



IMPROVING VOCATIONAL INTEGRATION THROUGH DIGITAL TRAINING FOR JOBSEEKERS IN THE BRUSSELS CAPITAL REGION.

PROMISING PES PRACTICE

“Social Impact Bond (SIB)”

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The Belgian labour market is currently experiencing a shortage of digital skills, which will increase with the digitalisation of the economy. Digital training for people who are far from the labour market therefore seems to be an appropriate way of filling the skills shortage in Belgium and getting many job seekers out of unemployment.

Name of the PES	Actiris
Scope of measure (a pilot project or a national reform)	Regional (Brussels capital region).
When was the practice implemented?	The programme “BeCode: Professional integration through digital training for job seekers in Brussels” is operational since 2020 and is scheduled to end in 2025.
What was the driver for introducing the practice? Was it internal or external?	<p>The programme was introduced to improve the employability of jobseekers in the Brussels capital region by developing their soft and technical skills, with a focus on two target groups:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. women, that are under-represented in the new technologies sector; 2. people from outside the EU, who, in the Brussels capital region, are faced with additional barriers to employment, such as not having a diploma or a recognised equivalent of a diploma obtained abroad and/or the difficulty of mastering the two national languages (French and Dutch). <p>The new technology sector offers real flexibility in relation to these barriers to employment and the jobs on offer are generally stable and well-paid in both small and large companies, with career opportunities and therefore sustainable employment.</p>
Which organisation was involved in its implementation?	<p>Beside Actiris, the Brussels PES, two additional parties are involved in the implementation of the programme:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ private investors (represented by Kois Invest) provide funding; ▶ BeCode, the operator, provides digital training to the jobseekers. <p>A monitoring committee represents all three parties and ensures compliance with the correct processes.</p>
Which groups were targeted by the practice?	Generally, all jobseekers living in the Brussels capital region and registered with the PES are targeted by the programme. Around 450 jobseekers are expected to participate in it. Quotas of at least 25% non-EU nationals and 30% women need to be met.
What were the practice's main objectives?	The practice's main objectives are to improve the employability of jobseekers living in the Brussels capital region by developing their soft and technical skills, and offering them digital training through web development courses. A primary goal is to reduce the shortage of people with digital skills, while lowering the levels of unemployment at the same time. The set goal is to secure employment for 63% of the participants who completed the training.

<p>What activities were carried out?</p>	<p>The programme consists of a seven-month course, in which the participants learn to create a website or mobile application. BeCode, the service provider, also offers intensive job coaching and puts the participants in contact with a network of potential employers. The training is followed by a mandatory three-month internship.</p>
<p>What resources and other relevant organisational aspects were involved?</p>	<p>The programme operates via the use of Social Impact Bonds (SIB) and upfront funding by private investors. To connect the participants with potential employers, BeCode also possesses and develops an organised network of employers. The PES also offers a whole communication package, in order for the operator to benefit from Actiris's network of partners, to raise awareness of the project, and to recruit trainees.</p>
<p>What were the source(s) of funding?</p>	<p>The program is organised and financed (2.5 million euro) via a Social Impact Bond. This means that private investors pre-finance BeCode's social intervention (the digital training programme) in Brussels with a loan for 5 years. This loan is repaid by the PES to the private investors with interest if the programme reaches its objectives. If the programme is unsuccessful (an external evaluation determines whether the project has reached its goals), the risk of the financing remains with the private investors. Either way, the operator, BeCode, receives the full budget to develop the project. The operator, BeCode, and their digital training programme, were selected through a call for interest. Once selected, a co-construction phase between the operator, the private investors represented by Kois Invest and the PES led to a contractual agreement on the programme to be implemented and precise goals to be reached.</p>
<p>What were the outputs of the practice: people reached and products?</p>	<p>The BeCode programme has not been operational long enough to measure relevant outputs. The goals it needs to achieve are: a minimum of 450 jobseekers are expected to participate in the measure over the course of 5 years, with a minimum job placement rate of 63% for all beneficiaries who complete their training. The quotas of at least 25% non-EU nationals and 30% women need to be met.</p>
<p>What outcomes have been identified?</p>	<p>The BeCode programme hasn't yet been operational long enough to measure relevant outcomes. The goal it needs to achieve is a minimum job placement rate of 63% for all beneficiaries who complete their training.</p>
<p>What are the lessons learnt and success factors?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Working with a SIB model implies that the actors co-construct the project. Therefore, allowing sufficient time before the launch of the project is a key success factor. Co-construction requires the PES to change its mindset and to share control instead of working in a top-down system. 2. Both the SIB and the co-construction process require a methodological framework with highly structured processes, high standards of transparency (documented decisions, traces) and a climate of trust between the participants. 3. Special attention in the selection procedure of the service provider: PES should pay attention to criteria such as <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Existence of a process of measuring and monitoring the impact; ▶ Ability to absorb capital and scale up (not a traditional subsidy).



Contact details for further information

Name: Jenna Gailly, *international relations unit, Actiris*

Email: jgailly@actiris.be, internationalrelations@actiris.be