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DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion

**VDAB: Host Country PES issues paper**

Input to Peer Review on Integrated multi-channelling:  
combining e-services with personalised services in a  
customer-oriented and efficient way

VDAB Belgium

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

VDAB's overall strategy in relation to multi-channelling is to be present in all channels and to make each service available as much as possible through each channel. The customer is in the driving seat and chooses the channel he prefers.

VDAB is also keen to follow new trends and to adapt new technologies in order to be able to communicate on the platforms where its clients are present. The latest examples in this field are the mobile website ([m.vdab.be](http://m.vdab.be)), digital tv and the social media.

The use of automated and self-service applications offers VDAB the opportunity to spend more time on personalised and specialised guidance. Thus the introduction of new channels and applications has not led to staff reduction.

The objective of VDAB is to integrate the channels (face-to-face, online and call centre) as much as possible, whereby counsellors and clients can work with the same unique files and databases. In that respect the new vacancy application MasterVac, a vacancy tool used by both employers and job advisers, is to be considered good practice. It offers real time publication of job vacancies, and all vacancies are contained in one single database; with all VDAB channels and customers working with the same unique file.

A major challenge for successful implementation of multi-channelling is to motivate (the altogether flexible) VDAB staff to embrace new applications and new ways of working. The key factor in doing so is ensuring that applications are working smoothly and that they offer an added value in the execution of one's job. Training courses and e-tutorials are organized by VDAB to help personnel get used to the new tools.

New applications for internal as well as external use must be tested thoroughly before going into production. Usability surveys with clients are important and can sometimes give surprising results. Long development times should be avoided, and a balance must be struck between the investment required and the efficiency gains. To address this, when new applications are required, a project study is carried out, where the features are described and the cost in terms of time and software are estimated.

The success in terms of numbers of visitors to VDAB's jobsite urged other actors to seek cooperation with VDAB. This resulted in partnerships whereby vacancies from commercial jobsites and private agencies are also published on the VDAB website. This makes [www.vdab.be](http://www.vdab.be) the place to be for anyone looking for a job or staff. It enables VDAB to fully play its role as director in the labour market.

Major future developments include the introduction of Mijn Loopbaan (My Career), a lifelong online portfolio, containing all relevant education and employment data, and the emphasis on competences in the matching process.

## **PES ORGANISATION AND SERVICE PROFILE**

VDAB (Vlaamse Dienst voor Arbeidsbemiddeling en Beroepsopleiding) was founded in 1989 and is the Public Employment Service (PES) for the Flemish region. Belgium has 4 PES: one for the Flemish region (VDAB), one for the Walloon region (Le Forem), one for the Brussels region (Actiris) and one for the German speaking community (ADG). They are working under the competence of their respective regional governments (the Flemish government for VDAB), operate independently from each other, but also have a strong commitment to cooperate in many fields.

The PES essentially offers placement, career guidance and training services. Unemployment benefits are not a competence of the PES, but of the federal RVA (Rijksdienst voor Arbeidsvoorziening). Unemployed people receiving unemployment benefits have to register as jobseekers with the PES.

VDAB employs 5,000 staff (4,263 FTE). It is not possible to provide an exact ratio of counsellors to jobseekers because the organisation is quite flexible in terms of the way in which staff are employed. For example, to deal with the diversity of tasks, other employees sometimes 'act' as counsellors.

Its head office is located in Brussels. There are 13 regional employment offices and 6 provincial training centres. The regional employment services are subdivided into local jobshops, where third party organisations also operate. The provincial training centres include several local training centres. Sometimes, training is also organized within companies.

VDAB is mainly financed by the Flemish government on the basis of a management agreement, setting out the objectives that have to be reached. It is governed by a Board of Directors, where employers' organisations and trade unions are represented. The total budget is 597 million euro. As VDAB does not handle unemployment benefits, this budget is entirely dedicated to ALMP activities.

