

Flanders, Belgium



## LEERWINKEL (Learning shop)

Keyword(s):

**lifelong guidance, learning opportunities, employment**



### Introduction

Young people and adults can go to a Leerwinkel for free information and tailor-made coaching about education or training. At the moment there are 4 active learning shops in Flanders. The answers provided are about De Stap from Gent.

### Main challenge

Young people and adults can go to a Leerwinkel for free information and coaching about education, training or career guidance. They coach them in making a choice. They give information about diploma-oriented courses, but also about courses which do not immediately lead to a diploma, but which can strengthen someone, teach them something new or help them to change their lives. They always first try to find out what someone is exactly looking for or what he / she wants to learn. They discuss what their dream for the future is. Some people have a very clear picture in their head of where they want to go, while others realize that they want to reorient themselves but they have no idea at all in which direction they want or can go. Their clients/consultants formulate their questions themselves and also choose the path and the pace they want to go. They do help them to clarify their questions or identify possible hurdles that may need to be overcome in order to start the learning process. Their guidance is always tailor-made. Together they draw up an action plan, often with small steps to reach the final goal. They refer people to training institutions in the region or to one of our partners. They work with many organizations, but they remain neutral at all times and independent of any training institution. They maintain good personal contacts with various intermediary bodies such as the public



employment services, the guidance centers for secondary schools, welfare organizations, the Agency for Integration and Civic Integration, libraries / knowledge centers, prisons, trade unions, local authorities and training providers in secondary, higher and adult education.

### **Timing**

Start in September 2003 in the case of De Stap as a pilot project from the ministry of education.

### **Objective**

The ultimate goal is that more low-skilled (young) adults would find their way to education and training. In Flanders they came to the conclusion that there was a clear shortage of these types of services and that there was a lack of financial resources for further development and expansion to other places in Flanders.

### **Target group**

Everyone (young people and adults).

### **Geographical range**

Currently there are 4 active Leerwinkels in Flanders (East Flanders, West Flanders and Limburg) and one in Brussels. There are also 3 Leerwinkels start-ups in Flemish Brabant and in the city region of Turnhout and Mechelen. They also organize 'consultations days' at their partner organizations. These are all places where the people they try to target already come to visit. In this way they try to get as close as possible to the people who can benefit from our work. By the way now there is also a learning and career guidance service in all prisons in Flanders and Brussels, thanks to the the ESF-project LIO (Learning Inside Out (NL)).

### **Stakeholders and partners**

Several authorities supported more low-skilled (young) adults finding their way to education and training, e.g. the Flemish Education Council (Vlor). The Social and Economic Council of Flanders (SERV) has also for a long time emphasized the importance of guidance towards education, training and career guidance. Together with all the Leerwinkels they form the Learning Network in Flanders and Brussels. Recently the network submitted a joint report with a proposal for basic services for learning and career guidance in all Flemish provincial regions and the Brussels-Capital Region.

### **Resources**

In the case of De Stap, they are financed through a broad partnership of the Gent city, VDAB East-Flanders, Syntra Middle-Flanders, OCMW Gent, EU and the Flemish government.

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### **Innovation(s)**

They were a part of the GOAL-project (Guidance and Orientation for Adult Learners) project, it ran for three years, from February 2015 to January 2018 and the KA3 project was coordinated by the Flemish Department of Education and Training. The Flemish policy experiments of this project were carried out by the existing guidance services Leerwinkel West Flanders and WordWijs (coaching of unqualified young people between 17-25 years) of Leerwinkel De Stap in East Flanders. The project focused on the development of experimental career guidance and orientation services in six European countries.

### **Evaluation**

They pride themselves by being independent of other education institutions. In Flanders, most guidance initiatives are private, therefore as independent they have a wider reach. Their work is evaluated by the broad partnership of institutions, see resources.

### **Success parameters**

They started as a local initiative, as a local project and they were able to become a regional network, working on opening new locations as we speak.

### **Impact**

Our answer is similar to the previous item. What is encouraging at the moment is the In practice the support for Leerwinkels grows every day. In West Flanders, East Flanders, Brussels and Limburg, people have been working for years on a qualitative, professional development of these guidance services, always in collaboration with local authorities and partners. Numerous educational partners, on the labor market, in civic integration and integration, justice and culture, recognize the added value of services by sending people to them, but also by allocating (temporary) project financing. In Flemish Brabant and the city region of Turnhout and Mechelen, there is also growing need and support for Leerwinkels from the local authorities.

### **Impediments**

The government is committed to paying extra attention to unqualified young people and school dropouts, (temporary) jobseekers, people who are inactive or who due to the circumstances have to retrain in their job or completely reorient themselves. These are all topics in which the Leerwinkels already have the necessary expertise. That's why, together with their colleagues, they see the Leerwinkels as a partner par excellence in this. The corona crisis has not made it any easier for people, especially for low-literate people, people with a migrant background, (ex)detainees,

psychologically vulnerable people , unqualified young people, NEETs (people who are not in education or training) and (temporary) job-seeking adults. Young people are at risk of dropping out of society and/or dropping out of secondary education, and they are suffering serious consequences. More thresholds were created for many of them, partly because of distance learning. For example, many of them do not have a PC or laptop, a stable internet connection and / or subscription, etc. Unaccompanied minors who live alone and single migrants were cut off from the much-needed contacts they built up in the training institutions, among other things. In large families, distance education for the children came first and the - perhaps only - computer was occupied by the children, and so on... There are a number of (poignant) examples. During this time of corona, they have made extra efforts to listen to existing difficulties and try to identify new thresholds. They have tried even more to provide personal support in planning, starting or continuing their training. For example, they received a lot of questions from (potential) course participants, students and pupils who had doubts because of corona to continue or even start their training. Due to the good cooperation with the training providers, (welfare) organizations and local authorities, it was possible to get an overview and to coordinate things. Together with local authorities and volunteering associations, they organized searches for adapted learning resources. They made agreements with, for example, center of (basic) adult education to see whether they could make their open learning center available to their clients/consultants. They have made numerous phone calls, sent emails and also conducted online video calls to keep their clients/consultants on board. By the way, these online conversations are an additional new service that has been introduced by corona, a service that they will continue to offer in the future.

### **Replicability**

The initiative can be replicated and adapted to different environments.

### **Concluding remarks**

They see themselves as the implementing partner of the one-stop-learning shops and as an executing partner of the Lifelong Learning Partnership to stimulate participation in lifelong learning so they can respond to local and regional challenges through enhanced cooperation with local partners.

### **Website/Social Media profile(s) of the initiative**

@LeerwinkelWest

@destapgent

To learn more, you can visit:

<https://onderwijs.vlaanderen.be/nl/leerlingen/hoe-haal-ik-mijn-diploma-secundair-onderwijs/leerwinkels>

<https://epale.ec.europa.eu/en/blog/epale-interview-hannelore-engels-van-de-stap>

<https://youtu.be/khR1LErB77I>

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