

Mobile Mentor Application (‘Mentor App’)

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FLANDERS (BELGIUM)

The practice consists of an online application that connects young jobseekers and experienced professionals with the aim of helping jobseekers to find a job. Jobseekers are supported by a mentor who provides them with advice on how to increase their chances of finding a job and taking the best decisions in their job-search.

Name of the PES

VDAB – Flemish Employment and Vocational Training Agency

Scope of measure
(a pilot project or a national reform)

Pilot project

When was the practice
implemented?

This pilot project started in January 2015; its implementation is still ongoing and it is due to completed by July 2017.

What was the driver for introducing
the practice? Was it internal or
external?

The main drivers for developing and introducing Mentor Application were:

- ▶ VDAB identified that young jobseekers could be supported with more individualised and accessible services. VDAB considers young people as a crucial target group due to their specific challenges and as a group which accepts and expects to use new technologies in their job search.
- ▶ The pilot project meets VDAB's aim of using new technologies, communication channels and IT tools to deliver more effective and efficient services from an outside-in, customer oriented point of view.

Which organisation was involved
in its implementation?

In addition to VDAB, several partner organisations were involved. In particular employers' organisations and private companies.

Which groups were targeted
by the practice?

The practice targets young jobseekers (to become mentees) and experienced professionals (to become mentors).

What were the practice's
main objectives?

The main objective of the practice is to help young jobseekers to find a job, through the help of experienced professionals who become their mentors.

What activities were carried out?

VDAB developed the idea together with an international group of young people doing an internship at IBM, called IBM Extreme Blue. Their goal was to develop a concept on how to support jobseekers in their job search. Students reflected on the need to receive advice from experienced professionals and created a prototype of the application, including a graphic design of the application. Based on the students' idea, VDAB launched a pilot project and created the fully-functioning application. The way the application works is the following: the mentors log in through their LinkedIn account and indicate their fields of expertise (for which they could be mentors). The mentee downloads the application into a mobile device (mobile phone, tablet) and registers as a user. The mentee searches his or her sector of interest (through a list of keywords) in which he would like to receive support. Once the mentee has confirmed that s/he wants a mentor, s/he receives a list of proposals of mentors and can choose one (the mentee has access to the LinkedIn profiles of the professionals suggested by the application). The mentor selected then receives the request from the mentee and can confirm or decline. VDAB informed all young jobseekers who were registered with the PES (80 % of young people are registered with the VDAB) about the Mentor Application and its functions. Jobseekers are also informed about the 'Mentor Application' when receiving job counselling services. VDAB contacted employers' associations and companies that are part of their networks to identify professionals who could be interested in becoming a mentor. a communication campaign (involving messages in newspapers and radio) was also carried out to reach out to other organisations and companies that would be interested in providing mentors.

What resources and other relevant organisational aspects were involved?	The development of the Mentor Application was done by two developers of a supplier of VDAB. Project management carried out by VDAB. External individuals, in particular students, but also employers' associations and companies were involved in the practice from the start. A collaboration was set up also with the Swedish PES (Arbetsförmedlingen).
What were the source(s) of funding?	The project was funded by VDAB (public funding).
What were the outputs of the practice: people reached and products?	<p>The main outputs of the practice included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Around 1 350 jobseekers have downloaded and registered with the application; this happened after the first communication campaigns were organised. ▶ Around 780 experienced professionals were recruited as mentors.
What outcomes have been identified?	<p>The main outcomes of the practice were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Through the Mentor Application, VDAB increased their capacity to connect different actors of the labour market (students, jobseekers, employers, employers' associations, public organisations) and involve them in the creation of an innovative service. ▶ The Mentor Application provides effective services to young jobseekers, accessible at any time and place through their smartphone or tablet. The Application is adapted to the needs of young jobseekers as it is flexible and individualised. ▶ The services provided by the Mentor Application were integrated with the other services provided by the Flemish PES, in particular with counselling activities carried out by VDAB staff.
What are the lessons learnt and success factors?	<p>The main lessons learnt are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Given that jobseekers are constantly changing, a periodic campaign should be carried out (every year or even every few months), in order to continuously reach out to new jobseekers and inform them about the Application's services; ▶ PES should plan from the start how to integrate the Application with other PES services provided; ▶ It is important to approach all actors at an earlier stage to get them involved in the set-up of the practice.



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