

THE CONTACT STRATEGY IS A DATA-DRIVEN, ONLINE SELF-SERVICE SUPPORT SYSTEM FOR CLIENTS. IT PROVIDES CAREER GUIDANCE AND JOB-MATCHING SERVICES IN AN EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE WAY TO ALL JOBSEEKERS AND STUDENTS THAT NEED ORIENTATION IN THE LABOUR MARKET.

PROMISING PES PRACTICE¹ New Contact Strategy

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BELGIUM (FLANDERS)

The Contact Strategy was introduced to make the Belgian Flanders PES' tools for job search more user-friendly. In the past jobseekers used several tools and communication channels that were not mutually compatible and had overlapping functions.

The online portfolio introduced by the new strategy provides the jobseeker with a full overview of the results of his/her efforts as well as a matching tool based on competences and using artificial intelligence (AI). The "digital-first" self-service support empowers the jobseeker and makes him/her more independent. This will also make the entire procedure more efficient and reduce the administrative work.

Name of the PES

The Belgian Flanders PES (Vlaamse Dienst voor Arbeidsbemiddeling en Beroepsopleiding, VDAB – Flemish Employment and Vocational Training services)

Scope of measure

Regional

When was the practice implemented?

October 2018 – on-going

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

The adoption of the Belgian Flanders PES' new Contact Strategy was driven by the changes in the labour market related to the digital revolution, new technological developments and AI-driven innovations. These changes are captured also in the "New Skills Agenda for Europe"². In this context, the Belgian Flanders PES intends to provide relevant tools for jobseekers and equip them with the digital skills that will become necessary in the future. Moreover, at regional level the Flemish government has pushed for a broader coverage of jobseekers and a quicker reaction from the Belgian Flanders PES to place the long-term unemployed into training and/or work. The Belgian Flanders PES' new Contact Strategy is part of a wider reorganisation process of the PES, aiming to achieve higher efficiency.

What is the practice trying to achieve?

The Belgian Flanders PES' new Contact Strategy tries to improve the efficiency and the effectiveness of the PES' services.

The first profiling of the customer is made digitally, in order to make the jobseekers more independent and to reduce the time spent on administrative work by the PES counsellors and trainers. Consequently, the PES estimates that the clients will be more satisfied because they will be able to get more intensive help from the counsellors if needed, e.g. in case they cannot find suitable solutions through the digital tools and the services offered by the call-centre. Moreover, counsellors can shift resources to individuals that have difficulties when using digital tools.

- The deep learning competences-based matching tool uses artificial intelligence (AI) in order to improve the experience of the jobseekers during their job search, making the application procedure easier and more user-friendly and the job search functions more efficient;
- The new strategy provides a higher degree of flexibility for the contacts (meetings can take place in the office or competence centres, at home, in hubs, online, by phone etc.); the diversity of tools allows the counsellor to interact with the client in a more personalised way;

¹ Practices referring to promising changes/reforms/approaches.

² The New Skills agenda for Europe (June 2016) <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1223>

What activities are planned

- ▶ The Contact Strategy is a user-friendly online self-service support for jobseekers and employers which includes the following new tools:
 - ▶ An online application portfolio, which includes an orientation questionnaire and a personalised dashboard which produces an overview of the jobseeker's efforts and results;
 - ▶ An AI-driven matching tool based on competencies, which recommends vacancies on the basis of the behaviour of other jobseekers with similar profiles;
 - ▶ Wizards/chat functions for jobseekers that need quick information.
- ▶ Call centre-based meetings provides support to the customer via e-coaching, social media or telephone;
- ▶ Face-to-face meetings for the jobseekers with counsellors can be booked online and take place only as a last resort after the jobseeker has used the digital tools and the telephone/online live support. These meetings allow flexible interaction, they can take place in the office or competence centre, at home, in hubs or at the Belgian Flanders PES partners' premises. Since these meetings are based on the information provided by the digital tools, the counsellor can give a quicker and more personalised service;
- ▶ In the online registration jobseekers will be able to decide if they need any help with job applications, the use of the digital tools, job orientation etc;
- ▶ The Belgian Flanders PES' new Contact Strategy is disseminated to the general public which occurs through the Belgian Flanders PES Facebook account and via videos on its YouTube channel.³

What were the source(s) of funding?

The Belgian Flanders PES budget

What are the early observations?

This Contact Strategy has been designed to reach out to all jobseekers within a few months of registering as unemployed and encourages them to use the digital tools. Nevertheless, groups that might need additional support services in addition to digital services (i.e. face-to-face counselling) are also taken into consideration.

According to the results of a survey prepared by the Belgian Flanders PES and published in July 2018, jobseekers prefer contacts by e-mail and telephone instead of face-to-face meetings. In the summer of 2018, before the implementation of the strategy, the Belgian Flanders PES carried out a study on the digital needs of jobseekers, which provided the following results: 50 % of the respondents have a positive view on the new Contact Strategy, 32 % do not feel confident about their digital skills but are motivated to use the digital tools and 17 % are negative about the digital strategy.

The Belgian Flanders PES is working on the development of indicators to measure the success of the new Contact Strategy on a yearly basis. These indicators include the outflow to work after 3/6/12 months, customer satisfaction towards the online tools, Net Promotion Score (NPS) and customer satisfaction towards the personal services.

Moreover, the Belgian Flanders PES will seek day-to-day feedback both from the jobseekers and from the employers using the services. Since the new Contact Strategy has just been implemented, it is not yet possible to talk about its results.

³ Internet: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fodrf_o9E-g



Contact details for further information

Name: Willem Schrijver

Email: willem.schrijver@vdab.be

Telephone: +32 2 506 14 57