



**The European Commission Mutual Learning Programme  
for Public Employment Services**

DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion

**PEER PES PAPER – *ACTIRIS***

**Peer Review 'PES and older workers'  
Germany, May 2012**

ACTIRIS

(Date: March 2012)

This publication is commissioned by the European Community Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity (2007-2013).

This programme is implemented by the European Commission. It was established to financially support the implementation of the objectives of the European Union in the employment, social affairs and equal opportunities area, and thereby contribute to the achievement of the EU2020 goals in these fields.

The seven-year programme targets all stakeholders who can help shape the development of appropriate and effective employment and social legislation and policies, across the EU-27, EFTA-EEA and EU candidate and pre-candidate countries.

For more information see:

<http://ec.europa.eu/progress>

## CONTENTS

1. MAIN CHALLENGES IN RELATION TO THE LABOUR MARKET.....	1
2. SERVICES FOR OLDER WORKERS: OVERALL STRATEGY AND APPROACH .....	3
3. PREVENTATIVE PES SERVICES AND MEASURES FOR OLDER WORKERS. ....	7
4. PES SERVICES AND MEASURES FOR UNEMPLOYED OLDER WORKERS... ..	12
5. MONITORING AND EVALUATION.....	17
6. CONCLUSIONS .....	18

**Author:** *ACTIRIS*

In collaboration with GHK Limited and the Budapest Institute.

# 1. MAIN CHALLENGES IN RELATION TO THE LABOUR MARKET

## 1.1. What is the labour market situation of older workers?

According to the 'Labour Force Survey', the situation of older workers (aged 50 - 64) in the Brussels Region can be described as follows.

Main Labour Market Indicators - Brussels Region		4ème trimestre 2009				4ème trimestre 2010			
		15-64	15-24	25-49	50-64	15-64	15-24	25-49	50-64
Employment Rate	M	60.8%	17.7%	75.7%	<b>54.9%</b>	60.3%	17.7%	74.2%	<b>56.8%</b>
	F	48.9%	18.8%	61.4%	<b>41.7%</b>	51.6%	16.9%	63.8%	<b>48.8%</b>
	T	54.8%	18.3%	68.6%	<b>48.0%</b>	55.9%	17.3%	69.1%	<b>52.6%</b>
Participation Rate	M	73.0%	28.1%	89.7%	<b>64.0%</b>	73.4%	29.7%	89.6%	<b>64.7%</b>
	F	58.3%	28.1%	72.5%	<b>47.0%</b>	62.0%	26.5%	76.8%	<b>53.6%</b>
	T	65.6%	28.1%	81.2%	<b>55.2%</b>	67.6%	28.1%	83.2%	<b>58.9%</b>
Unemployment Rate	M	16.8%	37.2%	15.6%	<b>14.3%</b>	17.9%	40.6%	17.2%	<b>12.3%</b>
	F	16.1%	32.9%	15.4%	<b>11.3%</b>	16.8%	36.3%	16.9%	<b>8.9%</b>
	T	16.5%	35.0%	15.5%	<b>13.0%</b>	17.4%	38.5%	17.0%	<b>10.7%</b>

Source : SPF Économie – DGSIE (Enquête sur les Forces de Travail)

The unemployment rate of the older workers aged 50 - 64 is around 10 % in the Brussels Region.

Administrative Data (people effectively registered with the regional PES), point out that among the 19 % of jobseekers aged 50-65, 72 % have been inactive for at least 2 years and 18 % for more than 10 years.

The same data shows that in the Brussels Region, 77 % of the jobseekers aged 50 and over are under qualified (only to primary school level or, for most, to higher education level with a degree not officially recognised in Belgium and therefore considered as under qualified).

The Brussels Region usually extends the category of 'older workers' to those aged 45 and over. Those aged 55 and over represent 9 % of the unemployed people in Brussels: those aged 45 and over represent 29 %.

In most cases, the reason those aged 45 and over leave unemployment is not to move into a job, but because they are registered as sick, or exempted from the obligation to register as a job seeker due to their age (over 50) and unemployment duration, or because they will receive their pension. Only 10 % of those aged 45 and over leave unemployment for a job.

Table 1 : Inactivity - job outcome for 45 + jobseekers registered with the PES on 31 December 2009:

Ensemble des DEI	45 - 50 aged	50 - 55 aged	55 - 65 aged	Total
<b>Total</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>10%</b>

Source : ACTIRIS, calculs Observatoire bruxellois de l'Emploi

The probability of leaving unemployment for a job increases with the level of qualifications and decreases with age. In addition, it seems that the level of qualifications is less and less important as age increases.

The Brussels labour market has the following general characteristics:

*Language demands:* Bilingualism and the need for other languages exist for many posts and sectors, including certain low-skilled sectors. These demands are much higher in Brussels than in the other two regions.

