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“Promotion of employment opportunities through exchange of good practices and active participation”

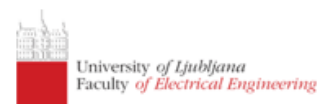
PEER-TO-PEER COOPERATION WITH IRAQI GOVERNORATE – BASRA

## Guidelines on Online Employment Platform Establishment

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## 1. Introduction

These Guidelines on Online Employment Platform Establishment were produced as part of the project “Promotion of employment opportunities through exchange of good practices and active participation” between Slovenia and Iraqi governorate Basra. The guidelines are specifically adapted to this project considering the needs expressed by Basra team in the first six months of the project and all the information received from providers of good practices in Slovenia – namely the company MojeDelo and Employment Service of Slovenia.

The guidelines include the basic steps that should be taken when establishing an online employment platform and should be used as a tool by Basra team when establishing the platform. However, issues not predicted here might arise which can be handled with the help of Slovenian team as part of on-demand support within the project activities.

## 2. Online employment platform – definition

Online employment platform is essentially a website that connects employers, looking for new employees or offering work, with job seekers. Usually both, employers and job seekers can use features of the website where the employers can post job ads and job seekers can apply.

A variety of online employment platforms can be found – from very general ones to very specific ones (specialized in different areas, target groups, etc.). Social media networks like LinkedIn also have this feature, as do other popular business centred networking sites.

Additional services, connected to Human Resources can be offered on an online employment platform. These can include review of CVs, skills testing, psychometric testing etc. It is important to remember that these services can only be offered if appropriate experts are part of the online employment management team.

## 3. Preconditions

A few preconditions must be met before taking the establishment steps.

There needs to be a **clear need** for such a platform expressed in the local environment – either from the side of the potential users of an online employment platform, the business community, or the local government. If general public already uses a social media platform or other online methods to get job opportunities, an online employment platform might be a good idea.

Make sure that you **assign the responsibilities** connected to establishment of the platform and daily operations of the platform as soon as possible. This way, you know exactly who to talk to about specific questions, ideas, problems etc.

## 4. Establishment steps

### 4.1 Goals

If preconditions for the establishment of online employment platform are met, it is important to define the goals you want to reach. Is this platform only a meeting place for job seekers and

employers, or will you eventually offer other human resources related services as well? Defining clear goals that follow the “**S.M.A.R.T.**”<sup>1</sup> method is advisable before moving to the next steps.

#### 4.2 Legal status

Based on local legislation, the decision needs to be made on what **legal form** the online employment platform will have. Will it be a part of the newly established business incubator? Will it be a government service/platform, operated and supported by the governorate? Will it be an NGO or a CSO? This decision will influence how the platform operates in the future, so it is important to think of all the options and choose wisely.

#### 4.3 End users and market research

**End users** of the online employment platform are both **the job seekers and the employers**. Both need to have an efficient, easy, and pleasant experience when using the platform, so that they will become returning customers / users.

**Deciding on the type of platform will influence who the end users will be.** It is of utmost importance to clearly define the end users in line with the goals set for this platform. Young unemployed people are a group that will be targeted, but the platform also needs to satisfy the needs of employers in Basra. This will enable effective differentiation from other existing platforms.

**It is advisable to perform a basic market research.** How do people look for job online at the moment? Which websites and channels are they using? Which are available? How easy are they to use? Which websites have very little / a lot of traffic? Answering these questions will help define what the platform will look like and what features will it offer.

#### 4.4 Website development

Once the goals have been set, the legal status and the type of platform decided upon, it is time to tackle its development.

The platform can, for example, enable only employers to post job ads while the job seekers have the possibility to simply search and scroll through them. Another option is that job seekers can apply for jobs via this platform. **More features require more involvement** but also, potentially, higher number of users as the platform offers more services. Knowing the market and how (unemployed, young) people look for jobs at the moment will be helpful in these decisions.

Below are some other parts of this process that we advise are considered.

##### 4.4.1. Design

As mentioned above, the two main end user groups are going to be job seekers and employers. Both need to have a pleasant experience to ensure they will use the platform again. The design of the platform and its features will determine whether the platform will have any long-term success or not.