The management agreement 2011-2015 outlines the mutual commitments of the Flemish government and VDAB for the coming years. Apart from one internal strategic goal related to the maximisation of the internal working processes, enhanced efficiency, and increased diversity in VDAB's staffing structure, the agreement contains 5 strategic goals:

1. To maximise the tailored activation of all citizens who are seeking a job or not working with the aim of integrating them into the labour market in a sustainable way
2. To provide career guidance for working citizens
3. To ensure a comprehensive approach for employers
4. To organize a future-oriented offer for the recognition and development of competences
5. To extend the number of partnerships between private agencies, training centres, commercial jobboards, career guidance organisations etc.

Over the years, VDAB's role has shifted from mainly being an actor in the Flemish labour market to increasingly determining and leading the strategic direction of the labour market (whilst still carrying out various operational assignments). This has led to the recognition of certain activities carried out by other organisations, public as well as private, profit as well as non-profit making. Combined actions between and with these organisations are supported in favour of a dynamic labour market. Moreover, calls for tenders are organized to determine which actors will carry out which activities.

In 2003, VDAB introduced the so-called 'comprehensive approach for jobseekers', which implies that there is consistent follow-up and guidance for every jobseeker (receiving unemployment benefits) towards employment or training. In recent years, this approach has been improved in several ways. For example, VDAB has introduced automated vacancy matching, distribution via the campaign management system and better follow-up. The publication of vacancies now takes place in real time instead of there being a one day delay. Equally for employers, an identical comprehensive approach is being implemented, guaranteeing, for example, that every vacancy is handled with the utmost success. In other words, VDAB maximises the services available to ensure that a vacancy is filled.

For several years, VDAB has established partnerships with other (private) employment agencies and other (commercial) jobsites in order to exchange vacancies and CVs. EURES has also been a partner in these activities since its establishment VDAB makes available a maximum of services to ensure that a vacancy is filled in. There are SLAs that range from publication only to intensive recruitment.

# 1. MULTI-CHANNELLING: OVERALL APPROACH AND STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT

## *1.1. What is the PES's overall strategy and mission in relation to multi-channelling, and in particular, in relation to online services and other related channels?*

The overall strategy of VDAB is to make each service available through each channel as much as possible. This involves not only using new technologies for communicating directly with its customers, but also for automating specific processes, e.g. matching vacancies and CVs. A related objective is also to make the labour market as transparent as possible for jobseekers, employers, stakeholders etc.

## *1.2. What was the rationale for introducing multi-channelling?*

The rationale for introducing multi-channelling is both to offer different avenues of communication and to make channels of communication more effective and efficient. As a public service, VDAB has to keep abreast of new trends for efficient communication with its clients, taking into account clients' preferred mean(s) of communication. Given that these new technologies diminish the amount of manual work, they also automatically provide more time for personalised and specialized services. Continually improving efficiency and work organisation is essential.

## *1.3. What degree of integration of the channels is expected and/or has been achieved? What developments have underpinned and/or influenced this strategy? 'Integration' means ensuring that all channels are brought together into one coherent service, rather than disparate parts.*

The objective of VDAB is to integrate the channels (face-to-face, online and call centre) as much as possible, whereby counsellors and clients can work with the same unique files and databases. The applications are not just for data storage. Jobseekers can, for instance, apply online from their My VDAB; employers can invite jobseekers from their My VDAB after having found them in the CV database; and communication from VDAB with jobseekers and employers can be done through all channels.

In the past, a number of IT applications have been developed independently from each other. For instance, this was the case with the Filemanager and Job Application Space for jobseekers. The Filemanager contained the official jobseeker's file, whereas the Job Application Space (formerly called My VDAB) was the private space where jobseekers were able to manage their job applications. These IT applications had no link with each other. Even registration had to be done separately, which caused some painful misunderstandings. Some people wrongly thought that by registering themselves in the Job Application Space, they were officially registered as a jobseeker. As registration as a jobseeker is compulsory for

someone applying for unemployment benefits, rectifications subsequently had to be carried out. Now both IT applications are accessible through one entry (called My VDAB) and parts, especially those related to personal data, are fully integrated. To work with a unique, centralised data source is very important.

It is worth pointing out that some data are only visible to or adaptable by VDAB staff. On the one hand, a job advisor can view the Jobindicator (a tool which allows job advisers to follow up how jobseekers have responded to the vacancies that have been sent to them), actions or events (invitations, registration, outcome of interviews, employment data received from social security). On the other, the personal jobseeker's webspace is only visible to and adaptable by the jobseekers themselves; a jobseeker can store personal CVs and upload reference letters in My VDAB which he can then send to employers.

