (and sufficient funds for) activation measures at their disposal, but also do the Jobcenters effectively combine the 'employment' expertise of the FEA (differentiated profiling system, standardised interventions) with the 'social' expertise of the municipalities (third-sector partnerships). Also the legal framework of the Social Security Code II provides a good basis for tailor-made and effective activation services, for instance by granting caseworkers high discretion in tailoring interventions to individual clients' needs. However, and this is the second kind of conclusion we would draw from this study, four over-arching factors may hinder the effective implementation of the SGB II policy design and one-stop-shop Jobcenter structure in daily practice. These are:

1. **Scarce staff resources**, leading to
 - a dominance of 'regular' casework (with very high caseloads) over 'marginal' case management (with much lower caseloads and hence more intensive counselling)
 - rampant short-term contracts for caseworkers, causing frequent caseworker changes and hence lacking coherence in individual clients' activation trajectories
2. **Cameralistic funding mechanisms** that sometimes create perverse incentives to 'fill' up activation measures
3. Differentiated **federal programmes and local target group approaches** that improve counselling for clients within the respective groups, but widen the quality gap between counselling for target group 'insiders' and 'outsiders'
4. A lacking 'personal **chemistry**' between individual caseworkers and clients
5. An increasing **concentration of hard-to-place or even impossible-to-place clients** in the client population of German Jobcenters (in the context of a vibrant labour market).

In order to mitigate the negative consequences of the above five aspects, the following strategies might be considered:

- Stabilising and intensifying counselling relations between caseworkers and clients by
 - reducing regular caseloads
 - expanding case management
 - making caseworker contracts more long-term (all of which would likely increase Jobcenters' administrative costs, however)

- Switching to a more flexible and modular procurement scheme, the latter meaning that not only entire programmes, but also parts of programmes can be bought and flexibly combined for individual jobseekers.
- Differentiating activation approaches not along social problem definitions (such as ‘age’ or ‘family status’) but along the degree of clients’ distance from the labour market more generally
- Making it easier for client to switch caseworkers. Additionally or alternatively, regular caseworker trainings should be institutionalised to update caseworkers’ conversational skills and knowledge of current activation programmes/labour market trends
- Institutionalising official ‘creaming and parking’ routines that will enable caseworkers to leave impossible-to-reintegrate clients ‘in peace’ (if the clients consent), thereby freeing time and monetary resources for dealing with clients with realistic reintegration prospects.

(5.B) The effects of policies on the well-being and social inclusion of vulnerable individuals

As became visible in section 4 above, it is difficult to make general statements about the effects of activation on the personal lives of vulnerable citizens based on a small sample of eight respondents. Hence, we will only give some general impressions on the effects of activation on clients’ lives here.

Our first impression regarding the effects of activation is that in spite of a very differentiated and holistic profiling system, the quality of job-counselling varies considerably depending on four individual factors and one systemic factor. The respective individual factors appearing in our interviews are:

- The personality and labour-market expertise of the caseworker
- The organisational position of the caseworker (in terms of target groups and/or the casework-casemanagement division)
- The personality, socialisation, motivation to work, and skill-set of the client
- The ‘chemistry’ between individual caseworkers and clients.

As several caseworkers and clients report, a good personal relation is crucial for making job-counselling effective. On a more systemic level, however, caseworker A7 (61) also acknowledges that the job advertisements available to the Jobcenter are to some degree limited in scope, making it systemically difficult to offer tailor-made job offers to clients:

I can only pass on job offers that employers have informed us about, or if they themselves have put a job advertisement in our database. A small workshop with 5-10 employees is not going to do that – that’s something to work on, I would say. Of course it’s important to have ties with large companies such as DHL or Amazon, call centres etc., (...) but the problem is that our applicant pool dries up after a certain time, I no longer have the people they need. [For such work] you need a certain IQ, then a certain flexibility – we have many single mothers, they can’t work shifts at a call centre. (...) So we would need more small and middle-sized companies, that would be a task for the employer service, but it’s a lot of work – contacting the companies, going there, calling them, presenting our interests.

When it comes to activation measures that take place outside of the Jobcenter such as training courses, sheltered work, work trials etc., we saw in our interviews that clients' satisfaction with activation measures again varies considerably. Firstly, several clients talk of 'useless' bulk measures such as application trainings that are often perceived as degrading rather than helpful or motivating (due to their partial low quality and also due to repetition). Secondly, two clients reported that they had to 'fight' in order to convince caseworkers of their motivatedness and 'worthiness' of extended support, which may indicate that caseworkers sometimes depart from the baseline-expectation that a client is not motivated. However, especially if clients are transferred to the case management system where more intensive counselling can be provided, clients often seem very satisfied with the results. Hence, our tentative conclusion would be that the real-world effects of activation on clients' well-being and social inclusion vary considerably in the German context, depending on the individual-level and governance factors enumerated under 5.A and 5.B above.

As a final remark, it should be added that both caseworkers and clients acknowledge that responsibility for personal well-being and social inclusion can never lie exclusively or even primarily with the Jobcenter, not least because the chances for 'real' labour-market success often lie outside of the reach of both Jobcenter staff and clients.

In spite of the above-sketched room for improvement, we would like to end this report by saying that our interviews have taught us great respect not only for the life-struggles and often astonishing perseverance of long-term unemployed individuals, but also for the difficult work of Jobcenter caseworkers. We wish to express our heartfelt thanks to our respondents for having shared their experiences with us.

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Appendix (A): Interview guide caseworkers

1. Einführung, Hintergrundinformation

- WOZU führen wir die Interviews, WER sind wir? (Jeder stellt sich vor)
- Wie werden die DATEN verwendet
- Sie können jederzeit eine Frage NICHT BEANTWORTEN, eine PAUSE einlegen oder das Interview BEENDEN, wenn Sie das möchten
- Dürfen wir das Interview AUFNEHMEN?

2. Funktionsbeschreibung

- **Was ist Ihr AUFGABENGEBIET bzw. HINTERGRUND (Ausbildung, Beruf)?**
 - i. WIE LANGE arbeiten Sie schon im Jobcenter?
 - ii. Was haben Sie VORHER gemacht?
 - iii. Welche AUFGABEN haben Sie neben Fallmanagement/Vermittlung?
 - iv. Haben Sie ein internes Vermittlungs-/BeratungsTRAINING durchlaufen?
- **Wie sieht ein TYPISCHER ARBEITSTAG von Ihnen aus?**

3. Kundenstamm

- **Wie ist Ihr KUNDENSTAMM aufgebaut?**
 - i. Haben Sie einen FESTEN oder wechselnden Kundenstamm?
 - ii. WIE VIELE Personen betreuen Sie zurzeit?
 - iii. Haben Sie eine spezielle ZIELGRUPPE?
 - iv. Was sind die größten PROBLEME Ihrer Kunden neben der Arbeitslosigkeit?
- **Nach welchen KRITERIEN erfolgt die Kundenzuteilung hier im Jobcenter?**
 - i. Ist das überall in Deutschland gleich oder ist das SPEZIFISCH für das Jobcenter [xxx]?

4. Beispiel zur Veranschaulichung

- **Gab es in der letzten Zeit eine(n) Kunden/ Kundin, der/die ihnen besonders im GEDÄCHTNIS geblieben ist? Können Sie etwas mehr über diesen Fall erzählen?**

5. Vermittlung/Beratung: Erster Kundenkontakt

- **Wenn ein Kunde NEU zu Ihnen kommt, wie verläuft das erste Gespräch? Wonach FRAGEN Sie? Was muss am Ende GEKLÄRT sein? Wie lange DAUERT ein Erstgespräch?**
 - i. Haben Sie dafür irgendwelche LEITFÄDEN oder EINGABEMASKEN am Computer? Könnten Sie uns diese einmal zeigen? Dürfen wir davon ein(en) Exemplar/Ausdruck mitnehmen?
 - ii. Inwiefern beeinflusst die Erstellung der EINGLIEDERUNGSVEREINBARUNG den Gesprächs-verlauf? Wie individuell ist diese in der Praxis? Dürfen wir ein leeres Exemplar mitnehmen?
 - iii. Welche PFLICHTEN haben die Kunden? Was passiert bei Pflichtverletzungen?
 - iv. Wie gehen Sie vor, wenn jemand NICHT DIREKT eine Arbeit aufnehmen kann? (z.B. fehlende Kinderbetreuung, Obdachlosigkeit, Suchtprobleme, Schulden, psych. Probleme etc.)

- v. Gibt es dafür standardisierte VORGABEN bzw. Vorgehensweisen?

6. Vermittlung/Beratung: Weitere Schritte

- o **Wie geht es nach dem ersten Gespräch WEITER?**
 - i. Wie HÄUFIG sehen Sie Ihre Kunden? Wovon hängt das ab?
 - ii. Was machen die Kunden in der ZWISCHENZEIT? Haben Sie zwischendurch Kontakt?
 - iii. Gibt es dafür standardisierte REGELN oder ist das von Fall zu Fall verschieden?
 - iv. Können Sie sich an die Kunden ERINNERN oder greifen Sie auf Akten etc. zurück, um sich Fälle wieder vor Augen zu führen?
 - v. Diskutieren sie manchmal Fälle mit KOLLEGEN?

7. Maßnahmen und Vermittlungsvorschläge

- o **WELCHE Maßnahmen gibt es (Kurse/Weiterbildung, Praktika...)?**
- o **Bieten Sie IMMER Maßnahmen an oder nicht? Wovon hängt das ab?**
 - i. Kommen die Kunden auch SELBST mit Vorschlägen?
 - ii. Wie ENTSCHEIDEN Sie, ob/wann eine bestimmte Maßnahme sinnvoll ist?
 - iii. Gibt es hierfür standardisierte RICHTLINIEN oder Tests?
 - iv. Wie viel ENTSCHEIDUNGSSPIELRAUM haben Sie bei der Genehmigung von Maßnahmen?
 - v. Wie sehr UNTERSCHIEDEN sich die genehmigten Maßnahmen in der Praxis?
- o **Wie schätzen Sie den vorhandenen MAßNAHMENKATALOG und die dafür vorgesehenen MITTEL/PLÄTZE ein? Reichen diese aus?**
- o **Suchen Sie für Ihre Kunden auch STELLEN(ANZEIGEN) heraus?**
 - i. Wenn ja: Welche KRITERIEN werden dabei berücksichtigt?
 - ii. Welche Arbeit ist ZUMUTBAR/SINNVOLL, wo sind die GRAUZONEN?
 - iii. Gibt es die Möglichkeit einer NACHBETREUUNG?

8. Zusammenarbeit mit anderen Einrichtungen, Arbeitgebern etc.

- o **Mit welchen Einrichtungen und Ämtern arbeiten Sie bei der Vermittlung bzw. Betreuung Ihrer Kunden ZUSAMMEN?**
- o **Haben Sie auch Kontakte zu ARBEITGEBERN?**
 - i. Gibt es dafür VORGABEN?
 - ii. Wie sind diese Kontakte ZUSTANDE gekommen?
 - iii. Wie VERLÄUFT die praktische Zusammenarbeit bzw. Weitervermittlung?
 - iv. Verläuft die Zusammenarbeit GUT? Wo gibt es evtl. SCHWIERIGKEITEN und warum?
 - v. (Inwiefern) PROFITIEREN die Kunden von der Zusammenarbeit mit diesen Partnern?

9. Aufgaben von Kunden und Jobcenter

- o **Was sind Ihrer Meinung nach die Voraussetzung für eine ERFOLGREICHE Vermittlung/Betreuung? – Von Seiten der Kunden? Von Seiten des Jobcenters?**
 - i. Was müssen die Kunden SELBST tun, um wieder in Arbeit zu kommen?
 - ii. Gibt es Kunden, die besonders SCHWIERIG sind? Wie gehen Sie mit ihnen um?

- iii. Gibt es interne ZIELVORGABEN, an die Sie sich halten müssen?
- iv. Wenn ja: Wie BEEINFLUSSEN diese Ihre Arbeit? Haben sie sich im Laufe der Zeit GEÄNDERT?
- **Welche Aspekte Ihrer Arbeit GEFALLEN Ihnen am besten? Welche weniger (und warum)?**

10. Gibt es noch weitere Punkte, die wichtig sind?

- Von Ihrer Seite...
- Von unserer Seite...

11. Danke und Abschluss des Interviews

12. Selbst notieren:

- *Geschlecht*
- *Geschätztes Alter*

Appendix (B): Interview guide clients

1. Einführung, Hintergrundinformation

- WOZU führen wir die Interviews.
- Wie werden die DATEN verwendet?
- Sie können jederzeit eine Frage NICHT BEANTWORTEN, eine PAUSE einlegen oder das Interview BEENDEN, wenn Sie das möchten
- Dürfen wir das Interview AUFNEHMEN?

2. Die Lebenssituation

- Wie lange sind Sie schon arbeitslos?
- Wie kam es dazu?
- Was haben Sie vorher gemacht?
- **Haben Sie Unterstützung aus Ihrem familiären Umfeld?**
 - Alleinstehend oder Partnerschaft?

3. Verhältnis zum Jobcenter

- **Können Sie mir Ihren allerersten Kontakt mit dem Jobcenter schildern? Was ist Ihnen aufgefallen? Wie haben Sie sich gefühlt?**
- Haben Sie immer noch den gleichen Arbeitsvermittler oder hat er gewechselt?
- Welcher Vermittler ist Ihnen besonders im Gedächtnis geblieben? Warum?
- Hatten die Vermittlerwechsel Einfluss auf die Qualität der Beratung? Wenn ja: welchen?
- Wie würden Sie Ihre Beziehung zu Ihrem jetzigen Vermittler beschreiben?
- Fühlen Sie sich von Ihrem Vermittler ernstgenommen?
- Denken Sie, Ihr Vermittler versteht Ihre Situation?
- Wissen Sie, welche Informationen Ihr Vermittler über Sie speichert?

4. Vermittlung/Beratung

- In welchen Abständen haben Sie Termine im Jobcenter?
- **Wie lange dauern Ihre Beratungsgespräche in der Regel?**
- **Wenn Sie an Ihren letzten Besuch bei Ihrem Arbeitsvermittler zurückdenken: Was wurde dort besprochen oder abgefragt? Haben Sie einen Fragebogen bekommen? (Persönlichkeitstest; Stärken-Schwächen Analyse)**
- Hatten auch Sie Fragen an den Vermittler? Wenn ja: Worum ging es da?
- **Haben die Fragen des Vermittlers alle wichtigen Bereiche abgedeckt oder fanden Sie, dass wichtige Dinge ausgelassen wurden?**
- Wurde eine Eingliederungsvereinbarung aufgestellt? Wenn ja: Können Sie sich daran erinnern, was darin stand? Welche Bedeutung hat diese Vereinbarung für Sie persönlich?
- Haben Sie Jobangebote bekommen? Wenn ja: Haben Sie sie als nützlich bzw. passend empfunden? Wie sind Sie mit den Jobangeboten weiter verfahren?
- Haben Sie Vorschläge des Jobcenters auch mal nicht befolgt? Wenn ja: Gab es dann Konsequenzen und wie sahen diese aus?

5. Maßnahmen

- **Welche Maßnahmen haben Sie schon gemacht?**
- Warum gerade diese – wie kam es dazu (mussten Sie, wollten Sie)?
- Was haben diese Maßnahmen Ihnen gebracht? (Qualifikationen, Motivation...)
- Wurden Sie jemals zu einem psychologischen Test geschickt? Wie war das?
- Was würden Sie selbst gerne machen, wenn Sie frei wählen könnten?
- Wovon hängt es Ihrer Meinung nach ab, welche und ob überhaupt Maßnahmen gemacht werden?
- **Hatten Sie die Möglichkeit, mitzureden oder Vorschläge einzubringen?**

6. Zusammenarbeit mit anderen Einrichtungen

- Hat Ihr Arbeitsvermittler Sie schon einmal an eine andere Einrichtung vermittelt?
- Falls nein: Wissen Sie, ob das Jobcenter mit anderen Einrichtungen zusammenarbeitet?
- Haben Sie sich jemals selbst an eine andere Einrichtung gewandt, um Unterstützung zu bekommen? Wenn ja: Welche war das und wie kam es dazu?
- Finden/fanden Sie es hilfreich, von mehreren Stellen Unterstützung zu bekommen? Warum (nicht)?

7. Erwartungen

- **Was denken Sie, woran es liegt, dass Sie noch keine Arbeit finden konnten?**
- **Was muss Ihrer Meinung nach passieren, damit Sie wieder eine Arbeit bekommen?**
- Denken Sie, das Jobcenter sieht das genauso oder anders?
- Würden Sie sagen, es gibt in dieser Hinsicht einen Unterschied zwischen Vermittlern?
- Was macht Ihrer Meinung nach einen guten Vermittler aus?

8. Vermittlung und Beratung: weitere Schritte

- **Inwiefern beeinflusst das Jobcenter Ihren Alltag? Gibt es Dinge, die Sie anders handhaben würden, wenn das Jobcenter Sie nur auf Ihre Anfrage hin betreuen würde?**
- Fühlen Sie sich gut beraten? In welcher Hinsicht könnte das Jobcenter Sie besser unterstützen?
- Wie beurteilen Sie allgemein Ihre Erfahrungen mit dem Jobcenter?
- Bei Langzeitarbeitslosen: (Wie) hat sich die Betreuung durch das Jobcenter im Laufe der Jahre verändert?

9. Gibt es noch weitere Punkte, die wichtig sind?

- Von Ihrer Seite ...
- Von unserer Seite ...

10. Danke und Abschluss des Interviews

11. Selbst notieren:

- Alter
- Geschlecht

Endnotes

- ¹ Unemployment Benefit II (Arbeitslosengeld II), the German unemployment benefit scheme for non-insured clients
- ² For an overview of the 12 types, see <http://www.sgb2.info/node/1260> [Rev. 2014-01-30].
- ³ See <http://www.perspektive50plus.de> [Rev. 2013-11-19].
- ⁴ URL: http://www.arbeitsagentur.de/nn_26236/zentraler-Content/A10-Fachdienste/A102-PD/Allgemein/PD-Frage-4.html [Rev. 2014-01-16].
- ⁵ URL: http://www.arbeitsagentur.de/nn_26812/zentraler-Content/A10-Fachdienste/A102-PD/Allgemein/Psychologischer-Dienst-Instrumente.html [Rev. 2014-01-16].
- ⁶ URL: http://www.arbeitsagentur.de/nn_26236/zentraler-Content/A02-Berufsorientierung/A021-Personale-Dienstleistungen/Allgemein/Testaufgaben-Beispiele.html [Rev. 2014-01-16].



The Impact of Integrated Approach to Social Cohesion

WP7 National Report **Italy Country Analysis**

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I. Introduction and methodology

A. Description of the local entity

The processing of long term unemployed at the Italian local level is strongly affected by the multi-level structure of the Italian system. In particular, while the province is the main responsible for employment policies, the municipalities hold strong competencies as regards social assistance policies. However, for what concerns the municipality of Milan, given its size and the fact that Milan is the main Italian economic hub, some services are also offered by the *commune* related to employment policies.

The public structures devoted to service delivery with respect to employment, training and career guidance at the provincial level are the *Agenzie per la Formazione, l'Orientamento e il Lavoro* (AFOL - Agencies for Training and Work Orientation), which have been created in 2008.

The network of AFOLs consists of seven agencies throughout the metropolitan area of Milan. This network of public agencies were born with the purpose of strengthening the supply of employment services, surpassing the previous fragmentation in the provincial territory, thus unifying all the structures and functions which were up to that time divided between the province and the municipalities.

All the AFOLs, but not the one of Milan-City, are co-participated by the Province and the municipalities which are grouped within a given AFOL. The Milan-City AFOL (MCA) offers services to both firms (training and free counselling) and citizens, through centres for career orientation, vocational training and an Employment Centre which provides a wide range of employment services to facilitate the entry of the persons into the labour market and the match between demand and supply of labour, also for disabled people.

It is worth underscoring that there are not 'social categories' which are especially targeted for the insertion to work: the mobility lists¹ constitute the main tool for selecting the people that are in 'working need'. There is only a specific disadvantaged category for which the province operates targeted interventions to guarantee its employability: people with disabilities. This must be interpreted as a consequence of the fact that, following the reform of the regional labour market, the employment of disabled people has become one of the provinces' competences. The Law 68/99 corroborates the concept of 'compulsory employment' (*collocamento obbligatorio*) with that of 'targeted/selected employment' (*collocamento mirato*) which implies providing a set of services that promote the

¹ In the *Liste di Mobilità* (LM - Mobility Lists) are registered all the people collectively laid off from firms (for cessation, variation or reduction of the activity) with more than 15 employees or those fired individually, for the same reasons, by companies that have less than 15 employees.

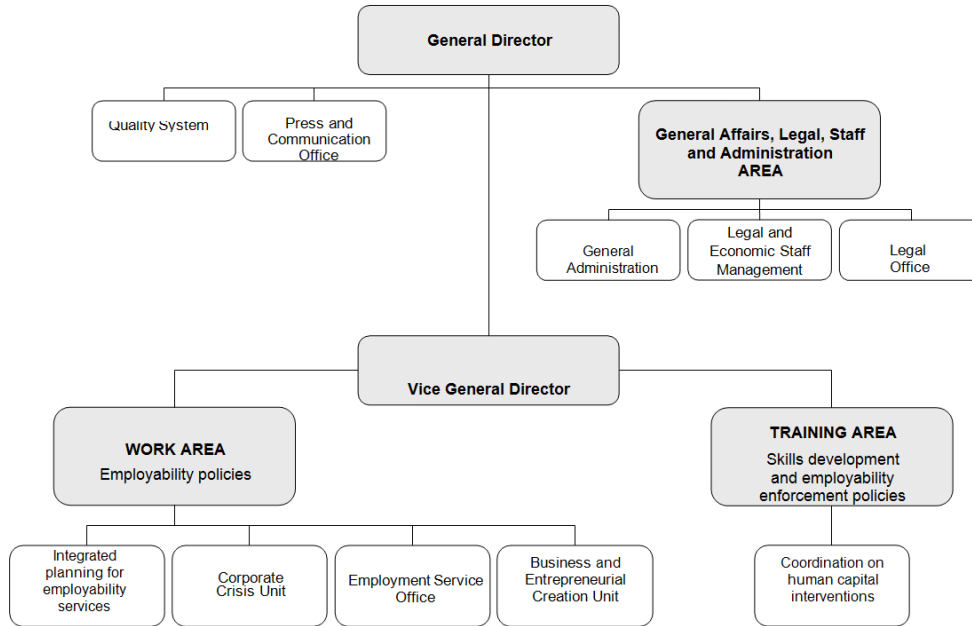
Therefore, all the employers, whose production unit is located in the province of Milan, have to provide the information related to the workers laid off for whom the mobility procedure has been activated to the Employment Centre of MCA. Indeed, following a resolution approved by the Provincial Council in 2009, the MCA manages LM and all the operational procedures related to mobility.

inclusion and the integration to work of disabled people by ensuring the real compatibility between the workers and their tasks, thus allowing them to be considered a productive resource for the employers. Furthermore, the MCA has created a service entirely devoted to unemployed women, the *Spazio Rosa*. However, at present, it remains a very small office, although well integrated with both AFOL and municipal services.

Interviews were all conducted at the central venue, Milan-City AFOL.

B. How local governance structure and organizational arrangements translate into people-processing

AFOL has a very complex organizational structure. Since 2006, Milan-City AFOL and its territorial agencies placed on the Province are the formal venue for job-seekers who need to register in unemployment lists. AFOL hosts the “Centro per l’impiego” office (CPI) where users have to declare their immediate availability to work in order to obtain the formal status of “job-seekers”. This registration allows unemployed people to take advantage of focused replacement services and, if formal requirements are satisfied, to receive monetary benefits according to Italian labor legislation. Once registered, a long-term unemployed has the obligation to attend every meeting organized by the PES office at which he/she is convened. If he/she skips a meeting, without a justification, he/she risks losing the state of unemployment and the related benefits/services. As will be described later on in the report, there is variety of active policies programs and services targeting different users’ typologies. Nevertheless, respect to the amount of people registered in the unemployment lists; resources are still inadequate to cover all the potential training and rehabilitation needs. As it is evident from the organization chart, Milan-city AFOL is functionally divided in two main areas of intervention: work and training. Work area is in turn divided in: Centro per l’Impiego (CPI), where job-seekers go to be registered in the unemployment lists (Employment Service Office in the chart) and other offices all pertaining to active policies area (PAL – Politiche Attive per il Lavoro). Nowadays, active policies and unemployment list registration are not functionally linked together, only a small part of job-seekers are, once registered, involved in job rehabilitation projects, career guidance or training activities. As it will be described later, there is still a weak linkage between unemployment registration and activation process due to the lack of sufficient financial and organizational resources. This might lead to job-seekers’ social exclusion, since, once registered, a person is not automatically accompanied in a process of rehabilitation. Projects are usually targeted to specific categories and the projects providing most individualized services can involve a maximum of ten- fifteen people each time. Moreover, large room of manoeuvre is left to individual job-seekers’ capability to find and apply for the most fitting activation projects: by consequence, most vulnerable individuals, lacking resources and instruments (for example: laptop, Internet connection, skills to update a CV) might find difficult to re-enter the labor market without an external help.



C. Description of selection of interviewees and other data for analysis

From September to December 2013, we collected totally fifteen interviews: eight to case-workers and seven to long-term unemployed. Interviews to case workers were a bit longer than those to job-seekers and lasted about one hour and a half each (Table 1). All of them were recorded and transcribed². Access was allowed first by AFOL General Director, but contacts were provided personally by CPI – Centro per l’Impiego - Office Manager so we should consider the possibility of selection bias in order to give an idealized picture of the organization. All the interviewed case workers are experienced and have a deep knowledge of the overall organizational structure and of the instruments-services available for the users. It seems that every case worker, during her career, is involved in different positions with growing levels of complexity starting from the mere front-office unemployment registration to the most articulated tutorship programs. The impression is that the greatest part of their professional training is made “on the field” and consolidated with daily experience. Confidentiality and anonymity of interviews was granted and it helped case workers to express honestly some personal opinions and feedbacks about the organizational efficacy and efficiency. Interviews with case workers were conducted in the work place during office hours.

² We are grateful to Anna Desanso who transcribed the interviews for WP6 and WP7.

Table 1 Interviews with case workers

	Organisation and Position	Gender	Educational background	Work tasks	Experience of case work (years)
1	AFOL – CPI unit- Manager	F	Education and Social Assistance	Coordination PES and front-office	<10
2	AFOL – CPI unit- Case worker	M	Accountant	Front-office, unemployment registration	<10
3	AFOL – CPI unit –Case worker	F	MA degree, major in Work Rehabilitation	Front-office and active policies- training rehabilitation programs	10
4	AFOL – PAL unit– Officer	F	MA degree, major Psychology	Front-office and targeted active policies programs	<10
5	AFOL – PAL unit - Officer	F	MA degree in Economics, major in Human Resources and Marketing	Front-office, work rehabilitation and business crisis unit	<10
6	AFOL- PAL unit – Officer	M	MA degree in Law, major in Work Legislation	Front-office and active policies programs targeted to disabled people	>10
7	AFOL- PAL unit – Case worker	F	MA degree in Philosophy, major in Human Resources	Front-office and targeted active policies programs, gender policies	<10
8	AFOL – PAL unit - Officer	F	MA in Economics, major in Active Policies	Front-office and targeted active policies programs	>10

Seven interviews with long term unemployed were conducted (Table 2). Each interview lasted about an hour. All interviewed people were enrolled in an active policies training program, called “Ricolloca-MI”³ aimed at their professional re-placement. Getting in touch with unemployed people was difficult because of managers’ denial to share databases with us for privacy motivations. The interviewees were, therefore, selected, after a brief presentation of Localise project, on a voluntarily basis at the end of three training meetings made at AFOL between November and December 2013. Obviously there is a consistent selection bias coming from the fact that all the interviewees shared some common professional background in order to participate to the project “Ricolloca-MI”. By consequence, all the job-seekers interviewed have more or less the same professional background (mechanical- technical drawers) albeit with different experiences or qualification. One of them, even if not long-term unemployed, was selected and enrolled in the project and has been interviewed. The fact that many active policies programs do not target exclusively long-term unemployed is significant and sheds some light on the fact that Italian policy makers tend to frame projects according to some specific issues (work rehabilitation, school-to-work transition, work-family balance) rather than segments of population. This point will be discussed later in the report.

The focus of the interviews on active policies and individualized services narrowed the range of selection, because only a slight part of the registered unemployed people undertakes active policies paths. This due to the fact that these programs are usually targeted to individuals with defined

³ “Ricollocami” in Italian means “replacement”.

professional or socio-demographic characteristics (age, residence, educational background) and have just few places available. There is a considerable *ex ante* selection process made by case workers on the huge unemployment lists to find, contact and screen the “right” people to be enrolled in every project.

Table 2 Long-term unemployed interviews

	Gender	Age	Referring Organization	Time in unemployment (since last job)	Education and work experience	Family situation
1	M	31	AFOL Milano Project “Ricollocami”	4 months	Industrial mechanical adept	Lives with partner, not married
2	M	28	AFOL Milano Project “Ricollocami”	2 years	Mechanical expert	Lives with parents
3	F	40	AFOL Milano Project “Ricollocami”	More than 2 years	Mechanical expert	Single. Shares a flat with others
4	F	29	AFOL Milano Project “4 Passi per il lavoro”	1 year	Bachelor Law	Lives with family
5	M	35	AFOL Milano Project “Ricollocami”	1 year	High-school scientific diploma. Worked as graphic designer	Lives with partner, no children, not married
6	M	52	AFOL Milano Project “Ricollocami”	Formally unemployed since 2008	Mechanical engineer. Worked in low qualified jobs since came in Italy	Married with 2 children, immigrated in Italy from Perù in 2007
7	M	37	AFOL Milano Project “Ricollocami”	Formally unemployed since 2010	Mechanical engineer.	Married with one child. Immigrated from Perù in 2010

The main interviews administered in the case of Milan within the WP4 report are listed in the table below and were carried out between May 2012 and December 2012. We will use evidence coming from these interviews for the analysis carried in Section II in this report. More specifically, the interviews which turned out to be particularly relevant for the drafting of this report are the following:

- CELAV (Director);
- FWA (Director);
- AFOL (Responsible for the Employment Services);
- Central Director Labor Policies - municipality of Milan;
- Central Director Social Policies – municipality of Milan;
- Local Bureaucrats at the provincial and municipal level for employment and social policies (10 interviews);

- Local policy makers at the provincial and municipal level for employment and social policies (6 interviews).