*Very great competitive pressure in the Brussels labour market* with people from outside the regional boundaries. The competition also exists between the generations. The increase in the population of Brussels has been in the younger age brackets, increasing competition for older unemployed, because of the wage level.

*Changed employment patterns in Brussels:* De-industrialisation and the off shoring of certain sectors in part explain the disappearance of low- and medium-skilled jobs.

*High demands in terms of qualifications,* while a large section of the labour supply is not well qualified; 52 % of jobs in Brussels are filled by workers with a higher education qualification (compared to 34.5 % in the other regions).

These elements particularly affect older unemployed, 77 % of whom are under qualified. Some of them will require a reconversion which could be difficult in unqualified fields.

*Ethnic discrimination in recruitment* is particularly worrying in Brussels. Unemployment among the non-EU population is three times greater than among Belgians. For immigrants, secondary or higher education qualifications represent a lesser advantage in terms of entry into the labour market, than it does for other people.

## **1.2. What are the main challenges facing PES in working with older workers and which groups among older workers are the most difficult to support?**

Older workers experience different problems which complicate their (re)integration into the labour market.

They can be a victim of (or join) stereotypes related to age in relation to (in)competences; motivation; ability to adapt to change; productivity and absenteeism; and the cost of their work.

Other factors may hinder their job search, including:

- Poor knowledge of the realities of the labour market (wages, employers' needs, retraining opportunities, etc.);
- Low chances of finding employment through traditional channels; and underutilisation of personal and professional networks;
- Poor knowledge of job search methods;

- Less access to training tailored to their needs (time, practice, etc.), due to their age;
- A lack of confidence in their physical abilities, skills and potential;
- Loss of confidence in future opportunities;
- Some real health problems that require adjustments to a work station or work process, and sometimes, a complete retraining (64 % of older job seekers have had careers involving physical work such as security, cleaning, transport and handling, construction, restaurants, etc.).

## 2. SERVICES FOR OLDER WORKERS: OVERALL STRATEGY AND APPROACH

### 2.1. What is the main strategic approach of the PES in dealing with the issue of demographic change and unemployment among older workers?

The support offered by ACTIRIS to job seekers is systematically targeted towards all job-seekers under the age of 50 who either receive services and benefits, or are entitled to them. Due to a specific demographic challenge<sup>1</sup> in the Brussels Region, young people are ACTIRIS's most important target group. With the exception of some group activities targeted at young people, older workers have exactly the same access to all services (individualised or group activities) provided by the PES or its partners, on demand. These services are targeted at the individual's needs.

As a target group of the European Social Fund, the long term unemployed aged over 25 have priority for some activities organised by ACTIRIS and its partners<sup>2</sup> working on several areas<sup>3</sup> such as:

- Assistance in starting a company;
- Workshops for active job searching;

---

<sup>1</sup> Brussels's case is atypical concerning demographic change. While data related to the federal level foresee a growth of the older population, perspectives 2060 drawn by the « bureau federal du plan » about Brussels indicate an expansion in the youngest segment of unemployed people.

<sup>2</sup> Since 1991 ACTIRIS has established partnerships with the various actors in the Brussels job market. ACTIRIS has developed a comprehensive offering of services with over 150 partnerships. The Belgian PES Agencies have taken on the role of overall coordination of the various parties involved in the job market (private and non-private employment middlemen, as well as the public middlemen). Through the direction of coordination, integration, stimulation and making available resources/information to various involved parties, the PES creates a significant added value. As a consequence of the decree of the 28th of February 2008, ACTIRIS is able to conclude contracts with public and private vendors, as well as administer financial grants, in order to implement employment initiatives **concerning Requests for Bids, Project Proposal Bids and special activities (accession partnerships, innovative projects, etc.)**. ACTIRIS has then drawn up various Project Proposal Bids.

<sup>3</sup> The 45+ group comprise 20 % of public accompanied by the partner's

- Monitoring of individual, socio-professional integration processes for job-seekers who receive a social integration grant from the public social welfare centres.

Around 20 % of supported people in these measures are aged 45 or older.

ACTIRIS published in March 2012 a call for a project concerning the support of long term unemployed people aged 45 years and older. A lack of experience in dealing with the older unemployed as a specific target group, is why this call for a project was considered to be exploratory.

The Belgian Federal entity provides some preventive measures to help jobseekers aged 50 and over return to work, including (but not limited to):

- additional income as financial compensations for the loss of income if they find a new job
- an income guarantee for part time workers
- exemption from some of the job seeker obligations if they start an economic activity with a 'Coopérative d'activités'
- holiday entitlement.

ACTIRIS develops actions for both unemployed people and employers. Actions towards employers mainly consist of visits. ACTIRIS provides the employers with various information about the different opportunities for hiring people and financial support to employment creation (See 3.1.1.).

