The PhDs@Work project
Enhancing career development of early stage researchers through interuniversity and intersectoral cooperation

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CONTEXT
Career of PhD holders


PRODOC project (2009-2013)

Goals
- Enhancing employability of PhD holders
- Boosting socio-economic competitiveness of Belgian-French cross-border Region

Partners
- 8 French universities (Lille)
- 5 Belgian "French-speaking" universities
- Focus Research Association (BE)

Actions
- Training and coaching for PhDs
- Annual *Doctoriales* week (75 PhDs, 25 experts/year)
- Annual PhD Job Fair (500 PhDs, 25 companies/year)
- Study on perception of PhD holders in private sector
Follow up initiatives (2013-)

Meetings
• Interuniversity informal meetings on career development (3-5/year)

Annual event
• Interuniversity event, open to all PhD candidates and postdocs from Belgian "French-speaking" univ.
• Goal: improving skills and employability of PhD holders, outside Academia

Training
• Continuous development of transferable skills training programme
• Individual career coaching (Focus Research)

Funding from Wallonie
**PhDs@Work network (2016-)**

- **7 partners**
  - **Universities**
    - Comprehensive: ~6400 PhD candidates
  - **Other**
    - ~900 PhD candidates
  - **Non-academic organisation**
    - Non-profit organisation
    - 90 career coaching/year
    - 40 one-day training/year
Aim of the network

- Common branding
- Commitment to develop common projects
- Pooling of experiences and expertise
THE PHDS@WORK PROJECT
(2016-2019)
3 years (2016-2019)

7 partners

10 work packages

Target: PhDs from all fields

1,545,000 €
- ~900,000 € for 6 universities
- ~550,000 € for Focus Research Association

Funded by Walloon Region
Main goals

Comprehensive model
(from will to start a PhD until "postdoc" phase)

- Boosting employability of PhD holders (by supporting career development)
- Linking PhDs and non-academic sectors
- Raising awareness about recruitment of PhDs outside Academia

Information, tools, training, events, coaching
This project is not a Research collaboration with industry (KTOs), an Industrial PhDs (KTOs), or an Internships.
Actions:

1. employability and career development

**The PhD path**
- **Understanding**: new guide on the doctorate and postdoc (Unamur)
- **Building** and **managing** the PhD path (ULg)
- **Supervising**: training and development of supervisors (ULg-ULB)

**Transferable skills**
- Training programme (all)
- Interactive auto-evaluation tool of skills
  → tailored training programme (UCLouvain)
## Actions:

### 2. Linking PhDs and non-academic sectors

<table>
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<tr>
<th>SSH</th>
<th>Visibility and valorisation of research in SSH outside Academia (USaintLouis)</th>
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| Alumni | Networking events alumni/PhDs (ULB)  
Mentoring alumni/PhDs (ULB and UMons) |
| Coaching | Training (all)  
e.g. Summer School "Boost your career" - ULB  
Individual career coaching (Focus Research) |
| Doc2Business | 5 start-ups with 1 issue each; 5 teams of 8 challengers (PhDs), providing consultancy for 7 days; 1 jury of professionals (Focus Research)  
[separate funding] |
Actions:

3. Recruitment of PhDs outside Academia

**Information**
- Information about PhDs profiles for companies, NGOs: meetings, PhD fairs, social media... (Focus Research)

**Online tools**
- Jobs database
- Marketing (visibility of job offers)
Main benefits (institution)

**Quality**
- Stronger and comprehensive project, thanks to optimisation of resources and expertise among partners

**Innovation**
- Boosting innovation for the support of PhDs
- Collaboration with non-academic organisation: increased reactivity

**Contacts**
- Collaboration with non-academic organisation: facilitated contacts with non-academic sectors

**Funding**
- Facilitated access to funding

**Attractivity**
- Improved offer for PhD candidates
Main benefits (PhD candidate)

- **Career**
  - Improved career development plan

- **Training / coaching**
  - Access to training: improved programme / increased number of sessions / different locations
  - Access to individual coaching: Focus research

- **Networking**
  - Networking opportunities: other PhD candidates, alumni, non-academic sectors...
Main benefits (Professionals)

**Exchange**
- Facilitated access to last development in DE, tools...
- Exchange of experiences
- Gain of expertise

**Development**
- Train the trainer opportunities
- Faster professional development
Main challenges

**Sustainability**
- Sustainability of projects (external funding)
- Evaluation of impact on PhD holders’ career

**Coordination**
- ≠ strategic priorities, resources and needs
- Co-opetition and involvement in other networks
  → No further integration: e.g. interuniversity transf. skills training programme

**Expertise**
- Certain skills not developed internally
  e.g. individual career coaching, link with private sector... via Focus Research
THANK YOU!

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