II. Activation of long term unemployed from the point of view of policy makers

A. How policy-makers plan the typical processing of long term unemployed in local organisations involved in activation

At the municipal level the *comune* of Milan provides services for job search, job placement and training through the *Sportello Lavoro* (SL - Labor front-office) and the CELAV (Centre for Job Intermediation). The SL offers free information and guidance for job search *to all the people* who are seeking employment (men, women, Italians and foreigners in possession of a valid residence permit).

By contrast, CELAV pertains to social policies, thus having as target people with special need. More specifically, its main purpose is to facilitate social integration and promote the employability of disadvantaged groups who being in a situation of personal, mental, physical, family or social distress - are unlikely to be employed. The centre is organized around six areas, each addressing a specific group: 1) people with disabilities; 2) ex convicts; 3) adults in difficulty; 4) youth and adolescents; 5) foreigners; 6) North Africa emergency and political refugees. The service operates by following an *activation* principle: the goal is to make self-sufficient and independent the individuals. To this aim, users are assisted by a *tutor* for developing an *individualized* path which aims at adjusting people's competences to the enterprises' exigencies by supporting the individual to acquire the appropriate skills through formative stages, paid trainings, salary supplements, etc.

The *Fondazione Welfare Ambrosiano* (FWA) is another interesting actor at the municipal level for providing services to workers and the unemployed. Its founders are the Municipality of Milan, the Province of Milan, the Chamber of Commerce of Milan, trade unions and Lombardy Region. The recipients of the services of the Foundation are all workers and their families, who work regularly in Milan or who are considering starting an entrepreneurial path, regardless of the place of residence or usual habitation. This includes both dependent employees with permanent contracts, and workers with temporary contracts, or atypical workers (temporary, project, apprentices, etc.). More generally, its potential beneficiaries include *any category of workers*, also autonomous, who are in a situation of temporary financial difficulty at the personal and family level, which might be due to various factors (job loss, layoffs, closure of his business, illness, etc.).

One of the most important financial tool provided from the FWA is the microcredit. More specifically, the Foundation operates through the provision of a bank guarantee (for a maximum of € 20,000) that will be paid by the credit system, based on a pre-investigation to assess the subjective and objective features of every single person. The micro-credit provided might be either *social credit* (e.g.: expenses for houses, extinction or payment of debts, family needs, training, mortgages, medical care)

or *entrepreneurial credit* (e.g.: start up of entrepreneurial activity, purchase of good/services for already existing activities). It is worth noting that through the social micro-credit it is realized a form of integration between social policies and labor: indeed, many of the people asking for microcredit are families where one of the spouses has lost his/her job and that, for this reason, becomes suddenly 'in need'. In this way the FWA and the providing of micro-credit also implies a cultural shift from the classic notion of social assistance.

B. How local policy-makers evaluate the impact of social and employment policies on the social inclusion and well-being of the most vulnerable groups

According to policy makers, the impact of social cohesion policies at the local level is strongly affected by *administrative* and *organizational* factors which operate so as to generate a high service delivery fragmentation.

From an administrative perspective, activation cannot be evaluated without considering the way through which employment services are delivered in Lombardy. Before 2006, the planning of employment and training policies was made through project calls and funds were allocated to the institutions and/or the organizations whose projects were selected. The introduction in 2006 of the so called *sistema dotale* (voucher system) was an important policy change occurred at the Regional level which had relevant consequences on service delivery at the provincial level. The voucher system is based on the centrality of the person and his/her freedom to choose the service providers to which refer – among a network of services offered by accredited or licensed public or private providers. Therefore, money is allotted directly to final users (rather than to institutions) in the guise of a *dote* (voucher) to be used at the service provider they prefer. The introduction of the voucher had several consequences on the activation of long term unemployed. In particular, while some institutional actors stress the introduction of the voucher as a way to boost transparency and overcome corruption, others – particularly those belonging to the private sector or employers' associations – emphasize its role in having brought about a 'race to the bottom' in service's quality. The latter effect would be mainly the consequence of the fact that, since any person might spend her voucher where she prefers, it is difficult to reach the 'critical mass' which would give the economic incentive to service providers to improve the quality of the delivered services themselves, being them training, placement or job search. In order for this 'critical mass' to be attained, service providers often offer the services that are more apt to attract as many workers as possible (and which usually are very basic) and that not necessarily respond to people's employability needs. Therefore, '*it is very difficult to defeat the logic of the quantity...and replace it with the logic of the quality*'.

Furthermore, leaving the absolute freedom of choice to the person does not imply that people are necessarily capable to select what is the best for them. Indeed, '*the voucher often spurs loneliness and*

exclusion, because a high-skilled person is more able to understand how to spend it but other [low-skilled] unemployed have much more difficulties’.

From an organizational perspective policy makers often complained about the lack of both inter-institutional and intra-institutional integration with respect to the planning of long term unemployed in local organizations involved in activation. In this respect, more integration would allow on the one hand a more *holistic intervention* on the person, taking into account his or her multiple needs and, on the other hand, it would avoid segmentation, overlapping and inefficiencies.

Indeed, as for inter-institutional integration, coordination between the *provincia* and the *comune* of Milan is very weak with the consequences that also social cohesion services are weak and fragmented leaving some room for free riding phenomena:

‘Given that the person is unique, if she has both social problems (for which the Comune is in charge) and employment ones (for which the Provincia is in charge), the Comune and the Provincia must be able to work together on this person. Indeed, the risk is that there are people who are more capable and get subsidies and others not even one, precisely because the two public institutions do not dialogue between each other.’

As for MCA (Milan-city AFOL), beyond its poor communication with the municipal level, it is worth underscoring the fact that it manages the mobility lists, implies that there is a huge information gap with respect to the other service providers operating in the municipality that bestows a competitive advantage on AFOL. As a result, the MCA might become a ‘quasi-monopolist’ in delivering training and employment services despite *‘some private employment agencies might provide a better service than AFOL’*.

III. People-processing from the point of view of street level bureaucrats

A. Diagnosis of life situation of long term unemployed by street level bureaucrats

People-processing in MCA organizational structure is very different in time and contents according to the functional area. As for CPI, the first place where a job-seeker arrives to make the registration, the process of categorization is highly standardized and relatively quick due to the enormous affluence⁴ especially in certain periods of the year when dismissals are more frequent (January or

⁴ Every day CPI front-office receives about 300-400 job-seekers. During high affluence periods, these numbers can easily double or triple.

September usually present the highest affluence of people at CPI). Registration to unemployment lists takes about half an hour and consists in a conversation between the front-office bureaucrat and the job-seeker, where the latter has to fill in an online form, called ‘Sintesi’, containing all the relevant information on job-seeker professional and educational career. ‘Sintesi’ comprehends also a section dedicated to job-seeker competencies as regard foreign languages, IT skills, formal certificated and other skills. Once the form is filled in, the job-seeker is given a document called *disponibilità immediata al lavoro* stating that she is immediately disposable to be called back by the agency in case a matching job opportunity is found. Another document released is called *stato di disoccupazione* and is used, if prerequisites are met, to apply for financial unemployment benefits. At this stage, there is not a formal classification or categorization of unemployed people. However, CPI case-workers have an high level of discretion in providing people indications about active services or ongoing projects. If a person is informally classified as a ‘difficult case’ – as it usually happens with immigrants without linguistic knowledge or documents - CPI case-workers usually address her to an open area called ‘Città dei Mestieri’, at first floor in MCA venue, where it is possible to receive some help in writing a CV in Italian, in using Internet and looking at job opportunities online. Similarly, if a person is seen to hold some expertise and skills, she can be directly addressed to PAL office – Politiche Attive per il Lavoro – in order to screen ongoing activation projects and eventually apply for them. Again, the level of case-workers’ discretion in this phase is very high since there is not a formal procedure to be followed after the registration to unemployment list. When a job-seeker is seen to be smart and skilled, CPI front-office case-workers have the possibility, but are not obliged, to send the person to PAL office.

‘If I see a smart person, I explain her the functioning of our Internet site and I give her the opportunity to go to Città dei Mestieri. We treat everybody in the same way. According to their needs I give them the right indications, if she does not have access to Internet I tell her to go to Città dei Mestieri or in some public libraries.’

Case-worker 2

‘Sintesi’ is the online system used by all CPI case-workers in the Province of Milano. Some parts of the online form – especially the one concerning professional profiles - are standardized across all employment agencies in Lombardy and are regulated by two law acts coming from Ministry of Labor. Data collected through this system are sent to a *borsa regionale* where all job-seekers’ profiles are gathered together and matched with job offers in a apposite site called *IDO – Incontro Domanda Offerta* (supply-demand matching) where companies and firms send their calls. The so called, *Riforma Biagi*, in 2007 established the necessity to set up an online national database, called *Borsa Lavoro*, still under construction, in order to have a unique system for the matching of job supply and demand.

Unemployed people can access the system 'Sintesi' online, through a specific access card and code provided during the first meeting, and update their profiles.

A more structured process of categorization is used by PAL offices in order to address people in the activation process. When a user applies for a slot in an activation program or her profile is selected from 'Sintesi' by a case-worker to participate in a project, she is convoked for a first screening interview. These interviews are fixed by appointment and take place in small offices ensuring some privacy as opposite to the massive processing system occurring at CPI front-office. The guiding criteria of the pre-screening process are strictly bounded by projects' frameworks. Each project usually aims at targeting some specific segments of the population (for example: youngsters, long term unemployed, over 50, women). In this sense, a first categorization is undergone by case-workers who have to screen the database in order to match the given criteria. For example, during our interviews, MCA was implementing an activation project dedicated to long-term unemployed with previous experience in mechanical design. In this case, case-workers organized some screening interviews to select participants. The interviewees were convoked among those sending online applications or among the matching profiles emerging from the database 'Sintesi'. After the selection process is completed, the type of documents and forms used varies a lot according to the project. In projects as *Dote unica lavoro*, the job-seeker is provided a tailor-made rehabilitation process, while in projects as *Ricollocami*, people are involved in focused training and class activities on a specific professional field. Case-workers have a variety of documents to fill in, the most important is called *Piano d'Intervento Personalizzato* (PIP). In the PIP, a tutor is assigned to the user and a table, containing the planning of services - divided in "job services" and "training services" - is filled in. For each section, there is an indication of the period of execution, of the subject providing this service, of the eventual third parties involved and of the amount of hours dedicated. There is also an interesting sort of score, called "valorizzazione" (in English "Value") that assesses the relative importance of each specific activity on the overall rehabilitation process (the score is given in percentage values on a total of 100%). Another part of the PIP describes how financial resources are allotted across different service providers and it reports also the cost per hour together with the total one. The last part of the PIP provides a list of monitoring and evaluation instruments. These are usually : the timesheet, the presence register, the stage record form and the service output (formal confirmation that the services were really provided). Sometimes, case-workers make use of informal checklists to remember all the official forms to be filled in.

As described in Section II, "relevant" or "irrelevant" users' characteristics are not established *a priori*, but vary according to the target of each project. Many times, users are classified as *vulnerable* because they need help in areas other than employment as health, social assistance and social housing. MCA case-workers could, in this sense, address users to other public offices at provincial or municipal level providing more targeted services, but the level of discretion is high. The only category which seems to receive more targeted services, inside MCA, is the one constituted by disabled people. MCA

has a dedicated office providing services and information about the inter-organizational network a disabled individual might be in need of contacting.

'We try to build this network (with CELAV) that is fundamental for disadvantaged people, for the most fragile ones...for disabled first it is important that the person is well followed, it is not possible that he or she sustains the job if an internship is not activated and the person is not taken in charge by social assistance services. There are also cooperatives that help these people...there is a catalogue with all these cooperative that help disabled people in the job rehabilitation process [...] we try to follow all this process.'

Case-worker 5

As for the other two main organizations targeting vulnerable job-seekers, *CELAV* and *Fondazione Welfare Ambrosiano*, both operating at municipal level, there is not an official network of inter-institutional dialogue with MCA. Most of case-workers interviewed had a deep knowledge of intra-organizational structure, but a very weak knowledge of other municipal or provincial organizations working on employment issues. Intra-institutional network is strong and well functioning, while the inter-institutional one is weak and almost inexistent apart from specific projects in which temporary employment agencies are involved.

'There are different levels of collaboration, in the sense that beyond strict collaborations, there were set up also other partnerships with temporary employment agencies [...].'

Case-worker 2

As for the assessment on working tools and methods of work, MCA case-workers often complain about the too standardized structure of regional forms applied to specific projects. According to their opinion, these forms are too general and, by consequence, unable to describe individual situations in detail. Case-workers usually add notes and comments on individual skills and professional experiences to complete individual reports. There are not informal categories used, every evaluation is made case by case. Difficult cases are discussed by case-workers with managers or other colleagues in an informal way, there are not protocols or predetermined steps to be followed.

'The most useless formats are the regional ones, they don't fit well all users typologies, and in specific programs as Dote Lavoro for unemployed people

having less than 29 years old, we had to revise the form because it was not fitting people entering the labor market for the first time, it was built for people having already some previous professional experience. Sometimes instruments are rigid, the content is more or less the same... also the final project relation should be modified because it is too schematic, it is more a questionnaire than a true relation from which the user professional profile can emerge clearly....it is too standardized and, sometimes, repetitive, it should be revised, improved.'

Case-worker 4

"Our output depends a lot on the process. [...]. As regards the instruments used to produce this output, large freedom is left to case-workers to use the instruments that are considered most appropriate, in the sense that we all have different educational background [...]."

Case-worker 8

B. Activation: addressing problems of long term unemployment

Individual activation process starts when a job-seeker is selected to start a project. A great share of projects provide standardized services to an homogeneous group of individuals selected according to their professional and educational background. For example, in the project called *Ricollocami*, groups of fifteen-twenty people, sharing common professional experiences, are addressed in specific training programs aimed at the job rehabilitation. In the project called *Dote Unica Lavoro* each selected participant has a fixed amount of money to spend in training and career guidance activities according to her needs. Case-workers don't have a large room of manoeuvre in adapting these services to individual needs. The legal framework provided to regulate these projects comes mainly from the Region or the Province and it provides already the range of services that can be provided by each local employment agency. Flexibility of action is also limited by staff dimension and financial constraints.

'There is not a unique difficult category, it is the type of activity requested respect to the target that might be difficult to implement, if a person has a low level of education it is very complicated to fill a rigid and deep format, the person might not be able to describe in detail what she has done, this requires more commitment to us.'

Case-worker 8

As described before, inter-organizational network is weak. People excluded from activation projects are not addressed towards other organizations unless the case-worker is able to give the user some useful informal suggestions or unless she applies individually to be enrolled in a project. Difficult categories, as immigrants or long term unemployed, are addressed to internal helpdesks as the info point dedicated to foreigners or the open space called *Città dei Mestieri*, where some open access laptops can be used with free Internet connection and where some case-workers are disposable to provide some help in basic activities as writing down a CV or monitor Internet sites dedicated to job offers.

Nowadays, Italian welfare is not built up with a conditionality system. Services and benefits are provided to unemployed people without any strong obligation, except the one concerning compulsory attendance to class activities (usually 70% of the total amount of class hours) when a person accepts, by signing the document called *Piano d'Intervento Personalizzato* (PIP), to be enrolled in a specific project. Case-workers' discretion is important in the very first phase of the activation: the screening-selection process and the analysis of individual needs. Once a person is selected and is enrolled in a project, the range of discretion becomes very limited because of service high level of standardization. Despite the analysis of needs that is conducted at the very beginning of each project, instruments disposable to respond to these emerging needs are limited by organizational, legislative and financial boundaries.

C. Overall assessment of activation system of long term unemployed by street level bureaucrats

Interviewed case-workers recognize that the activation system is still very fragmented and weak. A progressive process of reform is starting to be implemented and it goes in the direction of a greater conditionality and personalization in service providing. Starting from year 2014, MCA organizational structure will be totally reformed in order to create a unique process linking registration, unemployment benefits reception and activation.

'There is an evolution of active policies, in the past people went to CPI to enroll in the unemployment lists, today that list is not used that much. Today a person coming to CPI has a possibility that is not taken for granted, because by now it is a common thought that case-workers cannot do anything for you. So there is this evolution and revolution in the service, obviously the objective is to improve it, I hope that the person will be always the centre of the projects, I would never accept a change in our goals.'

Case-worker 8

People processing system is still not able to involve all the people in need of training and job rehabilitation. If on one side services have a too narrow range, on the other, people are generally discouraged so they don't have enough incentives to apply spontaneously to be enrolled in activation programs or they don't answer to case-workers convocations because they don't believe in programs usefulness. A 'stick-carrot' system would be more effective, providing incentives and linking benefits payment to activation process.

'The direction is to personalize more and more the range of provided services, obstacles come from the reply you have from users, some colleagues are working on a project, called "4 passi per il lavoro", they contact about seventy job-seekers per day, but at the end just six or seven are attending the interview. This is amenable to the fact that they don't understand well the service provided, sometimes there is also a bit of discouragement, they don't understand the utility of an interview, the Internet site is not clear...they don't understand how the service could be useful.'

Case-worker 6

'I think that there is an effort to give a practical meaning to what is written in the documents, [...] I think that the goal is to integrate services written in the documents. A person who comes here..we don't consider her in a negative way, we don't want to see the obligation, we see the opportunity.'

Case-worker 3

As regards the way in which unemployed data are handled, the system is recognized to be not integrated at all between national, regional, provincial and municipal levels. Data are not shared in an effective way and the national big data center called *Borsa nazionale del lavoro*, established in 2007 by Biagi reform of labor market, is still not completed. To conclude, fragmentation does not involve just institutions and organizations, but also the informational matching system between job supply and demand.

'I hope that the system will become more integrated, I expect a unique system where all the informations will be shared across different systems [...].'

Case-worker 1

IV. People-processing from the point of view of long term unemployed individuals

A. Characteristics of interviewees

All the job-seekers interviewed, except one, are enrolled in a training course in the framework of the big project called *Ricollocami* dedicated to the rehabilitation of long-term unemployed. By consequence, it is important to underline that all interviewees have more or less the same professional background (mechanical design and drawing) and are all men, except for two women. All interviewees have a medium-high educational background (high school diploma or higher) in the field of technical drawing and planning. The majority of them are young adults (less than 35 old old), except for a mechanical engineer coming from Perù who is 52 years old. All of them have had in the past other professional experiences in their field of study, except for one girl who gained a university bachelor in Law and has still to enter officially in the labor market. The job-seekers live with their spouse or partners, except for the two youngest ones, respectively 28 and 29 years old, who live with their parents. Italian interviewees don't have other relevant social problems and it seems that, despite difficulties coming from long-term unemployment, family acts as sphere of protection against social exclusion providing support and economic help, when needed.

As for the two foreign interviewees, two mechanical engineers coming from Perù, the situation is slightly different. The older one, 52 years old, married with two children, since has arrived in Italy has never worked in his professional field, but has been offered only irregular, precarious jobs in the cleaning services. Despite the regularity of their documents, foreigners are much more excluded from the labor market than the Italians. Obviously, exclusion from the labor market might involve also social exclusion since foreigners have far less resources and instruments to use in the process of job search.

'I registered as unemployed in 2008 at Afol in San Donato⁵ and I left my Cv, but nobody called me back. I registered in 2008 after having lost my previous job [...]. When I saw this opportunity to enroll in a training activity inherent to my professional field, I sent my Cv.'

User 6

Among all interviewees, unemployment emerges as a relevant social issue. The youngsters are usually attributing their status to general economic situation and bad political administration, not to personal wrong choices or deficiencies. Interviewees claim also the fact that information provided on MCA services and opportunity is insufficient. All of them, complain also about the bad functioning of temporary work agencies.

⁵ Municipality belonging to the Province of Milano, where the job-seeker lives.

'In general the State (is the responsible, ndr) considering all the political array, honestly you cannot expect in a young future if legislators are over-sixty year old. [...] Nobody thought about taking in charge a young person in order to train him/her, they always want to dwell the working period for people already in the labor market because it is less costly respect to train a new and young worker. All these aspects were determinant, there would not be such a level of youth unemployment.'

User 2

'I don't feel responsible for my personal situation, all these agencies that come out from the blue and close...it's pure economic interest, they exploit people and, at the end, they leave you at home. [...].'

User 3

Other users, attribute responsibility for unemployment to employers' dishonesty.

'I worked an entire year thinking I was working with serious people, but at the end...ah...never mind.'

User 5

'If I have to blame something to myself...it is the fact to have counted too much in my capabilities, but, in reality, if the employer wants to fire you, he just does it.'

User 2

Unemployed people arrive to MCA mainly by word of mouth because friends or family told them or because dismissed employees need to open the procedure of *mobilità* and register at CPI.

'Talking with other people, they told me to come at Milan-city Afol and to register at CPI (Centro per l'Impiego). In September 2009, I came here and I enrolled for the first time at "collocamento", I went by person to see how the situation was, they told me to declare my availability to work because I had an undeclared job. So, officially, I am unemployed since 2009.'

User 3

Expectations about services, financial support and treatment are very low or inexistent. Unemployed people interviewed are discouraged and disenchanted about the possibility to improve their situation through the help of MCA.

'The first time I arrived here, I remember the long queue and the lady at the desk looked at me and told me that I could have been her son, that I did not know how many guys like me were going there, but that I was different because I had already some working experience. After, I asked her if they would find me a job, but I told that as a joke, because I already knew that [...] they would have never called me back. And they never called me back, till now.'

User 1

MCA has a well organized and clear Internet site, but only the youngest unemployed discovered the services offered by MCA by using Internet. The impression is that job-seekers are not aware of the range of services provided by MCA and, most of times, they consider it a mere office in which enroll in unemployment lists in order to receive benefits. As for active job search, temporary employment agencies are the first organizations to be contacted in case of unemployment even if the successive feedback is mostly negative. MCA is considered a public office and not yet a place in which activation, career guidance and training are provided.

'About three years ago I came here and I enrolled in the unemployment lists and declared my availability to work. I came back in July this year and they told me: "it's you that have to look for a job." [...]. Since July I have never had any contact or information. A week ago, I received a letter with the invitation to this meeting. I have forgotten to be inscribed, I have never thought about that after the enrollment...I forgot the possibility to come here, ask and receive some indications...'

User 4

'Personally, I learnt not to expect too much, in the sense that I've learnt to live day by day, today you do this, tomorrow you do that, I don't stop and look for something special, I would be stupid to do that. I consider this experience just as something more to add in my Cv'

B. Reconstruction of encounters with PES and other organizations involved in implementation

Meetings at CPI (Centro per l'Impiego) and PAL (Politiche Attive per il Lavoro) offices are slightly different. The first, CPI, is not constituted by a unique office, but it is a big open space where people arrive and queue in order to enroll in the unemployment lists and declare their availability to work. The CPI open space contains 10 desks and welcomes about 300-400 persons each day. These meetings last about half an hour during which the case-worker asks the job-seeker questions about her current occupational status and her past professional experiences filling the fixed grid of questions in the online form 'Sintesi'. No psychological or attitudinal tests are provided, no individual services or needs are investigated at this stage. 'Sintesi' rebuilds the career of the job-seeker in an online format including only some information on the skills developed and on the desired characteristics of the future job.

Long-term unemployed interviewed recall that meeting in a negative way: fast, superficial and almost useless. Many users complain about long waiting queues and about the standardization of the service provided.

'The first meeting was terrible, I had no hope because, in practice, there was a long queue of desks, with single persons that made you sit down and asked you to describe your experiences while trying to fill in an attitudinal and professional profile [...]. Some of them were smart, as the ones who sit near me, but the one that talked to me was the worst. He was an idiot who asked me just a few questions and, in fact, I was wondering what he could have written in that profile, nothing in practice and he let me go very quickly, so that when I came back to AFOL, when I did the same thing with the girls here, it was the type of action I had to do back in the 2009, very detailed, well done, it had a sense, but the first meeting was a terrible experience.'

User 3

'There are big differences between the past and the present, the first time I came here my father helped me while I was queuing, I was a number, a human being with no name, I was not aware of what I was doing so I felt objectively a bit lost [...]. I filled in the forms, they did not explain anything to me, it happened many years ago and, for this reason I abandoned. I had no clue of what I've done, I had no idea of what they wrote on my profile. [...] I have never received any invitation till last week when I was convoked through the letter so I came here because I have nothing to lose.'

User 4

Meetings at PAL are recalled as much more positive than those at CPI. The content of meetings with PAL offices concerns the drawing up of individualized intervention plans through the document called PIP (Piano Intervento Personalizzato). Before starting an activation process, users are asked to take some psychological tests and they have to fill in many forms and documents. The objective of this preliminary phase is, for the case-workers, to understand their needs and competencies in order to provide the most targeted services as possible. The outcome of these meetings is usually a targeted plan of career guidance and training provided to the user according to her specific needs. Conditionality system is almost inexistent, users are obliged to attend classes, but there is not a real 'stick-carrot' system. Job-seekers don't have a large room for manoeuvre in determining the characteristics of the activation route: the range of services provided is limited and job-seekers just have the possibility to express some expectations about the outcome, but not any indication about the real content and modality of activation process. Differently from what happens at CPI, at this stage users become trustful and they rely a lot on case-workers' suggestions. Encounters at PAL usually cover the first part of an activation process and are finalized at determining what happens next to the user according to the requirements emerged (type of training provided, career guidance etc...).

'They submitted me some psychological testing and they gave me a feedback, according to some tables they had, after they asked me to describe myself in a detailed manner according to some parameters and, at the end, they verified if the two profiles emerging were matching. Afterwards, we revisited my curriculum, it was more or less ok, but it had not a sufficiently impacting graphical aspect, also content was not sufficient, because from the tests , other characteristics of mine came out that might be interesting for the sector in which I want to be employed. [...]. They made me the so called Book Profile [...].'

User 3

C. Assessment of everyday practice of policies in terms of impact on well-being, work prospects, participation in society

Users do not have a clear idea of what activation means. However, interviewed users assess in a very positive way the services they are provided during the activation process. Opinion on CPI and PAL are totally different. While encounters at CPI are evaluated negatively, meetings at PAL are considered useful and well organized. In their words, even case-workers' attitude changes slightly between the two services. By consequence, many users remember a first negative encounter occurred

in the past for the enrollment in unemployment lists and , at moment of the interview, when they have been already selected for an activation project, they underline the big difference between the first venue at CPI and the present experience with PAL officers. Street-level bureaucrats are, in the majority of cases, described as kind and gentle. In the case of activation services, the relationship between case-workers and users plays a fundamental role in the overall assessment of the process. Because of users' discouraged attitude, most of times, case-workers have to convince them that entering an activation project will be useful for them. Usually, it is after the very first meeting with PAL case-workers, that users change their idea on public employment services and become a bit more trustful. Each case-worker is assigned a user and has to act as a tutor monitoring all the steps of the project. Despite the positive feedback, users, when asked in which way, according to their opinion, the service could be improved, claim for more individualized services. Users' attitude, however, is still very far from the consciousness about the importance of individual activation in order to become employable. The focus is still on employment, they want to be urgently given a job, no matter which kind of. They rarely make a statement about employability or activation.

'According to my opinion, each job-seeker should have a kind of tutor who takes charge of a person who is a society outcast, because he stays at home with his parents doing nothing all day long. This tutor may push him to look for a job or create a job, even the most trivial one [...]. It is possible to create some jobs, because there are some jobs that nobody wants to do. [...].'

User 2

'I wonder why after all this time, I received a letter, just a week ago. I feel always abandoned. [...]. Today from the meeting, I think, it was clear that by this time it's up to you...you have to activate yourself through various channels [...]. I think the service improved...but from this moment I will start to act because I care about the present and not the past. I'll try to recover the time I've lost hoping that everything will be alright.'

User 4

V. Conclusion

A. Discrepancies between the way policies are planned with their implementation

Policies in Italy are implemented in a very fragmented way. Discrepancies and fragmentation between different governance levels are common and in the case of MCA it comes clear. The process of unemployed people's activation is still too fragmented in every-day practice: this fragmentation is evident in the case-study even looking at the organizational structure. As a matter of fact the first steps of unemployment registration are separated markedly from the stage of activation. Users suffer from this segmentation and usually complain about the high level of standardization of the first stage when they arrive at MCA to register and declare their availability to work. As regards activation process, public employment agencies have very thin room of manoeuvre in determining which categories should be targeted. Programs are framed at regional or provincial level and the targets are often already decided at that level. Implementation is sometimes made difficult because of this separation with projects' planning phase. There also evidence of a low level of external information about what MCA is and what kind of action it provides to users. This agency is still considered a mere public office where an unemployed person must go in order to obtain bureaucratic certifications. A relevant discrepancy emerged between the image case-workers think to give to users and the real perception they have. Informational leaflets, internet sites and other channels of communication are present and well updated, but there seems to be a problem in effectively reaching users that often arrive at MCA after having visited a lot of temporary work agencies. We noticed that an important process of reorganization is ongoing at MCA in order to link together registration and activation in a unique process in which the user is made responsible for her rehabilitation in the labor market. Users, especially the youngsters, are starting to understand the importance and the meaning of 'being employable' rather than 'being employed'. It is also important to add the fact that there are not specific channels for long-term unemployed. Targeted categories change according to the projects activated each year. The organizational criteria of employment social policies is not tied to the duration of unemployment status, but to socio-demographic background characteristics (gender, age, type of dismissal, level of educational attainment).

