

Long-term unemployed take the lead

Article: <http://urbact.eu/long-term-unemployed-take-lead-aarhus>

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eHqhsr-78ec&feature=youtu.be>

The problem and proposed solutions

In the City of Aarhus, a social experiment is unfolding. The experiment gives long-term unemployed a chance to take matters into own hands and try to facilitate their way back to employment. The experiment is called “Long-term unemployed take the lead”.

According to a Danish study, unemployment has negative consequences for 50 % of the unemployed in relation to their close relationships. And 25% of the unemployed have avoided social events to avoid questions about their work situation. New Danish research shows that among persons who are outside the labor market for a longer period, the risk of suffering a major depressive disorder is about 11 times greater than those who have a job.

The core principle for the project is that the unemployed knows best how to get back into employment and that knowledge should be used. Therefore, the unemployed are given the opportunity to make a plan with steps they can take on their road back to employment, receive financial support and sparring from the job consultants, employees from local companies and citizens in the same situation as themselves. The experiment is facilitated by “Jobcentre Aarhus” and focuses on long-term unemployed above 30 years of age. It runs for two years and includes 100 participants that can apply for up to 6.725€ to facilitate their road to employment.

Timeframe, dates, important milestones

Finished and evaluated (Feb 2017):

Phase 1: Focus is partially on finding a way to implement the experiment, both economically and legally.

Phase 2: The experiment began including the citizens. 15 handpicked participants were recruited and individual courses were done. The individual courses place the participant with a job consultant, and together they work out a course for employment

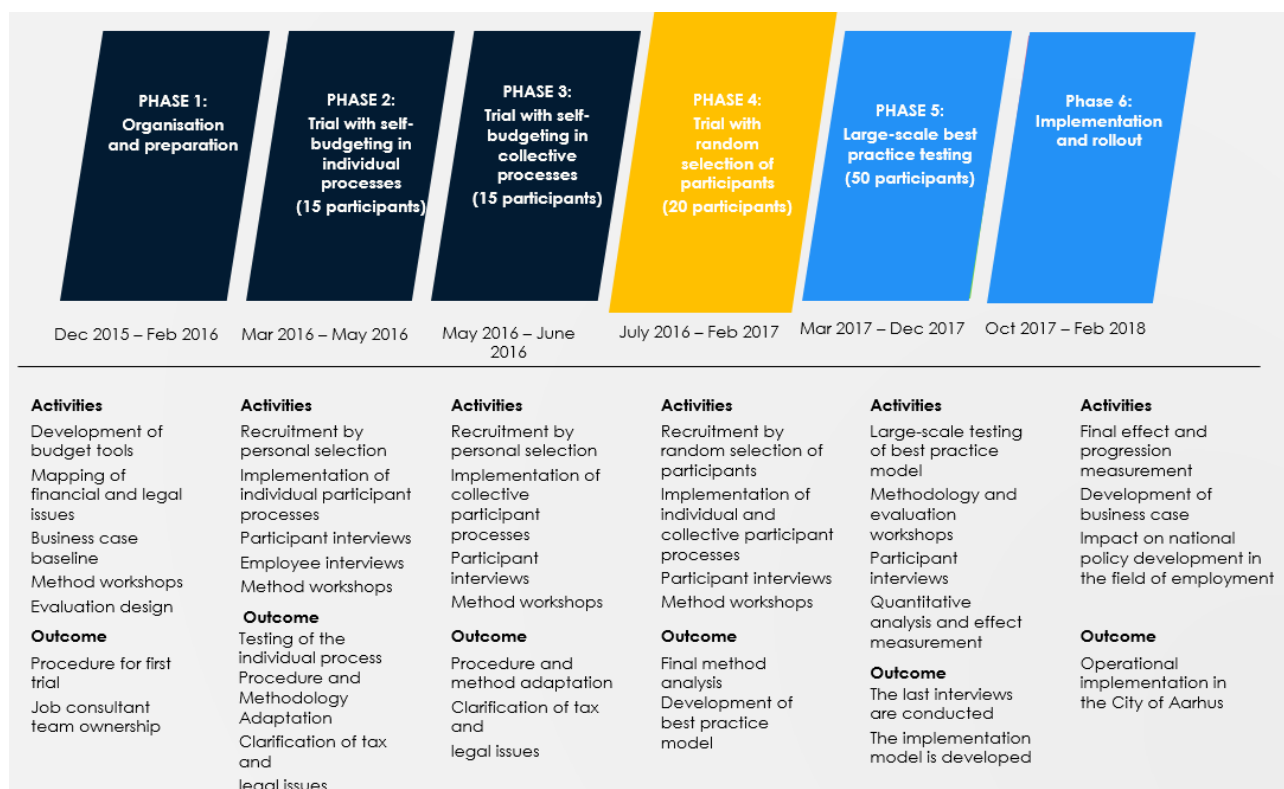
Phase 3: Continued with another 15 handpicked participants, this time with collective courses. The collective courses include the participants in groups where they meet with others in the same situation and consultants and employers from companies that explains what they are looking for in (new) employees and tips and tricks for job interviews.

Phase 4: The experiment continued with both individual and collective courses, but this time the 20 participants were randomly chosen.