## **2.2. Are there specific counsellors for older workers and/or specific employer counsellors to deal with the challenge of demographic change, and if so, what training do they receive?**

Counsellors work with all age groups to offer the whole panel of services provided by ACTIRIS. Some counsellors are meant to work with jobseekers, some with employers.

Support methods are mainly the same whether they concern young or older unemployed people. Special attention is paid to the personal project, the profile, skills and difficulties in finding a job. Elements of the profile and the highlighted solutions are adapted to the needs of the jobseeker and his/her professional ambitions.

The training topics are related more to the different aspects of the service provided and less to the specific target groups. For example, diversity consultants must know that age is a real discrimination issue, among others.

**2.3. What types of special measures does the PES offer to (unemployed and employed) older workers and how effective are they?**

Type of measure	Offered? (yes/no)	Brief operational description of measure	Year introduced	Year abolished	Effectiveness of measure (scale: 1 = not very effective, 5 = very effective)	Reasons for effectiveness or ineffectiveness
<b>Legal regulations e.g. exemption from activation</b>	- depending from federal level					
<b>Benefits e.g. longer duration</b>	- depending from federal level					
<b>Subsidies e.g. wage subsidies, social contribution subsidies</b>		<p><u>Relocation allowances for the unemployed</u>: The aim is to encourage unemployed persons who found paid work in the Brussels Region to settle here.</p> <p><u>Transition-to-work subsidy</u>: This measure does not exist anymore, but ACTIRIS still pay for the demands introduced before the 4<sup>th</sup> of November 2008. The new measure is called 'Aide au recrutement pour des projets spécifiques'.</p> <p><u>Subsidised contractors</u>: The measure allows local and provincial authorities, non-profit organisations and certain other forms of association to take on subsidised contractors.</p>				
<b>Other activities or measures e.g. training or coaching of placed older unemployed, upskilling of older employees, other preventative actions</b>		<p><u>Public employment services</u>: general services for jobseekers during their job-search.</p> <p><u>Active job-search workshop</u>: The objective is to learn and apply an effective job-search method (in-house and partnership).</p> <p><u>Partnership for childcare for jobseekers</u>: allows jobseekers with young children (0-3 years) to undertake the necessary actions in the context of their insertion course by providing childcare, whether occasionally (one day, or a few hours) or for longer periods (3 months or up to a year if the parent follows a training course).</p> <p><u>Vocational reintegration</u>: The social and vocational guidance service deals with difficult to place jobseekers (long-term unemployed, low skills, etc.).</p>				

	<p><u>Vocational Project Construction</u>: The aim is to provide all jobseekers, registered with ACTIRIS and living in the region of Brussels, with a personalised service in order to help them to improve their skills.</p> <p><u>Training cheques for vocational integration</u>: promotes the hiring of jobseekers with low language and ICT skills. Jobseekers can have access to a certain number of hours of training, whether in language or ICT programmes.</p> <p><u>Training and integration contract</u>: The aim is for the jobseeker to become employed after on-the-job training. It concerns only jobs for which jobseekers cannot be placed by the PES without training.</p> <p><b>Services for Job-Seekers through ACTIRIS Partners:</b></p> <p><u>Assistance for particular individuals</u>, who are confronted with <u>physical, psychological or behavioural hurdles</u> which hinder their occupational integration or access to an education. This includes intake appointments, workshops for establishing occupational goals and intensive counselling;</p> <p>General assistance for <u>minimally-qualified or vulnerable persons</u>, as well as monitoring in the context of socio-professional integration activities – depending on the case – such as gaining literacy, or pursuing basic education, preparatory training and qualifying training;</p> <p><u>Personalised counselling, to help individuals draw up clear and realistic occupational goals</u> that fit their particular personal characteristics, as well as the realities of the job market. The measures are of short duration and are addressed to all job-seekers who have not established clear career goals.</p> <p><u>Monitoring of individual, socio-professional integration</u> processes for job-seekers who receive a social integration grant (RIS/Revenu d'integration sociale) or corresponding assistance from the public social welfare centres;</p> <p>Assistance in <u>starting a company</u>: acquiring the necessary skills and receiving support during the search for financing possibilities and start-up assistance for the company;</p> <p><u>Increasing awareness among young people in schools</u> about the employment market and technical occupations;</p> <p><u>Referral Centres</u>: support the availability of training opportunities which meet employer's needs.</p>				
--	--	--	--	--	--

### 3. PREVENTATIVE PES SERVICES AND MEASURES FOR OLDER WORKERS

#### 3.1. Based on your experience (ideally backed up by performance measurement), what works best in relation to preventative measures?

##### **3.1.1. What is the PES' role and which measures have been taken to raise awareness of the importance of recruiting/retaining older workers? What has been the impact of such measures?**

As coordinator of the Territorial Pact for work in Brussels, ACTIRIS works on promoting diversity and the fight against discrimination, including age. The main objective of this policy is to neutralise the risks of direct / indirect discrimination, including age based discrimination.