It is the ambition of VDAB to create a fully integrated application, called Mijn Loopbaan (My Career), which will constitute a lifelong e-portfolio, containing all relevant data about education, training and work. The development of Mijn Loopbaan is proving to be a tough exercise; VDAB nevertheless hopes to launch a first version at the beginning of next year.

A similar situation appeared on the employer's side, where a Jobmanager tool was developed, allowing employers to input their vacancies for publication on VDAB's website and via the VDAB kiosks. Vacancies input by employers could be viewed, but not adapted by job advisers. This proved to be frustrating and counter-productive for job advisers and sometimes not customer-friendly for employers.

A project called MasterVac was put into production in 2010, which introduced a common vacancy tool for both employers and job advisers. MasterVac is the successor of the Jobmanager, which offers a major improvement in terms of real-time publication in and the use of one unique database. All vacancies, also those exchanged via hr-xml, are contained in one single database. Here again, all VDAB channels and customers are working with the same unique file.

1.4. What services are currently offered by which channels?

**Job-seekers**

	Registration of unemployed	De-registration of Unemployment records	Unemployment Benefit claims	Creation / update of Individual Action Plan	Information on suitable Job Vacancies etc.	Guidance (offered by employment advisors only)	Information on employment measures/ schemes	Applications/ referrals to/for employment programmes	Job/ vacancy matching	Other services– please specify Training
<b>Face-to-face/local office</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	not our competence	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Call centre</b>	<b>Yes (2000)</b>	<b>Yes (2000)</b>	not our competence	No	<b>Yes (2000)</b>	No	<b>Yes (2000)</b>	<b>Yes (2000)</b>	No	No
<b>Internet/online</b>	<b>Yes (2001)</b>	<b>Yes (2001)</b>	not our competence	No	<b>Yes (1994)</b>	No	<b>Yes (1996)</b>	<b>Yes (2002)</b>	<b>Yes (2003)</b>	<b>Yes (1999)</b>
<b>Email/SMS</b>	No	No	not our competence	No	<b>Yes (2002)</b>	No	No	No	<b>Yes</b>	No
<b>Social media</b>	No	No	not our competence	No	No	No	No	No	No	No

## Employers

	Registration/ intake of Job Vacancy	Follow up of PES handling Job Vacancy	Establishment of contacts with jobseekers	Labour market development information	Information on employment measures/schemes	Data exchange on participant in LMP	Other services—please specify Training
<b>Face-to-face/local office</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	No	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Call centre</b>	<b>Yes (2000)</b>	<b>Yes (2000)</b>	No	No	<b>Yes (2000)</b>	<b>Yes (2000)</b>	No
<b>Internet/online</b>	<b>Yes (2000)</b>	<b>Yes (2000)</b>	<b>Yes (2002)</b>	<b>Yes (1996)</b>	<b>Yes (1996)</b>	<b>Yes (1997)</b>	<b>Yes (2000)</b>
<b>Email/SMS</b>	<b>Yes (e-mail) 2000</b>	<b>Yes (2000)</b>	<b>Yes (2002)</b>	No	No	No	No
<b>Social media</b>	No	No	No	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes (general information)</b>	No	No

*1.5. How are job-seekers expected to engage with the various channels and services?*

From the outset, VDAB has tried, as far as possible, to make each service available through each channel. The customer is in the driving seat. He chooses the channel he prefers and he can switch channels at anytime. This is facilitated by the fact that all channels work with the same unique files.

Nevertheless, jobseekers are encouraged to use the online channel for registering, managing their files, searching for jobs etc. Jobseekers with no computer or Internet access at home can make free use of PCs in the local jobshops. When they come to register themselves at VDAB for the first time, the counsellor will tell them about the online applications and their possibilities. Jobseekers with no computer or Internet knowledge are offered the possibility of a short training course (4 half days) where they can learn the basics about the website and how to use it in their search for employment. Some jobseekers however don't have the ability ever to work with computers, in which case they are served by the face-to-face counsellors.