Large-scale, best practice, and implementation (Mar 2017 – Feb 2018)

Phase 5: Implementation of what has shown to be the best practice, and include 50 randomly chosen participants that will undergo a collective course.

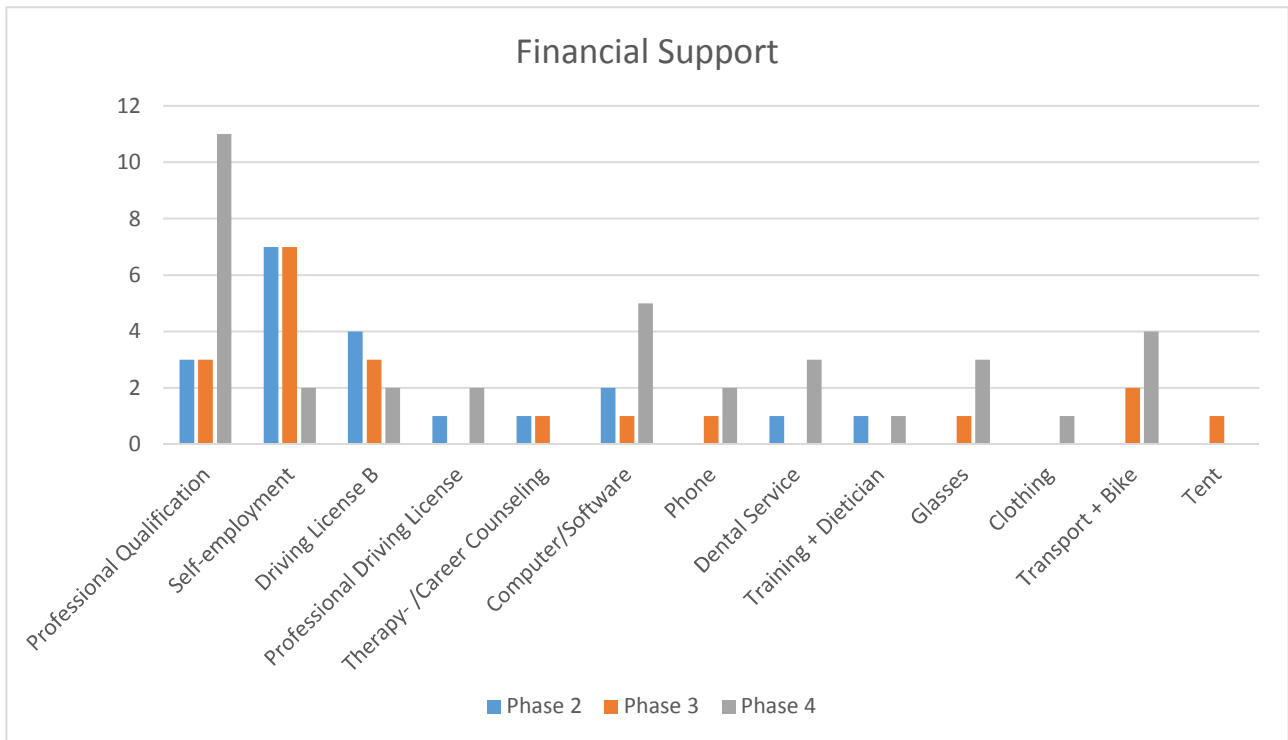
Phase 6: Evaluation and change on the level of national policy will be the focus.



Results achieved

The financial support during the experiment is paid for by THE VELUX FOUNDATIONS and the City of Aarhus. The City of Aarhus supports what can be done within the legal framework, while VELUX supports those parts of the initiative that stretch outside the limits of the law.

The criteria for receiving financial support is that the money is spent on something that brings the citizen closer to employment. The below figure illustrates what the citizens have requested financial support thus far.



The Y-axis shows the amount of citizens, that applied. The X-axis shows what item the citizens applied for financial support for. Citizens can apply for more than one item.

A majority of participants during phase 2 and phase 3 requested financial support to help with self-employment, which is not supported by the current law. As these participants were chosen by the job consultants they may have been so because they expressed interest in becoming self-employed. As 16 out of the 44 participants in the first four phases wanted to become self-employed, they have been encouraged to participate in complementary actions such as entrepreneur-workshops. At the time of writing, nine of the 16 participants that wanted to become self-employed have succeeded in doing so.

It is still not possible to say anything concluding about the program, but as of January 2017 14 of the 27 participants that took part in phases 2 and 3 are no longer on unemployment benefits, while the participants in phase 4 began their activities in February 2017. As already mentioned, 9 of the 16 participants that wanted to become self-employed succeeded in doing so, and as such, the experiment has shown that there is a considerable amount of unemployed that wish to take a step into the world of entrepreneurship which may be worth paying attention to.

What do the participants say?

The participants themselves expressed that they feel a larger amount of responsibility and control over their own lives when being met with trust and confidence by the job counselors. At the same time, they experience the new initiative as something “fresh” and tailored to their situation, and so they avoid the typical “one size fits all” courses.

As said by one of the participants:

“I’ve felt alive again. One kind of lulls in when unemployed. You become a couch potato and you are not getting the initiatives done that you probably should. So, this has been really good”.

/Supporting files (attached in the support package)

- Midterm Evaluation_Long term unemployed take the lead (PDF)
- Active Citizenship policy City of Aarhus (PDF)