Diversity consultants offer support to enterprises to help them develop their diversity plan. This includes forming a diversity team with key persons in the company. They then develop a framework for further actions with the company: which departments, which domains, and which target groups will be affected by this diversity plan. Finally, they develop, with the help of the diversity team, a diversity plan, initiated with the consideration of the specific situation of the company. A diversity plan is a two year roadmap which can include: adaptation of selection procedures; opening of new recruitment channels; analysing the job descriptions; and extending the access to training for the workers. The diversity consultants also insist on knowledge transfer to the next generations.

##### **3.1.2. Does the PES provide HR counselling to employers in relation to the demographic challenges facing them? If so, what is the nature of this service; is this provided in-house or externally; if in-house, is it provided by specialist counsellors? Which types of employers have been the target of such services and what has been the result?**

ACTIRIS has an Employer Directorate. Employer consultants go into the companies to provide some counselling to employers.

The acquired companies are divided according to specifications into three major segments:

- small and medium enterprises ( 5 to 100 employees) – 25.1 % of job offers in the Brussels Capital Region;
- large enterprises and major clients (over 100 employees) – 29.6 % of job offers in the Brussels Capital Region;

- Public institutions – 39.5 % of job offers in the Brussels Capital Region.

The services provided are not directly oriented towards demographic changes, but they take into account every aspect of the labour market and provide:

- Information about employment incentives (federal employment-supported measures and regional incentives): information about the job market and the supplying of occupational info-sheets (duties, educational qualifications, soft skills, etc.), to enable the creation of administrative profiles.
- Assistance in functions analysis. ACTIRIS helps each employer to determine the profile of the candidate sought and compose job vacancy announcements.
- Dissemination of vacancies, preselection of candidates for vacant positions and selection profiles for executive personnel. For small and medium-sized enterprises in Brussels, ACTIRIS reserves a free pool of personnel that are appropriate for the assignment (functions that do not require highly specialised qualifications).
- Assistance for international-level job placements through our international employment referral and placement centre in Brussels, BIJOB. It offers the use of databases which contain thousands of multilingual candidates who are seeking employment outside Belgium.
- Assistance in applying for and receiving financial support, to train a candidate within a company, in the service of private individuals. ACTIRIS reviews the candidate's actual requirements for training and ensures they receive support and guidance during training.
- Assessment of the language abilities of job candidates through computerised tests.
- Matching of the IT and language skills of new employees through ACTIRIS vouchers, which make training and professional development possible.
- Assisting companies during restructuring or mass layoffs.

ACTIRIS also offers employers its services through innovative management with T BRUSSELS HR. This allows employers to offer a full suite of workforce management solutions for the entire company, either temporarily (by temporary workers) or permanently; in order to place employees who are leaving the company in new jobs (outplacement<sup>4</sup>), to expand their skill potential and internal resources; or simply to obtain business advice from experts (for recruitment and selection).

---

<sup>4</sup> Cf. infra

**3.1.3. What specific measures are available to help retain older workers and enhance their HR potential (e.g. in work training)? What has been the take-up of such measures and their results on the long-term sustainability of older workers' employment?**

The role of Referral Centres<sup>5</sup> is to make a better match between the needs of companies and training provision and to encourage vocational training among the people of Brussels for key occupations in a particular sector. The ultimate objective is to increase the employment of Brussels residents in sectors experiencing needs for skilled labour. As the product of a partnership between the public and private sectors, the Referral Centres carry out initial training of young people, perform vocational aptitude testing, validate skills and provide assistance to jobseekers in key sectors. These occupational based Referral Centres mainly direct their activity towards teachers and school students, and the rest is directed towards unemployed or employed people<sup>6</sup>. There are currently five in the following sectors: IT and communications; the metal manufacturing and technological industry sector; construction; hotels, restaurants and catering; and transport and logistics. The trainings are composed of:

- from 50 %(transport and logistics) to 73 % (construction) of unemployed people;
- from 12 %(transport and logistics) to 22 % (metal-technological industry) of employed people.

The remaining is shared between students and teachers.

At the federal level several financial interventions are offered to help companies retain or hire older people and include:

- Reduction of the wage cost for people aged 50 years and older
- Reduction of the wage cost for people aged 57 years and older
- Reduction of the wage cost for the hiring of unemployed people aged 45 years and older
- Financial assistance from the fund for professional experience to projects with the objective to ameliorate the wellness of older workers.

---

<sup>5</sup> *Centres de références* in the Brussels-Capital Region. The equivalent in Wallonia is known as a *Centre de compétences* (Skills Centre). [Trans.]

<sup>6</sup> No data available about the age of the (un)employed people.

**3.1.4. Are there specific measures to support the retention of older workers in restructuring situations? What types of services are offered and how successful have these been?**

People aged 45 years and older may benefit from an **outplacement** funded by the employer. The outplacement support can take up to one year and guarantee the older worker a panel of personal services. Further information is provided in Section 4.1.1 below.