There seems to be no clear indication when it comes to defining the digital divide. Job advisers are sometimes confronted with young graduates who claim not to possess a computer or have Internet access. With 'older' jobseekers, it is more or less the same story. In the 50+ Jobclubs, there is a variety of computer skills: people with no experience, but willing to learn; and people who have it all in their fingers and share their knowledge with their fellow unemployed. They too can follow a training course to learn the basics about computing.

Jobseekers can also search all vacancies, training courses and information via the kiosks or Jobcomputers which are equipped with an easy-to-use button menu. An issue for the near future is how far can we go to make the use of e-services and call centre mandatory, taking into account the support, tools and instruments we provide.

*1.6. To what extent is the profiling and segmentation of job-seekers linked to and achieved through multi-channelling?*

The call centre is used to do screening about the degree to which jobseekers can be empowered to find employment without too much help from VDAB. Five weeks after registration, a jobseeker will be contacted by the call centre to maybe adjust his file, run through his search activities and give advice. On the basis of this interview, it will be decided whether the initiative should remain with the jobseeker or whether he has to be redirected to the local jobshop. Competences can be scored online in the jobseeker's file, either by a job advisor, by the jobseeker himself or by a training centre.

### *1.7. How are employers expected to engage with the various channels and services?*

Employers are encouraged to use the online channels to publish their vacancies and look for valuable candidates. When VDAB launched its first online applications, they were confronted with the fact that a lot of employers didn't have the Internet, did not know how to use it and sometimes even didn't know that it was on their computers. So VDAB took up the role of 'messenger' to spread the word of the Internet, combining it with the promotion of its online applications.

Nowadays the use of the Internet is common practice in companies and employers find it easy to input their vacancies for publication on the VDAB media and to search for candidates in the CV database.

Large companies, private agencies and commercial job boards are offered the possibility of exchanging their vacancies via hr-xml. This yields the advantage that they only have to input, manage or delete the vacancy in their own systems and the changes are automatically transferred to VDAB.

The online applications for employers are promoted during visits by account managers and presentations. They can always contact the call centre for help.

### *1.8. Does multi-channelling give rise to new services or just provide different channels for existing services?*

The Internet opened up a whole new world. Before the Internet, vacancies were made known to jobseekers via letter, notice boards or during interviews. With the arrival of the Internet, it was possible to publish the vacancies online for everyone to view.

New techniques subsequently came along, such as receiving alerts of new vacancies, candidates and training courses by e-mail and text (SMS). RSS-feeds, mobile web and digital TV were also introduced.

Jobseekers are now able to apply online for jobs and to manage their job applications.

An important innovation was the introduction of an e-learning platform, allowing anyone to undertake training courses when and where they want.

These tools are also an integral part of addressing mobility issues and improving the task of matching vacancies with competences. See: [http://synerjob.apache08.hostbasket.com/synerjobhome/presentatie\\_fonsleroy.html](http://synerjob.apache08.hostbasket.com/synerjobhome/presentatie_fonsleroy.html).

## 2. NEW DEVELOPMENTS: AUTOMATIC VACANCY MATCHING

### 2.1. How does the automatic vacancy matching system work?

#### Technicalities

The matching between jobseekers and vacancies is carried out by the Elise software. The following data are compared:

- (preferred) occupations
- experience in (preferred) occupations
- education
- driving licence
- languages (+ level)
- maximum distance to work/region
- contract duration
- full-time/part-time
- category jobseeker (fully unemployed, part-time working, full-time working...)
- age

### 2.2. Flow

There are three ways to launch the matching process: When a jobseeker is registered, his file is automatically matched with the vacancy database and he will receive an overview of the most suitable vacancies.

A jobseeker can match his file with the vacancy database anytime by pushing the 'Search vacancy' button in his Filemanager.

He will then see the vacancies that match with at least 80% of his file. A job adviser will see the vacancies that match from 50% onward. This percentage difference for the jobseeker and the advisor offers an opportunity for job advisors to suggest vacancies that match less, but might nevertheless be of interest to a jobseeker, perhaps after training.

