

A SET OF ACTIONS AND INITIATIVES TO IMPROVE THE WAY IN WHICH THE BELGIAN FLANDERS PES (VDAB) WORKS WITH CUSTOMERS (EMPLOYERS, JOBSEEKERS AND EMPLOYEES), GIVING THEM A MORE CENTRAL ROLE IN ALL PROCEDURES AND PROCESSES IN ORDER TO RESPOND MORE EFFECTIVELY TO THEIR NEEDS.

BELGIUM

Everyone Mediator programme

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The main challenge addressed by the Everyone Mediator programme is focusing on clients rather than on procedures. Through this programme which operates within the context of a sectoral approach, involving PES staff that work as mediators and are specialists in specific sectors of the job market, the PES' services are more tailored to clients' needs. A key lesson of the programme concerns the importance of following all necessary steps when developing it: carrying out an analysis of jobseekers' and employers' needs; organising meetings with PES staff and employers; undertaking strategic planning; implementing the programme.

Name of the PES	Flemish PES (VDAB)
Scope of measure	The Belgian Flanders PES (Vlaamse Dienst voor Arbeidsbemiddeling en Beroepsopleiding (VDAB), or the Flemish Employment and Vocational Training Services)
When was the practice implemented?	Since September 2015 – ongoing The programme existed before this date but was modified in 2015 to incorporate the new assignments of the Belgian Flanders PES in the programme.
What was the driver for introducing the practice? Was it internal or external?	The main drivers of the practice were external: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ► The Sixth State Reform law, (het Vlinderakkoord) announced on 11 October 2011 was implemented in 2014. Under this reform the Belgian Flanders PES acquired new responsibilities (e.g. checking that registered unemployed are actively seeking work, monitoring jobseekers' availability for work, activating beneficiaries on a 'subsistence income', offering renewed services with regards to work-based learning, reforming measures for helping long-term unemployed to enter the labour market). The Everyone Mediator programme was the tool introduced to carry out these new assignments. ► Changes occurring in the labour market making it increasingly VUCA¹ led the Belgian Flanders PES to follow a sectoral approach: mediators, as specialists in a certain sector of the labour market, work with jobseekers and register mutual agreements about the objectives of the jobseeker as a memory aid for both parties to help them focus on achieving the desired results.
Which organisation was involved in its implementation?	The main actor responsible for the implementation is the Belgian Flanders PES. The following actors were also involved in the design and implementation of Everyone Mediator: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ► Employers, who communicate the vacancies and organise training for the jobseekers; ► Employers' organisations from different sectors; ► The Flemish Ministry for Work, Economy, Innovation and Sport, which coordinates the programme.
Which groups were targeted by the practice?	The primary target group is the Belgian Flanders PES staff, at all levels. The secondary target groups are the Belgian Flanders PES' clients including employers, jobseekers, employees.
What were the practice's main objectives?	The Everyone Mediator programme aims to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ► Change the approach of the Belgian Flanders PES in the design and provision of services to respond more effectively to clients' needs; ► Change the Belgian Flanders PES staffs' way of working with employers, involving the latter in conceiving and designing new services; ► To improve the PES' response to the needs of employers in order to integrate jobseekers more quickly into the labour market.

¹ This is an acronym used to describe a situation being Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, Ambiguous - VUCA.

What activities were carried out?	<p>The activities carried out include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Organising the 'Day of the employer', an annual event during which information sessions and workshops are carried out with employers; ▶ The adoption of a digital approach for the Belgian Flanders PES staff, the jobseekers and the employers. For instance, the online learning tool for the PES staff leerplatform; and the 'Online assistant' (OLA) which is a tool helping employers to upload information regarding their needs and vacancies onto VDAB's website, giving automatic suggestions on possible inconsistencies and/or missing parts in the vacancy description uploaded onto the system; ▶ Setting up internal training programmes for PES staff; ▶ Visits by Belgian Flanders PES' account managers (PES staff responsible for a certain sector or type of job) are regularly organised at employers' premises, in order for them to take a proactive role in understanding employers' needs and creating new services accordingly; ▶ New techniques are used to design services on the basis of employers' requests; employers are therefore involved from the beginning of the process.
What resources and other relevant organisational aspects were involved?	<p>All Belgian Flanders PES staff were involved in the implementation of the Everyone Mediator programme. The same services are offered in all provinces/regions.</p>
What were the source(s) of funding?	<p>Belgian Flanders PES budget</p>
What were the outputs of the practice: people reached and products?	<p>The main outputs were the online tools developed for Belgian Flanders PES staff and employers, including the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The Online assistant (OLA) tool that helps the employers to draft vacancies in a more effective way; ▶ MijnLoopBaan, a platform where jobseekers can register, has been updated and now includes new procedures. Approximately 192 000 jobseekers are registered on this platform; ▶ The OLP (online leerplatform): a platform where new materials such as courses, short videos, webinars etc., are uploaded for the PES staff to consult; ▶ Guidelines for the mediators were uploaded on to the Belgian Flanders PES' intranet; ▶ The PES' intranet, MijnVDAB, and the Belgian Flanders PES' website was updated according to the new approach; ▶ Approximately 2 000 training sessions were carried out for PES staff.
What outcomes have been identified?	<p>The Everyone Mediator programme changed the way in which the Belgian Flanders PES views and responds to clients, especially employers, and delivers services. While previously it was mainly a reactive approach, it became proactive, empowering clients and involving them in discussions concerning their needs. The satisfaction of the employers is monitored on a regular basis by means of questionnaires, interviews, evaluations. According to the results of the most recent questionnaire (2017), 84 % of the employers are satisfied with the information provided by the Belgian Flanders PES.</p>

What are the lessons learnt
and success factors?

The key lessons include the following:

- ▶ The importance of following all necessary steps when developing a programme like the Everyone Mediator: carrying out an analysis of jobseekers' and employers' needs; organising meetings with PES staff and employers; undertaking strategic planning; implementing the programme;
- ▶ The importance of having a bottom-up approach: for instance, when creating a new tool, involving PES staff at an early stage;
- ▶ At every step of the process the communication with the target group(s) should be ensured, for instance, having a communication plan.
- ▶ It is important to maintain a good balance between investment in IT and in PES staff.

The success factors include the following:

- ▶ Having the right partners (employers and employers' associations) on board and involving them at all stages, from the strategic planning phase through to the development of more fit-for-purpose services;
- ▶ The involvement of employers in the design phase to ensure that their needs are understood and addressed more effectively.



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