



## Dreamstart, Belgium (Brussels)

### What?

DreamStart is an integrated business start-up scheme that aims to support unemployed youth (under 30 years old) in the Brussels region. Launched in 2013, the scheme provides pre start-up entrepreneurship training, coaching and mentoring. Volunteer professionals from public and private sector organisations play a key role in delivering the support. Optional access to finance is facilitated through microfinance institutions, such as the MicroStart, for those who take part in the scheme.

### Why?

The Brussels region faces high levels of youth unemployment. In 2013, nearly one out of three unemployed people in the region was under 30 years old. Self-employment is viewed as a potential solution to youth unemployment. There is an urgency to prevent the negative consequences of long-term youth unemployment, such as greater likelihood of being unemployed as an adult and reduced earnings over the life-course.

### Key activities

DreamStart training, coaching and mentoring is delivered over a period of two months to assist unemployed youth in developing a business idea and preparing a business plan. Three key criteria are used to select participants: (i) desire to start a business; (ii) viability of the business idea; and (iii) experience / expertise related to the proposed business idea.

The training covers elements of personal and entrepreneurial development, marketing, and business and financial planning. The support comprises classroom sessions, group work and individual assignments. DreamStart addresses both personal development and business start-up to build participants' self-confidence and reduce their chances of social exclusion.

A special feature of the scheme is the engagement of volunteers as trainers and coaches. Most are experienced professionals from public and private sector organisations. Some of them work as business advisers or in the financial sector, while others are retired professionals.

## Impact

Since 2013, DreamStart has run four cycles, each successfully completed by 10-12 participants. Approximately 60% of youth who finish the scheme and present their business plan to the panel start a business within a year. One-third of participants go on to start a business full-time and two-thirds work part-time, combining self-employment with paid employment. This allows them to finance start-up with earnings from employment. The scheme has additionally resulted in the creation of networks of young entrepreneurs who often stay in contact after the scheme ends, offering peer-to-peer support.

*This case study was adapted from material published in: OECD/EU (2016), Inclusive Business Creation: Good Practice Compendium, OECD Publishing, Paris. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264251496-en> [1]*

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### Links

[1] <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264251496-en>