

## **Fighting Unemployment of High-Skilled Low-Graduated Workers Through A Network of Institutional Actors: A Case Study**

Renaud Maes<sup>1,2</sup>, Cécile Sztalberg<sup>2</sup>, Michel Sylin<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Université libre de Bruxelles, Unité de Psychologie des Organisations, Bruxelles, Belgium,* <sup>2</sup>*Université libre de Bruxelles, Service de Formation continue, Bruxelles, Belgium*

The general political aim of lifelong learning is to contribute to a competitive knowledge-based economy. Even though this political ideal is nowadays widespread in Europe, it undergoes many declensions, depending on social, economic and political contexts. In many countries, one can find strategies focusing on an increase of the level of qualification and the training of unemployed workers leading to socio-professional reinsertion.

Unemployment is a major issue in Belgium and, particularly, in Brussels-Capital Region. One of the origins of this problem is the generally low level of qualification of workers (almost 25% of the unemployed workers do not hold a secondary education diploma). In parallel, in several sectors of the labour market -such as, notably, teaching institutions- the National Office for Employment has diagnosed a lack of graduated workers. One of the explanations for this situation is that the Belgian education system is strongly inequitable.

Such a worrying observation implies the development of new approaches to increase access to the education system and, more specifically, to the universities. In this article, we present an initiative led by French-speaking Belgian universities and, more specifically, by the Université Libre de Bruxelles in partnership with the Université de Mons. It consists in a network of institutional actors designed to fight unemployment of high-skilled and low-graduated workers. More precisely, the goals pursued by the universities are the socio-professional insertion and the personal development of the targeted candidates (mainly elderly, experienced workers).

This system relays on the validation of professional experience allowed by the public authorities. This validation process entitles a candidate to access university even if he does not hold the otherwise required qualifications and to follow a shorter learning curriculum to obtain his diploma.

The actors involved in this set-up are the regional offices in charge of employment policies, the universities but also institutions in charge of education for social advancement. The reason for involving two different kinds of education institutions has to be found in their specificities: roughly, university gives access to more advanced, theoretically complex knowledge. It should also be noticed that the regional offices in charge of employment organize short-duration vocational trainings. Thanks to this wide supply of education and training possibilities, the network can tackle numerous individual situations.

The article will be organized as follow: in sec. 1, we will give some insights on the labour market in Belgium and specifically in the Brussels-Capital Region; in sec. 2, we will describe the role of the different stakeholders of the network; in sec. 3, we will analyze the candidates' grounds for undergoing the orientation and selection process. We will briefly conclude by proposing some indicators to analyse the efficiency of this process and by discussing the first feedbacks from candidates.