B. Effects of policies on well being and social inclusion of vulnerable individuals

Users feel a bit more trustful after being included in a project of activation. Interviewed people feel to have passed successfully a process of screening and selection, they feel lucky to be given this opportunity. Activation programs are not available for every user, but just for a minority that paradoxically is the least vulnerable: in fact, often projects are designed in a way that excludes people who might present the highest difficulties in being transformed into employable individuals. In the

case of the project *Ricollocami*, for example, users were selected among those having already a medium-high level of education and professional experience in a very specialized sector (mechanical design). In this way, it is easy to create vicious circles: project exclude most difficult individuals that, by consequence, remain excluded from the labor market and become more and more vulnerable. Individual involvement in the activation process requires some basic skills and instruments (writing and speaking skills, Internet connection etc...) that are not available for large shares of population (over 50, immigrants, people with mental or physical disabilities). To sum up, activation projects are sometimes, paradoxically, an instrument of further exclusion themselves: certain vulnerable categories remain at very high risk of exclusion caused by a prolonged persistence outside the labor market.

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LOCALISE

The Local Governance of Social Cohesion

**WP7 The Impact of an Integrated Approach
to Social Cohesion
Poland Country Analysis**

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I. INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

A. Description of the local entity

The case study was conducted in a city X (LAU 1), which is situated in a sub-region (NUTS3) with relatively good economic situation, compared to average economic unemployment rates in Poland and regional GDP figures, yet lately deteriorating during economic crisis. City X has a specific administrative status¹, what makes inter-sectoral cooperation easier. Contrary to most territorial units in Poland, it fulfils simultaneously functions in the respect of both labour market policy and social assistance. Other relatively advantageous characteristics for policies' development and delivery are the strong public support for local government and trust between main institutions resulting from long-lasting cooperation (Mandes 2013: 7, 11).

However, despite all these local specificities, this case study of 'policy in practice' gives insight into peculiarities of the Polish welfare system as a whole. It demonstrates typical work organisation and practices of frontline staff in response to constraints such as lack of adequate resources, uncertainty of future funding, heavy caseload, sectoralisation of policies. All those factors are crucial in terms of evaluating the influence of social and employment policy on social inclusion and well-being of the vulnerable groups.

B. How local governance structure and organisational arrangements translate into people-processing

Due to a low level of income support, long-term unemployed run the risk of poverty and are financially dependent from their families. Heavy caseload in Public Employment Services and in social assistance² as well as uncertain financial resources for activation make difficult preventive actions, individualised case-management and tailoring services.

In accordance with national law people-processing is fragmented between two public organisations that provide support to the long-term unemployed:

- PUP (i.e. Public Employment Services in Poland, pl. *Powiatowy Urząd Pracy*), when it comes to passive (PLMPs) and active labour market policies (ALMPs).
- MOPR (i.e. social assistance organisation for, among others, the unemployed people, pl. *Miejski Ośrodek Pomocy Rodzinie*) as regards the problem of poverty and other social problems.

Despite the fact that PUP and MOPR share many clients – because being registered as unemployed is one of the conditions of access to social assistance – there are no permanent collaborative structures between two offices and interaction between their frontline staff is limited. The main tool of coordination between offices is an electronic platform that enables social workers to have access into personal records of the unemployed that are kept in PUP's IT called *Syriusz*. The access to information is one way, i.e. PUP workers cannot see MOPR files. This coordination limited to data transfer translates into increased control of clients, while potentially beneficial effects of integration of services are lacking. City officials initiated a pilot project aiming at creation of cooperation standards, but the project hasn't started yet [PES SLB5].

¹ X is a city with powiat rights' (pl. *miasto na prawach powiatu*). Similar to other 64 cities in Poland, it combines these two local territorial levels (*powiat* and *gmina*) in one. It means that both PES and social assistance are part of the same municipal administration, which is a factor facilitating cooperation.

² There are 631 unemployed per one job placement agent and this proportion is 1184:1 in case of vocational counsellors, while social workers are assigned approximately 100 families.

C. Methodology

The report is based on two types of methods (see annex, for details on data) : 1) in-depth interviews (IDIs) with long-term unemployed³ (11 IDIs), street-level bureaucrats working with this target group (9 IDIs); 2) documentary analysis. We have interviewed frontline staff employed from: PUP, MOPR and one non-governmental organisation. Additionally, we analysed tools used during processing of unemployed by frontline staff (e.g. individual action plan, electronic records in Syriusz, etc.). Moreover, we have conducted secondary analysis of data collected in the frame of WP2 and WP4. It includes: 1) 12 IDIs with local government officials and managers of key institutions responsible for the labour market policy and social assistance and 2) national acts and local strategic documents.

Several stipulations have to be made. Due to the fact that our analysis is based mainly on interviews, we will be able to provide only a brief account of numerous encounters of the long term unemployed with employment and welfare organisations and their discontinuous professional career. Second of all, few interviewees lack linguistic skills, which makes communicating their experiences difficult, when they are dealing with an 'outsider' not intimately familiar with their social environment. They seem to operate a 'restricted code' – to use Basil Bernstein's notion. Even with an active role of interviewer, their accounts lack chronological order, names of activation instruments and are full of spatial references that reflect where a person went without necessarily telling what for (e.g. names of streets, location of offices – e.g. 'down' versus 'up', etc.) [UNEMPL9, 11]. This empirical material poses challenges not only for a purpose of reconstruction of the unemployed institutional path (e.g. with what kind of workers a person met, when, in which programmes s/he participated in, etc.), but also for the analysis of their experiences, which they have difficult to voice. However, perception and communication problems are information valuable *per se*: making us realise difficulties such a person might encounter when dealing with public institutions and talking with employers. Finally, we are aware that descriptions of life problems we will provide in this report are also based on "categorisations" that originate not necessarily from the accounts of interviewees' themselves, but from sociological and economical literature, which might be regarded as a form of symbolic domination similar to the one performed by public institutions when they classify their clients (Dubois, 2009).

II. ACTIVATION OF LONG TERM UNEMPLOYED FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF POLICY MAKERS

A. How policy-makers plan the typical processing of long term unemployed in local organisations involved in activation

Despite the fact that formally PUP and MOPR have been a part of local administration for a long time, LMP and social policy are considerably standardised by national legal acts. Policy instruments, target groups, electronic data basis at disposal of frontline staff as well as standards of services are centrally defined. Local officials and managers of key institutions responsible for local policy planning have little sense of agency as regards these policies. They define their role primordially as implementation of national law. They don't think that it is locally possible to plan activation of vulnerable groups, such as the long-term unemployed. The fact that it is a citizen's responsibility to find his/her way through public institutions is taken for granted.

According to them, PUP should be, first and foremost, an institution strictly implementing the law: *'we cannot step out from the law, we are public institution (...) therefore we have to stick to it'* [PM4]. When asked about what they would like to do outside the legal framework, the manager's response was that first they need to get funds. In other words, the way of thinking in terms of financial transfer prevails and little attention is paid to impact of organisational arrangements on people-processing.

³ According to the national administrative criteria, long term unemployed are people, who were registered in PUP for more than 12 months during the last 2 years (excluding duration of being participant of apprenticeship, if relevant) (2004).

City has a little margin for manoeuvre when it comes to financial aspect of ALMPs. Funds for this purpose come mainly from central Labour Fund (pl *Fundusz Pracy*, FP) and European Social Fund (ESF) (which is calculated as a part of FP) and can be used uniquely for legally defined instruments. Approximately half of the money has to be spent in accordance with national and regional priorities, which define specific target groups (in 2012: unemployed aged less than 25 years old or more than 50, the disabled). Moreover, policy-makers emphasise their limited impact on economic processes: *'we have no influence on an increase of employment, it is the side of employers'* [PM4]. Financial constraints are also problematic in case of social assistance. However, as this area is mainly financed from the local budget, there is more flexibility and space for political decision-making on its division.

For policy-makers and PUP management, it is also important to obtain declared results of *'employment efficiency'* [PM3]. It is calculated as a percentage of participants of ALMPs (except job placement and vocational counselling), who find employment during 3 months after the end of programme. Since indicator does not pay attention to socioeconomic characteristics of participants, it encourages "creaming and parking". In theory, if PUP does not achieve what was promised, it might lead to financial consequences. However, so far there was never a risk that the declared level of indicators would not be obtained.

1) Public Employment Services (PUP)

PUP's tasks consist of implementation of both passive (PLMPs) and active labour market policies (ALMPs). PLMPs are very residual and in case of long-term unemployed practically limited to the healthcare insurance⁴. This link between health and labour market policies is criticised, because it creates incentives for registration as unemployed for people, who seek access to healthcare and not necessarily employment, which makes difficult their activation.

ALMPs are implemented by Occupational Activation Centre (pl. Centrum Aktywizacji Zawodowej, CAZ), which is a distinct unit of PUP created in 2009 in order to meet national standards of services and place activation personnel in direct contact with clients in one place. According to a "Municipal programme of employment promotion and activation of local labour market till 2020", intensive works on improvement of its functionality finished by the end of 2010. It regroups all frontline staff responsible for job placement, vocational counselling, job search and vocational training. Its staff also selects the unemployed (or refers them to employers, who perform the final selection on their own) for the purpose of other ALMPs such as apprenticeships and various forms of subsidised employment.

Unemployed, who nowadays register for the first time have information meeting about PUP services. Then job placement agents are the only workers having regular, but rare (once per 3 or 4 months), obligatory meetings with all the unemployed. Job placement agents verify if there are 'suitable' job offers (subsidised or not) and apprenticeships (for legal definition of 'suitable' job, see box below). They also play a diagnostic role, because when their *'intuition'* tells them [PES SLB4], they decide whether a person needs a meeting with other workers (vocational counsellor and job club leader) or s/he needs more detailed information on training. Unemployed might also see those other workers on their own, but not all of them are aware of it.

⁴ Health insurance means mainly a right to see a doctor without paying for visit or a right of being hospitalised or having medical treatment (in all cases waiting time might be long) and not necessarily refunds of medications (a list of refundable medications is precisely defined).

Box 1: Legal Definition of 'suitable employment'

Suitable employment is defined according to the following criteria:

- Employment or remunerated work, subject to payment of social contributions;
- Unemployed person possesses sufficient qualifications and professional experience to perform the job, or will be able to perform it after training;
- Her health condition makes it possible to perform the job;
- Journey to work and back home does not exceed 3 hours and can be made by means of public transport.
- The gross income should equal at least the national minimum wage, if it is a full-time job (or should be calculated proportionally to the time of work).

Source: "Act on employment promotion and labour market institutions" from 2004 with further amendments.

Vocational counsellors provide assistance in career planning and motivational support through individual and group counselling. They have also several additional responsibilities such as signing individual action plans or assessing people who apply for other types of ALMPs. Psychological support and providing information is also a task of job club leaders. They conduct information meeting for newly registered unemployed about available services, training for people who face multiple barriers and thematic sessions on a broad range of subjects.

Summing up, despite the creation of CAZ, the clients' path in PUP is far from standardised as regards both types of services proposed to the (long-term) unemployed and time frame of intervention (for more, see section III B).

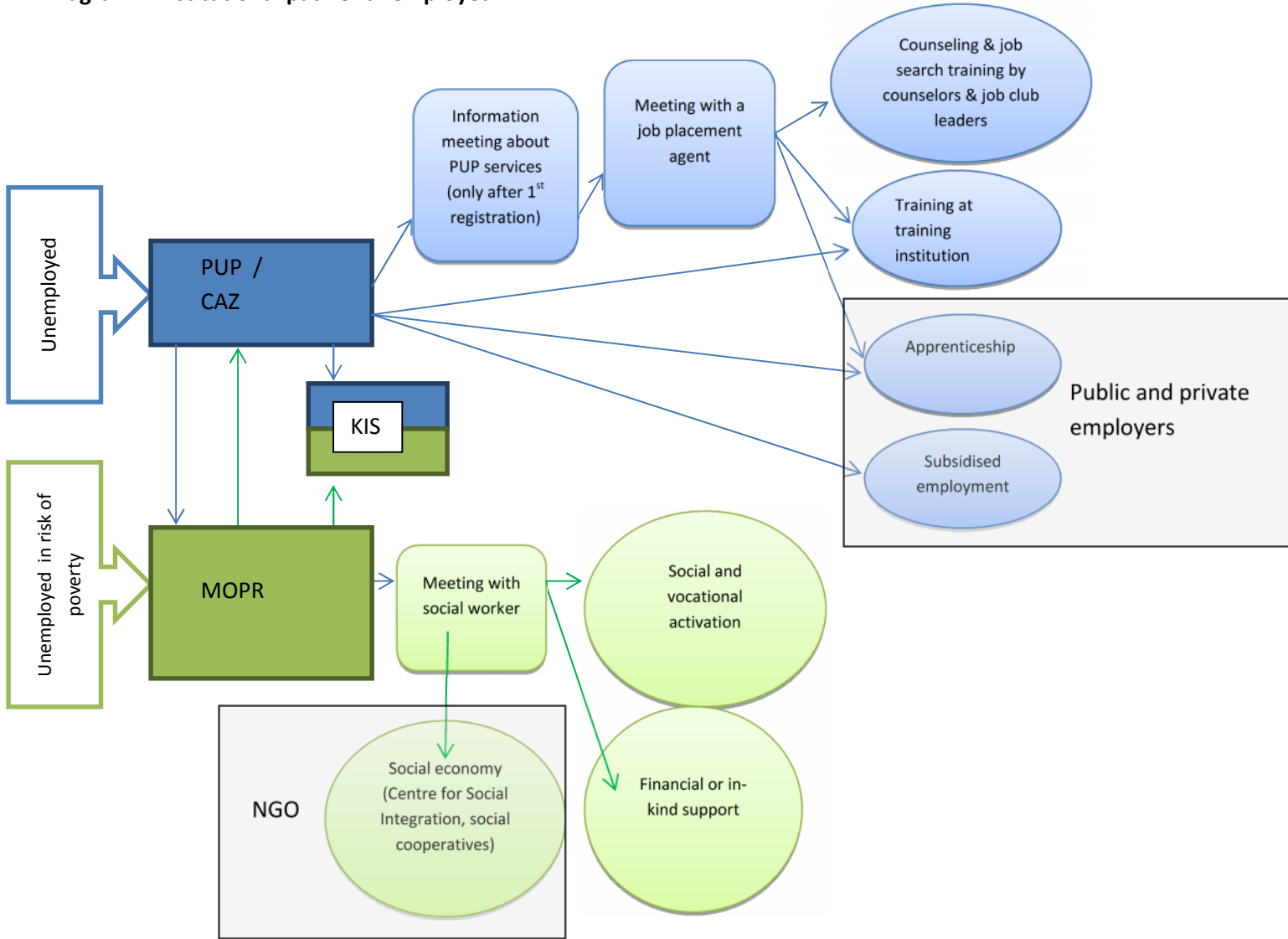
2) Social Assistance Centres (MOPR)

In result of X special administrative status MOPR carries out tasks usually assigned to two different administrative levels: it provides social assistance for various target groups and fulfils responsibilities, in the respect of family allowances and services for disabled. MOPR also has a department of crisis intervention and provides specialist counselling. It organises as well social and vocational activation programmes. Together with job placement agents and vocational counsellors from PUP, MOPR also conducts Club for Social Integration (pl. Klub Integracji Społecznej, KIS) for, among others, inhabitants of two revitalised districts. The interviewed long-term unemployed mostly used means-tested temporary and family benefits, in-kind support (meals for children, coal) as well as benefited from counselling and training.

Social workers are organised into district branches and each of them is assigned a number of families living in the neighbourhood. According to local policy-makers they play a role of '*institutions of first contact*', that diagnose problem and direct people further: '*institutions that operate in a place of living these people, so the first contact that enables a sort of analysis, diagnosis*' [PM5]. MOPR frontline staff often works with '*clients*' and '*chargees*'⁵ (pl. *podopieczny*) – as they call service users – who are in fact economically inactive, in risk of poverty and social exclusion. They demand from them to register in PUP as unemployed, since the unemployment is one of the entitlement criteria to social assistance and also for financial reasons (healthcare insurance is then paid from FP instead of municipal budget). The other obligatory criterion is low income of household members (see table below).

⁵ A word '*podopieczny*' (here translated as 'chargee') originates from '*pod opieką*', meaning "in somebody's care", "in somebody's keeping", "in somebody's charge". This naming suggests a close, personal but visibly hierarchical and paternalist relationship. When it comes to the PUP staff, they don't use one specific term to denote people, who come to the office: they talk about them as '*unemployed*', '*clients*', '*cases*' or simply '*people*' or '*persons*'. Compared to other Polish PES they rarely use a wide-spread term "*claimant*" [pl. *interesant, petent*]. The latter one has either negative or neutral connotation. It means a person, who comes and wants something from the administration and who is in a subordinate position.

Diagram 1 Institutional path of unemployed



Social workers working directly with families decide on which legally defined instruments use in an individual case: *'such a person must find her way to a social worker and, in principle, this is a social worker, who has all these instruments at his disposal such as finances, counselling, Club of Social Integration, other institutions like Labour Office, etc. He manages these resources and uses them. And when he sees that there is a person who is long and permanently unemployed, that there is a need to do something, because she reached a state that she is economically inactive, socially and she becomes self-excluded [pl. wycofana – K.S.S.], so then he proposes: "I have such an offer, please use it'. [PM6].* In other words, there are no standards how to work with (long-term) unemployed as regards type of instruments, order of actions and time frame. Moreover, instead of preventive measures interventions seem to be implemented when problems have already accumulated.

Box 2: Entitlement criteria to social assistance

A person can benefit from social assistance if s/he meet income threshold as well as one of the following *'dysfunctions'* concerns him/her, among others: unemployment, homelessness, disability, severe illness, family violence, substance abuse, helplessness as regards upbringing children and taking care of household in particular in single parent families and families with many children.

The legal threshold qualifying for financial assistance is almost the same as the absolute poverty line (counted as income necessary to survive biologically) and much below the relative poverty line (counted as 50% of average wage) (GUS, 2013). It equals:

- approx. 131 €⁶ (542 PLN) for a person living alone
- approx. 110 € (456 PLN) for a person living with other people.

Minimal temporary allowance equals 50% of the difference between threshold and the total income. Municipalities have right to increase this amount, but as rarely use this prerogative. City X is no different in this respect. The average monthly temporary allowance in Poland was approximately 62 € per an unemployed person in 2011 (274 PLN) (MPiPS)⁷.

3) Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs)

Third group of institutions that provide support for the unemployed are NGOs. In city X they mostly focus on various social problems and provide therapeutic services. They are complementary to MOPR activities. There is one NGO that stands out: it treats social and vocational activation as main goal and provides various services qualified as *'social economy'*. For instance it runs Centre for Social Integration for vulnerable groups, including long-term unemployed, which is a sort of subsidised employment in this case accompanied by – among others – individual and group counselling and support in job search. It also provides counselling for people interested by starting social cooperatives, which are form of support for people in risk of social exclusion (long-term unemployed are included).

To summarise, a long-term unemployed person searching for a solution for various life problems deals with fragmented policies and it is individual responsibility to find her or his way through public organisations. Income replacement and activation is carried out simultaneously by Public Employment Services (i.e. PUP) and social assistance (i.e. MOPR). They focus on employment, training, social assistance and – in extreme cases – housing, while childcare and health problems are not so much taken into account. Legal acts and strategic documents define, among others, the eligibility criteria for income support and target groups of activation measures. Together with financial constraints, it is used as an explanation of lack of agency of local policy makers, while – in

⁶ All calculations (if not indicated otherwise) are made according to exchange rate of National Bank of Poland of 1st December 2013.

⁷ The calculation according to exchange rate of National Bank of Poland in the end of 2011.

fact – individual path inside these two organisations seems to depend to an important respect on discretion of street-level bureaucrats.

B. How local policy-makers evaluate the impact of social and employment policies on the social inclusion and well-being of the most vulnerable groups

We have a limited knowledge on this aspect, since it was not the focus of WP4 interviews. Therefore we will provide only few critical remarks of local policy makers and heads of public organisation concerning current policies' shape:

1. The link between health insurance and status of the unemployed creates incentives for registration as unemployed for people, who seek access to healthcare. It makes difficult work of frontline staff because they deal with a high number of people, who are neither interested in employment nor in activation.
2. Caseloads of frontline staff are too heavy and they have too much administrative responsibilities [PM4]. In consequence they have too little time to diagnose problems and implement activation measures.
3. There should be more focus on individual case management, counselling and long-term intervention, since activating vulnerable individuals demands changing their attitudes and basic life skills [PM12].
4. Formal criteria concerning activation programmes financed from ESF exclude possibility of second participation, which makes intervention short [PM4].
5. There are no criteria of verification of quality of training provided by training institutions that are commissioned by PUP and MOPR through public tenders [PM8].
6. It is difficult to implement activation and in particular longer measures such as apprenticeship due to budgetary annual cycles and uncertainty of future funding, in particular when money from FP are delayed.

Only one interviewee emphasised a need to develop measures [PM1] and integrate various policy fields: starting with early education and family policy.

III. PEOPLE-PROCESSING FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF STREET-LEVEL BUREAUCRATS

A. Diagnosis of life situation of long term unemployed by street-level bureaucrats

IT as tool of control and representation

A person who comes to PUP is made legible through documentation. At the registration desk an individual is obliged to present documents concerning mainly education and professional career, but also residence permit, medical certificate (if a s/he is not able to perform some jobs or has a disability certificate) or other documents in specific cases. S/he also provides additional information concerning a number of children or unemployment of her/his spouse [D1]. In principle, this information is then put into *Syriusz*, which is available for PUP frontline staff and also for social workers from MOPR.

Syriusz serves also as an instrument to classify a person in terms of administrative categories that have consequences for access to benefits and services. Some services – such as various forms subsidised employment or apprenticeship – are restricted for specific groups of the unemployed. The most important among them are so-called 'people in special situation in labour market' (for details see box 3). The long-term unemployed are part of this administrative category. However, this group is so broad (it covers approximately 90% of the unemployed (MPiPS, 2013: 3)) that it is hardly any targeting tool at all. Selected groups among persons 'in special situation in the labour market' have easier access to ALMPs, when PUP organises additional programmes financed from the ESF in accordance with national and regional priorities (in 2012 mainly: people aged less than 25, more than 50, the disabled).

Box 3: Vulnerable unemployed according to legal acts

A person is considered as being 'in a special situation in labour market' if s/he fulfils at least one of the following criteria:

- unemployed aged under 25 and over 50 years old,
- long term unemployed;
- unemployed women, who have not returned to work after a birth of their child;
- unemployed people without professional qualifications;
- single-parents;
- ex-prisoners;
- the disabled.

Introduction of IT has economised the processes of official categorisation, since it is automatically performed by the system after data input: *'This is really a sort of labelling people. Because here we know – now he has registered – and we have all information and now (...) job placement agent goes through it (...) And here it will come out, if it is a person in a 'special situation' [in the labour market – K.S.S.]. So it is already here, system sees it and detects it'* [PES SLB5].

Syriusz also contains data on a course of current and previous registrations, among others, time of registration, obligatory and not obligatory meetings in PUP, proposed job offers, reaction (acceptance, rejection) and result (employment or not), participation in ALMPs, reasons for deregistration (e.g. taking up employment, sanctions, etc.) [D3]. For this reason, it is used as a technology of representation of an individual: what actions she undertakes and what is her/his deservingness. It gives an immediate insight into "self" represented in temporal forms: not only educational and professional career, but also all contacts with PUP that might go several or several dozen years back. Central categories used to interpret traces of interactions with frontline staff from PUP and MOPR are intention to abuse system (e.g. when a person does not fulfil financial requirements for social assistance or s/he conceals certain information) and person's 'activity' and 'motivation'. Street-level bureaucrats pay attention, among others, to such manifestations of 'activity' recorded in the files as visits in PUP initiated by the unemployed and various attempts to deal with joblessness, no matter their final results.

Work routines

Despite creation of CAZ that regroups all frontline staff responsible for ALMPs, the office kept prior organisational structure, but put it into CAZ, which reproduced workers' routines (similar phenomenon in Polish PES, described in Sztandar-Sztanderska, forthcoming). Still three distinct departments form CAZ: Job Placement, Vocational counselling, Vocational Development. Their employees focus mostly on carrying out their specific tasks and their cooperation is of secondary importance.

Job placement agents

Contact with job placement agents in PUP resembles quick, massive and impersonal processing described in literature on street-level bureaucracy (Lipsky, 1980; Prottas, 1979). Job placement agent has between 30 and 50 clients to talk to a day, which makes time per one meeting short (maximum a dozen minutes per client) [PES SLB4]. In a crowded day, both staff and clients feel *'a pressure of crowd'* [PES SLB4]. This sensation is magnified by the spatial organisation of room: service posts are only partially sectioned off by a Plexiglas wall from the open space. Waiting people fill the open space in the middle of the room and if a meeting does not end quick, one can hear a murmur of discontent or unpleasant comments.

During the first meeting, job placement agent verifies if all relevant information was included during registration in a personal electronic record and asks about qualifications, work experience, circumstances of losing previous job, expectations concerning job offers. During next meetings s/he verifies if anything has changed. S/he asks whether a person was looking for an employment on his or her own, whether s/he finds any job or activation offer at PUP disposal interesting and so on. S/he does not initiate conversation on other than work-related issues and even if a person herself starts to talk about her private life, some frontline workers are rather reluctant to pursue this subject: *‘Some people open up, but I always wonder whether to go deeper. Conditions are as everybody sees. If it is like this [he indicates at the empty and quiet room that day – K.S.S.], then we can talk. But if there is one person standing on another, they peep into here, then it is a tough case. It happens that people have dilemmas, they cry, the despair is deep I must say. And then it is difficult sometimes to hold these people back’* [PES SLB5]. In such a case, a job placement agent might decide to appoint an obligatory meeting for this person with a job counsellor. These meetings are also usually appointed if a person lacks motivation, work experience, qualifications or there are other difficulties that demand a closer look. However, institutional path is far from standardised (the only obligatory steps, see table 4).

Box 4: Obligatory steps of the unemployed (without benefit entitlements) according to PUP staff

Time frame	Obligatory steps for all	Obligatory steps for unemployed who also belong to other <u>specific groups</u>
Approx. 7 days after registration*		Information meeting about services provided by PUP for <u>the unemployed registered for the first time</u>
Max. 30 days after registration	First meeting with a job placement agent	
Every 3 or 4 months (max. 120 days later)	Meeting with a job placement agent or with other staff if needed	
If registered 180 days continuously		Individual Action Plan for selected members of ‘people in special situation on labour market’: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>less than 25 years old</u> • <u>more than 50 years</u> • <u>without qualifications or experience</u> • <u>ex-prisoners</u>

* Contrary to other steps, this obligatory step is not a result of national standards, but is a specific solution adopted locally.

Vocational counsellors

Vocational counsellors have more comfortable working conditions, both in terms of time organisation (they appoint meetings for a specific hour and can sometimes devote one hour or so) and spatial organisation (they have single rooms securing privacy, but making them more vulnerable in cases of aggression [PES SLB6]). It is important to emphasise that not all clients have chance to meet them at all. Some of the unemployed find out about their existence after several months of registration.

According to street-level bureaucrats interviewees, what differs compared to a job placement agent is their method of work. Instead of demanding quick answers to standardised questions they conduct interviews, which give more space to narrate about life and employment problems. Interviewed

counsellors said that sensitive topics arise during such conversations and are discussed in detail: such as financial problems, family relations etc.

Counsellors keep two types of records: paper and electronic. Both of them are censored for a reason of protection of personal data, but to a different degree: *“Due to the act on protection of personal data, these are rather evasive information. You can find more in a [paper – K.S.S.] form, but much less that previously (...) we pay attention to include as little as possible (...) personal stuff, and in [electronic – K.S.S.] system even less”* [PUP SLB6]. Counsellor’s paper records include general information not only on employment related issues, but also clients’ socio-economic situation, health problems and family situation. Electronic records included in *Syriusz*, (and therefore accessible by other staff in PUP and social workers) contain exclusively very general and decontextualised information on the course of counselling.

Potential accessibility to *Syriusz* by other people change the way they work: *“it also influences our decisions concerning quantity and quality of information transferred. So I always try to think, that there is perhaps somebody who reads, what we write.”* [PES SLB6]. Consciousness of permanent visibility by an “anonymous power” (Foucault, 1998) together with a right of a client to access his/her files lead workers to depersonalise and generalise entries:

‘Vocational counsellor: *but I don’t know (...) who reads [it- K.S.S.]. So my information will always be very general.*

Researcher: *So what you said, things like social-economic factors [which are part of IPD will be included in Syriusz – K.S.S.]?*

Vocational counsellor: *No, absolutely not. No. Neither that Smith came to me drunk and that he always comes drunk’* [PES SLB6].

‘Vocational counsellor: *There are some things, that I note [in paper files], but I don’t want to and I can’t even put it to Syriusz (...). When somebody tells me something about an illness or family situation, so I think, that I shouldn’t share it (...) and, in fact, there are [unemployed – K.S.S.] persons, maybe not so many, that demands to print them Syriusz [file – K.S.S.], what was written in it [PES SLB2]’.*

Street-level bureaucrats censor all information, which they qualify as ‘private’, ‘intimate’, ‘confidential’, but also things that cannot be easily proven or something they have no professional authority to judge upon. For instance, they can write that a person has a light disability, if they have a document of confirmation, but they are not allowed to precise what kind of disability it is. Generalisation of entries makes difficult transfer of information necessary for activation to other members of staff. For the purpose of communication, entries are coded and deciphered by those who know the code. For instance, if they suspect that somebody has severe psychological problems and they want to warn other workers about it, the entry might say: *“difficult mental contact with client’* [PES SLB6].

