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VDAB – Flemish Public Employment and Vocational Training services

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Author: VDAB, Belgium

In collaboration with GHK and the Budapest Institute

1. SERVICES FOR EMPLOYERS: OVERALL MISSION, STRATEGY AND PROFILE

1.1. What is the PES's overall mission and strategy in relation to employers?

The VDAB's mission:

As a public service provider we want to create a **transparent and dynamic labour market** in Flanders for jobseekers, with employees and employers playing both a **director's and an actor's role** in cooperation with **partners**, and acting with a social conscience.

The vision of employers' services:

Together with the employer, the VDAB employers' services provide suitable workers as building stones for a resilient enterprise.

Employers' services look into the employer's situation and provide **information and practical or instrumental** support regarding **personnel, training, labour market developments and employment measures**.

Employers' services act as a **neutral key figure** in the labour market by completing their services with a suitable **cooperation network** built up together with other professionals.

With this integrated approach, employers' services want to become the **contact point** which supports employers with staff and labour market questions.

1.2 How does the PES view its role via-à-vis employers?

Role	Importance of the role (scale 1 – 5, 1 is the least important, 5 is the most important)
Labour market advisor	3
Job broker and filler of vacancies	5
Human resource consultant	2
Partner in addressing the needs of jobseekers	4
Other (please specify): Vocational Training	4

1.3. Which services are offered only on a chargeable basis?

- online products: 'job in the picture/viewer', 'company in the picture/viewer', banner: 'job of the week', skyscraper, company/vacancy film, etc.
- vocational training for employees.

1.4. Are all services offered in all regions/localities or is there local discretion on what to offer and what not to offer?

All services are offered in Flanders, but services may be more or less specific regarding regional specifications, for example:

- airport, seaport, etc.
- fruit cultivation, etc.

Belgium has a complex labour market structure:

SYNERJOB is the Federation of Public Employment and Vocational Training Services in Belgium. SYNERJOB was created on July 3, 2007 as a non-profit organisation according to Belgian law, gathering under one banner, five public services, namely:



- VDAB: www.vdab.be
- FOREM: www.forem.be
- ADG: www.adg.be
- Bruxelles Formation: www.bruxellesformation.be
- ACTIRIS: www.actiris.be

In 2005 an interregional cooperation agreement was signed which prompted the VDAB, Le FOREM, ACTIRIS, ADG and Bruxelles Formation to cooperate in the dissemination of job offers, in the field of training jobseekers, in the promotion of language courses, etc., in order to promote the interregional mobility within Belgium.

1.5 What services are currently offered to employers?

Type of service	Offered yes or no?	Brief operational description of services	Segmented or universal service?	Service delivered by which PES staff?
Collection and provision of labour market information	YES	Information is provided on the website (review/forecast).	Universal service	Specialised advisors
Drafting and posting of vacancies	YES	Vacancies can be reported: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • via the call centre; • via the Job Shop; • via the website (Master-vac = a unique database: VDAB consultant, partner-consultant and employers all work on the same platform). 	Universal service	Call centre, company consultants, account managers
Recruitment services	YES	Matching, pre-selection, pre-screening, individual interviews, and collective action.	Universal service	Company consultants
Human resource consultancy	YES	The VDAB keeps employers informed about employment, recruitment and training, but also about other aspects of dealing with personnel: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • management literature: on the VDAB website an employer can find useful information about recruiting suitable personnel, motivating employees, possible dismissal of personnel etc.; • work links: the VDAB website brings together more than 2400 links to interesting internet sites concerning work and careers; • Arvastat: allows employers to create statistics about unemployment and job offers in a quick and simple way. 	Universal service	Specialised advisors

