*08.03.2023*

*Department of Work and Social Economy of Flanders*

*Measure name:*

*I-4.11 Digibanks*

**Milestone/target description:**

Signature of a Digibank partnership by 100 municipalities in Flanders with the Department of Work and Social Economy of Flanders aiming at (1) ensuring equal access to digital technology through the conditional provision of laptops, screening and other hardware and support in a specific context (such as lending service); (2) strengthening digital skills, both personal skills and technical skills (such as repair of IT equipment) through training and knowledge sharing; (3) procuring digital access to essential services (such as digital services from the Flemish Government, Tax-on-web) via so-called physical hubs.

**Verification mechanism:**

Summary document duly justifying how the target (including the relevant elements of the target, as listed in the description of the target and of the corresponding measure in the CID annex) was satisfactorily fulfilled. This summary document shall explain explicitly how and which vulnerable groups will be targeted.

This document shall include as an annex the following documentary evidence: a spreadsheet listing all municipalities which have signed a Digibank partnership with the Department of Work and Social Economy of Flanders, including information on: (a) the province in which the municipality is located, (b) the number of inhabitants, (c) the number of inhabitants with a migrant background and (d) the number of jobseekers.

On the basis of a sample that may be selected by the Commission, the following documentary evidence shall be submitted for each of the municipalities selected:

1. Copy of the Digibank partnership, including the list of actions which will be taken to achieve the objectives of the target;

2. Justification that the technical specifications of the actions are fully aligned with the description, criteria and conditions as set out in the description of the measure as in the CID annex, including as regards the targeting towards vulnerable groups.

**A. Evidence provided:**

Description of the files provided:

* BE-C[C51]-I[I-411]-T[149] Cover note: This cover note contains the content and information that is requested within the verification mechanism as the “summary document”. As such this document duly justifies how the target (including the relevant elements of the target, as listed in the description of the target and of the corresponding measure in the CID annex) was satisfactorily fulfilled. This summary document shall explain explicitly how and which vulnerable groups will be targeted.
* BE-C[C51]-I[I-411]-T[149] Spreadsheet: Spreadsheet listing all municipalities which have signed a Digibank partnership with the Department of Work and Social Economy of Flanders, including information on: (a) the province in which the municipality is located, (b) the number of inhabitants, (c) the number of inhabitants with a migrant background and (d) the number of jobseekers.

Description of the files that will be provided on the basis of a sample:

* BE-C[C51]-I[I-411]-T[149] Signed Digibank partnership *Name digibank* [*number of Digibank round*]: Copy of the Digibank partnership, including the list of actions which will be taken to achieve the objectives of the target. This document will only be provided from the moment a sample is selected by the Commission.
* BE-C[C51]-I[I-411]-T[149] Signed Digibank Partnership Digibanken Gent [*1*]: example that is provided.
* BE-C[C51]-I[I-411]-T[149] samenwerkingsovereenkomst en -strategie *Name digibank* [*number of Digibank round*]: Justification that the technical specifications of the actions are fully aligned with the description, criteria and conditions as set out in the description of the measure as in the CID annex, including as regards the targeting towards vulnerable groups. This document will only be provided from the moment a sample is selected by the Commission.
* BE-C[C51]-I[I-411]-T[149] samenwerkingsovereenkomst en -strategie Digibanken Gent [*1*]: example that is provided.

**B. Detailed justification:**

**Digibanks (I-4.11): Signature of partnerships to promote digital inclusion**

**Target description**: (i) Signature of a Digibank partnership by 100 municipalities in Flanders with the Department of Work and Social Economy of Flanders (ii) in response to the public call by the Department of Work and Social Economy of Flanders (iii) aiming at (1) ensuring equal access to digital technology through the conditional provision of laptops, screening and other hardware and support in a specific context (such as lending service); (2) strengthening digital skills, both personal skills and technical skills (such as repair of IT equipment) through training and knowledge sharing; (3) procuring digital access to essential services (such as digital services from the Flemish Government, Tax-on-web) via so-called physical hubs. (iv) The implementation of the investment shall be completed by December 31st, 2022 meaning that the Digibank partnership is approved and signed by the Minister of Work.