Other workers, who have – even more intimate – knowledge of private issues are job club leaders, who work closely with the unemployed having multiple problems in the frame of 3 weeks’ job search training. The number of participants is limited to approximately 64 persons a year (divided into 4 groups per year). However, job club leaders choose not to write anything down in order to gain trust of clients and respect their right to privacy.

MOPR

Besides access to *Syriusz* files, social workers have their own way of collecting information. Contrary to PUP workers they do not have to rely only on clients’ documents and declarations, but they also have access to their homes, where ‘*environmental interviews*’ are conducted and they usually also talk to their neighbours. In case of social assistance worker-client relations are of different nature

due to a character of social work and a repetitive contact with all families in their environment over a longer period of time that might even reach several years.

B. Activation: addressing problems of long term unemployed

One has to remember that in PUP X as well as other PES in Poland (Sztandar-Sztanderska, forthcoming), the work of frontline staff is not centred around individual unemployed. Rather than practising case management, they carry out their specific tasks separately with little coordination. Even if they manage to diagnose problems of a vulnerable individual and share it with other workers responsible for further steps, this knowledge does not translate into intervention. As one of our interviewees summed it up: *'if we would like to do this properly, then it should be done from the other side. It should start from the unemployed person. This person needs something and we are looking for a post of apprenticeship for her. Not the other way round. So we actually assign people to posts and not posts to people'* [PES SLB5]. In other words, individual must fit in the current PUP offer and this offer is not prepared to fit concrete people. While individualisation understood as tailoring services would demand not only modification of legal framework and working conditions, but also different work organisation and change of staff's practices. We will provide details on the this subject.

Job placement agent's role limits to checking if there are 'suitable' job offers (subsidised or not) and apprenticeships already in the PUP's catalogue during a meeting (for legal definition of 'suitable' job, see box below). When they contact employers and look for vacancies, they don't do it having in mind individual clients. If there is such an offer, a worker may issue a formal referral and a person is obliged to go to the employer. However, workers usually take into account individual preferences and don't force anybody: *'I don't send people [to employers – K.S.S.] by force, I don't like to do this, even though I have means. I hate to do this, because it has the opposite effect. A moment later I have a call from the employer: who have you referred to us? Employers turn their back on us. They don't inform us about [new job – K.S.S.] offers, because they don't want to deal with people, who come just to get the stamp [on the document of referral confirming that a person actually met the employer – K.S.S.]. So there is such a possibility to refer [by force- K.S.S.], but it is not the point'* [PES SLB4].

Usually job placement agents decide to send maximum 7 people per one offer a day to avoid imposing costs on the unemployed, if their chances are small and to save them unnecessary disappointment [PES SLB5]. It means that job offers are available on a first come, first served basis for these who obtain information only from PUP staff. Usually it is also possible to find employers' contact details on the webpage and a information board in the premises of PUP. However, the rule the faster, the better applies to apprenticeships and subsidised employment offers (not announced elsewhere), which are at the job placement agent disposal.

Other workers such as vocational counsellor or job club leader (provided that an unemployed meets them) might diagnose better his or her problems, but their professional role limits to their own responsibilities (counselling talks, short thematic sessions, job search workshops). To demonstrate it, we will provide an example of Individual action plan prepared by vocational counsellor (IPD). IPD was introduced as an instrument that aims to diagnose barriers to labour market entry and group together various ALMPs. It should enumerate what actions will be undertaken by the unemployed person herself and what actions might be undertaken by PUP within a fixed time frame. The idea behind is generally accepted by frontline staff: *'the idea is great. Because [IPD – K.S.S.] (...) assumes close cooperation of all departments, most of departments of Labour Office. It brings together work for a client's good – so to say. Dates are being fixed, period of implementation, the conception is ideal'* [PES SLB6]. However, its feasibility is contested. A job counsellor preparing IPD cannot make any promises about services a person will have access to. She cannot also verify if a person redeems what she had promised to do. We will provide longer excerpts of interview with counsellors for illustration:

'De facto it does not have the character of contract. Surely this was its intent. However in such a big (...) office (...) we are not able to implement it as a contract. As far as we can [formally – K.S.S.] oblige a person to take up concrete actions, we have no opportunity to enforce these actions and vice versa. If I indicate in Individual Action plan that (...) the most suitable form of support for her is an apprenticeship, then she should do it. Unfortunately, it is incredibly difficult to carry it out due to a number of the unemployed, due to the resources we have at our disposal, due to such a complicated structure' [PES SLB6].

'It is difficult to stick to [what is planned in IPD – K.S.S.], because I can have in control my calendar, my work (...) and group counselling, actions that are carried out in my department. However, when it comes to the implementation of apprenticeships or other forms [of ALMP – K.S.S.], funds come into play. And their implementation depends on their availability. So I often don't know when something will be implemented, when there will be such an opportunity (...) Maybe if the resources for concrete labour market instruments were always available, maybe this task [of IPD – K.S.S.] would look completely different. But at the moment we get money in tranches, all actions are implemented according to their schedules, in stages. So I often don't know, when it will be implemented, when it will be possible (...) So I guess what makes implementation difficult is this unavailability, this lack of financial fluidity when it comes to delivery, not what counsellor or job placement agent do, but delivery of labour market instruments' [PES SLB6].

In other words, lack of possibility of long-term planning due to uncertainty of resources for ALMP and defragmented organisational structure make uses of IPD superficial. Frontline staff signs it to obey to law, but it does not change their practices [PES SLB2, 4, 6].

The unemployed, who want to participate in ALMPs (other than job placement, vocational counselling or job search workshops), have to incur hidden costs of so-called 'free' services (Prottas, 1979). It involves:

- checking (online or in person) ALMPs offers in order not to miss the interesting ones the moment they become available. PUP staff rather do not inform on their own initiative about new offers in between rare appointments (phenomenon observed in: Sztandar-Sztanderska, forthcoming) [PES SLB4],
- waiting in an extremely long queue to get an obligatory summon from job placement agent in case of apprenticeships and subsidised employment the day the offer becomes publicly available [PES SLB4],
- filling in an application form for training, business start up or project financed from ESF in a way that demonstrates they know the labour market and persuade that their chances for employment are high (or even finding potential employer eager to certify that will employ them in case of more expensive training or guarantor of a loan in case of business start-up subsidies) etc. [PES SLB1, 2, 3] (phenomenon observed in: Sztandar-Sztanderska, forthcoming).

To sum up this work organisation is neither oriented at taking into account individual expectations, nor at performing conditionality. Due to uncertainty of resources and defragmented organisational structure staff is reluctant to force anybody to do something, because they don't want to waste money and effort on somebody, who does not deserve it, but – on the other hand – they define their role so narrowly that they treat themselves as responsible for their own actions and not all PUP's activities as a whole.

In case of MOPR there is one social worker assigned to each family, however his/her role is focused on evaluation of entitlements. There is not enough time and resources left for social work and activation (more on this subject, part C)

C. Overall assessment of activation system of long term unemployed by street-level bureaucrats

PUP frontline staff identify several constraints that makes difficult activation of vulnerable individuals.

First of all, legal regulations define available instruments. It means that nobody in PUP has decision-making power to use other measures, even though they might be crucial for finding or keeping employment⁸. For these reasons, frontline staff cannot deal with various manifestations of 'poverty trap'. For instance, our interviewees observed such barriers as repugnant physical appearance or poor health condition:

"First of all, I would replace them all [missing – K.S.S.] teeth (...). I can talk a lot about motivation, opportunities, but if somebody lacks central incisors... there is no point, isn't it? [PES SLB1]".

There is no cooperation in this respect with social assistance, which theoretically might use special allowances for this purpose (pl. *zasitek celowy*). Even if it was, there would probably be no money for that purpose. According to long-term unemployed interviewed in this study, they currently receive financial and in-kind support that is sometimes not sufficient for basic needs, such as food, clothes, rent.

Second of all, street-level bureaucrats having more personal contact with the vulnerable unemployed complain about a lack of '*intermediary instruments*', making possible a '*rehabilitation*' [PES SLB1]. By which they refer to tools that will enable to continue activation process in a longer perspective for those, who have to change a lot in their life before entering labour market. Three weeks of job club training or monthly sessions with a counsellor are not enough for them to make them ready for contact with employer. Meanwhile, they are left on their own with job search: '*They actually start to believe that they are capable of finding a job, they visit employers, go... And we see this person uplifted... And later after 3 months she comes back and says: I went to a number of companies, I submitted so many applications (...) And motivation goes down, very often a person starts to feel low. So sometimes we wonder, that this boosting up of their self-confidence and then this drop...'* [PES SLB2]. Without continuation of support, the effect might be contrary to intentions. The same problem concerns activation programmes carried out by MOPR: '*projects are too short for me (...) you should work for a very long time with such a person, who is for a long time embedded in something (...). If this situation lasts for long, then it is not possible to change it in three months. We shouldn't deceive ourselves, three months project won't change anything. Even if with, by force, put into employment, for instance we will fix him employment, but he is not mentally ready, than he will probably lose this job* [MOPR SLB6].

Moreover, caseload is too heavy (for data, see table 3) and resources for ALMP too scarce in order to systematically adapt services to the unemployed needs. As we already described, frontline staff rather impose costs on the clients of so-called 'free services' and in this way they ration access to scarce resources (Lipsky, 1980; Prottas, 1979).

Additionally, job club leader observed also that people, who participated in her workshops, who are '*still so distant from labour market*' yet motivated have smaller chances in the competition with other unemployed to participate in ALMPs. Exceptions are rare: during collective assessment of candidates a vocational counsellor might try to argument in favour of one vulnerable unemployed person coming from '*pathological family*', while other candidates will be probably selected according

⁸ With the exception of finding other funds for this purpose, which is very rare, because local authorities are either not able or not eager to finance it.

to their chances of finding employment. This dilemma between equity and efficiency is often pronounced [PES SLB 1, 2]. This subject appears in the context of future reforms of Polish PES, which will increase impact of indicators measuring quick employment and will decrease a room for taking into account precarious life circumstances [PES SLB2]. At present, some indicators exist and are taken into account during frontline staff assessment in PUP under study. However, they haven't played important role so far. On the other hand, difficult life situation together with motivation might be a factor facilitating access in case of MOPR activation programmes.

Similarly to other Polish PES, during years of decrease of funds on ALMPs these above-mentioned organisational solutions work in favour people having certain skills (e.g. writing application, persuading employer) and resources (e.g. access to Internet, money for bus ticket), advantageous life situation and time (e.g. having vs. not having care responsibilities) (Sztandar-Sztanderska, forthcoming). They are often unequally distributed, which leads to 'creaming and parking' or even 'social reproduction' to use more sociological terms (ibid.).

When it comes to the assessment of methods of work with vulnerable individuals, compulsion seem not to be effective, since it leads to a superficial compliance. According to vocational counsellor, job club leader and social workers successful intervention starts with an individual himself/herself deciding what should be done. The idea behind is to change the participants themselves with mostly their own individual or collective resources.

IV. PEOPLE-PROCESSING FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF THE LONG TERM UNEMPLOYED

A. Characteristics of interviewees

Types and sources of life problems

The interviewed clients revealed to be a heterogeneous group: when it comes, among others, to the unemployment spell, risk of poverty, family situation, health condition, professional experience, other life problems as well as basic socio-demographic characteristics (age, gender, education level).

However, most of them have socio-demographic characteristics that make them vulnerable at the labour market. We might characterise them as 'outsiders' at the labour market compared to 'insiders', i.e. mainly well educated men in the middle of their professional career with stable working conditions (open-ended labour contract). Interviewed people are vulnerable due to, among others:

- their age: most of them are either still facing problems typical for the beginning [e.g. UNEMPL 4, 5] or to the end of their professional career [e.g. UNEMPL7, 12].
- relatively low level of formal education: only one person has higher education [UNEMPL5] (but she is a typical example of a new entrant to labour market without any professional experience at all) while education level of others ranges from primary [UNEMPL 6, 9, 11] to vocational or general secondary education. However, even these basic qualifications are usually outdated, because in most cases they were obtained a long time ago.
- gender: women prevail among our interviewees and many of them experienced longer breaks in professional career due to a household division of labour combined with a poorly developed childcare infrastructure and discriminatory practices of employers towards mothers.
- duration or type of work experience: there are people among our interviewees, who have had none or short work experience [UNEMPL4, 5], performed mainly simple physical tasks [UNEMPL7, 9] or worked dozen or several dozen years in one company [e.g. UNEMPL 1,3], which makes it difficult to find job elsewhere.

Most of the interviewees have experienced various forms of precariousness at labour market, ranging from delayed payment of salary [UNEMPL4], extremely bad working conditions [UNEMPL9],

dishonesty of employers [UNEMPL9], age discrimination, repetitive unemployment after short jobs [UNEMPL2, UNEMPL13], illegal employment [UNEMPL9, UNEMPL11], work in companies that went bankrupt [UNEMPL4, UNEMPL12] or where mass dismissal were carried out [UNEMPL1, UNEMPL3, UNEMPL12]. In their biographies we can find traces of broader economic processes, such as institutionalisation of market economy combined with privatisation of public companies, deindustrialisation of city X and growing use of flexible forms of employment on the edge of labour law (e.g. civil contracts). What is more, they report experiencing influence of labour market regulations concerning, for instance, employment for the disabled subsidised by the state. People without disability certificate observe that the majority of job offers for simple physical and unqualified jobs (for instance in cleaning sector) is exclusively addressed to the disabled in order to lower labour costs.

However, the above mentioned individual characteristics and contextual factors which make interviewed people vulnerable are not the only causes of the unemployment. They also complained about health problems [UNEMPL11], but not necessarily severe enough to have a status of a disabled person [UNEMPL6]. Among a small number of interviewees, we have also encountered 3 families upbringing many children [3 in case of UNEMPL3, 5 in case of UNEMPL10, 7 in case of UNEMPL7] and 3 single parents families [UNEMPL10, 11,12], 1 of them being at the same time a large family [UNEMPL10]. As one of social workers observed: lack of employment is often *'only a top of iceberg'* and standard, short-time measures as well as paternalistic approach will not be a solution [MOPR SLB7].

Consequences of long-term unemployment

In the Polish context, characterised by the minimalist welfare provision (low coverage rate of unemployment benefit, temporary benefit paid by social assistance close to the existence minimum) main welfare provider is a family. Therefore, the financial consequences of long-term unemployment varied significantly depending on income of other family members and number of people to maintain. The risk of poverty was lower if other members family have a stable source of income.

If it was possible, the unemployed relied on support from working or retired family members. Some of them have already experienced a particularly tense and psychologically difficult situation when both adults, who were supposed to be breadwinners, were unemployed [UNEMPL3] and one interviewee is still experiencing this situation [UNEMPL7]. Reliance on family have several consequences. Welfare provision is not an equivalent of income provision, since "in-kind" type of substitution strategy – as Bison and Esping-Andersen observe (2000) – usually includes residing with parents in case of young unemployed [UNEMPL4,5] as well as is connected to a traditional division of household responsibilities, if a woman is the person who is unemployed [UNEMPL6]. In particular, unemployed aged 26 years old complained about lack of prospects to start their life on their own.

Seven out of twelve long term unemployed have previously or currently benefited from low allowances from social assistance (e.g. a temporary benefit at the level of approximately 62 € per person⁹) as well as small occasional allowances (e.g. 14,3 € for school textbooks for children) or in-kind support (a ton of coal for a winter season, free lunches for pupils, etc.). However, those, who have working or retired parent or partner, were usually ineligible due to a very low income threshold or found the fact of assistance humiliating and did not apply when there was no must [UNEMPL1, 3]. Additionally, some people earned money by working informally: women as baby sitters [UNEMPL6, 9], men in some temporal jobs or by collecting and selling scrap metal [UNEMPL11].

What is interesting, some of our interviewees pointed out that an important source of income are allowances accompanying various activation programmes, either organised by PUP or by MOPR: 3 of them were currently apprentices in PUP [UNEMPL1, 3, 5], one in subsidised employment in non-

⁹ Calculations are made according to exchange rate of National Bank of Poland of 1st December 2013.

governmental organisation [UNEMPL12], while a few others participated in some activation form in the past. However, this founding might be a bias resulting from our recruitment strategy of long-term unemployed interviewees relying on PUP, MOPR and NGO.

Some interviewed unemployed commented the total level of public support as far from satisfactory, while others were happy that they receive anything at all:

An unemployed man living alone: *'I get 260 PLN [62 € - K.S.S.] and I'm curious, who would survive on that'* [UNEMPL11]

An unemployed single mother of 5 children: *'what I get from MOPR it is enough. It is not a luxury, but it is possible to make both ends meet. I'm satisfied to receive this than rather nothing at all'* [UNEMPL10]

Generally speaking, the long-term unemployed (except those in relatively better financial situation thanks to other family members having income) have to limit their expenses to make the money last till the end of month, but it is not always enough. Two interviewees are indebted. In the first case, debt was indirectly one of reasons for her ending employment [UNEMPL7]. Despite the fact that the bailiff seized her whole salary, social assistance insisted to treat it as an income during calculation of entitlement. Second of them has no electricity, because he was not able to pay the bills [UNEMPL2]. Other long term unemployed also complain about difficult living conditions (e.g. a lack of bathroom and hot water [UNEMPL11]), but their situation differ. Savings also concern food [UNEMPL2,7], rent [UNEMPL2] education [UNEMPL4,7], public transport [UNEMPL4], physical appearance (e.g. hairdresser) [UNEMPL3] medical services (e.g. seeing a dentist) [UNEMPL3], not to mention cultural activities [UNEMPL3]. Their accounts prove the phenomenon of poverty trap: lack of money makes difficult finding a job and a problem aggravates with time. Long-term unemployed also mentioned social and psychological consequences, such as stress, tense familial relations, isolation from former friends and acquaintances, lack of hope for future.

Unemployed parents try to spend all they can on their children. However, children also suffer the consequences of poverty. Their access to certain goods and services is restricted: such as healthy food (e.g. fruits) [UNEMPL7] and clothes [UNEMPL3] as well as extracurricular and cultural activities (such as sport activities, foreign languages, cinema, holidays).

History of contacts with welfare and employment services

The main reason to register in PUP as unemployed is gaining access to free health insurance for oneself and also family members, which means that the unemployed, who have no other legal basis for obtaining health insurance for themselves and their family members are typical example of nonvoluntary clients described by Lipsky¹⁰. Contrary to Polish public discourse on the subject, it does not mean automatically that a person for whom the main reason of registration is health insurance is not interested by taking up job or ALMPs, because these motivations do not exclude each other.

People also register in order to use PUP's job placement services. However, some of them consider it ineffective and therefore don't treat it as a main reason of registration. They search for job independently from PUP and find it a more probable way to succeed. If there was no link between the unemployed status and a right to healthcare, they would probably decide to deregister on their own. Possibility to participate in ALMPs was also a reason of registration for some unemployed, for instance for young people [UNEMPL4,5], who counted on a training and apprenticeship as a way of upskilling. For people in risk of poverty, a status of unemployed allows to apply for financial and in-

¹⁰ Some unemployed have other options of access to free healthcare for them and their family members, because anyone might be insured by a working spouse or a working parent (in case of children below 18 years old or below 26 old if they continue education).

kind support from social assistance. Some people have been clients of social assistance for many years. For many people, also the youngest ones [UNEMPL4, 5], this was not the first registration as unemployed. Long time of registration and negative experiences (e.g. getting an outdated job offer [e.g. UNEMPL2,4]) reduce expectations towards PUP.

B. Reconstruction of encounters with PES and other organisations involved in implementation and assessment of people-processing

From the point of view of long-term unemployed there is no integration of PES and social assistance. PUP and MOPR are regarded as separate offices operating without coordination and having different clients-staff relations.

PUP

Obligatory contacts with front line staff in PUP are occasional (every 3 or 4 months) and mainly with job placement agents. Some people (especially during first months of registration as the unemployed) decide to come in-between these appointments on their own, but later they do this more rarely or give up. From the point of view of the unemployed, long breaks means also long waiting time for any public intervention to happen. Meetings are too short and rather of routine and impersonal character. Unemployed do not necessarily remember frontline staff they meet with: *'In general, I don't recognise their faces, yes? I think that these ladies or a man, men – because there are men too – they switch I guess. So there is no one that will remember me and vice versa...'* [UNEMPL7]. Since there is no possibility to have an obligatory appointment for a specific hour, people have to wait in a long queue.

Meetings with job placement agent are often assessed as useless, because it rarely happens that there is an interesting job offer exactly during a day a person is obliged to come. Interviewees have special names for this kind of meeting:

'I was [in PUP] today [i.e. December 19th -K.S.S.] and now I have [to go on- K.S.S.] 14th April to thicken my name off' [UNEMPL2]

'you only go there, shit, for a next date, shit, please come and thicken your name off. And goodbye [...] No [job - K.S.S.] offer. Nothing' [UNEMPL11].

Moreover, unemployed people complain that they received out-dated job offers and lost their time and money on calling or visiting employer in person. Exchange between a job placement agent and an unemployed person is focused on formal and work-related issues. First of all, a person is asked to sign a document of *'confirmation of job readiness'* to meet formal requirement of the unemployed status, which in practice predominantly means showing up to the appointed meetings and signing a declaration that s/he does not receive any income. Absence without formal excuse (e.g. medical certificate) leads automatically to losing the unemployed status and all related rights. Some interviewees experienced these sanctions and decided to appeal in PUP without success, but haven't decided to pursue the appeal in court.

Information on clients' educational and professional career, job expectations, family situation, etc. should be recorded in Syriusz. In theory, it should be used by frontline staff to decide which job offers available in PUP's catalogue present to such a person and what other types of treatment might be relevant. However this is not always the case from the point of view of clients. Some of them complain that they were informed about job offers, which are clearly inappropriate in the light of information stored by PUP (but not forced to accept them under threat of sanctions): e.g. employment in other city for a disabled person or a shift work for a single mother.

Some unemployed find rationale of including other specialists in activation process not transparent as well as they complained about dispersion of relevant information between different workers and – sometimes – offices. For instance, they don't know on what does it depend that they are asked (or not) to see a vocational counsellor and why they have to wait a year to have their application

documents checked by the counsellor [UNEMPL3]. Not all of them are aware of the fact that, they can go see her/him on their own without suggestion or formal referral from job placement agent. To sum up, the vast majority doesn't have any impression that there is anything planned when it comes to their activation:

Researcher: *So when you registered, I guess not, but if you were presented with any plan of action? This is what Individual action plan is for, but even without it... what next: now you will meet vocational counselor, then something and then something else. Were you presented with such a plan of "career"?*

Long term unemployed: *No. "You will be given a date, please come to thicken your name off". "Here, on the board, are job offers" and so on. This kind of statements.*

Researcher: *And do you remember, how was it during this first meeting for thickening your name off... What they were asking for? Were they asking about anything?*

Long term unemployed: *No.*

Researcher: *No? You just show them your identity card?*

Long term unemployed: *Yes. You know, automatically. Everything is done automatically' [UNEMPL4].*

So they act differently, depending on what they know and are informed about PUP offer and what they are able to do with this information. Contacts with other well informed unemployed are a valuable resource that allows to save time on searching for information and minimise a risk of missing a rare chance of participation in ALMPs (e.g. once a year).

More private subjects are discussed rarely during meeting with frontline staff: either if it directly impacts formal issues or job expectations (e.g. health problems excluding some types of jobs or family situation when it excludes shift work, etc.) or if a person has initiated conversation about it. For instance a mother currently upbringing 7 children recalls only one situation when she discussed about her family during 4 year period of her registration in PUP [UNEMPL7]. When two of her daughters reached legal age, she needed to bring certificate that they continue education to meet formal requirements. Since health insurance of children of an unemployed person by PUP can be prolonged till the age of 26 years old, provided that they continue education.

Some of the interviewees, who think of themselves as talkative and open, feel on ease to start a conversation on their private life [e.g. UNEMPL6], while others treat routine course of interaction focused on employment as a sign of lack of interest in them as a persons and also as a sign of powerlessness of PUP staff to solve their life problems:

Researcher: *Do you have impression that public officials have an overall idea of your situation?*

Unemployed *No.*

Researcher: *No, they don't? And what do you think what else should they know? What information is missing?*

Unemployed *Maybe this: do I have something to spend on food? Whether I have for bills, rent. Do I have a place of living (...) Do I have money for ticket to the office. I always say, that I came on bike. They smile (...) But on the other hand, if they knew, then what. Computer will show them there is no work and that's it. What else can they do? [UNEMPL4].*

Unemployed: *And a person will not open up in front of a worker of Labour Office, because, I guess, they will listen up and then do something else.*

Researcher: *So you have this feeling that...*

Unemployed: *Yes, yes.*

Researcher: *That they don't encourage, really.*

Unemployed: *No, no, they don't. This is like: you have searched for work on your own? No? And why not? No, because there are no offers of this type. That's it [UNEMPL10].*

According to our interviewees, meetings with vocational counsellors were less routine, however they did not differ significantly when it comes to their content. Mainly job related issues (e.g. preparation of application documents, job interview, job search activities) and ALMPs' offer were discussed. In some cases [e.g. UNEMPL6, 10], vocational counsellor required a proof of job search activities in a form of paper with stamps and signatures of employers that a person visited. Counselling sessions concluded quickly after maximum 4 sessions and some people mentioned that after these few meetings there were no possibility to see the same or any other vocational counsellor for another several months.

The unemployed, who had contact with social workers, contrasted approaches of staff from these two offices:

'I will tell you frankly that me myself I want to and ... I like better cooperation with MOPR (...) I trust them more. And I know that they won't forget about me. These ladies they know, I guess a whole office knows, that I'd like to take up a job. So I count on it. That maybe I will have an apprenticeship there [laugh]. Maybe they will apply (...). And when it comes to PUP, it seems to me they are more traditional... every item they say [she refers to individual unemployed persons – K.S.S.], as a person, every item, they say the same thing. So I'm not encouraged when it comes to them, with job (...) So MOPR might take care of these unemployed people, they would faster find a job, because they know people more (...). This is like with when you know someone [pl. po znajomości]. Like we say that it will go faster if you know someone, this is how they know about people. They know whom to push where [UNEMPL7].

Social workers were generally described as those who know their life situation and who care about their kids, health problems, family issues. They rather have not openly considered social workers behaviour as a control and violation of privacy, even though unemployed are obliged to invite them to their homes and answer social workers' questions concerning a way of spending money from benefits. Only one man living alone described a scene – he found funny – which might be – on the one hand – interpreted as a violation of privacy, but – on the other hand – it actually shows how little social workers can demand because – in some cases – they have so little to offer: his apartment was dirty and a social worker demanded him to vacuum it. So he answered: *'But how can I hover, if I have no electricity* [electricity was cut down, because of debt – K.S.S.] *'So take a broom and sweep" she replied [UNEMPL2].*

What is similar in both cases of PUP and MOPR our interviewees did not observe any planning of activation. Suggestions to apply for ALMPs such as training and apprenticeships in PUP or recruitment for activation programme in MOPR seem to be linked rather with availability of resources than with a planning of successive steps of activation. Additionally in case of PUP if somebody really want to participate, s/he has to monitor on her/his own when a recruitment starts or an offer of apprenticeship appears, because timing is crucial. Nobody from PUP will contact them in-between rare obligatory meetings.

Unemployed: *[If] an apprenticeship appears, an information on the [PUP- K.S.S.] webpage that there is an apprenticeship, then I come [to PUP – K.S.S.]. (...) I came but there were 8 persons referred for PUP for a particular apprenticeship, which I was interested in. 8 were sent and I was supposed to be 9th (...), so a lady did not give me a referral, because we thought that it is pointless. These people went there, so I won't get it.*

Researcher: *So (...) you are looking for this information on the webpage yourself?*

Unemployed: *Yes, yes, myself.*

Researcher: *So it is not like that that somebody calls you and says: "there is an apprenticeship" or something like that, but it is you who is looking for?*

Unemployed: *You have to do this yourself, yes. If you are lucky and you hit the day when there are apprenticeships announced (...) then you might get it.*

Researcher: *So you have to react fast, don't you?*

Unemployed: *Yes [UNEMPL4]'.*

Moreover, in both PUP and MOPR there was no follow up after one short programme or – even worse – it was not allowed to apply for several months again. These short-sightedness and lack of continuity of activation were criticised by the clients.

C. Assessment of everyday practice of policies in terms of impact on well-being, work prospects, participation in society

Change of life situation in effect of policies:

Many long-term unemployed criticise policies as having little impact on improvement of their well-being and work prospect. Some of them are even reluctant to call them 'support' and rather describe them as last-resort 'charity' (pl. *jalmuzna*) [UNEMPL3], helping them survive in difficult situation and emphasise that public agents do only what they are obliged to.

'Unemployed [about financial support of MOPR]: *These are laughable sums. When you have nothing to do, no work, then 200 zlotys [i.e. 48€] what is it? (...) And I won't mention: gaz, rent, electricity to pay. Medicine? If I had a prescription, something, then I know they will add something. But not all. For instance you have a medicine for 100 [i.e. 24€], so they will give you 50 zlotys... And where you can take from the other 50? [UNEMPL2]*

Researcher: *How do you evaluate a support form PUP and MOPR?*

Unemployed: *Mmmm... simply [silence]. "Support" [laught]?*

Researcher: *Yeah... Can we call it "support" at all?*

Unemployed: *Yes, that's it. They do what they can, don't they? And what they have to. I have such entitlements so I use it and nobody makes it difficult for me. They are available all the time, provided that I will come, yeah? [laught] [UNEMPL3]*

They don't believe in finding a job through intermediary of PUP. They criticise PUP for requiring them to come to obligatory appointments even if there are no job offers. Work organisation is focused on a control of their presence in the office rather than on assisting them in job search:

Researcher: *What does it give you the contact with PUP? How do you evaluate this contact?*

Unemployed: *It is my waste of time.*

Researcher: *Waste of time?*

Unemployed: *Yes. Labour office only helps if there is a benefit or a training. (...) But this coming, thicking your name of is pointless. Just as well I can go to a company, leave my CV, go myself instead of coming here (...)*

Researcher: *And what do you think your life since the contact with labour office it has deteriorated or improved or...*

Unemployed: *No changes. Labour Office does not have influence. More a lack of job has influence that Labour Office.*

Researcher: *Could you tell me what should be changed in labour office order to make it more adapted to your needs? Because according from our conversation it results that it does not respond to your needs?*

Unemployed: *I don't know. Labour Office is only institution not useless from my point of view [UNEMPL4].*

Moreover, some unemployed observed that in a era of CVs and IT, a system of control which demands confirmation of job search activity in a form of document with employers' stamps and

signatures is obsolete and implies unnecessary costs for them in terms of time and paying public transport [UNEMPL7].

