

INTERREG SIV

D.T1.3.1

Voucher Pilot Action Plan

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1. The Interreg SIV Project

Even though the EU unemployment rate is at an all-time low, it is still vital to focus on reducing the risk of long-term unemployment and facilitating the integration of disadvantaged groups into the labour market. There is an untapped potential for solving these challenges by activating private capital. This is the main goal of the new EU funded Interreg project Social Impact Vouchers (SIV) that started in March 2019 and will run until February 2022.

Within the scope of the SIV project, eleven project partners from eight Central European countries will introduce a novel and innovative labour market instrument, aimed at increasing the capacities of social enterprises and public stakeholders to leverage private capital for solving social challenges of long-term unemployment. Based on a voucher system, the project will develop an incentive system for companies to hire long-term unemployed and individuals from other vulnerable groups. The draft strategy for the voucher system (deliverable D.T1.2.3.) provides additional information on the specific means of implementing the voucher models in each partner country.

The programme will be financed mainly by private capital. However, additional public financing in the form of mixed financing is not excluded. The specific financial instrument behind the SIV programme will be a social impact fund. A detailed description of this financial instrument and the planned course of action for its implementation within the framework of the SIV programme is provided in the draft strategy for the social impact fund (deliverable D.T1.1.4).

The programme will be partly conducted online. For this purpose, the project partners will develop an online platform, aiming to support the programme's implementation by enabling matching between job seekers and prospective employers. Furthermore, modules for online coaching and training of both employees and employers will also be provided on the platform. For additional information on this aspect, please see the coaching concept (deliverable D. T1.2.6).

The following subsections of this voucher plan will focus on shedding light on what concrete tasks will have to be completed in order to ensure the successful implementation of the SIV programme in each partner country.

2. Voucher Pilot Action Plan

2.1. Social Impact Vouchers: General considerations

The international project Social Impact Vouchers is based on two main pillars - the Social Impact Fund establishment and the Voucher System launch. The voucher system shall be financed by means of the social impact fund. The main aim of the voucher system is to help people from disadvantaged groups to return to the labour market and thus to improve their quality of life. Benefits from successful implementation will apply not only job seekers, but also their surroundings, the community and the targeted regions as a whole.

In the Voucher strategy paper (deliverable D.T1.2.3.), possible scenarios for the implementation of the voucher system in the partner countries are presented. The different possibilities are compiled into five main voucher models. These models differ primarily with regards to the relations and roles of the prospective employers, job seekers and possibly of job agencies. They also illustrate the different possible financial flows into and from the social impact fund. In principle, the five models are based on the idea that the voucher system can be applied to (1) reimburse personnel costs to the employers for employing a person from a disadvantaged group or (2) to facilitate participation of job seekers in a training program that will increase their employability.



2.2. Social Impact Vouchers: Goals and strategy

Each project partner has a different history, different experience and different options for implementing the voucher system. At the same time, there are different possibilities and existing labour market measures in each country that our voucher system should complement. Therefore, our goal is to make the implementation of the voucher system as flexible and permissive as possible. Thus, the present action plan focuses on sketching a rough approach for implementing the voucher system in each partner country. The action plan therefore comprises general actions and tasks that apply to each and every project partner. However, it is up to the partners to define, substantiate and give details on the specifics of the implementation of the voucher system in each country.

2.3. Detailed view of the Voucher Pilot Action Plan

Therefore, the project partners are constantly working on further developing and refining their voucher models and, prospectively at the beginning of 2020, will commence with the concrete implementation of the models, as described in the draft strategy paper for the voucher model (see deliverable D.T1.2.3) and in the KANBAN task board for the voucher system (see deliverable D.T1.3.2.). A rough outline of the upcoming tasks and is provided in Table 1 below, containing the general action plan for the voucher implementation.



Table 1: General Voucher Pilot Action Plan

Action	Deliverables	Description	Responsibility	Involved PPs	Resources	Potential external partners	Deadline	Status
Analyze conditions for voucher system implementation	D.T3.1.1 Voucher process	Partners in all 8 participating countries conduct the comparative analysis for the implementation of the voucher system. The aim is to find out which voucher models are applicable in each country in terms of legal, technical and organisational procedures. Each country might decide even for multiple voucher models. This analysis will take into account also the Social Impact Fund establishment and operation.	PP11	All PPs	Project budget	relevant stakeholders - main actors on the labour market, think-thanks, universities, etc.	29/02/2020	
Revise the existing registration system	D.T3.1.3 OLAP cube	The lead partner revises the existing registration system and identifies further steps for the system adjustment. This action includes also testing based on the needs of each partner.	PP1	PP11	Project budget	External IT consultants	29/02/2020	
Develop match-making algorithm	D.T3.1.2 Match-making algorithm	Statistically supported matching procedure for bringing together jobseekers and employers. Existing algorithm used for test data and new data of partners and adapts to regional specifications and voucher model.	PP1	PP11	Project budget	External IT consultants	30/04/2020	
Conduct registration system testing	D.T3.1.3 OLAP cube D.T3.1.4 Data collection API	The existing and adjusted registration system will be tested by project partners with fictional/pilot entries. The outcome of the testing should be final recommendations for the final system version.	PP1	PP11	Project budget	External IT consultants	30/04/2020	
Launch campaign for job seekers	D.T3.3.1 Recruiting event concept and timeline D.T3.3.2 Voucher recruiting events D.T3.3.3 Contact lists	Partners in each country will prepare a promotional campaign. The aim of the campaign is to approach job seekers, promote the opportunities of the voucher system and the basic principles. The campaign will be led online (e.g. social media advertisement) and offline (e.g. recruiting events). The communication campaign shall be in compliance with the Communication strategy and activities within WP Communication.	PP3	All PPs	Project budget	PR agencies, media, associations, job portals, job agencies	31/05/2020	