Special assistance is offered to companies facing **mass layoffs and active restructuring measures**.

ACTIRIS informs companies in particular about:

- the process by which announcements of mass layoffs should be pursued,
- the set-up and running of ACTIRIS-led employee groups: their missions, implementation and successful evolution,
- restructuring plans, outplacement options, education and training opportunities, and other advantages that aid the search for new employment, etc.

To accomplish this, ACTIRIS has set up a special support and advisory service for companies.

The first duty specified by the regulations is to undertake a **review of the legality** of mass layoffs in the Brussels Region and support companies in the implementation of their restructuring.

In addition, employers have the vital task of keeping their social partners (employers, trade unions) **informed** from the beginning of the process, through mass layoffs, until the end of the negotiations, which often lead to a restructuring plan.

ACTIRIS monitors the **proper execution of the restructuring plan**, and in particular the measures provided for dismissed workers, yet without intervening directly in the negotiations.

Throughout the process, ACTIRIS provides **reporting** on the situation of affected workers, which is intended in particular for the above-mentioned employee groups. In particular, ACTIRIS ensures the collection of information about the efforts being made by these workers in their new job search.

**3.1.5. Which partnerships with external organisations are in place and have proved to be effective and why?**

To achieve its missions, ACTIRIS develops partnerships with many organisations such as 'Bruxelles Formation' and 'Vlaamse Dienst voor

Arbeidsmiddeling en Beroepsopleiding' – French and Dutch speaking offices for professional training in the main activity sectors, to develop structures as Referral Centres, etc.

**The Territorial Pact** for Employment is an informal round table established within ACTIRIS with social partners and other actors in the labour market in Brussels. The themes, such as anti-discrimination, diversity, mobility and inter-parent families, require a broad approach. Today, the Territorial Pact focuses primarily on promoting diversity among employers in Brussels. To this end, the Territorial Pact, and its team of consultants, assists companies in developing a diversity plan.

**The Referral Centres** (Supra): their role is to make a better match between the needs of companies and training provision, and to encourage vocational training among the people of Brussels for key occupations in a particular sector. The ultimate objective is to increase the employment of Brussels residents in sectors experiencing needs for skilled labour. One of their roles is the training of employed people.

They are the product of a partnership between the public and private sectors; they are non-profit association in joint management between the public and private sector. Both subsidise half of the activity. The public sector is represented by regional ministers (depending on the minister's responsibilities), PES service, and public training services (French speaking and Dutch speaking). The private sector is represented by employers' unions and activity sectors. The unions are also represented.

The main source of efficiency is the link between the needs of the labour market (employers) and the jobseekers' search and skills.

### **3.2. What do you see as the main challenges in relation to delivering preventative services for older workers, including the specific PES services offered, as well as aspects of the broader policy framework?**

Preventative perspectives cannot be isolated into one segment of the market, risking affecting them all.

While wage brackets could be a solution, pointing a specific group making it easier to hire, they could generate a risk of negative balance for the other groups. The challenge is to keep in mind the risks for the other groups to potentially lose the benefits of their situation.

Companies should be invited to think about their own internal demographic challenges and be encouraged to search among older workers for transversal skills

and transversal responsibilities such as younger employees' training, knowledge transfer between generations, etc.

## 4. PES SERVICES AND MEASURES FOR UNEMPLOYED OLDER WORKERS

4.1. Based on your experience (ideally backed up by performance measurement), what works best in relation to measures and services for unemployed older workers?

*4.1.1. In the context of the overall approach of PES services for unemployed older workers (individualised or targeted), what specific supports are available to this target group that have proved successful regarding outcomes?*

Every support provided by ACTIRIS is available for older unemployed people. Similarly, each support activity led by one of the 150 ACTIRIS partners is provided to any jobseeker, whatever his/her age. We assume that the measures used by the largest group of older unemployed are the best fit to make their way to employment easier. As examples, we only mentioned some support activities with a larger share of older unemployed people.

- **Assistance in starting a company**: this activity is led by ACTIRIS's partners. It is organised as individualised support to the market analysis and elaboration of the business plan, eventually training and skills empowerment, and finally company creation. In this program, the average age was 37 years old in 2011; 20.1 % are 45 years old or more.
- **Workshops for the active job search**: a range of individual or group support actions have been implemented to provide assistance in searching for a job, such as:
  - Learning to establish clear and realistic career goals; to draft a CV (curriculum vitae) and a cover letter;
  - Training in effective behaviour for job interviews;
  - Learning to establish areas of employment in which the job-seeker can and will apply for work;
  - Learning to understand, analyse and assess meaningful information in a job announcement in relation to one's career goals;
  - Learning to master telephone screening interviews, to raise a potential employer's interest.