Those, who during this or previous registration finished participation in vocational training, don't find them so useful from the point of view of improvement of work prospects, since they still have remained unemployed. Their critical remarks concerned, among others, a lack of opportunity to get work experience linked to a subject of training (they did not succeed to get apprenticeships afterwards) [UNEMPL 4, 6] or far too general content of training compared to previously acquired skills and qualifications [UNEMPL2, 4].

Those who currently are participating in apprenticeship and subsidised employment in CIS have more hopes [UNEMPL1, 5], but not all of them [UNEMPL 3, 12]. Two of them consider apprenticeship and subsidised employment as substitute of regular employment, a way of getting any income, but not improving their chance to get employed without subsidies. They also don't learn anything new, since – in the first case – a scope of responsibilities is narrower than the one in the last job [UNEMPL3] or – in the second case – it is a cleaning job that does not demand particular skills, which would be later wanted by employers [UNEMPL12].

However, there were some interviewees – women whose role was to take care of children and household – who were enthusiastic about activation programmes in PUP and MOPR. They valued opportunity to participate for the following reasons: additional income together with the opportunity to work part-time when familial situation does not enable for regular employment as well as a feeling of empowerment resulting from getting out the house, overcoming psychological barriers, meeting interesting people, learning new things, doing something valuable which might even been a stimulus to self-change and improvement of well-being as well as contacts with other people:

'I was so closed in myself. I was afraid of contact with environment, because a person spend whole time with these children. And I opened up. You could have talked about yourself, what hurts, what we would like to change. Then a person has completely different attitude towards life, more cheerful, friendlier towards the environment. It helped a lot, this course'. [UNEMPL10]

'The contact with us, who were always devoted to children, to family in general, without going outside, having contact with people. This is not familiar, but after a few of these lectures, these classes, we have changed. At least I did' [UNEMPL7]

Policy recommendations from the point of view of long-term unemployed:

The interviewed unemployed suggested several improvements concerning benefits, services and people-processing:

1. A current level of financial support is far from the one effectively preventing poverty.
2. A person and her/his family should not be deprived from a free access to health care in consequence of sanctions.
3. A focus of workers should be in providing support to job seekers and not on verifying formal requirements.
4. It will be desirable to finance public transport for the unemployed or at least refund tickets for dates of obligatory visits in PUP and referrals to employers.
5. The access to staff providing advice (such as job counsellor) and participation in activation programmes should happen faster after registration in PUP to prevent a person from making mistakes in contact with employers and to counteract the negative effects of unemployment before a person becomes a long-term unemployed.
6. The contact with vocational counsellor should be closer and – if a client – sees such a need should not terminate after a small number of sessions. Otherwise, a vocational counsellor will not support psychologically a person during stressful period of job search.

7. Communication between staff and the unemployed in between rare meetings should be two way. It means that if interesting job or activation offers appear a case manager will contact an unemployed and not as it is today that it is exclusive responsibility of the unemployed to check offers regularly in order not to miss an opportunity.
8. If needed activation process should last longer than from a few weeks to a few months. It should consist of several measures in order to make chances for employment bigger. For instance, a short training without practical experience does not count from the point of view of employers. It also mean that the access to apprenticeships should be also possible for people usually not selected by employers: people aged more than 40 years old, with low or outdated qualifications, with longer breaks in their professional career and mothers.
9. PUP should keep in touch with employers regularly in order to avoid situation of presenting the unemployed with an offer which is no longer vacant.
10. Staff should take responsibility for providing unemployed with information concerning the PUP s/he is looking for and support her in this search if it concerns external institutions.

V. CONCLUSION

This case study of “policy in practice” shows, on the one hand, limitations of the activation model in Poland. Top-down reforms of law were supposed to contribute to activation and individualisation of welfare provision, by initiating organisational changes (e.g. creation of Centre of Vocational Activation), introducing new tools (e.g. Individual Action Plan) and making sanctions for non-compliance more severe and forms of control more sophisticated (e.g. IT). However, as our analysis reveals, the effects of these reforms were far from the intentions, because they have not influenced elements of broader welfare context and work organisation that actually shape resources and create constraints for frontline staff. Lack of adequate funds and their cyclical accessibility as well as heavy caseload make impossible tailoring services. They translate into short-term and project-based planning, massive and fragmented people-processing instead of individualised case management. In these conditions, both frontline staff of PES and social assistance institutions are focused on performing their specific tasks and rationing scarce resources, which make their actions a typical example of ‘eligibility-compliance culture’ described by Kane and Bane (1994). However, in case of social assistance workers-clients relations are less impersonal due to a character of social work and a repetitive contact with all families in their environment over a longer period of time. Most of the vulnerable clients’ are not regarded as validated partners of frontline staff and have a limited influence on people-processing and later intervention. What might be surprising, in case of Public Employment Services individual workers also seem to have little influence on people-processing and intervention towards individual, because – despite creation of Centre of Vocational Activation –there is no coordination between specialised workers who are responsible for a narrow range of tasks. Frontline staff shifts the responsibility to find a way through PUP and access services (which also refers to access to relevant information on time) on individuals. When it comes to a disciplinary component, only IT seem to play a significant role, by limiting a margin of manoeuvre of clients and gaining control over information on the junction of PES and social assistance. Whereas, formal punishment such as deprivation of the unemployment status and all related rights for refusing activation offer or ‘suitable’ employment is difficult to enforce, when these offers are so scarce. Therefore, frontline workers decide to discipline only those, who do not even give minimal appearances of compliance.

These practices seem similar to the general features of street-level bureaucracy, identified by, among others, Prottas and Lipsky (Prottas, 1979; Lipsky, 1980). However, what is specific about the front-line staff-unemployed relations in a Polish welfare context is a degree of precariousness, caused by these mechanisms. In other words, the stakes are different. Instead of risking financial support, people registered in Polish PES (and in some cases also their families) might be deprived, first and foremost, of healthcare insurance. The long waiting time for ALMPs participation and rare possibility

to combine various activation measures for one person also prolong duration of unemployment spell of the most vulnerable individuals. This minimalist welfare provision also means that street-level bureaucrats generally lack tools that might overcome poverty trap and serve as positive incentives in activation process. Moreover, in this context some ALMPs are used, *de facto*, as a financial support instead of encouraging labour market entrance. However, in individual cases even these short programmes and counselling might start a process of social activation, which needs to be continued in order to give result in terms of work prospects.

VI. ANNEX

BASIC INFORMATION ON INTERVIEWS WITH STREET-LEVEL BUREAUCRATS

Number of interview	Institution	Position	Years of work experience in this type of institution	Gender	Age	Educational and professional background	Duration of interview
1	Poviat Labour Office	Leader of Job Club	17	Female	Approx. 35-40 years	Administration + Psychology	104 minutes
2	Poviat Labour Office	Vocational counsellor	6	Female	Approx. 45 years	Unknown	62 minutes
3	Poviat Labour Office	Specialists of vocational development	7	Female	Approx. 30 years	Unknown	69 minutes
4	Poviat Labour Office	Job placement agent	9	Male	39 years	History teacher Job placement agent	98 minutes
5	Poviat Labour Office	Job placement agent and supervisor of job placement agents	12	Female	Approx. 38 years	Teacher with specialty of social work	140 minutes
6	Poviat Labour Office	Vocational counsellor	19	Female	Approx. 40-45	Pedagogical studies	95 minutes
7	Municipal Family Assistance Centre	Social worker	16	Female	Approx. 42 years	Social work studies	86 minutes
8	Municipal Family Assistance Centre	Social worker	25	Female	Approx. 47 years	Social work studies (2 years)	208 minutes
9	NGO	Social worker	2,5	Female	30 years	Social work studies	78 minutes

BASIC INFORMATION ON INTERVIEWS WITH LONG TERM UNEMPLOYED

Number of interview	Age	Gender	Education	Registration time	Assistance from MOPR for unemployed	Duration of interview
1	54	Male	General secondary	More than 1 year	No	56 minutes
2	54	Male	Vocational secondary	3 years	Yes	56 minutes
3	46	Female	General secondary	More than 1 year	No	57 minutes
4	26	Female	General secondary	2 years	No	47 minutes
5	26	Female	Higher education	Approx. 1 year	No	64 minutes
6	56	Female	Probably primary	5 years	Yes	64 minutes
7	46	Female	Vocational secondary	More than 5 years	Yes	79 minutes
8	43	Female	Vocational secondary	At least 10 years	Yes	79 minutes
9	32	Female	Primary or general secondary	14 years (with breaks)	Yes	66 minutes
10	49	Female	Unknown	14 years	Yes	72 minutes
11	58	Male	Primary	Approx. 9 years	Yes	56 minutes
12	58	Male	Vocational secondary	Approximately 1,5 year	No	71 minutes

BASIC INFORMATION ON INTERVIEWS WITH LOCAL POLICY-MAKERS AND HEAD OF PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

Number of interview	Participant organisations	Number of interviews
1.	Public employment services and employment institutions (WUP, PUP or <i>powiat employment council</i>)	5
2.	Social assistance institution (MOPR / MOPS / PCPR / ROPS)	4
3.	NGOs	1
4.	City officials	2

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WP 7, THE IMPACT OF AN INTEGRATED
APPROACH TO SOCIAL COHESION

WP 7

Sweden Country Analysis

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2014-03-04

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I. INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

The general aim of the report is to analyse effects of an ‘integrated’ social and employment policy in terms of social inclusion and well being of vulnerable groups. This will be done by contrasting policy with implementation, highlighting the role of caseworkers and discussion support offered as perceived by long term unemployed. The interaction between case workers and long term unemployed is focused; the construction of clients and the way case workers deal with constraints in their every day work with clients is foregrounded.

Örebro was selected as the most innovative entity of the three Swedish case studies. Innovativeness here refers to collaborative attempts between organisations. In Örebro, as in the other two municipalities studied, there are well-established collaborative structures between local PES office and municipality. Meetings at management level, intermediate level and staff level are arranged regularly, and there are many attempts to align the services offered by municipality and local PES office in the field of unemployment services. In addition to this, the municipality has developed methods to improve the chances for long term unemployed to enter the labour market; one example of this are the social aspects included in procurement procedures. Also in relation to the third sector and private sector, there have been innovative measures where the municipality has shown commitment to involving third sector actors and private sector actors in the efforts to improve transition from unemployment to employment.

The data for work package 7 was gathered between September and December 2013. In total twelve interviews with street level bureaucrats and eight interviews with clients were carried out. Interviews with caseworkers lasted between one and two hours. Interviews with long term unemployed lasted one hour in average. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. Managers were asked to choose case workers who had been working in the organisation for at least a year, with experience and knowledge of routines of the specific organisation, and with authority to make independent decisions, directly affecting clients. The informants had a high level of expertise and experience. The sample does not necessarily give a representative picture of the work performed by case workers in general in each organisation, but rather gives a picture of work performed by *experienced* case workers. Most of the interviews took place in the office of the case workers, and in some cases in the meeting rooms where case

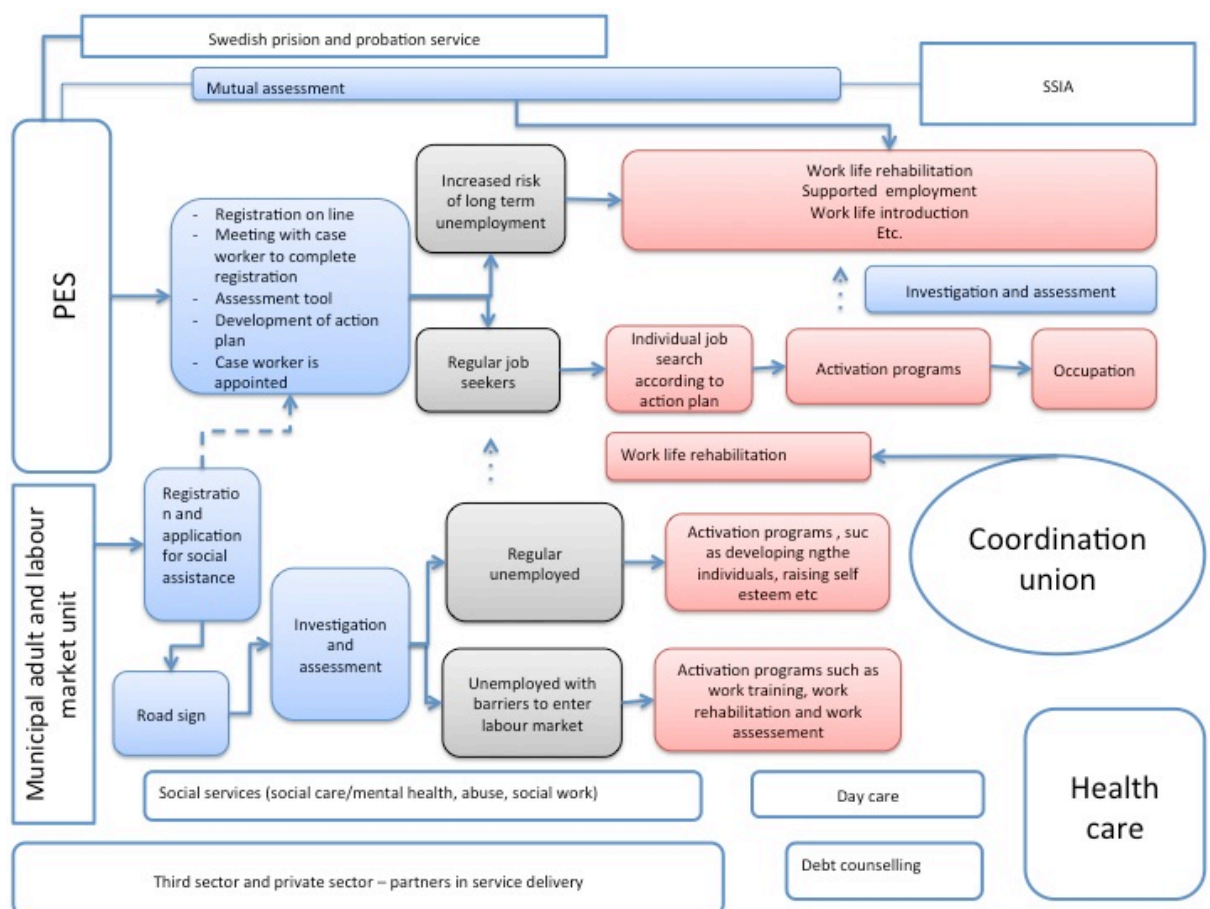
workers meet clients. Two of the informants have a slightly different role than a regular case worker, and were used as (internal) consultants. The tasks performed by these professionals are important with respect to understanding processes of categorisation of clients within PES and municipality, and were therefore included in the sample.

Two programs for long term unemployed were selected, one focusing job coaching and cv-writing skills and one focused on rehabilitation. Both projects were funded by PES and municipality, and are examples of coordinated structures at local level. Most informants were approached directly by the interviewer, during extended study visit. One interview was organised by the project manager. Access was facilitated by excellent cooperation of the project management.

In addition, documents used by case workers in their daily work, for instance guidelines used in investigations, templates in documentation systems and so on, were collected. The report also draws on interviews and documents from WP 4.

II. ACTIVATION OF LONG TERM UNEMPLOYED FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF POLICY MAKERS

In Örebro, unemployed are activated through PES, the municipal adult and labour market department and SSIA. The diagram above illustrates intended process of categorisation and activation of unemployed, as described in documents and interviews with local policy makers. The colours in the diagram indicate organisation (white), processing of unemployed (blue), categorisation of unemployed (grey) and activation (red).



PES is the main organisation performing activation for unemployed. Registering as unemployed is done electronically, but finalised by a case worker at the local PES office. Finalising the registration demands a face-to-face meeting between job seeker and case worker, and can be done anytime during office hours. A personal case worker is assigned, an action plan is initiated and unemployed are either categorised as regular job seekers or job seekers who run a greater risk of becoming long term unemployment. For those who are categorised as regular job seekers, independent job search in accordance with the action plan

follows, until the Job and development or Youth and job guarantee is due. Within the guarantees, intensified job search activities, investigations, labour market trainings, coaching and work placements can be conducted. After 450 days in the guarantee, occupation is the only alternative available (third phase). The activation is mainly conducted by complemented actors; private companies offering programs for unemployed procured by PES on national and regional level. However, in Örebro the local PES office decided to fund, together with the municipality, at least one local activation program that was not procured.¹

In the registration, an assessment tool is used to detect those who run a greater risk of becoming long term unemployed. If a person is detected as potentially having a reduced work capacity, further investigations can be carried out. Professionals in the PES rehabilitation team perform these investigations, or assessments. In the rehabilitation team, work psychologists, social consultants and physiotherapists are employed and work on a consultative basis within PES. An investigation can open up for other organisational resources such as subsidised employment, work rehabilitation, personal assistance on the work place, tools to facilitate for the individual in the work and so on.² In order to access this additional support, the person has to be categorised as having a reduced work capacity due to functional impairments according to a coding system used by PES. The question of functional impairment is related to reduced work capacity and can be of different character; social, psychological and medical (see WP 6 Sweden country report and Garsten & Jacobsson 2013). Case workers can refer job seekers to these investigations any time during unemployment an indication on the assessment tool is not necessary). Job seekers who are referred to PES by SSIA, as part of the rehabilitation chain and job seekers who are referred by the Prison and probation service also have access to these interventions to increase the chances of finding (and keeping) employment.

The case workers at PES, are changed according to categorisation of clients. For instance, case workers change when entering the different steps in the guarantee, or when job seekers are categorised as impaired. The staffing of PES has undergone a shift, and whereas older case workers might rely on secondary education and internal trainings, newly employed case workers usually have a BA or MA degree, mainly in social sciences.

¹ This is possibly related to the well established coordinated structures at local level in Örebro. In other PES offices, it was described as difficult to fund activation programs outside the procurement procedures, conducted centrally within PES.

² Subsidised employment, however, can also be granted long term unemployment if the unemployment exceeds 12 months or shorter if the person is below 25 years of age (nystartsjobb).

Örebro municipality activates unemployed who apply for social assistance. However, the activation is considered a *complement*, rather than substitute for the activation offered by PES. A registration as job seeker at the local PES office is required, according to the demands to be at the disposal of the labour market. However, as described previously, a registration at the local PES office does not necessarily imply that the person is offered activation. Most unemployed are expected to fend for themselves before participation in one of the guarantees, or other ALMP:s, are offered by PES. Unemployed who apply for social assistance are directly referred to the *Road sign*, a municipal organisation offering counselling. The Road sign, where social workers and vocational counsellors work, makes an investigation and suggests suitable activation, within the municipal organisation. After this, the person is subject to yet another investigation, carried out by the social worker responsible for the (financial) needs assessment and the (social) support to become self supporting. The unemployed recipient of social assistance is categorised according to closeness to the labour market.

When clients are categorised according to closeness to the labour market by the municipality, they are either categorised as: a) unemployed who are considered far from the labour market, or b) those who are considered close to the labour market (“job-ready”). Different activation programs are offered these two groups. The categorisation process, in fact, resembles the process in PES. Those that are considered to be “job-ready” receive support in a job search programme, where counselling and guidance is offered. The program also attempts to “induce self esteem” into the clients. Other activities organised for those who are considered “job-ready”, can be fairs where employer are invited in order to recruit and work placements/internships. Those unemployed who, according to the case workers, have barriers for entering the labour market are offered activation with a rehabilitation focus. Some of the programs have the objective to assess the work capacity of the individual, others are used as work training. The work training and work assessments are organised by the municipal placement centre (prakticentrum), and tasks performed by the unemployed can be doing craftwork, selling the craft in a sheltered shop, kitchen work in municipal catering services, gardening, snow removal and in other areas where the municipality carry out work task. In general, the unemployed are not employed in the established sense of the term, but receive benefits as activation support or social assistance during the work assessments and work trainings. However, Örebro municipality has decided to offer time-limited municipal employments to selected groups of unemployed recipients of social assistance. Long term

unemployed can be employed for a one-year period within the municipal organisation, according to the program. Prioritized groups are unemployed who have children, adhering to a political ambition at the local level to combat child poverty. The employment provides work experience, but maybe even more importantly for the municipal organisation; the employment grants access to social insurances such as unemployment, sickness and parental benefits, funded by the state.

The case workers who are responsible for the handling the cases with unemployed recipients of social assistance, are social workers. Staff working with the unemployed in the municipal projects and programs can have different background, there are generally no formal requirements. The municipally funded programs are either run by the municipality, or by third sector actors.

The activation programs offered by PES are preferred over local activation, following regulations in the Social service act. For the municipal organisations, issues related to financial compensation for the unemployed is an important factor for preferring activation by PES rather than municipal programs. Only those unemployed who take part in activation offered by PES, have the right to receive activation support. Participation in a municipal program does not give the right to activation support, only to social assistance. When a person receives the state funded compensation (activation support) the demand for social assistance is reduced.

SSIA refers unemployed to PES according to the rehabilitation chain. This means, that a person who has been on sick leave for more than 90 days has to be tested toward available work on the work place. After 365 days, the person is tested in relation to “any normally available job on the labour market”. The mutual assessment is a gradual transfer, where case workers from PES and SSIA meet with the person to discuss further steps. The case workers at SSIA have two tasks; to assess the right to sickness benefits and to support the person on the way back to the labour market. Many of those working at SSIA and have been there for a longer period, have secondary education and rely on internal trainings. More recently employed staff tend to have an MA or BA in social sciences (as is the case in PES).

The PES, SSIA, the municipality and the regional health care fund the Coordination union jointly. The purpose is to find suitable solutions for individuals who are clients within more than one of these organisational, that are in need for work rehabilitation, and where the organisational recourses within the participation organisations *are not considered sufficient* for the needs of the clients. One of the programs offered is conducted by professionals from

participating organisations, co-located in proximity to the office of the Coordination union. Institutions for adult education and foundations for individuals with impairments run other projects funded by the Coordination union. The programs are seen as a form of pre-rehabilitation for individuals, aimed at increasing their chances of benefitting from the regular support offered, mainly offered by PES.

Other municipal actors illustrated on the chart are; day care, debt counselling, social care and social services. The organisations offering these services do not offer activation as such, but play significant roles by supporting individuals, thus increasing their chances to become employed. The municipality, along national legislation in the field, offers the services. All unemployed with children below 6 years old have a right to child care 15 hours a week. When unemployed are in activation, full time child care is available; the same conditions as for students and employed. Private budget and debt counselling is available for all who reside in Örebro. Case workers can inform and recommend unemployed to take advantage of the services available, but do not refer clients as part of the activation plan.

Health services are provided by the region, in local health clinics. These offer primary health care for the local community, and are important partners mainly for SSIA. The regional health care is a partner in the Coordination union, funding 25 per cent of the budget. However, activation is not primarily a concern for the health care sector.

There is a variety of private and third sector actor involved in the field of activation at local level in Örebro. These implement programs that are funded by PES or by the municipality. The services they provide range from work rehabilitation, work assessment, work training organising work placement, CV-writing skills, coaching and so on. They constitute an important part of the field of activation at local level, but rely entirely on funding and referrals of clients from PES and municipality. This means that in the local context, activation is only required by individuals who are found *within* the regular systems; who are identified as a target group of PES and municipality, and who comply with the regulations set up by these organisations. Those who do not register as unemployed, or those who fall out of the system are not subject to any kind of activation, The institutional support to re-enter the labour market is then limited to services available for all citizens provided as part of general welfare solutions (child care, debt counselling, health care etc.).

Evaluations of policies for unemployed are made according to the procedures within the PES and SSIA as national agencies. This implies a rigorous system for measurement where goals are set at a central level. Departments within the organisations perform evaluation and

monitoring based on the results reported in the internal documentation systems. As for the municipal activation programs, the aim of the activation is to promote the financial independence of individuals. This could be either through employment, through education or by successfully transferring the person to the sickness insurance. In terms of processing, the success of municipal organisations can be described as working towards making clients “fit” enough to be able to get access to the services delivered by PES by enhancing employability. Other interventions could, depending on the categorisation process, aim to increase the chances for sickness insurance. This would demand other policies and programs, such as work testing and other investigations where a reduced work capacity could be documented. Yet another goal, however not explicit, is the deterrent, or discouraging, function of policies and practices. Procedures that are perceived as either too complicated, or stigmatising, can refrain some from requesting the support. For the municipality, goals are fulfilled when fewer clients apply for social assistance. This does not, per se, have to be connected to increased well-being or increased participation in society at large.

III. PEOPLE-PROCESSING FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF SLBs

The case workers interviewed in the study were experienced and had been working in their employing organisations for a long period; many of them over a decade. For WP 6 and 7 case workers from PES, SSIA and municipality were interviewed. The main focus of the report is the direct work with unemployed performed by PES case workers; what kind of information the case worker gathers, and what support unemployed are offered.

The case workers at PES work with different target groups mainly related to the length of time a person has been in unemployment and the perceived need for work rehabilitation. Categories along which work is organised at PES are: a) the age of the unemployed b) length of time registered at the local PES office, and c) assessed need for work rehabilitation. The services available, or rather the labour market programs offered by PES are critical for the categorisation process. Unemployed are sorted in (and sorted out) according to the *target groups of the programs*. For instance, age is perceived as a meaningful categorisation for the case workers, as age determines what services the unemployed is entitled to, that is; what services case workers can make use of for the specific client. So, unemployed are categorised according to age; unemployed below 25 years of age are activated with the Youth and job guarantee, and those over in the Job and development guarantee.

The most important aspect however, is time in unemployment (Forslund och Vikström 2011; Sibbmark 2012). Unemployed people below 25 years of age are activated after three months of unemployment, and unemployed people between 25 and 64 after 14 months (or when the unemployment insurance is about to be exhausted). Some case workers are assigned to work with unemployed before entering either of the guarantees, others are assigned to work exclusively with unemployed who are activated within the guarantees. Some case workers work exclusively with unemployed below 25 years of age, others with those above. This means that case workers *have access to different sets of tools according to what target group they work with*. Not all case workers can refer an unemployed to a training, and not all unemployed can refer clients to job-coaching. Some case workers have to refer client to activation, others are refrained from doing so.

This internal specialisation with varying jurisdiction on behalf of the case workers, reduces the scope of manoeuvre for the case workers and the possibilities to tailor make services for

clients. Age of the unemployed and time in unemployment are “fixed” categories in line with the official policies of PES, and are not subject to interpretation on behalf of the case worker.

However, within these “fixed” categories, case workers can (and have to) be prioritize. For instance, in the Job and development guarantee, work placement and participation in job-coach programs are the most common type of activation. From the case workers perspective however, work placement is preferred. Based on their experience, work placement rather tends to lead to employment than job-coaching. So, who gets work placements, and who gets job-coaching, and why? Work placements have to be organised by the job seekers themselves. This means that only those job seekers who can present an employer who has accepted to take on the person is actually referred to work placement. Those who fail to do so, are instead referred to job-coaching. This means that the selection procedures is closely linked to individual capacities of the unemployed; the ones with stronger resources and ability to organise a work placement will have more chances receiving this kind of support. As for training, availability is considered to be a major obstacle for referring job seekers. However, also time in unemployment is important, according to the informants. Those job seekers who can complete the training *before* 450 days of participation in the Guarantee are preferred. The reason for this is the construction of the third phase of the Job and development guarantee, where only occupation allowed according to PES policies.

So, age and time in unemployment (are important aspects in terms of what activation is offered. But what about the actual life situation of the individual; what do case workers know?. What kind of information do case workers perceive as important for their work,?

First of all, we are going to focus the information given by the job seeker to PES. In order to be defined as belonging to a target group for PES, a registration as unemployed is necessary (this was described previously).³ The registration is done electronically, and can be done on any computer. A personal account with a personal code is created for each unemployed. Through the personal account, unemployed can access information related to their case. On the online registration form, the following questions have to be answered. The questions are structured into five areas; *work situation, work preferences, competencies, background and about me*:

³ PES has been criticized for the lack of support to unemployed who are not registered; those who are “outside” the regular systems. For instance, close to five percent of the population between 16 and 24 do neither study, work or are registered as unemployed (Riksrevisionen 2013)

- a) Current activity (employed, part time employed, part time unemployed, unemployed, student).
- b) Participation in unemployment insurance and whether or not you wish to apply for unemployment benefit.
- c) Where in Sweden do you apply for jobs (locally or in the whole country)?
- d) Time frame in relation to when you can start a new employment (can you take on a job directly or not).
- e) Do you apply for part time or full time positions?
- f) Time period for which you wish to work (ongoing, 6 months or longer, 3-6 months, 11 days to three months, 1-10 days).
- g) Choose areas where you wish to apply for jobs. (21 different areas, ranging from administration, health care, construction and so on. One alternative is “no education or experience or training is required”.)
- h) Other competencies, for instance language skills
- i) Do you apply for work in other countries in the European union and Switzerland?
- j) Highest completed education (less than 9 years, 9 years, secondary school, post secondary school, and so on).
- k) Do you have a driving licence?
- l) Previous education and training
- m) Previous employment
- n) Address and other contact information
- o) Do you permit PES to provide your information to employers?