When a vacancy is entered in the vacancy database, the data are immediately sent to the Elise server, where the matching with the jobseekers' database takes place. This generates a so-called campaign, whereby vacancies are sent to jobseekers by means of a campaign management system. This is carried out on the basis of a cascade system, whereby the most cost-effective (read 'cheapest') way of communication is used:

Jobseeker has e-mail	Vacancies are sent by e-mail
Jobseeker has no e-mail, but has mobile phone	Vacancies are sent by text message
Jobseeker has neither e-mail nor mobile phone	Vacancies are sent by post

A tool called Jobindicator allows job advisers to follow up how jobseekers have responded to the vacancies that have been sent to them. A jobseeker may at some point be invited to come to the local jobshop if the vacancies that have been sent to him do not lead to employment. During a talk, the search activities and the possible reasons for lack of success will be discussed. This may result in the adjustment of the jobseeker's file or the suggestion of a training course. In cases of sheer unwillingness, the jobseeker's file will be transmitted to the federal RVA for a possible sanction.

With the campaign management system, a jobseeker will receive a maximum of 3 vacancies per day, whereas a vacancy will not be sent to more than 250 jobseekers.

### *2.3. When was this service introduced?*

A first matching tool, using the Autonomy software, was implemented in 2002. As the matching results were not entirely satisfactory, VDAB decided to switch to Elise in 2004. The follow-up with the Jobindicator was introduced in 2010.

### *2.4. What was the impetus and/or reasons for this service being introduced?*

By introducing the automated matching, VDAB wanted to reduce the time/workload associated with matching vacancies and jobseekers manually. This meant less time was spent on searching for candidates, sending invitations etc., which allowed vacancies to be filled more rapidly.

### *2.5. Has the service been targeted and/or promoted at particular client groups? Who are the main users of this service, either by nature or design?*

Sending vacancies with the automated matching is part of the activation policy in our comprehensive approach of jobseekers by VDAB. For most job-seekers, there's no opt-out.

Jobseekers over 50, however, are considered to be a special target group that requires a different approach. That is why they are invited in person or are encouraged to set up a mail alert in their My VDAB to receive new vacancies. The no opt-out concerns the younger group of jobseekers only.

*2.6. How has the interaction between the PES staff, job-seekers, employers and other stakeholders been affected by the introduction of this service?*

It has sped up the time between a vacancy being reported to VDAB and it being filled in. Generally speaking, one could say that it has had a positive effect on the functioning of the labour market. The time needed to fill a vacancy is also influenced by the general situation in the labour market. During the peak of the economic crisis, VDAB achieved a 'filling in' time of 36 days, the reason for which is quite obvious.

*2.7. What technical and other support is available for users of the service?*

The matching is a purely technical process which takes place behind the scene. So there is no real technical issue for the end-users. A challenge is of course to adapt this process to the ever changing reality of the labour market, e.g. by adjusting the parameters and criteria for the matching.

*2.8. What levels of client satisfaction have been observed in relation to this service? Have there been any observed changes in relation to different client groups, and if so, what are the possible reasons behind these changes?*

The matching is basically an arithmetical exercise, whereby data are compared. The quality of the data used is of the utmost importance. But even then, one can be confronted with odd results.

In the beginning, VDAB received quite a lot of criticism about mismatches. Over the years, VDAB has fine-tuned the matching process by adapting the parameters of the software. It is, however, fair to say that the outcome is not always perfect. The bottom line is that the results must be considered to be suggestions, which one has to interpret just like one has to interpret the results of a Google search.

*2.9. Is the success rate of such automatic matching being measured (in terms of successful placement outcomes)? If so, what are the results?*

The success of the automatic matching in terms of direct placements is not being measured as such. By using the crossroad bank of the Belgian social security system (Dimona), we have a follow-up of the jobseekers to see if they get employed or not, but there is no direct link with our automated matching. VDAB's ability to measure in the future depends on the data that will be made available by Dimona. At this stage, Dimona is too limited to link it to the VDAB processes.

*2.10. How was the service implemented across PES (or only in certain regions/for certain client groups)?*

The distribution of vacancies via e-mail and text was first tested in a limited number of regions and exclusively with young jobseekers, because it was thought that they would be more open to using these new technologies. As these tests proved successful, this way of working was generalized for every jobseeker up to the age of 49.