**Features where end users interact with the platform** (post job ads, find job ads, possibly apply for the job via platform) will **have to be easy and intuitive to use**. As part of simple market research, other online employment platforms could be researched (to see what features are well or poorly

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<sup>1</sup> SMART (method) stands for: S – specific, M – measurable, A – achievable, R – realistic and T – time bound.

designed, how easy they are to use, how pleasing to the eyes they are) for ideas on how this platform should look like.

#### 4.4.2 Choosing a developer

Once the general idea on the look of the platform is devised, developer needs to be chosen – either from own team or outsourced. It is advisable that the developer is chosen based on their previous work and experience, as well as on the style of the work they do. The development process can be lengthy, so it is advisable to **align the expectations** with the services the developer can offer.

#### 4.4.3. Web hosting and domain registration

The name of the platform must be easy to remember and most importantly – still available to register as a domain. Decision also needs to be taken on web hosting. **Price, safety of the data** (the minimum of data the platform will collect are the job ads employers will post) and **availability of IT support** are some of the factors to take into account.

#### 4.4.4 Software

Two main options present themselves regarding software. Either an entirely new website with all the desired functionalities can be build or an existing online employment software that fits the needs best can be purchased. There are pros and cons to both. To decide, it is advisable to first **define the type of platform, understand the limitations (time, budget)** and what existing software is available on the market.

### 4.5 Partnerships

Partnerships with key stakeholders are what will ensure long term success of the online employment platform. **Relationships with the companies and organisations that are (potential) employers, as well as with the general public** need to be established so that trust in this platform can be built. Trust can only be built by offering an exceptional service to the end users.

Agreements with employers can start off with informal discussions, however, the end goal should be a signed agreement with clear definitions on what will the platform offer in exchange for the employer to post job ads on it. **Work towards exclusivity** – the goal is for the employers to ONLY post on this platform. On the other hand, the platform needs to be advertised among job seekers, so that job ads will actually receive some applications – otherwise exclusivity will be hard to reach.

Below, find a list of suggested stakeholders that the platform could enter into a partnership with:

- Local companies
- International companies, based and/or present in Basra
- CSOs and NGOs
- University of Basra (and other universities in Basra Governorate)
- VTCs
- Other educational institutions
- Local / city government

The size of the organisation that (will) employ people does not matter, the important part is that these organisations know that **this platform is a reliable and safe option** when they will look for new employees. They need to know their data will be safe and that the team behind the platform will work towards bringing traffic to the website.

**Partnerships with educational institutions** are a simple way to “notify” large amounts of (future) job searchers of this platform. Again, security of data, user friendly services and diversity of job ads will attract people.

**CSOs and NGOs** – international or local – are usually based on project work, but as long as they are employing people, they have to know of this platform. It can be their link to young professionals, recent graduates, technical staff, etc.

#### 4.6 Advertisement

The platform can be successful only if it has **enough traffic and enough people applying for job ads**, posted on the platform. Awareness of the platform can be raised by building partnerships; however, larger promotions or advertisements are usually necessary to drive traffic, at least at the beginning.

To optimise advertisement, knowing end users and where they are is elemental. If the goals are identified, basic market research was carried out, partnerships have been built, then the management team of the platform already has good overview if advertisement of the platform is even needed. **If advertisement is needed**, then decision has to be made regarding **what type of advertisement would best fit the needs**. This platform can be advertised via paid ads on social media platforms, on a local radio, in universities and other educational institutions etc.

#### 4.7 Services offered

As mentioned above, initially, the online employment platform can be a very **simple meeting point for employers** (who can post a job ad) **and job seekers** (who can potentially apply for the job on your platform). **As the reach and number of users grows, other related services can be offered.**

Precondition for additional services is that a member of the management team or staff is specialised in this field. High level of professionalism will differentiate this platform from other (similar) websites.

Below, find a list of other possible services the online employment platform can offer in the future:

- Job seeker profile (option to create a profile and speed up application processes).
- Review of CVs.
- Advice on career development and related topics (for example a blog – this will drive traffic to the website, lots of people use online employment platforms to look for information, not only to look for work).
- Database of job seekers that employers can choose from (be aware of data safety and privacy laws).
- Matching employers with job seekers and vice versa.
- Q&A platform (part of website where job seekers can post questions related to employment – again, this creates traffic and gives an insight into what kind of users the platform has).
- Posting a job ad / searching for jobs based on skills, not positions.