Some of the questions are directly related to the right to receive unemployment insurance (c-f). After completion of the form, the unemployed has to go to the local PES office in order to become registered. In the PES office in Örebro, there is an open reception, with extensive opening hours (10 to 18), referred to as *Direct service*. Once entering the reception, a case worker, who inquires about the nature of the visit and, if required, guides the person to a vacant case worker, approaches the unemployed.

The direct service, that is like the heart of everything. Our direct service, it is built on a service concept that we have elaborated since the 90-ies (...) When other offices have 2 hours waiting time, we only have 30-40 minutes. And we meet the customer directly, we find out what they want, briefly, put them on a waiting list, we give them a case worker as quickly as possible.

The reception is divided into different areas, and centrally located are computers connected to the PES webpage. In the open space, which resembles an open space office, case workers do registrations and have meetings with unemployed. There are meeting rooms available, most of them with glass walls and doors leaving no room for privacy. In direct connection to the reception there are offices for case workers and managers, also with glass doors. The open space is connected to the interior region of the office building by locked doors opened only by key cards by staff. This is where most case workers have their work places. However, meetings with clients do not take place in the interior regions of the office building; this area is restricted to staff.

The unemployed who wish to register as unemployed is directed to any case worker available in *Direct service*. Most of the case workers interviewed had scheduled hours in *Direct service*, up to 25 per cent of the weekly working time. What happens in this initial meeting with a case worker is crucial for the further processing of the client. Either the unemployed is categorised as a regular job seeker, or defined as a job seeker risking long-term unemployment. If the person is categorised as regular, the person will be included in labour market programs when time in unemployment exceeds the time limit for inclusion in the Job and development guarantee. The guarantee is offered those who have used 300 days of unemployment insurance or who have been registered as unemployed for fourteen months.

In the finalising of the registration, an assessment tool is used for profiling; to detect job seekers who run a greater risk of long-term unemployment (Assadi 2014).

I think, this assessment support, is about giving the right intervention to the right person. And those who do not need this, they should get other things (intensified support, training, rehabilitation and so forth). Because, this early interventions, this opens up doors for the recourses we have. It can be supported employment, or the PES rehabilitation and so on.

The computer based assessment tool is completed by the case worker, and makes a statistical analysis based on following variables:

- Age
- Functional impairment (as stated by the job seeker)
- Country of birth
- Level of education
- Financial compensation

- Month when registration as unemployed is made
- Area of work
- Time in unemployment
- Previous unemployment periods
- Experience in the field of work the person is looking for
- Education in the field of work the person is looking for
- Level of unemployment in the municipality where the person is living

The assessment support categorises the job seekers into four groups; 1) very good chances of finding employment, 2) good chances for employment 3) consider need for support in order to increase chances for employment 4) need for support to increase chances for employment, consider early interventions (Assadi 2014). For those who are categorised in the fourth category, an action plan has to be made within five days. There are no defined programs that have to be applied as an early intervention; training as well as job coaching can be used. However, less than fifty per cent of those who had been categorised in group 4 actually received an intervention within four months, according to studies made by PES (Arbetsförmedlingen 2012). One interviewee describes the procedures:

At the very first visit to PES, it is sometimes, obvious that this person has a need. And if the assessment tool says that they need an early intervention, well, then we tick the box “early intervention”. And then we refer them to a case worker, and they are responsible for sending them to these group meetings. And we meet them every 14 days, and we try to find an activity for them.

Even if the tool is standardised, case workers use the assessment support differently according to Assadi (2014). Her study shows that some case workers avoid questions that can be perceived as sensitive or too personal, whereas others see the assessment support as a valuable tool to understand the situation of the job seeker. However, none of the questions in the assessment tool (or in the web based registration form) explicitly addresses issues related to life areas outside work, education, country of birth and age. Social circumstances; such as for instance housing issues, family situation and other social problems are only touched upon on initiative from the case worker or the unemployed. One case worker describes how for instance frequent job changes leads her on to ask specific questions relating to the social situation of the unemployed. Appearance and conduct of the unemployed is also of importance to the case worker.

(I get information) ...in the personal meeting. And it is not only what you say. It is more, what you see. To use your senses. That might sound a bit funny, but it is about looking at what you wear, and well, hygienic matters, and if you smell of alcohol. And, well, that you are in time for meetings.

Asking questions in relation to social situation of the unemployed is described as somewhat of a difficult act. The assessment support is to be used in the first meeting with the unemployed, and case worker and job seeker have never met before.

If you, in this first meeting, do not dare to ask the questions...

According to the informants, it varies what kind of personal information is gathered in the meeting. On the one hand, there is a certain reluctance towards asking questions that are perceived to be very personal and intimate, such as for instance drug and alcohol abuse. On the other hand, when a problem is obvious, lack of experience and training to talk with about social problems experienced by the unemployed. However, another case worker describes how she feels quite comfortable asking questions related to personal issues;

One of my colleges, she said, how do you dare to ask those questions? Well, I said, I don't know, but it just does not feel strange to me do so. It is pretty natural to ask the questions. Because if I don't, I will never find out.

Apart from the reluctance to talk about social problems, there are other factors reducing the chances for personal information to be brought up in the meeting between case worker and client; time and spatial dimensions. The allocated time slots for meetings are relatively short, impeding any longer discussions between unemployed and case workers. One case worker describes the meeting when unemployed register in *Direct service*, and when the assessment tool is used:

It varies, from 20 to 40 minutes. If you take 40 minutes, you start to ruin the system for the Direct service. If everybody was to spend 40 minutes, everything will fall apart, that does not work. You have to do it in 20, 25, 30 minutes, at the most.

The spatial dimensions discussed are critical; the open landscape, glass doors and computer screens rather draws the associations to a bank, or a car vendor company, than a counselling room where private information is made visible. Even if privacy, to a certain extent, is offered in one of the meeting rooms, the transparency makes the person quite visible from the outside.

Work load is another major factor affecting the processes of categorisation, and affecting the chances to offer individualised services (see also Riksrevisionen 2013, WP 6 Sweden country report). The case load varies, depending on what category of job seekers the case workers is mainly working with. Up to three hundred job seekers per case worker who works with “regular”⁴ unemployed is considered as a high work load, but not unusual. High case load and the control aspects of the work (see WP 6 Sweden country report) puts restraints on the case worker. One case worker describes:

- *It is really hard, you hear and see colleagues who do not manage (...)*
- *What makes the work so hard?*
- *Well, it is too much. I usually say, and I think I have a fairly good overview. If you have more than 120-130 job seekers, the systems do not work. The system does not work; with (automatic) reminders (in the internal documentation system) and everything you have to do. And you have nobody who can help you out. Job seekers hand in their activity reports between the 1 and the 14 each month, and then we have to contact them, between the 15 and the last day in the month. We have to contact all our job seekers. Do that 300 times, and you will see.*

The high work load means reduced time for case workers to meet with the unemployed, as well as employers (see WP 6 Sweden country report). The case workers describe how they develop strategies to reduce the more time consuming aspects of clients work, i.e. individual face-to-face meetings. Instead, contacts via phone or e-mail are preferred. One case worker describes how she tries to refer clients to other case workers who work in *Direct services* (the open space information desk): instead of meeting with her:

Well, no, but I try, I usually say, it is really hard to get in touch with us. But you are welcome to our direct service; I also do a lot of hours in our direct service. So, you can meet me, or my colleagues. You do not have to meet me; you can just as well meet Pelle, or any other case worker. He can take your id, and well, support you along the road. So, do not wait to get in touch with me, the Direct service is open every day from 10 to 18. Welcome in. And, then, I have the e-

⁴ That is; an unemployed who has not been categorised as long term unemployed, as functional impaired or in need of work rehabilitation.

mail. The e-mail is like holy for me. I try to use the mail as much as I can. If somebody writes I always try to answer, and well, get it (done with)... Many of those who call; the phone call is much more difficult to terminate, I think. As a case worker. The person calls me, and well, it can be about stuff that does not make the case move forward that much. Like, they just want to get it out with (prata av sig), and, I, I do not have that time.

Another case worker describes how focus should not be on finding the case worker actually assigned, but instead, how unemployed are encouraged to get hold of case workers that are a) available and b) competent in a specific field.

I usually say, don't pay attention to who has been assigned as your case worker. Try to find someone (a case worker) who is competent enough to answer your questions, instead. That is better. Because, most (unemployed) do not manage to get this (personal) contact with their case worker, anyway.

This situation seems to open up for some sort of Mc Donaldisation in the provision of labour market policies. The relation between case workers and clients are not considered to be a central aspect; rather, the service delivery resembles the logic of delivering standardised meals. Who delivers the meal is made secondary and the content of the Job and development guarantee is, as are the meals, standardised.

However, there are situations where the personal situation of the job seeker is investigated and documented. If the person is categorised as a person with reduced work capacity, this opens up for a more extensive individualised support (see WP 6 Sweden country report). The reduced work capacity is directly linked to a coding of functional impairment causing the reduced work capacity. As many as one fourth of all who are registered as job-seekers at PES have been categorised as having a reduced work capacity due to a functional impairment (Garsten & Jacobsson 2013, Jacobson & Seing 2013). The assessments are made by social workers and psychologists within PES, and work on a consultative basis. Case workers need for the unemployed to be coded accordingly, in order to be able to access support such as for instance subsidised employment and assistance on the work place. Social consultants, psychologists and physiotherapists use different methods for assessing the individual. Social consultants, in general, use Work social investigations (*arbetsocial utredning*) (Seing 2009). In this investigation, which follows a manual developed specifically for PES, the entire life situation of the individual is in focus. One informant describes:

When I do an investigation, a work-social investigation, I focus all different areas of life. For instance, what does the network look like? The family situation? What kind of support does the person get? What about education and previous experiences? What happened in school, what merits does the person have? And also, I focus limitations. How long has the person been abusing alcohol or drugs, for instance?

A critical aspect of the investigation is the future prospects of finding employment, employment being the central goal. However, if the problems the person has are judged to be too severe at the moment, other authorities can be involved:

Let's say you have a situation with abuse. Is the person sober enough, and stable enough, that work is actually an option? Or do we need to coordinate this with other authorities, with supporting contacts?

For the case workers, contacts with case workers working for other authorities are well established, especially in the field of work rehabilitation. A final quote from a case worker will exemplify how coordination between different agencies can be played out:

His health (the unemployed) had been going up and down. Sometimes he was really sick. And well, we talked about possibilities of him having his own company, and that is difficult when you get sick. So, the work psychologist established a really good contact, and well, we had some guidance around things related to work. And in the end, he could do it; when we first started he had to bring his children who sat outside the door and waited. But finally, he was able to come on his own. He always had a bottle of water to fiddle around with, to avoid panicking. And then, we had a preparatory intervention, we still have it. It is like a soft version of group meetings, we do not run them ourselves, and we have a company doing this. And we asked him, do you want to start there. And he did. So he started, but the group met several times a week, and he was not able to drive his car on his own. The children were working, of course, so they could not drive him. And we got in touch with the municipality, one of their case workers investigated if he had the right to support from the municipal social psychiatry. Maybe they could help with the transportation issues. And we met, the municipal case worker, the psychologist, me and him. And we made a plan: the social psychiatry drove with him to the group meetings (...) and after a while he got much better, and he even wanted to start a business on his own,

really big plans. We had to hold him back a bit, and instead I presented an activation program (run by a foundation), that we have used for placements and work assessments.

The statement indicates the close connection between actors and case workers, highlighting a high level of integration between different actors and policy fields.

IV. PEOPLE-PROCESSING FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF LONG TERM UNEMPLOYED INDIVIDUALS

Eight long term unemployed were interviewed. Two projects in Örebro targeting long term unemployed were selected. Most informants were approached directly by the interviewer, during an extended study visit in the project. One of the interviews was organised by the project manager. The majority of the informants participated in a project focusing job-search, coaching, cv-writing. In the program, information on for instance debt counselling, workers rights was included, as well as weekly sport and fitness training. The program was scheduled for five weeks, following a 35 hours a week schedule. Each morning started with a morning meeting where vacancies registered at PES were shown on wide screen (connected to the PES web page). This was followed either by job search on computers or lectures. Another important component was role plays, where participants played out an imaginary job interview. One participant was acting job seeker, another was acting employer and a third a person represented an HR function. The other participants were acting as audience, giving feed-back on the behaviour of the job seeker during the fake interview. The five weeks were followed by seven weeks individual job search/other activities such as for instance work placements. The other project targeted people in need for rehabilitation due to health related problems. This project had fewer hours of scheduled activities; three hours, three days a week for a period of eight weeks. The goal of the project was to motivate and strengthen individuals, and to support participants, with the goal to improve the chances to re enter the labour market.

The interviews touched on highly personal and sometimes sensitive issues and effort was put on establishing trust between informants and interviewer. This was done by visiting the projects, presenting Localise, taking part in daily activities and having informal conversations with participants. All interviews were carried out on the premises of the projects. It should be noted that most interviews were challenging and emotional; most of the informants had a complicated life situation and problems that seriously affected their general well being.

Gender, age and ethnicity

Six out of eight informants were female. The main reason for the gender bias is that it was easier, for me being a woman, to establish contact with the female participants. For instance, most informants were approached and asked about their willingness to participate in the study

in coffee breaks and during lunch breaks. Women and men did not interact among themselves to a greater extent; they tended to sit at different tables, in the breaks women stayed inside and most of the men went outside, and so on. The "female spaces" were more easily accessible, but in the projects, men and women were equally represented, based on observations during the study visits.

The age of the informants varied between mid 20ies to early 60ies. Based on the general impressions during the visits to the programs, the sample is representative of the groups that attended the programs. There were not many participants below the age of 25, which can be explained by the fact that none of the two projects were targeted primarily to youth (18-24 years old).

20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-64
A1	2	2	2	1

Four of the informants had a history of migration. No one had been less than five years in Sweden. Only participants whose level of proficiency in the Swedish language was considered high enough to understand and respond to the questions in the interview guide were interviewed. It would have been impossible to interview some of the participants in the project without using a translator, as many participants had very low Swedish speaking skills.

Unemployment.

All informants exceeded the official definition of long term unemployed; unemployment spells varied between 1 and 20 years.

Time in unemployment	1-4 years	5 or more years
Interviewees	6	2

Based on the biographies told in the interviews, six of the informants had been in an instable position on the labour market or on sick leave for the last five years or more.

Education, work experiences and reasons for being unemployed

The level of education varied between secondary school (2 or 3 years) and completed university degree. However, some participants in the projects lacked reading and writing skills and had less formal education than the informants. Previous experiences on the labour market varied from no experience at all, to a history of longer employments with one or several employers. The ones who had had longer employments described how changes in the labour market had made their work redundant; privatisations and procurement procedures had forced their employers to either move or to close down. This left the workers unemployed, on a highly competitive market. The informants refer to themselves as being affected by structural changes of the labour market in Sweden, that have taken place since the early 1990ies.

Some of the informants had occasional experiences from work, in for instance small family run retail or health care sector (elderly care and personal assistance). Three of the informants had no experience of the Swedish labour market, and very little experience from labour markets in other countries. Some of the women had no or little experience of the labour market, but long experience of domestic work, taking care of their own children at home. They had not been in employment when the children were born, and had not found their way into the labour market ever since. Lack of contacts and references due to long periods outside of the labour market, or due to migration, was seen as a major obstacle for finding employment. Others explained their unemployment by the situation on the labour market; the numbers of unemployed exceeding the number of vacancies, creating a highly competitive situation. Another explanation to unemployment was lack of skills, or out-dated skills. Lack of skills could refer to a variety of things, for instance lack of a driving licence, certificates and other formal qualifications. Out-dated skills referred to education, training and previous work experiences that had become out-dated during the unemployment period, reducing chances for finding employment.

Health

Several of the informants had been on sick leave for longer or shorter periods during the last five years. At the time of the interview, seven of eight informants were considered to be at the full disposal of the labour market; that is, their work capacity was not considered reduced due to poor health (or any other) reasons. Almost all of the informants expressed concerns related to health issues, especially to pain related issues. Pain in neck and shoulders, problems with joints, or severe headaches were problems that some of the informants experienced on a daily basis. Obesity, osteoporosis and fibromyalgia, were other health problems that affected the health situation of the informants. During the informal conversations during the extended study visits, participants in the programs articulated other problems, such as social phobia, severe gambling problems and alcohol related problems. Some of the informants had sleeping difficulties, problems to concentrate, and anxiety.

Financial situation

All of the informants received financial compensation paid by SSIA, i.e. activation support. All but one informants expressed a situation where financial difficulties was a major concern; the compensation was considered too low to be able to afford monthly expenditures. The unstable situation on the labour market had been an on-going process, and the years with low income had led to a very vulnerable financial position. Some were worried about having to leave their home, and others explained how they had to rely on family and network for financial support. The informants who had partners relied financially on them, and some of the informants received financial support from children or parents. Informants who lacked this kind of family and network support, instead received means tested social assistance. The financial situation of the informants gives a clear indication of the increased responsibility put on families and the reduced scope of social protection through the welfare state. It also raises serious questions on the chances for long term unemployed to live an independent life. Some of the informants were caught in a poverty trap, where means to invest in necessary skills was lacking and the system in itself constitutes a barrier for increasing. Two concrete examples of situations in which financial vulnerability reduces the chances for the individual to find a way back to the labour market will be provided: Investing in a driving licence would in some cases raise the chances for finding employment. One of the informants who did not have a licence, did own a car. The car was worth less than 1000 euro, and she was using the car to prepare for

the driving licence test. She was told by her case worker in social services to sell the car, in order to be eligible for social assistance. Without car, she would have to do all the driving in a driving school, a much more expensive and less viable option. The other example relates to skill enhancing. One of the informants had been offered a job, but would have to complete a short training on running a operative system; he had to become be certified. The informant lacked the financial means to pay for the five day-training, and with financial responsibility for underage children, taking up new loans and even reducing the monthly income was not seen as an option. PES could not offer the course, neither would they pay for the course. One informant describes:

No, they have completely missed out on some things. Like, they demand that you should study, and things like that. But, the compensations you would have is so low, that it is really impossible if you have a family life. You cannot prioritize away your own children, for instance.

The stories tell about two individuals whose way to the labour market is obstructed by their financial vulnerability, but also by rigid systems seemingly incapable of individualising interventions. Some of the informants also described a feeling of lost control, as they had been referred to activation they did not prefer. They did not know the reasons for the referral of the case worker, but as financial compensation was tied to participation, they saw no other option than participating in the activation.

Family and network

Three of the informants were single and lived on their own, with either no children or adult children who had moved out. Four of the informants had financial responsibility for children who at the time of the interview were below 18 years of age. The children who were not in school age had child care provided by the municipality during the hours of activation (full time for full time activation). Several of the informants described problems in their marriages, and some had recently been going or were going through divorces. Intra familiar violence was mentioned, as well as difficulties due to increasing feeling of being socially isolated during the period of unemployment. Housing was not explicitly mentioned as a problem, except for the fear of losing the house in a deteriorating financial situation.

History of contacts

All of the informants were in contact with and registered as unemployed as the local PES. In order to be eligible for financial compensation, unemployment insurance as well as activation support, a registration at the local PES office and compliance with suggestions made by PES case workers is required. The local PES office is obliged to report individuals to the respective unemployment insurance by non-compliance, but whether sanctions are fulfilled differ between the insurances (IAF 2013). The sanctions are build up according to a first, second and third warning. The government is currently working on legislation to introduce the same systems of sanctions for unemployed receiving activation support. However, at the time being, case workers only have the option of expelling the unemployed from the program by withdrawing the decision on activation (anvisningsbeslut). This leaves the unemployed without financial compensation.⁵ The informants were very well aware of the immanent threat of loosing the financial compensation (see WP 6 Sweden country report).

In general, the level of knowledge about the system of support offered by PES was low among the informants. Some of the informants expressed a great deal of frustration in relation to decisions made by case workers, where the rationale behind the decisions had not been sufficiently explained (see also WP 6 Sweden country report).

The face-to-face meetings with case workers at PES were described as short, and rare. Meetings are usually organised by the case worker, who writes a letter the person. Often, the meeting takes place in order to renew an action plan. One of the informants describes how she was invited to a meeting with her case worker. Along her, others were also invited:

I: What happens in a meeting with your case worker?

LTU: Well, last time, there were several of us, who sat around a table. Well, six or seven. Then we got to talk to him (the case worker, my comment) a bit. He took one after the other, and talked to us. There were two of them, my case worker and another one. (...) It took ten or fifteen minutes, maybe.

The meetings are described as highly focused on job search, on updating of action plans. One long term unemployed recalls her first visit to PES, and the meeting with her case worker:

⁵ The suggestion to equalise the systems for compensation through unemployment insurance and activity support is described as a reinforcement of the work line, but also as reducing the economic consequences by non compliance. Instead of expelling the person, a warning can be given (IAF 2010). Studies show that expulsion from labour market programs and thereby loss of activation support was rare, ca 2 % of all referrals to labour market programs were withdrawn in 2009-2011. In the majority of these cases, the decision (and compensation) was withdrawn because the individual qualified for unemployment insurance. However, refusal to take part in activation within the Job and development or Youth and job guarantee or misconduct and obstructive behaviour were other common reasons. (IAF 2011).

LTU: We met for 10-20 minutes.

I: Ok, and what questions did she ask you?

LTU: Well.... How I should go about, like, my action plan. How I was supposed to look for jobs.

I: Did she ask anything else, about your situation or about your life?

LTU: No, I don't think so.

The focus of the meetings are related to the unemployed has been doing in relation to job search, and future planning.

LTU: I talk to him, he goes through, my file, one could say.

I: Ok, a case, or a file, that they have? Or what is it?

LTU: Well, I guess it is some kind of standard questions, really. Like, what have I been thinking of, what have I applied for, what applications have I written. And stuff like that .

Issues related to more private matters are generally not discussed, according to the long term unemployed interviewed (see WP 6 Sweden country report). The case workers are, with some exceptions described as friendly and professional; and as persons doing what they can under the conditions they are working under. They are all very well aware of the high work load carried out by the case workers, and whereas some use this as an explanation as to why case workers are not so accessible as they wish, others are frustrated (see also WP 6 Sweden country report).

Several of the LTU expressed positive experiences of activation as such. One of the reasons mentioned was the supporting role of the staff in the activation projects, others mentioned the social aspects of meeting people in the same situation. Even the ones who had been very negative towards the suggested activation expressed a neutral rather than negative opinion about the activation. However, there were also signs of silent opposition, or resistance. Slacking, or doing other things than taking part in the activation program, has been described as one way to execute resistance in activation programs (Panican & Ulmestig 2011). Facebooking and playing games at the computer, instead of actively looking for jobs could be one way. Others could, for instance, be prolonged smoke or coffee brakes. All of these could be observed in the project where the prolonged study visit took place. The staff of the project was well aware of this, and was described as a problem only if the behaviour had a “contagious” or demotivating effect on other participants. However, it was not seen as a problem as such.

Only three of the informants mentioned contacts with the municipal social services, and had been taking part in municipal activation programs as well labour market programs offered by PES. Some of the informants did not see the social services as a viable option, due to the stigma associated with mans tested social services. The encounters with the case workers within the municipality are generally described in a more positive way than the encounters with case workers within PES. First of all, the case workers have more knowledge about the entire life situation of the individual, than their case workers at PES. The case workers within social services are not exchanged as they are in PES; case workers within social services in Örebro keep the same clients throughout the entire process, whereas the PES case worker is replaced depending on participation in labour market programs.

V. CONCLUSION

Many of the informants seem to share similar problems in relation to health concerns, social problems, financial vulnerability and long lasting unstable positions on the labour market. That unemployed tend to have more problems than simply the absence of employment is not in itself surprising and has been well documented. However, the complex life situations of the long term unemployed raises some important questions in relation to the support offered by the case workers.

Policies for long term unemployed are put to work by case workers at local offices, either as part of a national agency (PES, SSIA) or as a local authority (municipality). There are several mechanisms at stake, refraining case workers from meeting the individual needs of the unemployed. First of all, the time restrictions associated with the *Job and development guarantee* and the *Youth and job guarantee* reduces the possibilities for case workers to offer tailor made support. The regular unemployed have to qualify for intensified support, by being registered as unemployed for as long as up to 14 months. Resources are linked to job seekers' participation in specific labour market programs, rather than to the professional judgement of the case worker or the needs as the unemployed express them.

Secondly, case workers lack information on the life situation of the individuals, preventing them from offering services that corresponds to the needs of the unemployed. High case loads in combination with high demands on documentation and administration, makes it necessary for case worker to develop strategies to restrict time spent in face-to-face meetings with the unemployed. This implies that only limited information on the situation can be gathered in each specific case. Another reason for the case workers' lack of information is the absence of training in how to meet clients with complex social problems. Case workers who have not been trained in doing so, or have sufficient work experience, are less inclined to ask about social problems of individuals, and issues that might be perceived as personal and sensitive. No formal qualification on working with vulnerable groups is required for PES and SSIA case workers. Social workers, who are trained in taking a holistic approach to people's life situation, are mainly found within the municipal organisation. In PES and SSIA, any degree in social science is considered suitable.

Thirdly, the standardization of the procedures through which the unemployed are processed within the organisations, impedes case workers from meeting the individual needs of the unemployed. In PES as well as SSIA and municipality, unemployed are constructed in line with the already given organisational solutions. This means that instead of focusing the individual needs as expressed by the unemployed, the client is categorised and referred through the system according the solutions (and interventions) available for each category. In the three organisations, the processes which unemployed go through (described in chart 4) are highly standardised, and in order for the unemployed to access services, the unemployed has to comply with these standardised categorisation processes.

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The Local Governance of Social Cohesion in Europe

**WP7: The Impact of an Integrated Approach
to Social Cohesion**

National report - UK Country Analysis

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Outline

This report is the UK part of Work Package 7 of the Seventh Framework European Commission programme: Local Worlds of Social Cohesion (LOCALISE). LOCALISE is focused on the organisational challenges of integrating social and employment policy, partly in response to the radical changes in the local governance of social cohesion across many Member States of the European Union. The programme brings together six European countries and develops a common theoretical and methodological approach that guides the research in each of the work packages.

The report explores the structure of everyday interactions between advisors delivering employment services directly and clients receiving those services. One of the tasks of the report is to critically investigate the effects of an 'integrated' social and employment policy in terms of social inclusion and well-being of the vulnerable groups. The report is structured as follows: this first chapter presents the methodology used and the governance of activation policy. The second chapter explains activation policies for the long-term unemployed from the perspective of the policy makers. The third chapter focuses on street-level bureaucrats' views of the implementation of activation policies for the long-term unemployed, and on the general policy context. The last chapter considers activation policies and their effects from the point of view of the unemployed individuals. The report ends with a conclusion chapter.

Whenever possible throughout the report those interviewed are allowed to tell their story in their own words, therefore the author's narrative is interjected by interviewees narrative as much as possible. Throughout the document when reporting information gathered from the interviews, advisors are referred to as 'advisors', while clients are referred to as 'participants'. None of the quotes used in this report are labelled in any way, so as to protect confidentiality and anonymity. Deleted or amended information in the quotes is designated using three dots inside parenthesis or word inside square brackets respectively.

1. Introduction and Methodology

This chapter describes data collection and analysis, and the governance structures and organisational arrangements of employment policy at national and local level.

1.1 – Description of selection of interviewees and other data used for analysis

This report is based on interviews with policy makers and experts with responsibilities for and/or knowledge of employment policy development and implementation. The investigation also draws on interviews with front-line workers implementing those policies, and individual users of those policies.

Policy makers and experts

Interviews with policy makers and experts were conducted in three localities in the UK: Cardiff, Edinburgh, and Newcastle. These cities represent average, very strong, and under-performing UK regions classified in terms of economic health¹ and compared to UK overall performance. Participants hold senior positions in relevant organisation selected in order to meet the parameters agreed by the consortium partners (see Table 1). A more detail explanation of the selection criteria for localities and participants can be found in WP4 UK National Report (Fuentes & McQuaid, 2013: 10-11).

Table 1 – Number of organisation and interviews classified by type of organisation and sector

Participants	Edinburgh		Newcastle		Cardiff	
	Org	Int	Org	Int	Org	Int
Government officials	2	2	3	4	4	4
Public Employment Service, public agencies (local and national)	3	4	2	2	3	4
Service providers (public, private and third sector)	8	12	8	10	7	10
Federations and experts	3	3	4	4	5	7
Total	16	21	17	20	19	25

Org = organisation that participate / Int = interviews conducted

Front-line workers and service users

Interviews with front-line workers and service users (refer to as advisors and clients respectively by the organisation studied) took place in one organisation providing labour market interventions to long-term unemployed individuals. Since UK wide activation policy for the long-term unemployment comes under the Work Programme (WP), and since this policy is delivered by contracted organisations, it was necessary that the organisation under study was a WP delivery organisation (see Section 1.2 and 2.1 for more information on labour market policies). The requirement was to choose an organisation regarded as innovative, in the way of working and the cooperation structures with other organisations. Due to confidentiality assurances, the organisation, locality, and region will not be identified in this report. Anything that could identify the organisation has been deleted or changed substantially. The organisation operates in an urban locality in the UK.

Eight advisors and nine clients were interviewed; these interviews were pre-arranged by the office manager, and took place during two days². More detail on interviewees selection, data

¹ The 'economic health' classification was based on three variables: The labour force participation rates (in % of the annual average population (from 15 to 64 years, 2008); The total unemployment rate (in % of the labour force, 2008); The regional gross domestic product (purchasing power parities per inhabitant, 2008). The analysis was conducted for LOCALISE Work Package 3 by CETRO (German partners in this consortium). Work Package 3 ranked NUTS-II regions within the six nation-states according to the level of social inequality in order to identify best, average and under-performing regions.

² The interviews with advisors took place at the end of November and the beginning of January, and the interviews with clients took place at the end of November.

analysis, and interviews constrains can be found on WP6 UK National Report (Fuentes & McQuaid, 2014: 6-7). Section 4.1 and Table 2 in this report present clients' characteristics in more detail.