Launch campaign for employers	D.T3.3.1 Recruiting event concept and timeline D.T3.3.2 Voucher recruiting events D.T3.3.3 Contact lists	Partners in each country will prepare a promotional campaign. The aim of the campaign is to approach employers, promote the opportunities of the voucher system and the basic principles. The campaign will be lead online (e.g. social media advertisement) and offline (e.g. recruiting events). The communication campaign shall be in compliance with the Communication strategy and activities within WP Communication.	PP3	All PPs	Project budget	PR agencies, media, associations, job portals, job agencies	31/05/2020	
Launch final version of the registration system	D.T3.3.4 SME (Employers) registration D.T3.3.6 Online matching	The final version of the registration system will be launched in compliance with the campaign timeframe.	PP1 (PP11?)	All PPs	Project budget		31/05/2020	
Training programme preparation		Training programmes will be prepared based on the target groups needs in each country. Experts in the field will be invited to prepare the content of the training programme. Training materials are supposed to be available in online and print version.	PP11	All PPs	Project budget	Specific topics experts	31/05/2020	
Launch pilot training programme		The pilot training programme will be tested with the first job seekers. The feedback will be collected and reflected in the updated training programme.	PP11	All PPs	Project budget	Specific topics experts, trainers	30/06/2020	
Implement training programme		It is expected that the training program will be offered to the target groups in a baseline form that can be complemented and improved. The intensity and duration of the training program will depend on the needs of the target groups - job seekers and employers.	PP11	All PPs	Project budget	Specific topics experts, trainers	28/02/2022	
Implement voucher system - Phase 1	D.T3.3.5 Voucher distribution	The voucher system will be implemented in four phases. This model will allow for continuous evaluation and improvement of the voucher system, introducing new elements tailored to the needs of the target groups.	PP11	All PPs	Project budget	job agencies, associations, job portals	31/10/2020	
Implement voucher system - Phase 2	D.T3.3.5 Voucher distribution	The voucher system will be implemented in four phases. This model will allow for continuous evaluation and improvement of the voucher system, introducing new elements tailored to the needs of the target groups.	PP11	All PPs	Project budget	job agencies, associations, job portals	30/04/2021	



Implement voucher system - Phase 3	D.T3.3.5 Voucher distribution	The voucher system will be implemented in four phases. This model will allow for continuous evaluation and improvement of the voucher system, introducing new elements tailored to the needs of the target groups.	PP11	All PPs	Project budget	job agencies, associations, job portals	31/10/2021	
Implement voucher system - Phase 4	D.T3.3.5 Voucher distribution	The voucher system will be implemented in four phases. This model will allow for continuous evaluation and improvement of the voucher system, introducing new elements tailored to the needs of the target groups.	PP11	All PPs	Project budget	job agencies, associations, job portals	28/02/2022	
Evaluate periodically the voucher system	D.T3.4.1 Stakeholder briefings D.T3.5.1 Status report on progress of work experience D.T3.6.1 Status report on job-seekers experience	The detailed feedback system will be continuously implemented and evaluated. The feedback conclusions will be reflected in the voucher system update.	PP4 & PP10	All PPs	Project budget		ongoing	
Improve and update voucher system	D.T3.2.1 Improved voucher process D.T3.2.2 Adapted OLAP cube D.T3.2.3 Adapted data collection API D.T3.2.4 Improved Voucher management work-flow	The relevant feedback will be processed into recommendations which will be considered and potentially implemented.	PP5	All PPs	Project budget		ongoing	
Conduct sustainability plan of the voucher system		As the voucher system should be sustainable for 5 years after the project end, the sustainability study will be carried-out. The study should focus on the financial, organizational and operational sustainability of the voucher system in all participating countries.	PP11	All PPs	Project budget		30/11/2021	

Source: Presentation of Centre (PP11)



In a nutshell, the partners are currently working on a common concept/story for all partners to communicate to programme participants and potential investors as well as on the compilation of pitch decks. Furthermore, there is regular exchange between the project partners concerning the stakeholders that each partner succeeded in engaging so far, which is particularly interesting especially for international companies or organizations. In addition, the partners provide input, based on their own experiences and knowledge, on examples similar to the voucher concept of other partners. Of course, each partner undertakes individual actions necessary for implementing the voucher system in their respective countries and provides regular status updates to the other partners on the developments and changes related to the implementation process. The status quo for the implementation of the voucher systems in each country as well as the planned next steps in this process are briefly presented in the following subsection 3.