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HR-Vademecum: online tool – for employers and (VDAB) consultants – that gives an overview of the HR-related topics and measures available in the market (private and government). 		
Information and advice on subsidies and ALMP	YES	The VDAB provides employers with detailed information on the main federal and Flemish employment promotion measures.	Universal service	Specialised advisors
Support for the integration of disadvantaged groups and long-term unemployed before and/or after employment	YES	<p><u>Job coaching:</u></p> <p>The VDAB job coaches provide guidance to employees in their new job to promote smooth integration. They act as intermediaries to match employers' interests with those of the new employee. If there are questions about administrative matters or human resource issues, the VDAB will look for the optimum solution.</p> <p>This service is free of charge for the employee and the employer. Employees are eligible for job coaching if they are a member of the migrant population, aged over 50 or occupationally disabled.</p> <p><u>GIBO and IBOT:</u></p> <p>The formula for individual vocational training (IBO) is quite simple: the employer trains the jobseeker. If the employer has a candidate who does not possess the necessary competencies, a VDAB individual training advisor will work out a training pathway with the employer. While the jobseeker concerned is in training, the employer pays no wage or social security contributions and is only responsible for a productivity bonus and insurance for accidents at work.</p>	Universal service	Specialised advisors and partners

		<p>The VDAB will monitor the training progress. When the training has been completed, the employer will offer the jobseeker a contract for an indefinite period.</p> <p>GIBO = IBO for the occupationally disabled</p> <p>IBOT = IBO with specific language support</p> <p><u>Jobkanaal</u> is a recruitment tool for various employers' organisations enabling employers to find suitable and motivated candidates from the 'special opportunity groups' for vacancies, free of charge.</p>		
Rapid response and redeployment for large-scale redundancies	YES	Social intervention advisors support redundant workers seeking new employment.	Universal service	Specialised advisors and partners
Legal advice and support in relation to employment law	YES	Legal advice concerning VDAB services	Universal service	Specialised advisors
Other service(s)	YES	Vocational training	Universal service	Specialised teams, subcontractors and partners

1.6 On average, how many employers does the PES work with per year? What share is this of the total number of employers in the country?

The VDAB works directly with 39.4 % of Flemish employers (cfr. question 1.7).

Indirectly, via partnerships with recognised temporary employment agencies, the VDAB delivers services to many more Flemish employers. The VDAB gives the temporary employment agencies the possibility to publish their job offers on the VDAB website and informs all jobseekers whose profiles matches the requested profile. It is however, impossible to give a percentage because the VDAB does not know the names of those employers

1.7 What is the profile of the employers that the PES typically work with?

Number of employees	All Flemish companies	Companies working together with the VDAB	
> 999 employees	249	232	93.2 %
500-999	308	279	90.6 %
200-499	885	816	92.2 %
100-199	1366	1234	90.3 %
50-99	2425	2110	87.0 %
+50 employees	5233	4671	89.3 %
20-49	7650	5932	77.5 %
10-19	10600	6955	65.6 %
5-9	19000	9852	51.9 %
< 5	114807	31942	27.8 %
Small and medium businesses (-50)	152057	54681	36.0 %
unknown	35798	16813	47.0 %
Total	193088	76165	39.4 %

1.8 Are there some types of employers who are currently less likely to engage with the PES and why?

There are no significant signs that companies from certain sectors or dimensions currently make less use of the VDAB products or services. There was a 19 % increase in vacancies received in 2011 compared to 2010.

Vacancies declined for companies in the primary sector (agriculture, horticulture, forestry, aquaculture, etc.) - 11.5 % in 2011 compared to 2010. There was also a decline of vacancies for the companies in the energy, water and waste treatment sector, - by 6.3 % in 2011 compared to 2010.

1.9 What are the services most used by employers and why?

'Managing vacancies' is the service that employers use most. This is related to our large database of jobseekers and the possibilities that are offered to train people on the job.

Reporting of vacancies:

- employers have various possibilities to report vacancies (website 'Mijn VDAB', call centre, Job Shop, etc.).

The job database:

- The VDAB publishes the reported vacancies in a large job database that can be consulted on the website: <http://www.vdab.be>. This website is visited not only by jobseekers but also by employees. About 70 % of visitors to the site are employees looking for another job.
- Employees or jobseekers who are not connected to the internet can also consult vacancies on job computers. These terminals are installed in public places that are frequented by large numbers of people such as libraries, town halls and shopping centres. Each month, more than 700 000 visitors consult the 330 job computers spread across Flanders.