Please refer to the good practice video for more information on what this platform could offer as far as employment services go – available at: <https://p2p-slovenia-basra.com/activities/#platform>

#### 4.8 Financing

Legal form of the online employment platform defines financing options and long-term sustainability of the platform. it is advisable to **create a realistic financial plan** based on all the decision taken so far in order to secure a future for the platform.

When establishing the first draft of financial plan, it is advisable to think of following questions:

- Will the services offered by employment platform be free of charge for job seekers?
- Will the services offered by employment platform be free of charge for job providers?
- Who will provide financial resources for IT support, webhosting and all other running costs?
- Who will cover costs of the platform management team?
- How will advertisement costs be covered?

**Long-term financial support** is one of the biggest challenges in achieving sustainability of the platform as well as ensuring its financial independence. **Financing should be as diverse as possible**, financial plan and the goals set should often be referred to to keep track of progress.

**Below** are some suggestions on how to bring in additional funds to support the platform long-term by charging fees to job providers:

- Selling advertisement space on the website.
- Selling job ad promotions (job ad will be seen on top of page, have a special mark or indication to increase visibility).
- Creating and selling package deals with additional services for organisations, looking for new employees.
- Charging organisations to post job ads.

## 5. Management of online employment platform

Daily operations of the platform should be assigned before the platform is even created. Who will be responsible to make sure everything is working ok? Who will be networking with the employers in the local environment?

As this platform is more than just a simple website, **daily IT upkeep will be needed**. If some of the above-mentioned steps will be outsourced, ask about IT support as well as clearly defining what this entails is advisable.

It would be sound that one team member dedicated their work entirely to networking and establishing and nurturing partnerships. This person will attend several meetings and constantly contact potential job providers (companies, NGOs, governmental institutions) and institutions representing potential job seekers (universities, VTCs, etc.). Through these meetings, a content for employment platform will be provided and its management adapted according to the needs of the market.

In any case – whether the development of the platform is outsourced or performed in-house, we suggest you **assign a small team to the daily operations of the platform**. This team will make sure job ads are posted, they will work on advertisement and building partnerships.

The platform will only be successful if it is supported by a dedicated team that will make sure it runs smoothly.



## 6. Checklist/Template

- ❖ **PRECONDITIONS**
- ❖ **S.M.A.R.T. GOALS**
- ❖ **LEGAL STATUS** (please add)
- ❖ **END USERS** (please define)
- ❖ **BASIC MARKET RESEARCH**
- ❖ **DESIGN**
- ❖ **TECHNICAL ASPECTS** (developer, webhosting, software – please add information about these decisions)
- ❖ **PARTNERSHIPS:** (please name the individual organizations and mark with which ones an agreement of collaboration has/will be signed)
  - UNIVERSITY (e.g. University of Basra)
  - LOCAL COMPANIES (please name the specific organizations)
  - INTERNATIONAL COMPANIES (please name the specific organizations)
  - LOCAL / INTERNATIONAL NGOs (please name the specific organizations)
  - CSOs (please name the specific organizations)
  - LOCAL GOVERNMENT (please name the specific organizations, departments, persons)
  - VTCs (please name the specific organizations)
  - OTHER
- ❖ **ADVERTISEMENT** (please specify how you plan to inform both general public and potential employers of your platform)
- ❖ **SERVICES OFFERED** (please define the services the platform will offer)
- ❖ **FINANCIAL PLAN** (please establish a financial plan for the first 5 years of online employment platform. Clearly define all the financial sources that will sustain the platform in this period)
- ❖ **MANAGEMENT** (Please name daily IT support person(s) and the daily operations team)

## 7. Literature

Tawanna R. Dillahunt, Aarti Israni, Alex Jiahong Lu, Mingzhi Cai, and Joey Chiao-Yin Hsiao. 2021. *Examining the Use of Online Platforms for Employment: A Survey of U.S. Job Seekers*. In CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI '21), May 8–13, 2021, Yokohama, Japan. ACM, New York, NY, USA. Available at: <https://dl.acm.org/doi/10.1145/3411764.3445350>

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