Older jobseekers (+50) are invited in person to have relevant vacancies proposed to them. However, if they like, they can create a search profile in My VDAB that will send suitable vacancies into their mailbox or to their mobile phones. This process is carried out independently from the automated matching.

*2.11. What have been the challenges and success factors for implementation?*

As described above, the big challenge was to produce valuable matching results. For that purpose, appropriate criteria and parameters had to be set up. Files (CVs) and vacancies needed to be of a high quality. For jobseekers, when there is face-to-face contact with a job advisor, the jobseeker's file is run through and adjusted when necessary. In terms of the vacancies, to improve the quality and the 'matchability', an online assistant tool warns which information might need to be added or changed, for instance, in the case of contradictions. When the quality score of the vacancy is below 50%, a job advisor will adjust the vacancy, or contact the employer when it has been input by the company itself.

*2.12. What are the plans (if any) to develop this service further?*

For the future, we have the intention to improve the matching processes using competencies (see section 2.8). Each occupation requires a set of competences that a worker has to master to carry out the job. The videolink under 2.8 illustrates this further.

### **3. NEW DEVELOPMENTS: USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA**

#### *3.1. What types of social media have been used in PES?*

VDAB operates one corporate Facebook and one corporate Twitter account. Specific departments or local offices are allowed to set up accounts for targeted subjects or projects.

VDAB also displays videos about occupations, training courses and reports on YouTube. The central Facebook and Twitter accounts have two administrators (one main and one back-up) who post messages and follow up reactions on behalf of VDAB. Local accounts (and YouTube) are managed and followed up by a dedicated administrator. VDAB personnel have to be aware if they are acting as a private person or as a VDAB member of staff. Personal accounts are not used to spread VDAB messages.

#### *3.2. When were the social media services introduced?*

VDAB started to use social media in 2009.

#### *3.3. What was the impetus and/or reasons for social media being introduced?*

VDAB felt that it had to have a social media presence because this is the medium through which some of their clients communicate with each other ('You've got to fish where the fish are').

#### *3.4. Has the usage of social media been targeted and/or promoted at particular client groups? Who are the main users, either by nature or design?*

There is no specific targeting. The current usage of Facebook breaks down as follows: 57% women, 41% men and 2% unknown. The 25-45 age group constitutes 65% of the usage. No data for Twitter is available.

#### *3.5. How has the interaction between the PES staff, job-seekers, employers and other stakeholders been affected by the introduction of social media?*

There is little interaction now, but we can expect that this interaction will grow, for example, in terms of people asking questions, and sharing or re-tweeting messages. Social media are mainly used to draw people's attention to interesting information on the website, which essentially means anything that seems appropriate on the spur of the moment: events like job fairs, new training courses, links to sets of vacancies, interesting articles in the e-zine, information about themes that are talked about in the news.

*3.6. What technical and other support is available for users of social media?*

Social media are in general easy to use. The technical support is mainly to be found in the Help pages of the platforms themselves. Nevertheless, VDAB staff with questions about these media can ask advice from the administrator of the corporate accounts. Guidelines for VDAB staff have been written down. They can also follow a one-day training course about social media.

In terms of the client groups, there is no need to provide support in the use of social media.

*3.7. Is the success rate of such social media being measured (in terms of access to information, activation of job search etc.)? If so, what are the results?*

The success of Facebook and Twitter is measured in terms of the number of followers or fans. VDAB always puts shortened (bit.ly) links in its postings, so that they can measure how many times a link has been viewed. VDAB also monitors what is being said via the social media and on the Internet in general (reputation management) and responds to questions.

*3.8. What levels of client satisfaction have been observed in relation to social media? Have there been any observed changes in relation to different client groups, and if so, what are the possible reasons behind these changes?*

Sometimes people are surprised to find out that a public service is present in these new media. There have been some instances where people have posted messages about technical website issues, hoping that VDAB would pick them up. When VDAB then takes action and solves the problem, people sometimes show their satisfaction by replying.