**Element (i)**: Signature of a Digibank partnership by 100 municipalities in Flanders with the Department of Work and Social Economy of Flanders

At the moment of submission of this cover note, a total of **171 municipalities** in Flanders and the Brussels-Capital Region had already signed a Digibank partnership with the Department of Work and Social Economy of Flanders, which surpasses the goal of 100 municipalities. When a municipality is a partner in at least one Digibank where they are involved in, this is indicated in the spreadsheet (BE-C[C51]-I[I-411]-T[149] Spreadsheet) in column F. Multiple Digibanks are allowed within the same area (e.g. city). Therefore, one municipality can be a partner in multiple digibanks. Columns J, N, R and V indicate which municipalities are part of one or more Digibanks, and whether they have signed a partnership agreement. For each municipality that is partner within a Digibank project, a copy of the Digibank partnership will be provided after the selection by the Commission of a sample, in which the municipality and the Department of Work and Social Economy of Flanders have signed the following statement: ’With the creation of the local digibanks, the Flemish government aims to reduce the risk of digital exclusion among vulnerable groups through three objectives: 1) equal access to digital technology; 2) training and knowledge sharing to strengthen digital skills; 3) guidance toward improved digital access to essential services. This is explained under Article 1 and will be provided in the following document for each Digibank partnership included in the sample (BE-C[C51]-I[I-411]-T[149] Signed Digibank partnership *Name digibank* [*number of Digibank round*]).

Furthermore, the timing of implementation is set in this document (see element iv).

**Element (ii)**: in response to the public call by the Department of Work and Social Economy of Flanders

As explained in the National Plan for Recovery and Resilience ([NL - Nationaal plan voor herstel een veerkracht\_1.pdf (belgium.be)](https://dermine.belgium.be/sites/default/files/articles/NL%20-%20Nationaal%20plan%20voor%20herstel%20een%20veerkracht_1.pdf) > P.392) the local Digibank projects were awarded through public calls for funding, spread over several parallel rounds in 2021 and 2022. These rounds took place during the following periods: (1) October 4th 2021 - November 15th 2021; (2) January 27th 2022 – March 24th 2022; (3) March 28th 2022 – June 16th 2022; (4) June 20th – September 8th 2022; (5) September 12th – October 27th 2022. These public calls were published on the website created for the Digibank project (<https://digibanken.vlaanderen.be/> > Inspiratie > Nieuws). The Digibank project proceeds in two phases: (1) a strategic development phase and (2) an implementation phase to actually implement the selected projects.

**Element (iii)**: aiming at (1) ensuring equal access to digital technology through the conditional provision of laptops, screening and other hardware and support in a specific context (such as lending service); (2) strengthening digital skills, both personal skills and technical skills (such as repair of IT equipment) through training and knowledge sharing; (3) procuring digital access to essential services (such as digital services from the Flemish Government, Tax-on-web) via so-called physical hubs.

For each municipality that has signed a Digibank Partnership, a justification is provided that the technical specifications of the actions are fully aligned with the description, criteria and conditions as set out in the description of the measure as in the CID annex, including the targeting towards vulnerable groups. This will be provided in the following document for each Digibank project included in the sample BE-C[C51]-I[I-411]-T[149] samenwerkingsovereenkomst en -strategie *Name digibank* [*number of Digibank round*]. An example of this document, for ‘Digibanken Gent’, is included.

As defined in the National Plan for Recovery and Resilience ([NL - Nationaal plan voor herstel een veerkracht\_1.pdf (belgium.be)](https://dermine.belgium.be/sites/default/files/articles/NL%20-%20Nationaal%20plan%20voor%20herstel%20een%20veerkracht_1.pdf) > P.395), the Digibanks should target towards vulnerable groups such as low literate adults, people with a low level of education, single women and jobseekers. Each Digibank indicates their target group in the ‘samenwerkingsstrategie en –overeenkomst'. For the sample that may be selected by the Commission, this will be provided in BE-C[C51]-I[I-411]-T[149] samenwerkingsovereenkomst en -strategie *Name digibank* [*number of Digibank round*]. The target group of Digibanks are in every case adult people in Flanders who are at risk of digital exclusion. Digibanks therefore contribute to lifelong learning. Extra attention is paid to job seekers and people at risk of digital exclusion in preparation for a trajectory to work. Strengthening basic digital skills can play an important role in activating people to (re-)enter the labor market.