In 2010, ACTIRIS's 'Guidance to active job search service' supported 1017 persons aged 45 years old or older (17 % of its public), and ACTIRIS's 22 partners supported 809 45+ aged people (19 % of their public).

- **Monitoring of individual, socio-professional integration processes** for job-seekers who receive a social integration grant from the public social welfare centres. Among the broad spectrum of services and benefits offered and in partnership with ACTIRIS and with the support from the European Social Fund, the CPAS offices assist eligible clients with integration or appropriate financial support so that these clients can, through a structured as well as individualised integration process, become integrated into the job market for the first time, or become reintegrated after being unemployed. In 2010, 13 275 persons benefited from a support; 15.5 % were aged 45 and older.
- **Assistance for particular people**, all those who are confronted with physical, psychological or behavioural hurdles which hinder their occupational integration or access to an education. This personal integration process can include intake appointments, workshops for establishing occupational goals and intensive counselling. In 2010, 20 % of the public were 45 years old or older.
- **Outplacement**. There is a legal obligation for the employer making workers aged 45 and over redundant, to offer those workers outplacement support, whatever their function or level. The costs are covered by the employer.

The outplacement procedure is an obligation for the worker.

Outplacement is a set of services; guidance and advice is provided individually or in a group to support individuals to find employment with new employers as early as possible or to develop a professional activity as an independent. It can consist of:

- psychological support
- logistical and administrative support
- assistance in the implementation of the job search
- support in the negotiation for a new employment contract
- support during integration into a new workplace.

ACTIRIS offers jobseekers this service via the innovative management of T Brussels HR services.

**4.1.2. Are any Active Labour Market Policies (ALMP) measures specifically targeted at unemployed older workers and which ALMPs have proved most effective for older workers and why (key factors affecting their success/failure)?**

Brussels ALMPs are mainly focused on younger and under qualified unemployed who represent the most important challenge. They

systematically benefit from the CPP process<sup>7</sup>. Most of the measures are accessible to any jobseeker and they can be reached via the CPP process: a job seeker counsellor advises the jobseeker to address a specific measure. In this way, all the measures, including those above, are connected to the main Brussels' ALMPs.

For example, one measure accessible only via this orientation 'Aide à l'élaboration du projet professionnel' is led by ACTIRIS's partners. AEPP is personalised counselling, to help a person draw up clear and realistic occupational goals that fit their particular personal characteristics, as well as the realities of the job market. The measures are of short duration (three months) and they are addressed to all job-seekers who have not established clear career goals. The share of the unemployed aged 45 years old and older in this measure is only 13 %. An explanation is provided by the priority put on the younger unemployed during the implementation phase of the CPP process. This share will increase.

ACTIRIS Vouchers: aim to promote education and training. However, these are designed for job-seekers and support hiring by a company through the means of skills matching. These vouchers enable job-seekers to receive education or training aligned with the needs of the job market (short modules, as well as in time periods in ICT or languages). The training enables job-seekers to complete effective integration courses to further their career goals. The first versions of this measure targeted younger people. In 2011, the target groups were enlarged to all jobseekers. Among nearly 5 900 recipients, 12 % were aged 45 years old and older. This share will probably increase in the next few years. ACTIRIS vouchers are relevant to CPP procedure.

IMT-B website: is not directly related to the ALMP, IMT-B's purpose is to guarantee constantly updated information about the labour market and help anyone in their approach to the market, including activated jobseekers and older unemployed. ACTIRIS organises available information about the job market, facilitating a better balance between supply and demand. ACTIRIS follows developments in employment and unemployment for the Brussels Capital Region from up close, and utilises thematic analysis to find answers to questions about change in general and changes in the world of work.

---

<sup>7</sup> Construction du Projet Professionnel: Assistance in developing career goals: ACTIRIS requires interviews for all job-seekers who have newly registered and receive services or are entitled to services. The purpose is to discuss the job-seeker's occupational goals and to draw up a clearly-structured action plan, which includes a timeline. This is accomplished by means of a designated career counselor who guides the job-seeker on his/her way to employment. Setting clear career goals, and planning out the actions to be taken to achieve these goals, makes it possible to offer better-structured, more individually-tailored and more efficient career counseling. The deadlines for the preparation of this action plan, and the intensity of the consulting, is adapted to the target group which the job-seeker belongs to, as well as to measures the job-seeker has committed to for the plan's implementation;

Since the beginning of their presence on the Web in April 2009, the number of visitors to the Brussels job market information website has been growing constantly.

**4.1.3. What are the best ways of encouraging employers to offer employment opportunities to older workers? And what is the relation of services to financial incentives/subsidies?**

Most of the financial measures are under federal competences. On the regional level, some enhancement of the professional experience could be done, including by promoting various forms of mentoring in the companies.

The approach must be specific to the reality of each employer and adapted to the realities and needs of the companies.