Vacancy follow-up:

- An employer can follow up vacancies via 'My VDAB':
 - The VDAB offers a user-friendly online service to employers. The service consists of separate space for employers on our servers. An employer can receive jobseekers' CVs in his/her mailbox or by text message. This enables vacancies to be reported and then followed up.
- The VDAB follows up vacancies through:
 - Pre-selection and individual interviews: the VDAB advisor makes a pre-selection of jobseekers from the database on the basis of the selection criteria in the vacancy and then invites candidates for an interview, after which they may be referred on to the vacancy.
 - Active matching: in order to efficiently fill in vacancies, selection criteria are matched against the competencies, possibilities or wishes of the registered jobseekers. This process has been entirely automated and jobseekers are invited online (e-mail, text message, letter) to respond to the job vacancy offer.
 - Collective action: the VDAB advisor may invite a large group of jobseekers and present vacancies to them. An employer can come to the VDAB to explain his own vacancies.

- Contact with the employer: the VDAB advisor keeps regular contact with the employer to follow up the progress in filling the vacancy and undertake any additional action required.

1.10 What financial resources are allocated to the services for employers compared to services for jobseekers?

From the total cost of VDAB services - 49 % goes to services for employers.

Most products and services (mediation, training and premiums) offered by the VDAB, are to the benefit of both groups of customers (employers and jobseekers).

2. ORGANISATION OF THE SERVICES TO EMPLOYERS

2.1 Does the PES have specialist staff who provide services to employers?

Yes, they are called 'account managers'.

2.1.1 How is their work organised?

For each of the five Flemish provinces, there is a team of account managers (44 account managers/5 team leaders). Each account manager is responsible for one or more sectors in his/her province.

2.1.2 What training and skills development do the specialist staff receive and for how long?

- The VDAB has a training centre for its own employees (Spoor21) and offers each employee five days of training every year. The team leader and account manager plan these trainings during the yearly planning and evaluation sessions.
- Every year an 'account manager's day' is organised. On this day a current topic is presented to all account managers (e.g. employer branding, social media, learning networks, etc.).
- During team meetings people (internal or external) are invited to discuss topics (+/-1 hour/ meeting).
- Last year (2011) additional training was organised for account managers on: 'Prospecting pays off!' (five days) and 'HR & corporate culture' (four days).
- In 2012, training on 'Network and cooperate' (two days) is planned.
- New IT applications: +/- 2 days/year.

2.2 Does the PES have generalist staff to work with employers?

Within the VDAB a large range of people have contacts with the employers and jobseekers:

- company consultants
- IBO consultants
- job coaches
- social intervention advisors (SIA)
- consultants on interregional and national mobility
- training managers
- trainers
- consultants in training centres

2.2.1 How is their work organised?

Their main activities are receiving and supporting jobseekers (>90 %). Over the years their relationship with employers became less important because of the various projects which focus on better service for jobseekers.

To act as a professional go-between, you need to combine excellent knowledge of both sides, namely demand and supply or jobseeker and employer. That is why the VDAB started a 'Service Integration & Communication' programme in 2009. The aim is to streamline internal operations and renew the attention on mediation between both.

Service Integration & Communication programme

The VDAB is committed to an open and customer-oriented company with all-round employees. This will give employers greater transparency and a professional partnership with the VDAB. One of the key words in VDAB services to our clients and employers is 'mediation'. In order to act as a professional all-round employee and go-between, one needs to have an excellent knowledge of both sides.

In the past, the VDAB had a group of consultants who were more focused on the jobseekers and a group of consultants with a focus on the employers. The consultants with a focus on the unemployed almost never had direct contact with the employers. They do not know the 'world of the employers' well. For about a year now, the VDAB has provided an internal training programme to bring them more knowledge of the employers. The name of the programme is: 'Service Integration & Communication'. A special task force works out the programme and ensures proper planning and implementation.

We want to improve all VDAB employees' interaction with the world of business by using a variety of methods (training, internal and external placements, exchange of experience and events). By providing solid training and activities, we will support all VDAB personnel to build affinity with the client group of employers and create a professional partnership.

These are some examples of activities:

- Training on 'how to prospect', 'corporate cultures and their impact on HRM', 'employer branding', 'how to assist an employer in preparing a good vacancy', 'how to work in a team to help an employer', 'how to set up an internal network', etc.
- Personnel also have the opportunity to participate in an internship (one day or more) at an employer's company.
- Account managers or business consultants take a colleague along on their visits to an employer.
- This year, we have also organised a 'day of the employers'. The target group was middle management. There were several workshops, some in collaboration with employers.
- At various internal (policy) forums, extra attention is paid to the client group 'employers'.