As evidence for the targeting of vulnerable groups, a spreadsheet (BE-C[C51]-I[I-411]-T[149] Spreadsheet) is provided, listing all municipalities which have signed a Digibank partnership with the Department of Work and Social Economy of Flanders.

This spreadsheet includes information on:

(a) The province in which the municipality is located (column B);

(b) The number of inhabitants (column C): the number of inhabitants living in each Flemish municipality in the year 2022 as found on the website of Statistiek Vlaanderen ([Bevolking (vlaanderen.be)](https://statistieken.vlaanderen.be/QvAJAXZfc/notoolbar.htm?document=SVR/SV-Demografie-Stand-Bevolking_fusie2019.qvw&host=QVS%40cwv100154&anonymous=true). For the municipalities in the Brussels-Capital Region, the number of inhabitants in the year 2022 were found on the website of Bisa (Brussels instiute for Statistics and Analysis) ([Jaarlijkse evolutie | IBSA (bisa.brussels).](https://bisa.brussels/themas/bevolking/jaarlijkse-evolutie)

(c) The number of inhabitants with a migrant background (column D): the number of inhabitants living in each municipality with a migrant background, as measured on the 1st of January 2022 and found via the website Statbel ([Diversiteit naar herkomst in België | Statbel (fgov.be)](https://statbel.fgov.be/nl/nieuws/diversiteit-naar-herkomst-belgie-0) > herkomst per gemeente > Totaal Belg met een buitenlandse achtergrond). A person having a migrant background is defined as an individual having at least one parent that was first registered under a different nationality than the Belgian nationality;

(d) The number of jobseekers (column E): the number of inhabitants of each Flemish municipality that are jobseekers as of December 2022, and as found on the website of VDAB (Arvastat (vdab.be) > Kerngetallen – Werkzoekenden zonder werk). For the municipalities in the Brussels-Capital Region, the number of jobseekers were found on the website of Actiris ([Cijfers | Actiris).](https://www.actiris.brussels/nl/burgers/cijfers/) The most recent numbers are reported, which are these of 2020.

**Element (iv)**: The implementation of the investment shall be completed by December 31st, 2022.

As described in the National Plan for Recovery and Resilience (NL - Nationaal plan voor herstel een veerkracht\_1.pdf (belgium.be) > P.395) the Digibank project will be rolled out in two phases during the first quarter of 2021 until the second quarter of 2026 (an extension of the original date was implemented). The first phase, 'Description of strategy and call for projects’, started during the second quarter 2021 and ended in the last quarter of 2022 (31st of December 2022). The second phase, ‘Partnership creation and deployment of selected projects’, continues until the second quarter of 2026. The date of agreement can be found for each partnership in the Digibank partnership in the document BE-C[C51]-I[I-411]-T[149] Signed Digibank partnership *Name digibank* [*number of Digibank round*]. An example of this document, for ‘Digibanken Gent’, is included.

**Achievement of the requirements in the description of the measure:**

**Measure: Investment I-4.11***:* Digibank partnerships

**Description of the measure:** The measure implements the agreement concluded between the Flemish government and social partners, which includes the objective of Flanders’ digital transformation.

The Digibank project is more specifically meant to help eliminate the digital divide.It is intended to leverage the support of local partnerships to combat digital exclusion of vulnerable target groups. The local Digibank partnerships are intended to provide services to those vulnerable people that are at risk of digital exclusion, by making hardware available, by organizing the necessary training and by guaranteeing access to essential services by organizing physical ‘hubs’.Because of the scope of this challenge, the milestone of 100 municipalities was set to reach as much vulnerable target groups as possible.

Flanders is divided into 300 municipalities with a total of 6.774.807 inhabitants (1/1/2023). The number of inhabitants per municipality varies between 77 and 538.910 inhabitants. The mean number of inhabitants per municipality is 22.583 inhabitants. As one can see in the spreadsheet, the potential number of inhabitants reached via digibanks is 6.203.544 or 92% of the Flemish population. When we consider vulnerable groups of persons having a migrant background and jobseekers, in total, the Digibank projects have a potential reach of 1.260.588 persons having a migrant background and 232.377 jobseekers.

Other elements that are meant to contribute to the digital transformation of Flanders are achieved by the completion of other milestones/targets.

The implementation of the investment shall be completed by 31 December 2022.