**4.1.4. Which partnerships are in place and have proved to be effective with external organisations and why?**

Since 1991 ACTIRIS has entered into **partnerships with the various actors in the job market**, which are distributed among the 19 municipalities in the Brussels Capital Region. These agreements are targeted at socio-professional integration, the active search for employment and the inclusion of children of job-seekers. The partners also cooperate with public institutions in particular; support the creation of new jobs, as well as prepare young people still in school for the work world.

ACTIRIS has developed **expansive service offerings with over 150 partners** from the public and private sectors. To maintain consistent policies, ACTIRIS and its partners are linked together over the RPE online network.

Together, they provide a coverage rate of around 21 % of the Brussels jobseekers. *In the year 2011, more than 35 400 persons were supported by ACTIRIS partners.*

Soon the local coordinators for 'Houses for employment' will boost the professional local partnerships between ACTIRIS and its partners, as well as between ACTIRIS's partners. Implemented activities are supposed to guarantee proximity, dynamism and a coordinated professional network.

The Referral Centres are also effective partnerships in providing training and skills in the most recent technologies (supra).

ACTIRIS is due to publish (March 2012) a new call for projects oriented on the support of those aged 45 and over and long term unemployed people (two years and longer).

The support will be personalised, intense and long term (up to one year), and include:

- Personal and professional assessment
- Career plan development
- Link with the employers
- Individual or group support.

One objective of this call for projects is to understand the different realities in the support of older workers and detect priorities. Also, this measure is meant to develop and to test new ways of evaluation.

**4.2. What do you see as the main challenges in relation to delivering services and measures for unemployed older workers, including the specific PES services offered, as well as aspects of the broader policy framework?**

In the Brussels market, the first challenge will be to understand the different issues and specificities inside the group of 'older unemployed' and to create, while new competences will be transferred from the federal level, new measures or services that are able to create a connection between employers' needs and the skills of the older unemployed.

The second level would be seen as a service to the jobseekers, to support intensive work with the employers to break down stereotypes, highlight success factors with older people and help older people to valorise their own skills, and promote the benefits of their professional experience.

Third, intensive and rapid support measures should seek to prevent long term stagnation in unemployment.

We can also point to the use of categories (age, sex, nationality) in public policies as a way to create a representation of a reality. This leads to read the reality through these frame of references, creating or strengthening stereotypes.

## **5. MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

### **5.1. What systems are in place for performance measurement and evaluation for older workers / unemployed?**

The evaluation of (un)employed people is conducted through an individualised process as personal or professional assessments, or in screenings (check of the professional abilities realised in the Referral Centres).

### **5.2. What are the main indicators used in evaluating the effectiveness and efficiency of services and measures for older workers?**

ACTIRIS develops statistical indicators for all the support measures created, as well as for the ones provided in house as well as for the ones provided by partners. Most analyse the path of unemployed people.

In house measurement evaluation focuses on the path of the jobseeker: exit rate from unemployment, reasons of exit (employment, sickness, etc.), training, etc.

Each measure led in partnership is due to generate a rate of positive output (employment, company creation, workshops for active job search, etc.). A first step is to check what the recipients of a measure do after the support actions (work, training, etc.). Data are provided on a declarative basis by the partners who encode the information in ACTIRIS's Database. The quality of indicators and the evaluations depend on the reliability of the data provided.

A second step already used for some internal analysis and to be developed for actions led in partnerships, is to check, with a control group if the benefit for recipients is real or if the action has no impact on the unemployed person's path into work.

A third way to evaluate the implementation of a measure is to gather in 'focus groups' field professionals. Every aspects of the measure are analysed: the public targeting and recruitment orientation process; public profile and support methods implemented, etc. Field professionals are selected on a volunteer basis among each trade and include: company consultants, jobseekers' counsellors, partners, etc.

Finally, every two years, ACTIRIS has to propose a strategic plan to the Brussels' Government. To elaborate this plan, a consultation is made inside ACTIRIS to detect any unanswered need. Transversal or specific round tables (containing employment counsellors, company consultants, etc. ), are organised to identify publics or particular problems for which ACTIRIS's professionals have no solution in-house or with ACTIRIS's partners. These roundtables generate new ideas and new initiatives.

### **5.3. What have been the main evaluation results in recent years?**

No specific evaluation has yet been made on the specific target group 'older workers' available, except first observations (Q1).

Each measure led in partnership has its own specific topics, methods and outputs, and there is no global evaluation. Each is evaluated for its own results, rather than for its implementation.

For example, assistance in starting a company: in 2010, this measure generated a rate of 62 % positive output, mainly job oriented. In 2011, 20.1 % of the public were 45 years old or older; 29 % of the people aged 45 and older ended this action to find a job as an employee (36 % of the entire group); 31 % created an economic activity (24 % of the entire group). No data is available yet about the results of the new companies created.

Referral Centres are another example: through evaluation it was concluded that there is a need to create a common assessment framework for the five existing centres.

