



## ACTION PLAN FOR THE REGION OF FLANDERS

### Part I – General information

Project: DIALOG – Interreg Europe

Partner organisation(s) concerned: ESF Flanders

Country: Belgium

NUTS2 region: Flanders (Vlaams Gewest)

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### Part II – Policy context

#### *The Action Plan aims to impact :*

- X Investment for Growth and Jobs programme
- ⇒ European Territorial Cooperation (Interreg) programme
- ⇒ **Other regional development policy instrument**

#### *Name of the policy instrument(s) addressed:*

- ESF + program Flanders 2021-2027

### **Background**

The Managing Authority for the ESF in Flanders is part of the Department of Work and Social Economy. Since the ESF operational programme 2013-2020 has come to an end we started working on the new ESF + programme 2021-2027. The Flemish ESF+ program is structured as a framework program, it outlines the major structural challenges of the Flemish labor market and tries to respond flexibly to both current and future (and unforeseen) challenges from a strategic positioning and framework. In this way, this program will simultaneously contribute to eliminating the structural challenges of the Flemish labor market, as well as being able to anticipate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and help support the transition to a digital and green economy, in particular with regard to more vulnerable groups in the labor market. To build-up the program, various stakeholders have been consulted, in particular the social partners, NGOs, broad institutional partners, sectors.



Their vision on the implementation of the ESF program 2014-2020 gave us further insight into the socially relevant themes and into the challenges for the implementation of this ESF program 2021-2027. Their insights and points of interest enriched the environmental analysis and their involvement will be further translated during the implementation of this program through a thorough partnership approach.

Working with **new partnerships** and developing new ways of cooperation are taken up in this new programme, inspired, among others, by the good practices from the Dialog project.

In order to further improve the efficiency of EU funding, the ESF-program 2021-2027 is based on a number of strategies. For example: for the pillar 'social inclusion' two strategies are defined: the first strategy '*inclusive entrepreneurship*' focuses on creating the right business context for the influx and retention of vulnerable groups (non-professionals and job seekers). Organizations with many bottleneck vacancies receive special attention. Efforts are also being made to make data available on the (lack of) use by organizations of existing measures to support the integration of vulnerable groups. The Flemish social partners and their regional departments will be given a central role in this strategy. They proactively will address companies, inform them about measures and support them in dealing with diversity in the workplace. In doing so, they will bridge the gap between inclusive companies and local partnerships for job seekers and non-professionals. The work and social economy directors will also ensure that the necessary connections are made with the local partnerships for vulnerable groups. Via the second strategy '*local partnerships for vulnerable groups*' the ESF will facilitate VDAB (the Flemish public employment service) and local authorities to set up sustainable local partnerships with relevant service providers, aimed at guiding the most vulnerable job seekers and non-professionals (with complex problems). The aim of the partnerships is to enable these target groups to participate fully in society, including but not exclusively through work. These local partnerships are part of overarching ESF projects, which have sufficient critical mass to support the local partnerships within these projects. The key principle of the local partnerships is being able to work on a holistic and tailor-made basis. Guidance capacity is therefore provided in function of the various local needs.

It may be clear that the major aim of the operational program 2021 to 2027 is to work with partnerships and to make stakeholders co-creators in order to have more impact on the Flemish labour market. It is therefore quite clear that the surveys done in the Dialog project, has given us new insights on how to develop sustainable partnerships and to be as inclusive as possible in creating partnerships. As a result of the DIALOG-project, Flanders will also incorporate the **final target group** – as much as possible- as being one of the important stakeholders in these partnerships. This new approach will have planning making sure that the timing of the definition and the implementation of phase 2 of the project correspond. Also, the lessons learnt from the interviews with the stakeholders in Flanders are being put together with the good practices from the DIALOG-partners in one document.

### Part III – Details of the actions envisaged

#### ***Name of the action: Evaluation and monitoring of a new participative approach***

- 1. Relevance to the project (please describe how this action derives from the project and in particular from the interregional exchange of experience. Where does the inspiration for this action come from?)***

Of particular relevance for the development of the Action plan were the core elements of the following best practices presented by other partners, namely from the Internal Area of Tesino (Trentino) the bottom-up approach and from Spain the cooperation which has been set up to create an Health intervention plan. This Spanish good practice has proofed that it is important to think carefully which stakeholders to involve. In the Italian good practice, different actions were being made to involve the final target group.

- 2. Nature of the action (please describe precisely the content of action 1. What are the specific activities to be implemented?)***

All the experiences and good practices that have been analysed contributed to the draft of the model of reference and will help laying down the guidelines which are instrumental in the implementation of the action plan. But, we also see that Flanders has already an important tradition in working with participative methods and to keep our stakeholders motivated we plan to develop in phase 1 an inspirational document with some extra food for thought for our stakeholders (for instance on impact, common ground, diversity, inclusiveness, etc).

So together with the leasons learned from the good practice and with the document we still would like to develop, we will set up a strategy related to our gender activities in the new ESF programme. Namely we would like to find out in the youth partnerships, how we can introduce the topic of gender and which stakeholders need to be involved. ESF Flanders intends to define the executive plan aimed at implementing this strategy through a bottom-up design approach capable of taking into due account the expectations, ideas, projects and initiatives of the local partnerships.

In phase 2 we will monitor this process guidance to see if this approach would be something which could be useful for other experiments in the new ESF programme in Flanders.

Different phases can be distinguished:

- Mapping of the stakeholders
- Design of the participatory process, with a special focus on the final target group
- Application of the tools for the implementation of the participatory process
- Drafting of the executive plan

**3. Stakeholders involved (please indicate the organisations in the region who are involved in the implementation of the action 1 and explain their role)**

Active involvement of all stakeholders within the youth partnerships will be required; all of them should be able to express themselves, to participate and to provide their contribution for shared decisions. As mentioned above, a special focus will be placed on the involvement of the youngsters. So, the tools and techniques will have to take into account the possibility they have to reach this group.

**4. Timeframe (please specify the timing envisaged for action 1)**

In the period August 2022- July 2023 (phase 2) this strategy will be defined. After phase 2, the monitoring activities should be transferred into regular evaluation actions.

**5. Indicative costs (please estimate the costs related to the implementation for action 1)**

Ca. € 12.000

The costs will refer to:

- 1) to support actions for participation
- 2) the activation of tools for animation and involvement of the final target group;
- 3) the drafting of a bottom -up design approach

**6. Indicative funding sources (please describe how action 1 will be financed. Is it through the policy instrument(s) indicated in part II):**

For the implementation of the action plan, no Interreg Europe funding will be used. Therefore, resources of the European Social Fund will be used.

**Date:** 9<sup>th</sup> May 2022

**Name of the organisation(s):**

ESF Flanders

**Signature(s) of representative of the relevant organisation(s):**

Benedict Wauters