

HUNGARY

Diversification & job creation

Location

Budapest

Programming period

2014 – 2020

Priority

P6 – Social inclusion & local development

Measure

M20 – Technical assistance

Funding (EUR)

RDP budget 55 000

Project duration

2020 – ongoing

Project promoter

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Website

www.munkaszuret.hu/

In response to the COVID-19 crisis, a website was set up under Rural Development Programme Technical Assistance to help match agricultural companies with jobseekers

Summary

The COVID-19 pandemic has posed great challenges for producers and farmers. Labour market conditions have deteriorated and many people have lost their jobs, especially in the tourism and services sectors. In some sectors, however, labour shortages have emerged due to the loss of commuters and cross-border seasonal workers.



The aim of the project was to connect farmers and producers with potential employees. It is crucial for the agricultural sector to have an adequate number of workers available to prepare, care and harvesting the crops. To achieve this goal, a website called "Work Harvest" has been set up under the Hungarian Rural Development Programme's (RDP) Technical Assistance to match agricultural companies offering work with jobseekers.

Results

Currently the website has:

342 registered jobseekers. It is worth noting that this number many not fully reflect the total users of the site as jobseekers do not have to register to use it.

52 registered work providers.

473 work advertisements were published, and the content is constantly updated.

Lessons & Recommendations

- ❑ The success of the website lay in its rapid design and implementation and its importance to the interested parties. The website will remain active even after the pandemic has finished, so that seasonal work for the autumn harvest can also be publicised. Promoting the site will increase the number of registrations as well as, the number of job seekers and subsequent job offers.
- ❑ However, it was precisely because of the website's rapid implementation that a number of technical issues were experienced, and in some cases, still need to be resolved.

Context

The coronavirus pandemic posed great challenges for producers and farmers. Labour market conditions have deteriorated and many people have lost their jobs, especially in the tourism and services sectors. In some sectors however, labour shortages have occurred due to the loss of commuters and cross-border seasonal workers.

The Hungarian National Rural Network (NRN), through its network of territorial managers, collected information from the grassroot level on the current situation, including the problems and difficulties faced. In some areas, it has become almost impossible to find farm workers, which if not resolved, would cause serious losses in agriculture. The crop sector was particularly affected, while the livestock and processing industries suffered less from the new conditions. The reason for this is that the picking of seasonal fruit and vegetables is often carried out by large numbers of workers from abroad, who this year were unable to cross the borders due to the COVID-19 emergency. Meanwhile, strawberries, asparagus, cherries, etc., were ripe and ready for picking, a situation requiring immediate action to prevent the 2020 crop from being lost. It was obvious that the lost workforce had to be replaced either by people who had become unemployed in the service sector, or by workers from elsewhere within the country. However, many farmers and producers did not have a network of contacts to reach the domestic labour force.

To deal with this situation, the Hungarian Ministry of Agriculture and the Hungarian NRN decided to create an online platform to connect demand with the supply of labour at the domestic level. The website provides this service for both contractors looking for workers and jobseekers. It also means no fees have to be paid to intermediaries.

Objectives

The main goal of this project was to provide food chain suppliers, food producers and entrepreneurs, with support in finding the right workers quickly, thus saving the 2020 seasonal fruit and vegetable harvest. In addition:

- Jobseekers and those who lost their income should be able to find seasonal work close to where they live.
- Creating such a website will, not only provide immediate help, but will also be the opportunity to start thinking in the longer term and to explore the long-term possibilities of the website.

- The website will be constantly updated to provide news on the RDP and other important topics related to agriculture.

Activities

Once the labour problem was identified, in the course of the crisis discussions, the a first step was for the Minister to draw up the specifications for the work required to design and build the "Work Harvest" website. The crisis situation and the sudden shortage of manpower in agriculture required an immediate response, leaving little time to set up the website. Once the decision to create the website was made and agreed to by the Board of the Hungarian NRN during an online meeting, a procurement procedure was announced for the development of the website.

The contract was awarded on 23 April 2020 and the first version of the website was completed within two weeks. In light of the urgency, it was decided that this first version would be launched immediately without any tests, and any necessary repairs and troubleshooting would be carried out in parallel. Accordingly, the work is ongoing, partly to correct technical issues, but also but also because ideas concerning the functionality of the website are continuously emerging.

The online platform provided an opportunity to recruit sufficient numbers of workers for the current seasonal jobs and for jobseekers to find available work in the sectors that suits them.

The step by step process, involved:

- taking the decision to set up the website,
- tendering and procurement,
- announcing the successful contractor,
- purchasing a website domain,
- renting the server,
- designing the visual elements for the website,
- creating the infrastructure for the website,
- fixing ongoing technical issues,
- continuously expanding the functionality of the website based on new ideas,
- promotional communication campaign,
- presentation at events.

The operation of the website is currently guaranteed for three years, as long as the Hungarian NRN has a contract to perform its networking tasks.

Main Results

Currently the website has:

342 registered jobseekers. It is worth noting that this number many not fully reflect the total users of the site as jobseekers do not have to register to use it.

52 registered work providers.

473 work advertisements were published and the content is constantly updated.

Work or job opportunities can be searched by topics (field crop production, open field vegetable growing, vegetable growing, fruit growing, viticulture, pig farming, poultry farming, beef cattle breeding, dairy cattle breeding, sheep farming) and by geographical location.

The website is currently only available in Hungarian, but an English version is planned for the near future.

The long-term goal is that the website will not be active and useful only during the coronavirus crisis but will also serve the community after that. The NRN would like to extend it to students and plans to take the product to festivals that will be organised in late summer and early autumn.

There are already requests from abroad, particularly from regions across the border that are inhabited by Hungarians. For this reason, the website's manager considers it important for the website to be available in foreign languages so as to be used more widely.



Key lessons

The success of the website lies in its rapid implementation and importance to the interested parties. The website will remain active even after the pandemic has finished, so that seasonal work for the autumn harvest can also be publicised. Promoting the site will increase the number of registrations, well as the number of job seekers and subsequent job offers. However, it was precisely because of the website's rapid implementation that a number of technical issues were experienced and, in some cases, still need to be resolved. For example, the authenticity of advertisers and applicants has yet to be verified. The developers therefore want to include a feature whereby registered companies or jobseekers can leave messages and opinions about both employees and job providers. This would increase the credibility of both the advertisers and the workers. It will be possible to leave both positive as well as negative feedback which will be visible on applicants and contractors' profiles.

Another issue that came up is that once a job has been filled it can be deleted by the person who posted it. However, there is no way to track the reason why the vacancy has been deleted, meaning they can't accurately count the number of vacancies filled through the website, as the vacancy may be deleted for another reason. Development is also underway to resolve this and to gather more detailed information about user behaviour. This will allow the website to be further developed to better suit users' needs.



Additional sources of information

www.origo.hu/gazdasag/20200403-idenymunka-kereso-portal-indult-a-mezogazdasagi-munkavallalas-tamogatasara.html

www.youtube.com/watch?v=uX42QuUcpQ

www.facebook.com/watch/?v=585269872083021