1.2 – How local governance structure and organisational arrangements translate into people-processing

This section describes the governance and operationalization of policies targeted to the long-term unemployed, which will have consequences on people-processing³. Labour market policy is a UK government reserved matter and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is responsible for welfare and pension policy (DWP, nd a). Local government does not have responsibility for, or over, labour market policy, but they have responsibility for policies closely related to it such as employability, including skills and economic strategy. Currently, national activation policy for the long-term unemployed is delivered through the Work Programme (WP), launched throughout Britain in June 2011. According to the DWP, the WP aims “to support people at risk of long term unemployment into sustainable employment. Work Programme providers are paid primarily for the results they achieve and they will be paid more for supporting people who are harder to help” (DWP, 2012a). 18 companies have been contracted by the DWP to deliver the WP in the 18 contract areas (see Figure 1). These companies (from now on labelled ‘prime providers’ or ‘primes’) hold contracts in one or multiple contract areas and are in competition with one or two other prime providers⁴.

All individuals claiming out-of-work income benefits and defined as long-term unemployed⁵ and other certain claimants⁶ have to take part in the WP. Other benefit recipients can be voluntarily referred⁷ but once in the programme, participation becomes obligatory (DWP, 2012a). The WP is mandatory for up to two years and sanctions are imposed by JCP for non-participation. Referrals of clients to prime providers are carried out by JCP on a systematic basis, with the same number assigned to each prime. However, the prime provider with better results would get an increased market share of clients over time.

As service delivery has not been specified by the DWP, and there is no requirement for WP delivery organisations to specify the services they deliver, there is little knowledge of services offered and accessed by claimants in each contract area, locality and/or prime contractor. This service approach has been termed a ‘black-box’ approach by the DWP.

³ The notion of ‘people-processing’ considers implementation as a process of social construction of client during which a person is subjected to the operation of the organisation, his/her complex situation is simplified, standardised and acted upon.

⁴ Four contract areas have three prime providers, while the rest have two.

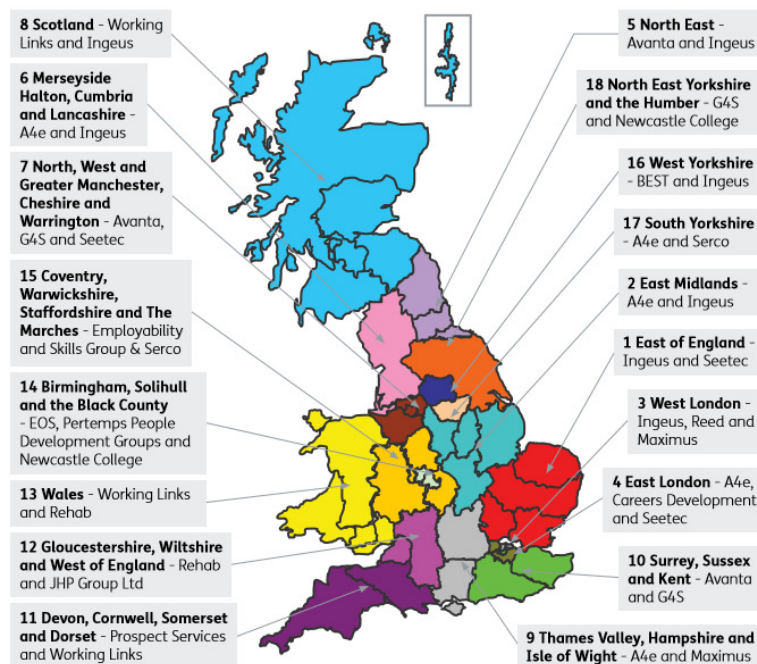
⁵ Individuals aged 25 and over that have been unemployed for 12 months or more; and individuals under 25 years-old that have been unemployed for 9 months or more.

⁶ These are: those receiving JSA who are according to the DWP 2012a at “seriously disadvantaged in the labour market, including some who have recently received incapacity benefits” and that have claimed benefits for the past three months; and some individuals in receipt of Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) Work Related Activity Group that will be required to attend when close to being fit to work.

⁷ For example the ESA Support Group.

Primes were required to provide supply chains of sub-contractors in their bids to the DWP, however, no specification on the use of suppliers exists thereafter (Simmonds, 2011). Due to the lack of publish data, it is difficult to know the services that Work Programme providers deliver or contract out. This report will shed light on one the service provision of one prime contractor.

Figure 1 – Work Programme’s contract areas and providers.



Source: DWP, 2012a.

Payments to WP providers are based on results: the criterion to draw full payment includes a sustainability requirement, and there is also a clear differentiation in payments according to clients’ classification based primarily on the type of benefit received by the clients, and in the length of unemployment and age group⁸.

2. Activation from the point of view of policy makers

This section presents typical trajectories for the long-term unemployed as they are planned by policy-makers, and how labour market policies impact on service users’ well-being and social inclusion is evaluated.

⁸ Prime providers will receive a total minimum amount of £3,700 (e.g. £3,800 for a young person) to a total of maximum of £13,700 (e.g. for those receiving Employment and Support Allowance in the Support Group and that had recently received Incapacity Benefit) (Fuentes & McQuaid, 2013b).

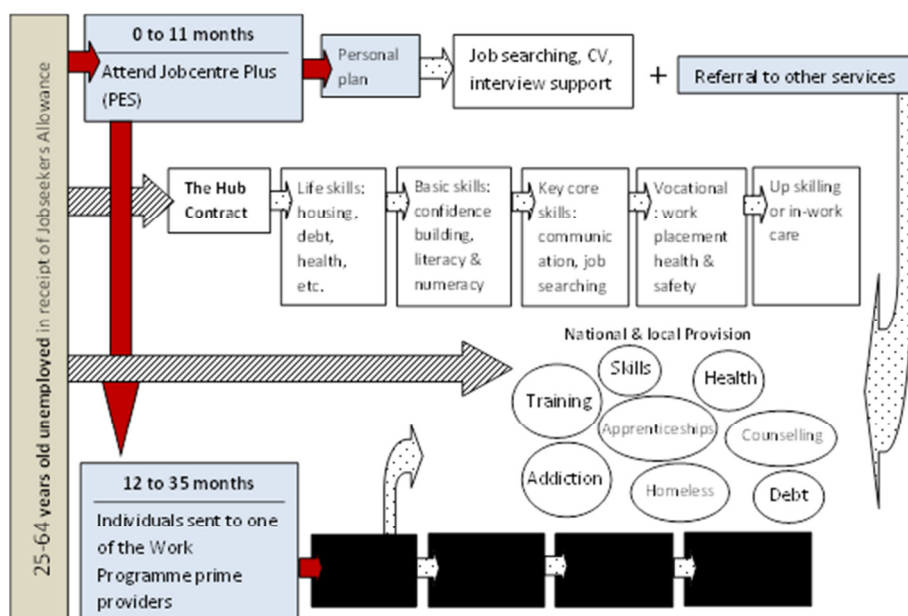
2.1 – How policy-makers plan the typical processing of long term unemployed in local organisations involved in activation.

Labour market policy is a UK government reserved matter (i.e. it is the responsibility of the UK government). The DWP is responsible for welfare and pension policy, for income protection (income transfers) and activation (employment services) across the UK. Part of this study focuses on localities in Scotland, Wales and England. The devolved administrations of Scotland and Wales have devolved responsibilities for a number of policy areas. Some of the devolved policy areas directly relevant to this study are: education and skills, housing, health (and social work), social welfare, economic development, transport, and local government.

National policy

The provision of services for the short-term unemployed⁹ is the responsibility of Jobcentre Plus¹⁰ (JCP) advisors, which as well as directly providing some services for this group of claimants, refer individuals to contracted-out services (such as training and placements or specialist provision). JCP advisors are also responsible for imposing sanctions if claimants do not comply with mandatory activity, and/or break their Jobseekers’ Agreement. Services for the long-term unemployed are largely contracted-out by the DWP to private, public or third sector providers. National labour market overall policies for the short- and long-term unemployed are usually mandatory. As it can be seen in Figure 2, Figure 3, and Figure 4 below, the three localities in our study have identical mandatory paths for these claimants as a result of national activation policies. National labour market policies are linked to income assistance for individuals receiving out-of-work benefits.

Figure 2 – Edinburgh: typical service journey of a 25 to 64 years-old unemployed individual



⁹ Individuals aged 25 and over that have been unemployed for less than 12 months; and individuals under 25 years-old that have been unemployed for less than 9 months.

¹⁰ JCP is the public employment service

Figure 3 – Newcastle: typical service journey of a 25 to 64 years-old unemployed individual

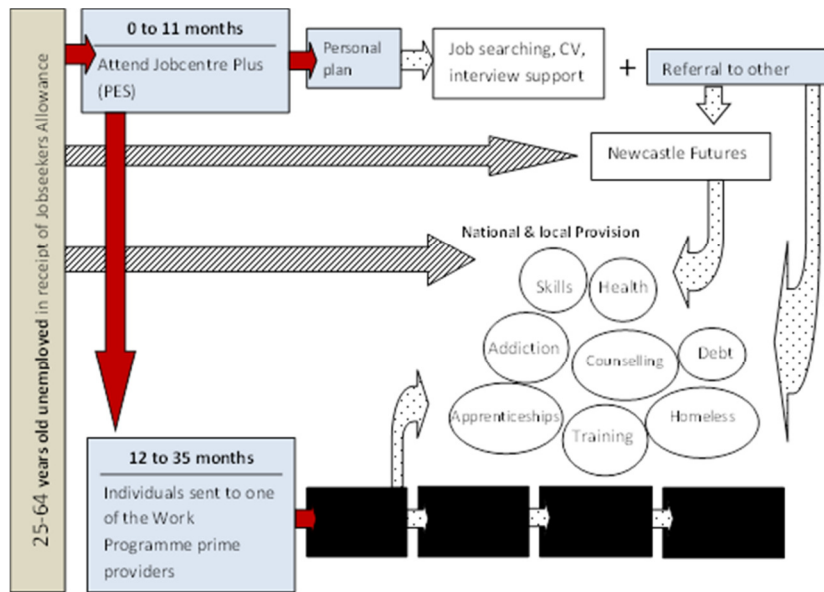
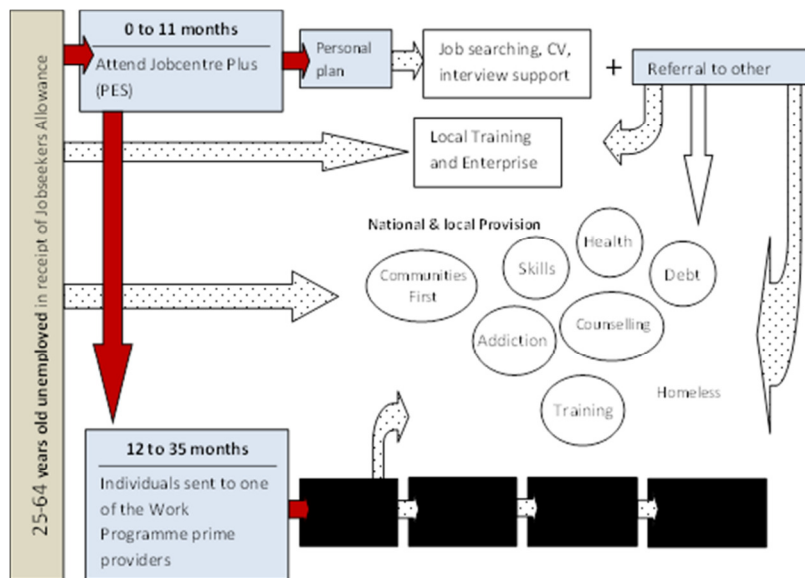


Figure 4 – Cardiff: typical service journey of a 25 to 64 years-old unemployed individual



- ➔ Obligatory path (national policy)
- ➔ Voluntary path (devolved and local government policies)
- ➔ Possible referral routes: it could be in a mandatory or voluntary basis

Source: based on UK WP4 report (p. 47 of UK, WP4 report or deliverable 4.1 p. 217).

Currently there are a number of ‘Get Britain Working’ measures (see Appendix 1) or welfare-to-work programmes which were established in 2011 by the current Coalition Government (gov.uk). For the short-term unemployed, JCP managers decide which measures will be offered in their area (DWP 2012c) and service users do not have a choice on the provider or

on the type of provision. For some unemployed individuals, 'Get Britain Working' initiatives are compulsory depending on DWP conditions and their Jobseeker's Agreement. Service provider's discretion over the services' goals and processes is limited, as the DWP determines the goal and overall processes of the measures.

For the long-term unemployed, the Work Programme is the national welfare-to-work policy which replaces a number of previous programmes (DWP 2012a) and it is mandatory for certain benefit claimants (see Section 1.2). The introduction of the Work Programme has affected JCP service provision, which was said to be now focused on the short-term unemployed.

Local services

Local authorities are responsible for providing front-line services such as social services, economic development, housing, etc. There are local government Acts that set out the relation between central and local government: in Scotland the relationship is based on the Scottish Government's Concordat¹¹ and the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003; The Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) represents the interests of local government and is the link between central and local government. The introduction of the Work Programme has affected devolved administration and local government service provision linked or related to labour market participation, which was said to be now focused primarily on the short-term unemployed rather than the long-term unemployed.

Local services for the unemployed varied in the three localities under study (Figure 2, Figure 3, and Figure 4), due mainly to local government provision and the diversity of private and third sector providers that have been contracted to provide services on employability, skills and education, social assistance, etc. However the specific labour market services available to the long-term unemployed within the WP are not in the hands of local government, or national government. Due to the black-box approach described in Section 1.2, services are designed and sourced by the prime contractor. Due to the lack of available data and to commercial confidentiality, the specific delivery model implemented in each locality is unknown. It is expected, and was mentioned in the interviews with service providers, that prime contractors will access local service provision through various contractual or referral agreements.

WP prime providers

WP prime contractors design services for long-term unemployed in order to achieve the requirement outcomes and to obtain payment from the DWP. From the interviews conducted in the three localities, all prime contractors provided services in-house and also sub-contracted some services: the levels of outsourcing appear to range from 40 per cent to

¹¹ The Concordat was agreed in November 2007, which set out the terms of a new working relationship between the Scottish Government and local government based on a number of key tenets with regard to strategy, funding, and processes (Scottish Government website [accessed 3 April 2012] <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/923/0054147.pdf>).

over 70 per cent. Outsourcing was, in most cases, a result of the prime not having a physical presence in a geographic area, specific expertise, or having higher cost or lower effectiveness than sub-contractors.

2.2 – How local policy-makers and experts evaluate the impact of social and employment policies on the social inclusion and well-being of the most vulnerable groups

When policy makers and experts were asked about their opinion regarding activation policies for the unemployed, there were a number of criticisms in how policies were designed. A number of interviewees mention that services are not integrated fully and that agencies do not collaborate in part because they have to compete for funding and they have to perform according to outcomes. As a result interviewees said that there was some duplication in services. It was stressed that coordination is more efficient if it is done at the design stage:

“So after [a service] it’s been designed it is too late, so implementation is not going to work, we’ll work around that, and things are bolted on to try and fill the gaps; whereas if you design it with an open canvas you are able to design it in a much more coherent way.”

Another common complain regarding the impact of policies, was that usually services and policies are developed and then individuals are expected to fit into them, while there should be rather developed around individual needs. One interviewee mentioned that public services should be run by social enterprises, in order for them to be more tune to the needs of individuals than the needs of government.

“I think that is what is wrong in the way that we develop structure and we develop frameworks and we develop services and then we expect people to fit into them.”

Clear evidence and understanding of methods that work for moving people into closer or into the labour market, was also needed in order to develop services that are effective. It was stressed that data sharing between organisations was needed to provide evidence of successful trajectories and also to provide services that are targeted to people’s needs. Having a case-worker or case-manager which coordinates services and the trajectory of clients was seen as beneficial, in order to limit the gaps between services and create some rationalisation.

The importance of demand-side policies (e.g. the creation of jobs, opportunities, etc.) and the importance of supporting SMEs (Small and Medium Size Enterprises) was stressed. It was said that policy should look into getting individuals into jobs that they can sustain. Also stressed was the need for investment into policies, rather than just looking at implementing policies based on cost-reduction.

“I’d like to see the rules of procurement changed so that they are focused on performance and quality, obviously price and cost has got to be part of that but less a focus on that and more of a focus on quality, performance and social impact, so that in some way we can measure the social impact to give social enterprises an opportunity to explain what impact they can make.”

It was said that having universal services (and then within the universal offer there would be services targeted further for particular groups with particular barriers) would not stigmatise people and they would identify and access particular services.

3. Activation from the point of view of street-level bureaucrats

This section focuses in street-level bureaucrats. It first describes the process by which street-level bureaucrats assess and categorise unemployed individuals; it then focuses on the planning of activation; and finishes by presenting their evaluation of labour market policies.

3.1 – Diagnosis of life situation of long-term unemployed by street-level bureaucrats

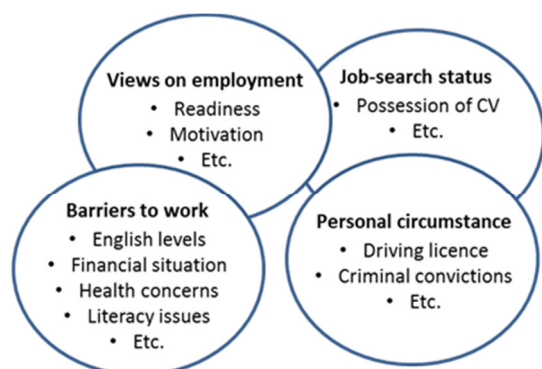
The organisation studied refers to unemployed individuals mandated to the WP by the DWP as ‘clients’. In the first few meetings with the organisation, the client’s current personal and household situation, employment goals, and barriers to employment are explored (see Figure 5) are explored through a standardised questionnaire, designed by the organisation. The initial advisor which meets the client is not the client’s case-worker yet; a case-worker (also called advisor) will be assigned to each client after the first few meetings and once the client’s next stage of support has been decided. According to advisors, the answers to these questions, the advisor’s judgement, and client’s opinion will determine client’s next stage/type of support. It was stressed that the questionnaire is a subjective tool, which allows advisors to use their experience in order to categorise clients according to their position with regards to labour market participation.

Advisors are usually assigned to the same client for a period of several months. According to advisors their role is to support and help people through different means to move closer to getting a job and ultimately move into sustainable employment. Advisor’s responsibilities differed slightly depending on their specific position within the organisation. Assistance provided by advisors usually takes into account client’s potential barriers to employment in three broad areas.

The first area is that of the client’s personal circumstances. Questions in this area aim to ascertain client’s personal situation, or follow up on issues relevant to that person. When exploring this area, advisors usually let the client speak and do not constrain the conversation by using prepared questions, although in a few instances a check-list is used to

make sure a minimum of information has been gathered. According to advisors every aspect of a client's situations that could be a barrier to work is considered when planning and/or providing support to individuals: including their health, housing needs, finances, childcare, also clients "*personality and likeability*" or in other words their communication skills and presentation. This is because, as advisors stated, clients' circumstance at any time are fundamental in their chances of moving into employment.

Figure 5 – Themes of the initial questionnaire to clients (non-exhaustive¹²).



The second area that advisors explore is clients' expectations. Questions in this area focus on exploring clients' goals and preferred jobs. In some stages this also involves challenging clients' expectations, and the advisor suggesting and exploring other areas of work.

The third area of interest to advisors is clients' employability and job-search methods. Questions in this area mainly focus on: exploring clients' experience and skills including transferable skills, and finding solutions to skills gaps; learning and developing job-search tools and techniques (such as CVs, covering letters, etc.); exploring and discussing job-searching methods and ways of applying for jobs (internet, personal, phone); and also discussion of interview skills and techniques, etc.

Advisors mentioned that they leave clients to tell what they think are their barriers to work, rather than been prescriptive in what could or should be considered a barrier. There appears to be only a few mandatory tools that advisors have to use during their meetings with clients: the initial questionnaire (used in the initial meetings and before starting or finishing stages of support), the Better Off Calculation, and the administrative clients' files. Although it was said that there are multiple tools that advisors can use for supporting clients (e.g. a scale of client's progression), they are not required to use them. Some advisors found those tools helpful in order to motivate some clients by showing them distance travel; some used and created tools to support client while other did not. Advisors "*screen*" and categorise clients, but there seems to be scope for subjectivity and participants' input. Therefore, it is

¹² Figure 4 is not an exhaustive representation of themes that the questionnaire contained, as the questionnaire was never seen and interviewees could not mention systematically what it contained.

difficult to see only 'mechanical objectivity' (Porter, 1995) taken place in the assessment of individuals.

Various forms of support are offered within the organisation (see Section 4.2). It is during the meetings with the advisor where support is mainly given and planned. Those meetings take place usually in the organisation's open-plan office. There are a number of private rooms which can be used for meetings if more privacy is required, and for group or one-to-one workshops. According to advisors, the regularity of meetings is tailored to clients' needs. All advisors interviewed stressed that they have a high level of flexibility in adapting the support provided to clients' needs and wishes. A number of factors could make the service inflexible in terms of the type and pace of support given; these are advisors' case loads, performance targets, and pre-arranged meetings.

Advisor's caseloads vary depending on their specific role, however in general advisors' average caseload is 200 clients. Advisors with clients classified as 'closer to the labour market' have in average a caseload of 70 clients. Advisors normally arrange appointments with 12 to 15 clients every day (higher if group-work is planned), and attendance is around 75 per cent. All advisors arranged 30 minutes meetings, although it was said to be normal for meetings to vary in length, depending on other pre-arranged appointments and on clients' needs at specific times (e.g. if a client has an interview coming up advisors will expend more time with that client)¹³. Advisors seem to be very flexible and autonomous in their daily workload planning.

In terms of outcome targets, all advisors have individual targets and, as expected due to the financial structure of the WP, these are two-fold: targets for job-starts; and targets for job sustainability which in turn is divided into 13 weeks and 26 weeks sustainability. It appears that different advisors have different targets and although they could mention job-starts targets with certainty (5 to 8 a month), they were unsure about their exact sustainability targets (around 75 to 90 per cent). It was stressed that targets vary and are dependent on business needs. Most advisors said that targets do not hinder their job, and that the way to achieve targets is to do the job properly: i.e. sustainability is achieved by finding the right job for the client.

Although many areas of a client's life seem to be of interest to advisors in order to assess clients' needs and plan support, assessing the actual range and availability of support required is perhaps more difficult. With the limited information gathered in this study regarding range of support, a tentative analysis is that the support and assistance provided to those with health issues or multiple barriers is narrow. However, due to the lack of data on WP service delivery, it is difficult to know if the organisation studied is offering more or less support compared to other WP organisations.

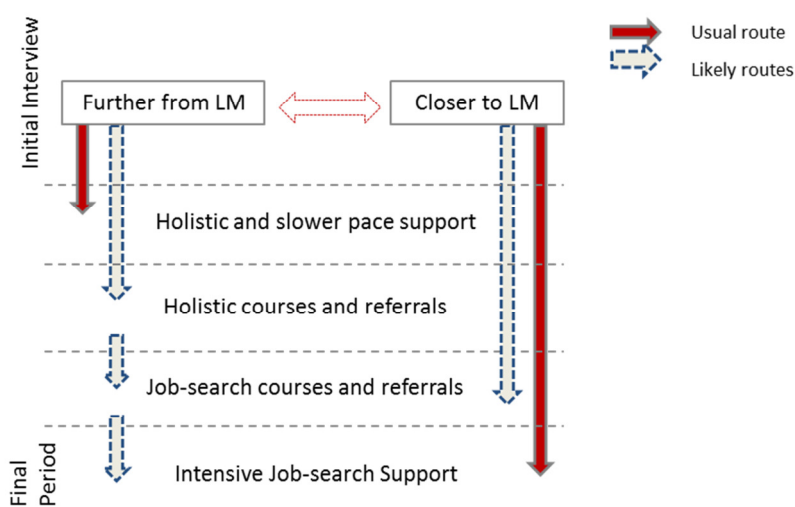
¹³ Observations of meetings seem to correlate with the practices narrated by advisors interviewed: meetings observed lasted between 20 to 35 minutes.

3.2 – Activation: addressing problems of long term unemployed

The assistance provided by the organisation could be classified in the same way that labour market policy is often classified: supply-side and demand-side assistance. The former encompasses general personal support and job-search and job-specific support. It includes (a) ‘soft’ and holistic help and (b) more ‘hard’ and job-search targeted help. Demand-side assistance takes the form of, for example, securing work trials and shelter vacancies. The main, although by no means only, focus of the assistance appears to be supply-side hard help.

Clients can access various types of support at the same time, but there is, to some degree, a ‘typical’ client trajectory (Figure 6). For example, clients closer to the labour market or with less substantial barriers, will access assistance including courses which is more focused on job-search techniques. Clients which have more complex barriers or are further away from the labour market will receive job-search assistance but will also access courses –whether provided by the organisation or sub-contractors– with a focus on health, daily habits, and targeting specific barriers that they have. The support to this group of clients seems to have a different pace as *“they need a bit more time”*, and will be more focused on addressing labour market barriers before they are ready to engage in intensive job-search. Within the two broad client’s categories (closer to and further from the labour market) there are many different individual circumstances and situations. There is specific support for those clients that are not ready to engage with an advisor in the office environment, and according to the organisation the number of clients accessing this support has increased since the start of the WP, from around 1 per cent of clients to currently 40 per cent of all clients in this category (most of which seem to be in receipt of ESA).

Figure 6 – Typical path of support (LM = labour market)



It was stressed that the support offered and the pace of the support depends on the individual circumstances and needs, such as: personal health (e.g. physical or mental illnesses or substance misused), household situation (e.g. having children in care, partnership/marriage breakup, etc.), housing issues (e.g. homelessness), and other issues such as criminal records. It also depends on unexpected individual circumstances or other factors, such as family bereavements, health issues, etc. These factors will determine clients' needs and assistance at different times. According to advisors, their experience and their judgement are fundamental in deciding client's next stages, pace and type of support.

There does not appear to be a standard or template 'action plan' that advisors have to use or produce, with or for clients. This action plan consists of planned actions that clients will do in between meetings, or during a longer period of usually four weeks, or it can be a bit of both. It will also include what subsequent meetings will cover. These plans usually focus on job-search preparation and/or activity, including applying for jobs, focusing on clients' weaknesses (e.g. skills gaps such as interview skills, IT, or others). However, in some occasion other activities could be included, such as making an appointment with a GP, etc. although advisors mentioned that their influence on some issues such as appointments with external agencies is limited as advisors *"can only kind of show them the door and they've got to walk through it"*. It seems that there is certain dialogue between advisor and clients when planning activities. According to advisors, involving clients in the planning of, and decisions regarding, their support develops trust, motivation and independence. Tailoring support to clients' needs and aims was mentioned by advisors as important in order for clients to take ownership of the decisions made, attain independence in the long-term, achieve sustainability of job-starts, build trust in the relationship, and openness to ideas that the advisor will suggest and explore.

Within each stage of support there is also some standardisation with regards to the type of assistance offered. For example the roles and responsibilities of advisors supporting those closer to the labour market are similar, and the same is the case for those advisors supporting those with multiple barriers. However, advisors stressed that they have a high level of flexibility in adapting to clients' needs and wishes. For example advisors can go on industry visits, arrange group-work or courses (such as basis IT skills, interview skills, sector-skills workshops), or go out for a coffee or to hand out CVs with clients. They are encouraged to use a range of tools and to develop and devise their own tools as they see fit in order to help clients *"back into work"*.

Clients referrals

Clients, however far from or close to the labour market, can access support or courses provided by the organisation or external contracted-out provision. According to advisors, clients are referred to these providers or courses according to their needs. The courses available in-house are the same for all clients. However, it does appear that advisors suggest,

or clients request, attending those courses as and when necessary. It was mentioned by some advisors that courses also help them to manage their caseload.

The WP tendering process required that those contractors presented a chain of subcontractors. In the case of the organisation and locality under study the subcontractors dealt mainly, although in some instances not exclusively, with people with physical disabilities, mental health conditions, learning difficulties, criminal records, and/or substance misuse. Some also deal with all client groups but focus in a specific skills or employability area. Advisors mentioned that referrals to these sub-contractors were done on a case by case basis and according to clients' needs. Once a client is referred to external subcontracted organisations, she/he secures a place and attendance is expected. Clients who do not engage ("DNEs") are not referred to sub-contractors. Some advisors refer less due to the nature of their role or their caseload (either because their clients do not need it or because they have accessed these services before).

Advisors also suggest to clients other services/organisations that, although not sub-contracted by the prime provider, could be of benefit (such as charities providing food free of charge, organisations providing counselling, or courses such as 'coping with depression', etc.) depending on their needs: *"I can't help everyone but I can help them by knowing where they need to go"*. However, approaching these organisations is entirely the decision of the client. In some occasions, advisors phone organisations or agencies on behalf of the client to ask for advice or make appointments (such as organisations offering debt or housing advice). It was said that clients usually have support from other agencies, such as GP (General Practitioner), social services, etc. Although there does not seem to be a systematic approach to this type of referrals, one advisor said they can access a list of local organisations electronically and some advisors mentioned consulting with other colleagues when necessary. Although advisors would suggest the in-house support, they recommend this alongside external expert assistance. An advisor mentioned the following example:

"I have a girl who quite suddenly became pretty depressed; I would not want her accessing [support here] until she's spoken to her doctor about it first. So, [I] signpost to a doctor."

Links with employers in order to access job opportunities, was seen as very important by advisors and clients. There do not seem to be links with education providers and advisors said that long-term education is not usually mentioned by clients, and if it has career effects then that option is explored. In the words of one advisor:

"If a client wants to do long-term training/education, they will be signposted to the colleges with encouragement, but also they will be reminded that they need to be considering "what is this going to do for me in terms of employment at the other end? Is it worth your while to take a year out of looking for work to get a qualification as a bricklayer when we are not building anything?""