*3.9. How has the use of social media implemented across PES?*

The use of the social media is not integrated into VDAB's processes. They are considered to be an additional means of communicating with the clients and were gradually introduced on a voluntary basis. As these media become more popular, interest in their use is increasing within the organization.

*3.10. What have been the challenges and success factors for implementation?*

The main challenge was to attract followers and fans. The logos of and links to Facebook and Twitter are on VDAB's homepage. VDAB depends a great deal on the viral spreading of messages by followers and fans to their friends. There has been no dedicated promotion campaign.

*3.11. What are the plans (if any) to develop social media further?*

At this moment there are no concrete plans for any further developments. New trends and applications are being watched carefully.

## 4. IMPACT OF MULTI-CHANNELLING APPROACHES

4.1. *Are indicators being used to monitor the usage of the different channels in relation to the different services and types of user? If so, what are they?*

VDAB produces a great number of statistics in its Executive Information System (EIS). EIS contains a dedicated section about multi-channelling where the share of each channel in our service delivery can be viewed. EIS is not limited to multi-channelling. It contains statistics about all aspects of VDAB's service to customers (vacancies, jobseekers, employers, training courses, guidance, complaints, My VDAB accounts, website visits etc.)

4.2. *What are the quantitative and qualitative results of this monitoring? Are there any other relevant results, for example, from specific evaluations?*

The market share of the main processes give a good idea of how the different channels are used:

<b>Vacancy input</b>	<b>Registration jobseekers</b>
Online 86%	Online 39%
Call centre 4%	Call centre 6 %
Face-to-face 10%	Face-to-face 55%

The above figures concerning the market share date from 2011. The qualitative aspects of the market share are not measured. The statistics are not broken down according to the type of user.

4.3. *How are the various channels promoted and how effective is this promotion?*

The various channels are promoted in brochures, online, during fairs, in campaigns and during face-to-face interviews with jobseekers/workers and company visits by account managers and job advisers. It is difficult to measure the effectiveness of this promotion, but one indication is that VDAB's website, although targeted in the first place at the Flemish market, is the biggest jobsite in Belgium. This results in partnerships with commercial jobboards and private agencies who are eager to collaborate with VDAB's website.

4.4. *How has the introduction and evolution of multi-channelling affected the organisational structures, working practices and culture of PES?*

The introduction and evolution of multi-channelling has created new opportunities and challenges for staff. The Internet applications, for instance, opened up a new and ever evolving world. Call centre agents acquired expert knowledge about the

organisation and its processes, which increased their career opportunities within the organisation.

As in every organisation when a new department is developed, the information is made public within the organisation and staff may apply. The call centre, for instance, was developed from scratch. Expert knowledge was acquired through the past experiences of VDAB staff and by consulting and using the knowledge database. The reason why call centre agents must have expert knowledge is that they have to provide clients with professional and correct answers to their questions.

There has been no staff reduction as a result of the introduction of multi-channelling, but there has been a dramatic improvement in terms of efficiency. In particular, with the introduction of MasterVac, vacancies are displayed in real time, the matching process commences immediately and the vacancies are targeted to a larger number of jobseekers. In contrast, with the old vacancy system, there was a one-day delay between inputting the vacancy and it being available on the Internet. The search by job advisors took much more time than via the new automated process.

#### *4.5. What has been the impact of multi-channelling on staffing?*

The new channels (online and call centre) provided the face-to-face services with more time for personal and specialized guidance or coaching. This often means a more interesting and challenging job. Having said this, every change and introduction of new services is confronted with reluctance, sometimes caused by a lack of knowledge or fear of having one's job stripped. The need of a quasi permanent change management is obvious. Moreover, it can be helpful to have internal marketing (intranet, e-mail), training and e-tutorials to prepare staff to use the new techniques.

#### *4.6. What has been its impact on staff training?*

The introduction of new channels or services often requires new competences. Demonstrations, presentations and training courses or e-tutorials are organized to familiarize staff with new applications.

#### *4.7. What has been the impact on the amount of time available for PES advisors to deal with clients or to focus more on those in need?*

As routine jobs have been taken over by self-service tools or by automated processes, counsellors were able to spend more time on target groups.

