

## **AGE MANAGEMENT - PROMOTING SME EMPLOYMENT DIVERSITY IN ANTWERP**

The main goal of this project is to increase the labour market participation of jobseekers aged over 45 and also non-natives within the region of Antwerp. This will be done through the principle activities of matching the needs of people in these groups who would like to re-enter the labour market, with the needs of SMEs. A key strength of the partnership is that it operates at the intermediate level between supply and demand and is therefore trying to satisfy needs on both sides.

The demand-side activities of the DP focus on the attitude of SMEs towards employing older workers, as smaller employers generally have a more closed culture with regard to diversity in the workplace. The main challenge is raising awareness amongst SMEs of the benefits of employing older people, and non-natives.

A key activity for the DP is to effectively engage with employers, namely SMEs and also with the two target groups of people who have been inactive for some time and who would like to return to the labour market and also non-native re-entrants as a target group. Methodologies have been developed to reach out to older/non-native jobseekers, facilitating access and re-integration in the labour market of those who have been inactive for a long time and who would like to work again.

The DP has developed a methodology of "how to convince employers of the benefits of hiring older workers?". Through the identification of 5 phases of diversity, they are able to put firms on a scale from "no diversity in the workforce at all" to "broad diversity of the workforce". With this analysis they then motivate firms to take a wider view and introduce diversity in their workforce.

On the demand side, key challenges include persuading employers of the benefits of hiring older workers, and also to motivate firms to take a broader view and to introduce diversity in their workforce. Through contact with SMEs, suitable vacancies are identified, and potential candidates from the target groups are screened to see whether their skills, competencies and interests would match the vacancy.

Once a person is placed, both employee and SME may access continuing support, training and information. Guidelines for employers and employment mediators are also produced for additional support.

It is anticipated that the practical advantages for both employers (increasing diversity in their workplace, quickly filling their vacancies with a suitable candidate, ongoing support) and for the target groups (opportunities to find a real job offer for older persons and non-natives in Antwerp, training and support to re-enter the labour market) will promote a change in SME culture relating to diversity in the workplace and age management.

### **DP information**

Member State: Belgium

DP Identifier: BenI-01/EQ/1.A/002

Link to [DP website](#)

Link to [EQUAL database description](#)

All comments and information should be emailed to [empl-equal-etg3@ec.europa.eu](mailto:empl-equal-etg3@ec.europa.eu)