'SmartCorners' and 'SmartJobs' workshops – digital skills and digitalisation of jobs

SKILLS TRAINING IN REGIONAL PES OFFICES TO DEVELOP BASIC DIGITAL SKILLS THROUGH WORKSHOPS, JOB SEARCH COACHING AND VIRTUAL JOB INTERVIEWS.

Publication date: August 2024

BELGIUM

As Forem began to provide more services online, some clients struggled to engage with these digital modes of support to help them enter the labour market (e.g. creating a job profile, compiling a CV). Therefore, Forem began offering training in digital tools through workshops and providing access to digital technological equipment.

Name of the PES	Forem (Belgium, Wallonia)
Scope of measure (a pilot project or a national reform)	Pilot projects in the region of Wallonia, Belgium
When was the practice implemented? (including start and end date for pilot projects)	At the beginning of the project, the aim was to help workers to develop their digital skills. Since 2020 the project has evolved and now focuses on helping all citizens to develop their digital skills for specific occupations. The project is ongoing.
What was the driver for introducing the practice? Was it internal or external?	▸ External: Some clients struggled with engaging in new digital ways of support, which motivated the investment in 'phygital' training that mixes digital tools with in-person physical support for those who would otherwise fall behind. ▸ Internal: Staff of Forem needed to be trained in digital skills in order to then train their clients.
Which organisation was involved in its implementation?	Forem
Which groups were targeted by the practice?	The project did not have a specific target group but offered the training to jobseekers who visited the PES to look for a job. However, there was a slight bigger focus on raising awareness among young people of the need to compile a CV for job applications.
What were the practice's main objectives?	▸ To build awareness of the importance of digital technology in everyday life and in the context of job searches. ▸ To increase clients' level of digital skills. ▸ To help clients to acquire the autonomy they need to be part of the digital society.
What activities were carried out?	In SmartCorners, clients can access technological equipment such as laptops, smart TVs and other equipment they may use in the workplace or in other situations in everyday life. Forem organises 'SmartJobs' workshops with training modules on basic digital skills: ▸ A simple in-person assessment to determine the need for training. ▸ Engaging activities through a four-hour face-to-face digital workshop, via a smartphone or tablet. Participants can also practise for job interviews through a virtual reality headset with a virtual interviewer. ▸ Clients are helped to complete and publish their profile on the Forem website. ▸ Trained PES staff support clients with their digital learning and help them find further training through other partners if necessary.
What resources and other relevant organisational aspects were involved?	Forem increased the amount of equipment available and focused on training its staff.
What were the source(s) of funding?	European funding through the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) fund and through post-COVID-19 financing in Wallonia which enabled access to more equipment.

What were the outputs of the practice: people reached and products?	▶ The smartphone application 'APP Forem' was developed at the time of the experiment and was used in the Smartjob workshops to help people familiarise themselves with the technology. ▶ Forem is currently developing ways to measure how many people have used the app and how many use the app frequently. ▶ An online test to determine clients' digital competence. ▶ In 2021, only 500 people attended a workshop, compared to 1,400 in 2023.
What outcomes have been identified?	The project team is working to develop a set of success indicators to measure the quality of services. It is, however, difficult to determine how participants use their knowledge and skills. One idea is to monitor clients' use of 'APP Forem'. Another is to collect data through self-report email forms on how clients use their knowledge after the training.
What are the lessons learnt and success factors?	▶ People can adapt to new ways of working with digital technologies provided they see the benefit to their lives. ▶ Digital learning is a long-term process and not a one-off activity. ▶ Access to technology is not the only issue – clients often need in-person help from staff as well.

Contact details for further information

BET, Gina

Director Open Services Forem

Email: gina.bet@forem.be

Phone: +32(0)71295160