



**CROATIAN EMPLOYMENT SERVICE**  
**Central Office**  
**International Relations' Division**

**Subject: *Eighth World Congress of the World Association of Public Employment Services (WAPES), 28 - 29 May 2009, and related events of the WAPES in Dubrovnik***

The Croatian Employment Service had the honour to host the Eighth World Congress of the World Association of Public Employment Services held in Dubrovnik, 28 – 29 May 2009.

The topic of this year's Congress, which was adjusted to the current situation in the labour market, was "The Crisis Response of Public Employment Services - Operational Initiatives towards Sustainable Recovery".

The presence of the majority of representatives of WAPES member countries was also used as an opportunity to hold meetings connected to strategic planning of activities of the Association; and these were two meetings of the Managing Board, regional meetings and the General Assembly session.

The elections for various three-year mandate positions in this Association are important in order to raise the level of motivation and involvement of individual member countries; the Croatian Employment Service was elected member of the Managing Board for the fourth time.

During the events in Dubrovnik some of the sponsor companies presented themselves in the exhibition area in front of the conference hall, which contributed to the attractiveness of the Congress.

The Congress has been traditionally organized every third year in one of the member countries and this year's Congress in Dubrovnik was attended by 54 WAPES member countries, representatives of each of the continents.

The Congress was opened by:

- Leo Begović, state secretary of the Ministry of the Economy, Labour and Entrepreneurship,
- Miše Galjuf, deputy county prefect of the County of Dubrovnik-Neretva,
- Đuro Market, member of the City Government in charge for tourism, economy and small-sized entrepreneurship,
- Ankica Paun Jarallah, Director General of the Croatian Employment Service,
- Christian Charpy, president of the World Association of Public Employment Services and
- Patrick Venier, executive secretary of the World Association of Public Employment Services.

The task of the Eighth World Congress of the World Association of Public Employment Services was to show how public employment services (PES) throughout the world function as the main actors in the area of labour market policies and how they cooperate with their stakeholders in the times of global fiscal and economic crisis.

***The main topics of the Congress were as follows:***

### **1. PES Responses to the Crisis**

In times of global crisis public employment services are faced with a new environment and rapid economic changes. They must therefore quickly adapt to a new situation and prepare for new services towards clients and at the same time prepare for the recovery. The representatives of all 5 WAPES regions, wherein the member countries are grouped by continents, reviewed the current situation and challenges they are confronted with in their respective labour markets. In African countries the public employment services are understaffed and have insufficient funds necessary for providing services and the development of measures. Further issues refer to an insufficient PES network coverage and unsatisfactory IT support in the services themselves. In American countries there is a significant increase in unemployment suggesting that the number of unemployment benefit claims has also significantly increased. Some countries are stimulating big construction works, establishing funds for economic stimulation. What is being encouraged is strengthening of the network of public employment services which stimulate employment and self-employment. Asian countries differ very much with respect to economic and labour market development so that very different measures are being implemented in each of them. Much emphasis is placed upon measures designed for young persons. Arab countries are affected by the crisis to a somewhat lesser degree and the crisis has hit some sectors such as textile industry and tourism. Therefore, incentives are for the most part being directed exactly towards these sectors; in the form of more favourable loans, assistance for expansion to new markets, subsidized wages for retaining workers and education incentives. European countries are seriously affected by the crisis, especially those which depended on American financial market (Iceland, Ireland, Great Britain). Public employment services can offer only palliative measures, the priority of which is preserving the existing workplaces. The problems, European public employment services are faced with, refer to the fact that they do not have enough capacity to meet the needs, that is, it is necessary to invest more resources and take on more employees. What is necessary is a further modernization of the employment services and a dialogue at international level.

### **2. PES Services to Employers in Crisis Times**

Since the crisis has led to the increase in the number of vacant workplaces and thereby to the increase in the number of jobseekers, there is now a growing pressure on public employment services. The governments have created the incentive schemes for employers, the purpose of which is to stimulate employment and assist employers to retain workers in order to preserve workplaces and to slow down the rise in unemployment.

The government in Cameroon commissioned the study on possible consequences of the crisis and measures which are to be undertaken. It is also made possible to increase the contributions paid by employers. The public employment service and employers have built a better relationship, the network of local offices has also been established, a number of counsellors have been employed and IT support has been modernized. Unemployment has been rapidly spreading across the Great Britain so the relationships with employers are being intensified in the sense that they are encouraged to announce vacancies and employ the most vulnerable groups. In order to meet all the demands made by employers, partnerships with private employment agencies have been established. An analysis about crisis impact on employment has been conducted also in El Salvador. On the basis of this analysis, employers are encouraged to fill their vacancies via public employment services as well as non-profit organizations so that their users can enter the database of public employment services and find employment more easily. All existing employment services are increasing the number of staff members so that they can respond to growing demands and they are strengthening partnerships for employment.

### ***3. PES Services to Jobseekers in Crisis Times***

In times of crises it is necessary to deal with the priority issue – to focus on new jobseekers or hard-to-place groups and to establish balance between short-term and long-term measures. In Croatia the CES has channelled its efforts on interventions before companies have been seized by the crisis. It has established mobile centres and provided higher-quality services to employers and unemployed persons in order to overcome the long-term unemployment. Australia has a great share of private service providers offering services to persons unemployed for up to three years and in July 2009 it introduced a new system on the basis of which unemployed persons are grouped into four categories and so are the services. There is also a bonus system for service providers which find an employment for persons who spend at least 6 months on the new job. In Argentina the network of employment services started developing in 2003 as a consequence of a big crisis in 2001. When it comes to the global crisis, there have been three programme packages designed and these would be activities focused on regions, labour force education and promotion of social dialogue. At the same time as the network of employment services is expanding, the network of life-long education and vocational training programmes is being established, too.

### ***4. PES Internal Processes and Handling of Labour Market Data***

The tools of public employment services are essential for the implementation of services and comprehensive reliable information is essential for the development of services. The government in Korea established a public employment service in 1998. Since then a sophisticated information technology system has been developed which records the contacts between employers and jobseekers and provides specialized services (to young persons, older persons, part-time employees, women). Since young persons have the highest unemployment rate, the e-learning system has been introduced especially for them. Bosnia and Herzegovina presented the work of regional network of the Centre of

Public Employment Services of Southeast European Countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia and Turkey). The Centre has been organized as a sub-region of WAPES region Europe. It was established in 2007 as a continuation of the Bucharest Process. The Centre provides support to the member employment services in the area of capacity building for the implementation of programmes, mutual cooperation, drafting of three-year work plans. After this, Bosnia and Herzegovina presented its information technology system which was developed 2 years ago from the CARDS programme resources. The goal was to create the database for informing state institutions and the public about the situation in the labour market as well as for informing foreign employers about labour force availability. By strengthening of the system there have been some new activities designed which have supported business processes such as handling the issues of financial assistance for unemployed persons, work permits for foreign citizens and labour market research. Based on data obtained through IT support, New Zealand is going to introduce the following activities as response to crisis: revise the plans, increase production incentives, provide assistance to small- and medium-sized enterprises, establish funds for key economic sectors, strengthen education and support private agencies.

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The mutual goal of WAPES member countries is to contribute to better functioning of labour market through interchange of information, the delivery of data related to labour market, job placement and implementation of measures which are in line with labour market demands as well as the implementation of social security measures related to (un)employment. Therefore, these member countries recognized once again the importance of dialogue and an active interchange of experiences and good practices in the context of the crisis, by which most of member countries are affected.