Round tables led to many conclusions in the 'strategic plan', including the need for:

- a specific measure for the older unemployed
- a specific measure for younger people to help them identify and use some social codes of professional life.

### **5.4. Have these results led to any changes or are changes being considered in the organisation and delivery of services to improve the labour market situation of older workers?**

This area needs attention and the evaluation process led to the creation of both above cited measures by the publishing of new calls for project proposals.

They also led to the clarification of some orientation process between ACTIRIS and some of its partners. Some selection criteria and group compositions were downward revaluated for the workshops for the active job search.

## **6. CONCLUSIONS**

### **6.1. What do you see as the main challenges in relation to delivering effective services to (unemployed) older workers?**

Except for individual support and some group activities such as workshops for active job searching, ACTIRIS has few specific measures or services especially focused on the older (un)employed or workers. A first analysis has been undertaken to understand the difficulties in (re)connecting older people to the employment market and points to the lack of specific tools.

The main challenges for Brussels are in dealing with the labour market transformation (de-industrialisation and disappearance of low and medium skilled jobs), and the profile of older jobseekers, mainly under qualified. Some solutions can be explored, such as training, skills enhancement, etc.

The second challenge is to elaborate on concepts to support older workers as soon as they become unemployed, to prevent them from stagnation. They need to rapidly identify their competences, skills, and know precisely what they want to do to develop a personal strategy.

## **6.2. What are your conclusions on what works best in relation to the delivery of effective services for (unemployed) older workers?**

Despite the novelty of ACTIRIS's initiatives to deal with older unemployed as a specific target group, we identified some success factors.

The first and most important success factor is probably the identification of a realistic professional project and the best ways to achieve it. The measure meant to help unemployed to achieve an existing project show the best rate of unemployment exit to employment.

The second success factor is the way to reverse stereotypes and turn elements of the profile seen as weaknesses into strengths, dealing in the same time with the jobseekers and the employers.

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

Topics	Importance of the topic (scale: 1 very unimportant, 5 = very important)	What would you most like to learn from others in the topic(s) you are most interested in? (maximum three bullet points)
PES services for older workers: overall strategy and approach	4	
Preventative PES services and measures for older workers	3	
PES services and measures for unemployed older workers	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>strengths, weaknesses and risks</i></li> <li>- <i>link between measures and employers</i></li> </ul>
Monitoring and evaluation	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>the ratio of qualitative and quantitative</i></li> <li>- <i>participation of field professionals and unemployed people</i></li> </ul>

## ANNEX

### Description of effective/proven practice

<b>Title</b>
'Information about the Job Market' website
<b>Introduction</b>
<p>Inspired by the Québec variant, the Brussels Region employment market information website, or IMT-B (<a href="http://imtb.actiris.be/">http://imtb.actiris.be/</a>), collects information about occupations and employment sectors in the Brussels Capital Region, as well as about vocational education and training. The site also records the jobs listed by ACTIRIS numerically.</p> <p>This website was built in cooperation with Brussels education and training through the Employment Agency ACTIRIS, and the development of the VDAB is encouraged in that the site responds to the new information needs or even to the questions of other target groups.</p>
<b>Main description</b>
<p>This website utilises various sources of information, such as training descriptions of Brussels Service Centres for Employment (Brussels education and training, and VDAB), occupational descriptions developed by ACTIRIS, employment statistics, ACTIRIS database of job offers, etc.</p> <p>This website is aimed primarily at persons who are looking for a new job or a new professional orientation, as well as temporary workers in the job market. The site also strives in its current version to provide answers to their various questions about the job market:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What skills are generally required for a profession?</li><li>• Which professions in the Brussels Region suffer from a shortage of workers?</li><li>• Which professions are particularly in demand?</li><li>• Which positions are vacant at present for a particular profession, or for an employment sector?</li><li>• Which vocational training programs exist to prepare for a job?</li><li>• Which employment sectors provide the majority of jobs in the Brussels Region?</li><li>• In which Brussels employment sectors are there positive hiring trends, or in which sector is there a high demand prevailing?</li><li>• Which social welfare partners exist in an employment sector?</li><li>• Which professions are represented in a particular employment sector, or in which employment sectors are certain professions practiced?</li></ul> <p>Through the establishment of the IMT, ACTIRIS organised available information about the job market, facilitating a better balance between supply and demand. The Brussels Employment Office ACTIRIS follows developments in employment and unemployment for the Brussels Capital Region from up close, and utilises thematic</p>

analysis to find answers to questions about change in general and changes in the world of work. In doing this, it meets the following objectives: to be equipped with anticipatory tools to forecast skill needs, to identify new skills, to analyse job market phenomena in the Brussels Region, and to disseminate information.

**Main results and success factors**

Since the beginning of their presence on the Web in April 2009, the number of visitors to the Brussels job market information website has been growing constantly.