## 5. INTEGRATION OF MULTI-CHANNELLING APPROACHES

### *5.1. What are the main challenges in introducing successful multi-channelling approaches and how have they been addressed?*

The challenges are to:

- provide user-friendly, good working and permanently available online applications
- have them promoted internally and externally
- enable all channels to work with unique databases and files
- have an up-to-date knowledge database
- keep abreast of new developments

### *5.2. What are the main (potential) pitfalls of multi-channelling approaches?*

As a public service, VDAB cannot afford to exclude certain groups. By letting the client choose his channel, this danger is being avoided to a large extent. This can be underpinned by information and training sessions and by providing the use of PCs at the PES locations.

The feeling is that computer competences are ever improving, also amongst older jobseekers. It goes without saying that not every channel is suited for every occasion. Sometimes a good talk will have a greater result than 100 text messages sent.

### *5.3. How do you avoid the exclusion of certain groups if you offer increasingly digitalised services?*

The client can use his preferred channel. Those not familiar with PCs and the Internet can follow training courses, there are Help functions in the applications, and when working on a PC in a VDAB location, they can ask support from VDAB staff. And don't forget the easy to use (mobile) telephone.

### *5.4. Which other applications are being considered to appeal to certain client groups or to deliver certain functions?*

What is lacking now at VDAB is online guidance and coaching. This was not considered a priority in the past, but with the introduction of Gmail and Google Apps, the use of for instance, videochat with certain clients could be considered.

VDAB might also be interested in developing IPad and iPhone Apps. There are, however, no concrete projects at this moment.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

### *6.1. Conclusions on what works best in relation to your approach to multi-channelling?*

The PES have to offer a wide range of user-friendly channels and keep an open eye for new trends. It is important that the PES are present on the platforms that their customers use in their daily life and activities. Multi-channelling offers opportunities to provide a broader range of services to the clients and influences the labour market in a positive way.

At VDAB, the different channels and applications were often developed as separate applications laid next to each other. Over the years, they have become more integrated. It's important to keep an overall view and to guide staff to use the new tools to their and their clients' advantage.

### *6.2. Conclusions on main obstacles/pitfalls relating to multi-channelling and how these can be overcome*

- The PES must be careful not to exclude jobseekers belonging to certain target groups, who do not have the ability or the means to work with the new media.
- New applications for internal, as well as external use must be tested thoroughly before going into production. Usability surveys with clients can be quite surprising. Sometimes, surveys confirm what we are thinking, sometimes they don't. One recent example: we felt that our mobile website offered too many search criteria. The survey pointed out that the majority of users were satisfied with the number of search criteria, and that those who weren't, preferred to have even more search criteria.
- As things move fast in the technology world, long development times should be avoided.
- Financial resources have to be sufficient. Striking the balance between the investment required and the efficiency gains is important. To address this, when new applications are required, a project study is carried out, where the features are described and the cost in terms of time and software are estimated. On the basis of the study results, it is decided whether the initiative fits within the available budget and under which priority it should be treated.

### *6.3. Conclusion/comment on missing data/research evidence*

The evolution in the field of social media and the phenomenon of Apps for different platforms and information carriers must be watched carefully.

The risk of vacancy and CV databases getting outdated, especially with a younger audience, must not be taken lightly. When jobseekers don't visit jobsites anymore to search or to apply for a job and instead are using social media for this purpose, the

PES must think how they can deal with this. Of course, this risk can't be taken lightly, as matching vacancies and jobseekers is our core business.

*6.4. Conclusion/comment on key issues to be addressed by PES*

The keyword is quality: applications must work flawlessly, and files and databases must be up-to-date and complete. Staff must be trained to use the different channels and clients must be made aware of the possibilities of each channel.

## 7. QUESTIONS

*7.1. What would you most like to learn from other countries – please outline the key areas of interest/questions*

- VDAB is interested to hear if other countries have developed iPad applications or have any plans to do so in the future.
- Do other PES have a well-defined strategy about the use of multi-channelling and, if yes, what exactly are they trying to achieve with it?
- How do other PES deal with social media like Facebook and Twitter? How do they use them? Are they integrated in their systems? How do they promote them? How do they approach the so-called Y generation and their successors, the Z generation or digital natives, who have not known a world without Internet or mobile phones?