It is important that what one has learned is also shared with colleagues from the team. The programme will be continued even more intensively in 2012.

2.2.1 What training and skills development do the generalist staff receive and for how long?

All VDAB employees receive an initial training on 'start competences'.

In 2010 we prepared a whole range of internal courses: 'Company cultures' (1/2 day), 'Introduction to the business world' (1 day), 'Social media' (1 day). We also offer consultants the opportunity to train on-the-job via (internal and external) internships, and to share knowledge and experience (learning networks). The various local 'bottom-up' projects are also very important. Targeted internal communication is the key to success and addressed in two courses: 'Where is VDAB heading?' and 'What is in it for me?'.

2.3 What partnership arrangements does the PES have in place to deliver the service to employers? What type of partner organisations and with what purpose?

The VDAB has a large range of partnerships:

- with temporary employment agencies: to advertise and search for candidates;
- with employers' organisations: to develop services according to the needs of employers;
- with accountants and organisations that support employers in their administration: to organise information sessions on subsidies and employment measures;
- with sector organisations: to find solutions for opportunity jobs (sector agreements);
- with other agencies: to support enterprise growth, to promote diversity plans etc.

3 CONTACTING AND ENGAGING WITH EMPLOYERS

3.1 How does the PES identify, target and make initial contact with employers that could potentially benefit from the PES services?

The segmentation of the companies used by the VDAB is simple: the VDAB focuses primarily on the SME and divides the companies by sector.

To identify employers that could potentially benefit from VDAB services, the VDAB makes use of different information sources, for example:

- creating a list of fast growing companies: this list is made each year by a specialised magazine (trends);
- local media: which job offers can be found in local media and are not known in our database;
- local government: new companies coming to the region;
- networking;
- creating a list of companies that did not use VDAB services in the last two years.

Each account manager makes his/her own prospecting plan within his/her province and sector(s) based on knowledge and evolutions in his/her province.

The initial contacts are made by the account managers by phone and followed by a visit to the employer. The account managers also organise local events on HR-related issues.

The VDAB website is also an important channel to come in contact with a new employer.

3.2 What tools, approaches and communication channels are used to develop a sustained contact and relationship with the employer and how effective are they? In particular, what is the most effective channel for initial contact?

- networking is very important;
- events, info sessions;
- personal contact is very important for SMEs;
- mailings (Siebel);
- media campaigns: printed media and a television channel targeted at employers, to promote our services;
- partnership with employers' organisations: using their media channels, being present at their events;
- participation at specialised exhibitions targeted at employers.

4. WORKING WITH EMPLOYERS: RECRUITMENT AND FINDING JOB OPPORTUNITIES FOR DISADVANTAGED INDIVIDUALS

4.1 Is reporting of vacancies compulsory?

The employer is legally obligated to report his vacancy to the VDAB if, during the previous calendar year, they employed an average of at least 20 workers and have published the vacancy in the press. However, many employers are not familiar with this legislation and there are no sanctions taken if they do not fulfil this obligation.

4.2. What types of vacancies are most reported?

This information is based on the result from the period January – October 2011.

Desired skills:

- For 50.27 % of the vacancies, the employers did not request a degree (the jobs needed no specific training or the employer had not filled in the required training) or were looking for low-skilled candidates; 17.47 % of the vacancies mentioned medium-skilled and 32.10 % indicated highly skilled.

Blue-collar versus white-collar:

- 36 % of the treated vacancies were for 'blue-collar workers', 64 % were for 'white-collar workers'.

Number of vacancies per sector:

- 2.60 % of the vacancies came from the primary sector, 28.10 % from the secondary sector, 52.54 % from the tertiary sector and 16.76 % from the quaternary sector.

Type of company:

- 89.52 % of the vacancies came from SME employers (<50 employees) and 10.48 % from companies with more than 50 employees.

4.3. What specific tools and systems do the staff use in their work with employers and which ones are particularly effective for recruitment and vacancy filling?