3. Concrete planned implementation of the voucher system in each country

As roughly outlines in subsection 2.3, there are some general steps in the implementation of the voucher system that apply to each and every project partner. But how exactly is the voucher implementation expect to work in each country? The partners in each country have to account for the different social, legal and economic conditions in each country as well as for the different challenges and difficulties that are shaping the population needs. Furthermore, the project partners will address different target groups, based on their individual expertise, background and networks.

Therefore, each partner is in charge of outlining the specifics of the implementation of the voucher system in their respective countries. Table 2 below provides a summary of the planned approach of each project partner regarding the voucher implementation and illustrates their intentions as well as strategic orientations:

Table 2: Summary of the planned implementation of the voucher models in each country

Austria (PP5, PP10)	The Austrian partners proposed a different system where the coaching and matching of the public job agency is improved. There will be no reimbursement of labour costs from the fund, since the public system is already covering this. Instead, the programme should represent an add-on to public interventions, with particular focus on matching and coaching. The payback will be possible because of successful matching. This concept diverges from the application form, but there are no objections from the consortium.
Croatia (PP2)	The Croatian partner will add on top of existing government payments and will also provide more specific and targeted training. They will work with disabled people to help larger companies to meet the quotas for employing people in this group. Therefore, the voucher system is envisioned as a complementary programme to models 1 or 2 with the add-on of targeted coaching and training. In this model, the salaries will be paid by the government and the training costs will be reimbursed after the successful completion of the training.
Czech Republic (PP6)	As illustrated in model 5, the Czech partner will continue with the BEC model for supporting aspiring entrepreneurs, which they already have running and is supported by the BEC cooperative. In addition, they want



	to combine this model with model 1, thus with a voucher system offering 3 months of labour cost reimbursement. Model 4 also presents a viable option and could be combined with model 5, by also involving job agencies in the process.
Germany (LP, PP9)	The German partners will use the originally proposed idea of salary vouchers, which are targeted at people who are not serviced by the existing social systems. A success fee will be paid back for successful integration. PP9 adds the target group of migrants and especially of refugees and mentions the possible use of apprenticeship as a training tool.
Hungary (PP4)	The Hungarian partner proposes a model to integrate disabled people into larger companies, since many of these companies have to pay higher taxes due to not meeting employment quotas for this target group. With improved matching and coaching, the voucher system could facilitate large companies employing more people with disabilities. The vouchers will be granted directly to the employers for a duration of three months of employment, as illustrated in model 2 and will cover salary and training costs. The success fee could be paid out of the excess tax savings.
Poland (PP7, PP8)	The Polish partners propose a system where they provide coaching for digital skills and then facilitate the matching with both SMEs and larger companies. Thus, they will create jobs for immobile job seekers with good qualifications, where they can work from home. Projections show that there will be great need for an additional work force in the future. As in model 4, the voucher will pay for the training (upskilling/reskilling) and the employer will cover the salary. After two months, the employer will pay back a fee for the matching and coaching.
Slovakia (PP11)	The Slovak partner's addressed target groups are graduated single parents or parents on/after maternity leave and 50+ year old unemployed. The voucher programme will provide digital coaching that will enable these people to work from home. They will focus less on training and more on working with online coaching models. They plan to add on top of existing schemes (the state pays 12 months' salary when keeping the job for a minimum of 18 months) by combining elements of models 1, 2, 3 and 4.
Slovenia (PP3)	The Slovenian partner does not have a clear picture at the moment of the exact voucher system to be implemented, but will go with employer salary vouchers, as depicted in models 1 and 2 or with a system similar to those of Poland and Austria, where the funds will be used primarily for training, designed for the limited educated segment.

Source: Presentation of WU Vienna (PP10)

Defining the strategy as well as the concrete steps for the implementation of the voucher system in each country is a work in progress. Based on developments stemming from discussions, feedback rounds and negotiations with relevant stakeholders, each project partner is responsible for making their approach more concrete as well as for, when necessary, adapting and redesigning their action plan for implementation. For instance, Table 2 above provides an overview over the planned approach of each partner at the time of the second partner meeting in September 2019. In the meantime, it is to be expected that the partners have further refined their plans for implementing the vouchers. For this reason, PP10 plans to conduct bilateral



calls with each partner at the beginning of 2020 in order to further elaborate on and, if necessary, to also revise the information presented above. This also serves as preparation for the third in-person partner meeting, to be held in the spring of 2020. The focus of the meeting will be on setting up the voucher systems as well as the social impact funds in the impact region of the project.