



Entrepreneurship Works, Belgium (Flanders)

What?

Entrepreneurship Works (*Ondernemen Werkt*) was a one-year coaching scheme that ran from 2008 until 2013 in Flanders, a Dutch-speaking region of Belgium. The objective was to help unemployed job-seekers start their own business. The coaching comprised elements of one-to-one business advice as well as personal and entrepreneurship skills development.

Why?

In Flanders, very few unemployed job-seekers returned to work through self-employment. Entrepreneurship Works was launched to address two obstacles that unemployed people in this region often face when starting a business: (i) the lack of motivation and skills for self-employment; and (ii) the fragmented provision of employment and self-employment services. The scheme was primarily funded by three consecutive European Social Fund (ESF) projects, the ESF-Agency Flanders, and the Flemish government.

Key activities

Entrepreneurship Works involved a partnership between the Union of Self-Employed and SME's (UNIZO), the Flemish Public Employment Service (VDAB), and the Flemish Agency for Entrepreneurial Training (Syntra). Those interested in pursuing business creation were initially screened by external business consultants within the VDAB regional offices. Potential candidates were invited for assessment of their skills and business ideas. The selected candidates were subsequently referred to UNIZO to receive free coaching for a period of one year.

During the first phase of the scheme, participants had to undertake a mandatory business management course, delivered by Syntra. This three-month course covered a range of topics, including development of a business plan. The aim was to develop candidates' entrepreneurial competences and to explore the feasibility of their business ideas. At the end, the participants could decide to go on to the next phase of Entrepreneurship Works, or to withdraw from the scheme.

The second phase included an intensive guidance towards business creation. The candidates received up to six months of individual coaching and could also attend group workshops. The objective was to execute the skills acquisition plan developed during the exploratory phase and focus on practical tasks, such as applying for a

loan, searching for a commercial property, contacting suppliers, and potential customers and preparing a marketing strategy.

Impact

The key indicator of impact was assessed by evaluating participants' transition into employment or self-employment. The average transition rate into employment, measured one year after registration at the VDAB, was 52.4% for the period 2011-13. The scheme achieved transition rates of 66.6% after one year for those seeking self-employment, and 81.3% for those who sought employment, following the completion of the initial phase of Entrepreneurship Works.

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