- automatic quality control on vacancies: vacancies are checked for unacceptable words (ex. mother tongue) and incompatible conditions (ex. vacancy for driver and no driving licence required);
- advice on drafting job offers;
- online CV database;
- 'find an employee', automatic match between a CV and profile in the job offer;
- automatic matching;
- matching by advisors: pre-selection and interviews;

- ‘flashing lights’ for vacancies: indicate on a daily basis the vacancies that need extra support;
- vocational training on demand of employers: training plans and selection of candidates are made by the VDAB and employer(s), to fit the profile requirements in the vacancies that employers reported to the VDAB;
- matching by advisors (face-to-face contact) has proven to be very effective in working with disadvantaged jobseekers;
- vocational training on demand is very effective for vacancies that are difficult to fill.

4.4. What tools and approaches are used to incentivise employers to take on disadvantaged individuals and the long-term unemployed and which ones are most effective?

For private companies:

- Financial advantages for recruiting people from ‘opportunity groups’: to promote young low-skilled jobseekers <26 years, to promote experienced jobseekers >50 years, to promote disabled persons, etc. For a complete overview, see: <http://www.aandeslag.be>
- Support after placement: NODW (‘Dutch on the work floor’), job coaching (to promote smooth integration), GIBO and IBOT (individual vocational training for disabled persons or with special language attention), AMC coaching (attitude training), coaching persons with a work disability and if necessary also their close colleagues.

For the Government:

- a quota for the recruitment of particular groups (migrants and disabled persons): 4 % in 2012;
- financial advantages and support after placement.

5. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

5.1 What systems are in place for performance measurement and evaluation?

There are systems operating on three levels:

- general VDAB policy level: balanced scorecards;
- management level: Executive Information System (EIS);
- team level: Oracle BI intelligent dashboards.

5.2 What are the main indicators used in evaluating the effectiveness and efficiency of the services to employers? Aside from measuring the number or duration of vacancies filled, what other indicators are used? What have been the main evaluation results in recent years?

A management contract between the Flemish Government and the VDAB defines a number of parameters that the VDAB must meet. These parameters are linked to specific operational funding and are evaluated annually.

For the management contract 2011-2015, the following monitoring parameters are defined concerning the 'comprehensive employers' approach':

- 1) Labour market information: provide quality information concerning labour market related issues → employer satisfaction objective = 75 %.
- 2) Vacancies: tailor-made, high quality and friendly support.
- 3) With specific attention for the SME → employer satisfaction objective = 63.5 %.

5.3 What have been the satisfaction levels and feedback of employers to the services offered?

- 1) Labour market information: 85 % (objective = 75 %)
- 2) Vacancies: 62.7 % (objective = 63.5 %)
- 3) Vacancies – SME: 63.8 % (objective = 63.5 %)

Feedback from employers on what they most expect from the VDAB:

- a single point of contact and personalisation of services;
- greater flexibility and reactivity.

5.4. Is there a system in place to feed evaluation results into service development?

Required actions, based on the satisfaction survey results and other indicators, are defined in the JOP (yearly operational plan).

6. CONCLUSIONS

6.1. Where do you see the main challenges in relation to delivering effective services to employers?

- mind setting in the organisation: renewed focus on the employers for all advisors and corporate working;
- increase in custom work and flexibility and anticipating future needs (e.g. organising training on demand, etc.);
- increase in effective personalised services for SMEs (with reduced staff?);
- supporting employers with permanent recruitment difficulties and adapting their expectations to labour market conditions;
- matching competences.

6.2. What are your conclusions on what works best in relation to the delivery of effective services to employers?

- personalised service
- open communication
- after-care and loyalty
- effective partnerships
- new recruitment methods.

6.3. In the Peer Review discussions, on which of the following issues would you most like to focus and what three things would you most like to learn from others?

Role	Importance of the focus (scale 1-5)	What would you most like to learn from others in the area(s) you are most interested in (three points in total)
PES organisation and staffing	4	How to manage workloads in teams
Contacting and engaging with employers	5	How to reach all employers and efficient segmentation Image building, both public and private
Recruitment and finding job opportunities for disadvantaged individuals	3	
Monitoring and evaluation	2	

The VDAB publishes its key figures -a quick survey of the main aspect of the VDAB services over the last year- annually in three languages (Dutch, French and English). You can download the digital brochure on <http://vdab.be/trends/kerncijfers.shtml>. For a more detailed look at our services, you can consult the annual report, which can be downloaded from our site <http://vdab.be/trends/jaarverslag.shtml>.