Conditions of support

Attending the WP is, for most clients, mandatory. Sanctions for non-compliance are imposed ultimately by JCP. In order for JCP to impose sanctions, the prime contractors (and therefore advisors) have to report clients' non-compliance with mandation to JCP (this is a contractual requirement). However, it appears that actions are not mandatory per se, and that advisors have the authority to make actions mandatory (or not).

Mandation, for example making appointments or activities mandatory, is not often used unless necessary (for example by someone after the third non-show to an appointment or when a client is clearly uncooperative). Before mandation is used advisors try to be as flexible as possible with their clients. Advisors stressed that they prefer to work on trust and allow and encourage clients to take part in the decision making regarding the frequency of meetings, the type of support, etc.

3.3 – Overall assessment of activation system of long-term unemployed by street-level bureaucrats

In term of the adequacy of the WP, advisors stressed that the support available is very good, however a number of potential improvements were mentioned: increasing the availability of local service provision that WP prime providers can access; the administration of sanctioning by JCP could be made clearer to clients, as at present was said to be confusing and as a results tends to diminish clients' trust in the WP organisation; increasing resources into the WP by DWP as this will increase the number of staff and the available support; increasing the profile of the WP amongst employers could be beneficial.

Advisors mentioned that they hope that the support they offer benefit clients. In some cases they said they have been able to see the consequences of the help provided, and they were very encouraged by the results. Advisors mentioned that in some clients that have been long-term unemployed feel *"they have been written off"* and that the right support really helps people.

"I think it's an honour to do this job because you have the ability to change and influence so many lives, not just of the immediate client but also of their family, I think it's a very challenging job at times and it's a very tiring job but each day you're reminded as to why it is that you do this job"

Advisors mentioned that they believe labour market policies to be adequate but stressed that the timing of support could be improved. For example unemployed individuals would benefit if they were referred to the WP earlier on. Some structural factors were mentioned as important barriers to labour market participation for some clients. For example, one advisor mentioned the difficulty for ex-convicts, even for the most motivated and hard-working clients, to find even low-skill low-paid jobs. Another issue mentioned was the inadequacy of housing accommodation, mainly for people that have managed to overcome

substance misused, but they are placed in an environment surrounded by drugs again, so the chances of relapse are increased. One advisor mentioned the need for agencies (for example the public sector such as the NHS, the council and other organisations) to be more joined up with other organisation such as employment agencies.

“You know it is a bit idealistic but if everybody could be singing from the same hymn sheet, if we could all be doing the same thing to help everybody move forward I think it would make a far greater difference.”

One advisor also mentioned that the current welfare changes in term of reduction of entitlements, while understandable in the logic of reducing the welfare bill and ending welfare dependency could increase financial hardship amongst people. This according to the advisor would negatively affect labour market participation, due to for example the increase in crime, homelessness and disengagement.

Social enterprises were mentioned by two advisors as excellent initiatives, as they provide people with the opportunity to gain skills and experience in a real and practical environment. Placements were also mentioned as initiatives that should be encourage and increase.

4. People processing from the point of view of the long-term unemployed individuals

This section focuses on users of labour market services. It first describes participants' individual and household characteristics. The encounters between service users and organisations involved in the delivery of labour market services are then detailed. The section ends by exploring participants' assessment of those policies.

4.1 – Characteristics of interviewees

The number of clients interviewed was nine. Two participants were female and all of them were over 30 years old (see Table 2). All participants but one had been mandated to the WP; six had been in the programme for 12 months or over, while three had been six months or less.

Household circumstances

All participants interviewed lived in single adult households. Only one lived with dependent children; two others had contact with their children in a regular basis. The majority lived in rented housing, either from a housing association or a private landlord. Two people were classified as homeless and lived in temporary accommodation. In one instance homelessness was a result of the spare-room tax, which meant his housing association tenancy was

stopped. The majority of those interviewed were receiving Jobseekers' Allowance (JSA). Some of them had been transferred from other benefits to JSA recently¹⁴.

Table 2 – Characteristics of clients interviewed

Length in the organisation	Length of unemployment	Age
12 months	18 months (but one short-term job during this time)	30-35
20 months	Almost 2 years	30-35
22 months	3 years	30-35
3 months	Over 10 years	35-40
6 months	10 years	35-40
2 months	11 years	40-45
12 months	13 years	40-45
22 months	2 years	40-45
18 months	2 years (but 3 short-term jobs during this time)	45-50

Work history and length of unemployment

Five participants had mostly previous low-skills jobs in the hospitality industry¹⁵. Some people had had transport and delivery jobs, one had professional jobs, one was an animal trainer, and one worked in the construction trade as a bricklayer.

Four participants had been unemployed for 10 year or more, four for around 2 to 3 years, and one person for just over a year. However, two participants that have been unemployed for around 1 to 2 years have had one to three temporary jobs during their time in the WP (see Table 2).

In terms of participants' work history the majority had shorter or temporary, but constant, jobs, with four having had long-term jobs (5 to 10 or more years) previous to their current period of unemployment, and only one not having had previous work experience.

Factors influencing long-term unemployment

The specific cause of current long-term unemployment is difficult to assess. Participants mentioned a number of issues that resulted in their current unemployment. In some cases two or more factors overlap and it would be problematic, without further research, to suggest a causal relationship between these factors and unemployment, and even between the multiplicity of factors that participants mentioned.

Being made redundant was most often mentioned as the reason for unemployment. Redundancy was due to the temporary nature of the job or to the company closing down. Once unemployed, a number of reasons were cited as barriers to finding jobs: the

¹⁴ One person was moved from Income Support to JSA as a result of her youngest child turning five; another person with health issues was moved from Income Support to Employment Support Allowance (ESA), as a result of the obligatory re-assessment.

¹⁵ One person having a managerial job and another person owning his own business.

employment environment¹⁶; lack of skills to continue in the same line of work; and lack of experience over time. In the words of a couple of participants:

“All my life, I can find jobs, no problem (...) But when the recession came, I was going to jobs, like one across the road for example, (...) 419 people were at that job, and it was for standing in the street collecting money, like not collecting money, but getting details so you can get people to fundraise. One position going, and yet 419 people went.”

“I was applying for jobs, but as I say the competition is fierce and because I’d been away for two years, I kind of felt right behind everyone else who’s applying for the job.”

Health issues including depression and substance misused, learning difficulties, together with household problems, caring responsibilities, and prison, were other factors mentioned for current unemployment.

Participants tend to look for work in the sectors where they have worked before, although other sectors were often considered. In some cases, participant did not consider applying for certain jobs, depending on the sector or the condition of work: such as the hours of work, the distance, the temporal nature of jobs.

4.2 – Reconstruction of encounters with the Public Employment Service and other organisations involved in implementation

All participants, but one, had been mandated by JCP (the Public Employment Service) to attend the WP, after being unemployed for 12 months or over. The exception is one participant that accessed the WP straight after being release from prison, and one participant who volunteered to participate in the WP.

Most participants’ main contact with labour market services, prior to their participation in the WP, had been with JCP. Only one mentioned being mandated to another private service provider. Most participants as well as attending the WP organisation, have to attend JCP every two weeks to “*sign on*”, as this is a requirement in order to received out-of-work income benefits. According to participants, meetings with JCP advisors last around 5 to 10 minutes and usually involved checking a number of issues such as: attendance to the WP; changes in circumstances; compliance with mandatory job searching activity¹⁷; etc. The participant receiving ESA Support Group did not attend JCP but had to attend ATOS regularly to undertake the work capability assessment.

Participants said that no information was given to them when they were referred to the WP. Most participants assumed that it would be a similar service to the one offered by JCP. Only one person had positive expectations as he had heard positive things about the provider and therefore volunteered to participate in the programme.

¹⁶ I.e. not enough jobs and too many jobseekers.

¹⁷ This include for example: conducting a certain number of job searchers; contacting a certain number of employers every week; applying to certain number of jobs; prove of job searching activity.

First meeting and pace of support

Participants mentioned that in the first instance they met with someone in the organisation which asked them question and explained the various stages of support within the organisation, although they were unable to specifically state which stages were those. See Section 3.1 for more details on this first meeting.

Once an advisor is assigned to a client, meetings between them are where support is mainly planned and in many cases provided. Participants confirmed having a main advisor, which could change depending on their needs/trajectory. Usually, clients are seen by their advisor and only met other advisors in exceptional circumstances¹⁸. Having the same advisor seemed important to build trust and a personal relationship. The majority of participants meet their advisor every week (most of them are at an earlier or later stage in the WP) and one meets monthly with the advisor (it would seem that this is the participant that is furthest away from the labour market compared to other participants). However, advisors said that most clients have meetings every two week, although sometimes keeping this regularity proves difficult due to caseloads. All participants seemed happy with the regularity of meetings, which for most had changed over time. Participants mentioned having a voice in the regularity of the meetings and the support they would like, although two clients stressed that in some cases regularity of meetings depends on advisors availability. Participants stressed that advisors are flexible when they cannot arrange appointments or when they have to change them due to unexpected circumstances.

It would appear that clients who are “*more job-ready*” tend to be seen more regularly, which appears to be corroborated by our sample. According to few advisors more regularity for those that are closer to the labour market is a “*necessity*” as those clients need to keep activity and motivation up. While it was said that those further away from the labour market might require a different pace and type of support in order to bring them closer to be ready for work, so meetings might be scheduled every two weeks or once a month depending on other activity taken place (such as courses).

It was mentioned by one advisor that there could be a temptation to focus on those nearest to the labour market, due to the target system, however it was stressed that advisors need to balance their caseload, so when those most ready to work move into work, there are other clients that have been progressed nearer to the labour market.

Type of support

There are a number of areas of support (see Figure 7) that the organisation offers. This section explores the support offered in more detail.

¹⁸ Such as the absence of their advisor or a client’s emergency situation

Figure 7 – Areas of support (non-exhaustive¹⁹).

According to participants, most meetings consist on: doing or revising CV; searching for jobs; looking at new vacancies²⁰; considering different jobs; filling applications; talking about interviews and exploring new avenues to search for jobs. Meetings can consist on clients spending the whole time with their advisor, or spending some time together and then they will do job-search by themselves (e.g. using the computers, telephones, etc.). Depending on clients' specific needs advisors in some occasions spend more time with them: for example, a participant with lack of computer skills due to dyslexia said that his advisor will go through his emails and support him applying online. It was also stressed that the content of meetings would accommodate clients' needs and to some extent wishes at different times: for example if a job interview was imminent the meeting will focus on that (e.g. doing mock interviews) and it would be more intense:

"I had one, a job interview (...) and [she] put me through my pace... really put me through my paces, as far as the interview techniques and everything are concerned. And she did a whole load of work for that, so yeah, I'm really thankful for that one."

Participants stressed that the assistance and support given by advisors focuses on job search but goes beyond it. According to participants, during the meetings advisors would ask them what they have been doing between meetings regarding work but also they will discuss other issues such as: their experience and transferable skills; their goals; available and suitable courses; financial issues (e.g. 'Better Off Calculations' would be done); and also their personal circumstances. Advisors ask about their general circumstances and situation, and they try to help in different ways, such as reading through documents, trying to explain a specific issue, making phone calls if require, referring them to other organisations, exploring the different options, and sometimes just by listening. The majority of participants thought that advisors knew enough of their circumstances and situation to help them adequately. In the words of some participants:

¹⁹ Due to commercial confidentiality and anonymity assurance, the support offered by the organisation cannot be fully disclosed and described in all its richness.

²⁰ According to participants advisors often have a piece of paper with new jobs in different sectors.

“They always ask how you are [unclear], they ask how you’re doing in general not just how your work search is doing, they ask how you are as a person and it’s refreshing, it’s good to be able to speak to somebody as well that I don’t see as much and it’s easier, I think it’s easier to speak to somebody I don’t know than somebody I do.”

“When you first sit in they’ll ask you... if you talk about it, they’ll listen and help you and advise you where they can, so it’s not always about work, even though that’s what it’s based all around” (...) “It’s like a lot of the aspects, so they helped me when I told them about my house and what happened, they looked at the letter, seeing if they could help and seeing what they could do and stuff (...) They gave me numbers, or... I’m alright with talking, but other people don’t like talking, so they may phone up for them, so that can be helpful”

“I take on board that they’re busy, and there is a lot of people that come in here. But yeah, they do a lot, they’re very interested, and I’m always surprised that they can remember half the stuff that I tell them. But yeah, they do, they’ll help as much as they can, and if they say they’re going to phone you and help you with something, or work as well, if they know you’re going to get a job, they’re absolutely amazing, they’ll do everything that they can to help you. They’ll even keep time off if you’re going to start work so you can come in and do a mock interview, stuff like that. So they do set aside a lot of time, so I think they’re quite helpful.”

According to participants, in many cases advisors’ support is about being there for them, giving them encouragement, and building confidence. In the words of one participant:

“They’re good for confidence building, because, well your confidence does take a bit of a kick when you become unemployed. And yeah, they can put you back up on a good straight line, so to speak”

It was mentioned that advisors also push the boundaries of comfort zones in a “coaxing” way more than through pressure. None of the participants mentioned being pressured by advisors, although participants said that there is an expectation that they will meet a certain level of activity regarding job-search. Participants stressed that advisors respect their choices in terms of desired hours of work or preferred sector, but that they are encouraged to explore and then, if suitable, consider other sectors and jobs. However, participants ultimately feel the decision is up to them²¹. In the words of one participant:

“It’s not just my employment that’s been helping me it’s helped me mentally as well, [my advisor] has been the one that’s picked me up as well so, back to the jobs anyway it’s just a case that I’m finding out just now what type of work I’m interested in and what I want to do.”

Clients, however far from or close to the labour market, can access support or courses provided by the organisation (usually vocational and short-term) or external contracted-out

²¹ This was confirmed through observation of clients and advisors interactions in two occasions, where the advisor made suggestions, but the final decision was put to the client.

provision, according to their needs. The majority of participants had attended at least one course and said that they were useful and convenient²². Three participants interviewed had been referred to subcontractors.

Once clients enter paid employment In-work support is carried out by all advisors but is also tailored to clients' needs, with variable levels of contact and support. It therefore appears to be *"fully dictated to by the individual's circumstances"*.

4.3 – Assessment of everyday practice of policies in terms of impact on work prospects and well-being

Most participants stated being pleasantly surprised when they found out about the type and content of support offered by the WP organisation. In the words of a participant:

"I didn't have any [expectations]. Because I didn't agree with the way that [another agency] was run, I was like, "oh no, another employment agency, what's this going to be like..." you know, I thought it was going to be the same. But they're entirely professional, they are not like [the other agency] at all, I really like them."

In two occasions, participants said they would have liked to be sent to the WP earlier:

"I actually wish the Jobcentre had sent me here before. I think if they'd done it a lot sooner... I've been on a work trial here, I was only here about four weeks and I was sent on a work trial."

General support

All participants interviewed stressed that they really appreciated the support from the organisation, and said that they were very happy with it. In general participants mentioned that the help received is very good and useful, relevant to their needs and circumstances, and met their expectations. The job offers given to them by advisors met their goals and desires. The most useful support mentioned was the advice by advisors, the workshops available, the support with computers, the use of facilities, the knowledge of advisors regarding hidden jobs and job searching, and the moral support and encouragement. The rest of this section will look at each of these in turn.

The assistance with writing CVs, covering letters, and similar things was said to be very useful. The opportunity to use the facilities in the office (such as computers, phones, photocopiers, etc.) free of charge was very important for some participants, as it allowed them to apply for jobs that otherwise they would not be able to apply for and help with establishing a routine and getting out of the house.

²² Course are hosted in the organisation's offices.

“It’s been positive. It’s been morale boosting. Erm... I don’t see this as a chore, I don’t see this as something that I have to do, I see this as something that I enjoy doing, basically, because of the facilities that I’ve got to help me out here. So I don’t know how to put that down into words really.”

“It’s very positive in everything, you know, they provide great job searching facilities, I wouldn’t have known how to put a CV together the way they have, so I mean things like that. And yes just general support and sometimes encouragement if you’re, it is easy to become deflated if you’re constantly trying job after job and getting nowhere, so they’re very supporting and very encouraging. I like the place, I like the organisation; I’ve good things to say about them.”

In terms of job opportunities, participants mentioned the fact that advisors know about new vacancies or “hidden vacancies”, places were to search, etc. as very valuable: “[my advisors] is always kind of networking for me, sometimes on my behalf I think that might be a good way to put it”. Better Off Calculation were said to be very useful to see how paid employment will affect their financial situation and the number of working hours that will give most financial beneficial to clients:

“[My advisor] explained (...) today to show me how much extra I could have in my pocket at the end of the week if I was working rather than being on benefits and the difference is so much better.”

Courses and external support was also said to be forthcoming, easily available, and positive. A number of interviewees mentioned they would like to do specific courses, such as the ECDL (European Computer Driving Licence) or Forklift licence, but they said that the organisation or JCP could not help with the cost. Work trials were mentioned as very useful even when the job was not suitable. In the words of one participant:

“It was a great experience to go back to work, after having such a big gap, it was nice to go back; and also the opportunity, the possibility of a job being there. But even without, if there was no offer of a job, the company will still give you a reference at the end of it, so that will help with my employment as well, to have a recent reference from somebody.”

Two participant mentioned in-work support as very valuable, both before and when actually in work, as they see it as a safety net to help with problems and to come back to the organisation “if it doesn’t work out”. One participant mentioned the financial and other support while in work as vital until the first salary came in or when the job had finished until benefits were re-established:

“With most agencies its weekly pay so perhaps if I was starting today it would be a week on Friday I would get some sort of jobseekers allowance at the end of the week and then like I say [my advisor] if I was struggling after that she would maybe help me get through to pay day more or less with travel or food vouchers or whatever you know to get to that all important first day. So most agencies it is weekly pay so that issue doesn’t really raise its head as much as it does if you’re signing off for a permanent job that’s monthly paid. (...) Recently I had to go back and claim jobseekers allowance and it was a full fortnight before I got any money so she helped me out with some food vouchers, like the thing here today, and some money to keep my electric on because I’m on a prepaid meter so yes things like that she’s very, very supportive.”

The opportunity to have some vacancies only advertised to clients of the organisation was also mentioned by participants and advisors as very beneficial. This arrangement limits the disadvantages of the normal job market: the amount of competition is reduced, and pre-selection is not based on CV but on the individual suitability for the job (e.g. transferable skills, attitude, etc.). Vital for this to succeed, is that the organisation builds trust with employers by matching their needs to clients in the pre-selection process.

Advisors’ attitude

All participants said that advisors have a very good, positive, friendly, approachable and open attitude, which makes them feel welcome either during and outside pre-arranged meetings, and which they find helpful. While, in contrast, relationships with advisors from JCP or other employment agencies were said to be rather distant and include more pressure.

One participant summarised the common feeling stating that advisors ask, suggest, and encourage rather than order; and that at the end of the day it is up to the individual to decide. In the words of one participant:

“They give me all the information, like how to apply, email, what hours, what they need, and then what they think I should do, their sort of view on it. But it’s still up to you what you do, it’s just what they think. And they’re usually right.”

“And my advisor (...) supports me, and I feel like, “Somebody’s there helping me and supporting me,” I can go do that then. I don’t want to let her down as well. (...) they’re good that way, and they’ll help you. It gives me the confidence to go and do stuff like that. I tell them, “Oh, I went and applied for that job, or I phoned that up, and they want me to go and hand my CV in.” “Oh, that’s good,” overpraise and things. So it is nice, then you feel like you’re doing something good, and you’re not useless, if that makes any sense.”

Participants’ well-being

Most participants mentioned that their life has improved to some extent since being referred to the organisation. They mentioned that a number of issues had improved: their confidence due to the support, encouragement and overpraising of advisors, and also due to

being more proactive; their optimism, because of the advisors support and help, due to taking part in a work trial which shows *“that I can do the job”*, as a result of having goals, and again being more proactive in general. Two participants said that their life has improved in a general way, as they have someone to speak with, something to do during the day, a routine to keep, and a goal to look forward to. One participant mentioned that even though workshops are sometimes targeted to wellbeing, the organisation does not focus on health. However he stated that his health had improved due to his mental attitude being much better. In his words:

“I am much happier that I’m doing stuff. I always feel I’ve achieved stuff doing the cold calling or applying for jobs. I walk away feeling like I’ve achieved something for that day. So I’d say in a lot of ways they do improve your life, but I don’t know if it’s specific to your health and stuff like that.”

Two participants who said that their wellbeing has remained similar, mentioned that the organisation has helped them by keeping a routine and keeping active, and one believe that his life will improve in the future.

Evaluation of support from other agencies

Assistance from the organisation was rated much better when compared to assistance from other agencies in particular assistance provided by JCP. The common complaint with external agencies was the lack of professionalism of advisors and of the service in general, and the support being rated as not very useful. However some participants mentioned positively the support given by other agencies.

There were a number of complaints regarding the lack of support offered by JCP, such as lack of assistance with CVS, courses available, in-work support, etc. which was said to be influenced by the length of meetings. Participants also mentioned that the advisors tend to vary, and that they are not as approachable and knowledgeable of their circumstances: *“they don't really know your situation, they see so many people that they don't remember when you go back”*. In the words of one participant:

“The Jobcentre are not as proactive in helping, they are more... you need to do this, go and do it. But they don’t explain how to do it, or or...like, when I came here, the first thing Kirsten did was we re-evaluated my CV, we did cover letters, spec letters...whereas the things that I'd done before, the Jobcentre said, that's fine, whereas here she said, it's actually awful, as an employer if you looked at that. So the Jobcentre are very kind of, yeah just go and do what you need to do, there's no actual physical help there.”

A number of participants also mentioned JCP advisors’ attitude was very distant and uncaring, quite different to the attitude of advisors within the WP organisation, with one participant pointing out that *“it’s nothing to do with the staff it’s just they don’t have policies in place (...) help you”*.

“I think the attitude of the Jobcentre is that they don’t really care, you’re just a number; you go in and sing on and go. Whereas here, they’re very... what do you want to do, what do you need to do, what can we do try u to get you back into work.”

Therefore some participants mentioned to avoid going into JCP unless it is necessary

“I try to avoid the Jobcentre apart from if I go in and sign on that gives them proof that... I try and use my gateway account as much as possible, so it’s showing up on their screens as well, but in terms of help or support I would never ever go near the jobcentre for that, it’s because it’s not going to happen.”

In relation to support offered by subcontracting organisations to the WP organisation, participants opinions were mixed, although most were positive.

Recommendations

Participants found difficult to mention anything that they thought was missing from the WP organisation. One participant said that some of the workshops time-slots were not suitable for people with caring responsibilities; the suggestion was to schedule more courses in the morning. Another participant mentioned that holding work-days in the office with a range of employers would be beneficial to know what they expect from employees. Finally one participant suggested that the coffee in the coffee machine could be improved. one participant summarises the general opinion:

“No, to be quite pretty honest anything I have asked with help for, generally they have help me, they’ve never said “no, we can’t do that” or “no, we’re not prepared to do that” or anything like that, so they seem to be quite good that way.”

There were a number of factors that participants said would help them to get a job: courses (ECDL, to Forklift Licence, and the Driving Test) that would give them a better chance in the labour market, but for which they could not get sufficient funding²³; work placements that could provide the opportunity to be kept on by the company at the end of the trial if there are vacancies, would help to build and increase their confidence, would give them experience that can be put in their CV, and would provide the opportunity to have a routine in a real job situation. All of those that mentioned work placements or work experience did not expected to be paid during it and were positive about it. One participant said that although some jobs do work experience it is in many cases for the younger unemployed. In the words of one participant:

“So I think people should do it just to get in a routine, be up early, meet new people, just to get some sort of normality back in life; because I feel ten times better for doing it.”

²³ Funding available from the ILA (Individual Learning Account) was insufficient.

A number of participants mentioned the amount of people applying for jobs as a very important impediment to get a job. However, even when not directly mentioned this was implied by many through the interviews. Some participants mentioned that it is difficult to keep motivated, to keep going after multiple rejections:

“If you’re getting from 830 and you’re getting to the first assessment you’re doing okay. I find that, that actually is you know, what I mean it hindrances just the fact that there are so many people chasing one job, it’s very difficult just to get through to the interview stage, let alone... (...) Jobs have to be there for people to apply for and mainly many they’re not full to permanent.”

It appears that those without computer at home, of lack of computer skills, or learning difficulties seem at disadvantaged when looking for work. These participants stressed that computer courses would help. Two participants also said that the current uncertainty with regards to the benefits system does not help people: the pace of the change which is quite fast, together with the restructuring of the housing benefit and other benefits, means that people, including them, are unsure about what they are entitled. One of them mentioned that due to this uncertainty part-time jobs do not seem feasible now, even when they “*could be a stepping stone to full time*”, while a few years ago, taking a 16 hours jobs would not have been a problem for him but he is “*less likely to take that chance, now*”. One participant mentioned that the hours of work in hospitality were said to be a problem regarding childcare. Although however the availability of childcare per se did not seem the issues, the cost of it especially during school holidays was stressed as a problem.

5. Conclusions

This last chapter of the report presents some conclusions with regards to the way that policies are planned and implemented, and the effects that those policies have in the well-being and social inclusion of the long-term unemployed that were interviewed.

5.1 - Discrepancies between the way policies are planned with their implementation.

Activation for the long-term unemployed is planned by central government, and it is currently delivered through the Work Programme. It could be argued that the design of the WP aims at dealing with some of the shortcoming of previous policies, such as once-size fits-all and standardise policies, creaming and parking, and short-contracts. The black-box approach could foster personalisation of services, while the sustained and differential payments could aimed at discouraging ‘revolving doors’ and creaming/parking of those unemployed. The Work Programme funding period (up to seven years) could be seen as an attempt to tackle short-termism in funding.

However, there are a number of objective factors perceived during the study, which could hinder personalisation and tailor-made services. Although WP prime contractors have freedom to devise service provision and the DWP expects contractors to put in place the necessary services in order to move people into the labour market. WP providers are constrained by formal policy goals and more importantly available finances (i.e. total payment expected for services and expected return). The available resources are influenced by the financial and contractual model of the WP, with some interviewees arguing that it appears that WP providers' use of subcontractors is low and there is a lack of specialist provision as a result. This would seem to be confirmed by DWP national WP statistics that show expected outcomes for individuals with more complex and multiple problems (i.e. those previously in receipt of health or income support benefits) are not being reached.

The high caseloads of advisors, which seem to be necessary also as a result of the WP financial model, could restrict the amount of support provided to clients. Advisors' necessity of meeting targets, as the WP is based on payment by result, could result in creaming (prioritise assistance for those closer to the labour market) and parking (less services and support for those further to the labour market). The lack of personalisation as a result of these factors could affect more those service users with multiple and complex needs.

The operational design of the WP could hinder the possibility to learn from best practice and to be able to scrutinise how national policy is implemented. The lack of detailed information around the implementation of the WP is understandable due its financial and contractual model, in which intellectual property and commercial confidentiality for prime providers is fundamental.

5.2 – Effects of policies on well-being and social inclusion of vulnerable individuals

In this study only one organisation delivering the WP was analysed. Due to the nature of the WP, results cannot be generalised to other prime contractors. In terms of participants interviewed, all were self-selected and some were selected by advisors, which could give us skew data.

In the organisation studied there seems to be limited standardisation in the format and type of support provided, perhaps surprisingly when considering the governance characteristics of the WP (e.g. performance base payments, competitive tendering, private companies delivering services). Advisors appear to have a high degree of flexibility in their day to day routines and in the pace and type of support they provide to clients, even though there are some standardise patterns in their work. This allows for individualisation within a pre-given framework created by formal policy, organisational context, and available resources. Participants interviewed stressed that the support received was relevant to their needs and of quality.

It could be argued that the DWP model of payment to WP contractors, based on sustained and differential payments, signals a departure (started to an extent with previous programmes) from work-first approaches, towards an 'employment-first' approach²⁴. It could be argued that the need for WP contractors to achieve sustainable outcomes, is behind the stress that advisors put in taking into account clients multiple barriers and wishes, and involving clients in the decision making. As a result, it appears that the level of choice and agency of clients is high, or at least it is described as such by participants. To some extent it could be said that there is a degree of co-production in the development of the 'action plan' (content and pace of support). This is reflected in the positive feedback from participants on the attitude of advisors.

It is important to mention however, that available resources greatly influence the individualisation of services: i.e. the smaller the range of support, the greater the standardisation of services (less individualisation and choice). With the very limited picture, that this study allows, a tentative analysis is that the support and assistance provided to those with health issues or multiple barriers is narrow. It could be inferred by the information gathered that the positive effect, stressed by participants, of the WP in their well-being, is more a result of the process of support than of the substance of support.

²⁴ In an employment-first model sustainable employment, with long-term career progression or maintenance, would be the aim, which for some service users would require dealing with barriers to maintaining and progressing in employment.

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Appendix 1 – Get Britain Working measures

Figure 8 – Type of support offered by UK's Get Britain Working measures

	Target group	Job broker/ advice mentoring	Netw orkin g	Training / education	Appr entic eship	Work experience placement	Employ ment with training	Guarante ed interview	Volunt eering	Wage subsidi es	In-work suppor t	Incentive payments employers	Financial incentives (individual)
Jobcentre Plus	All pre-WP	√											
Youth contract	18-24			√	√	√				√		√	
Support for NEET	16-17			√	√		√						
Sector-based Work Academies	All			√		√		√					
Work Trials	All					√							
Work experience	16-24					√							
Employment on Trial	All					√							
Skills training													
Skills conditionality	All JSA or ESAWRAG			√									
Mandatory Work Activity	All JSA					√							
Work Together													
Work Clubs	18 plus pre- WP	√	√										
Enterprise Clubs	All	√	√										
New Enterprise Allowance	All	√											√
Access to Work	Disable (in or out of work)											√	√
Work Choice	Disable	√									√	√	
Residential Training Colleges	Disable			√									
Work Programme	Long-term unemployed												

