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NUDGING JOB SEEKERS: A CASE STUDY AT VDAB

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If you want to live a happy life, tie it to a goal, not to people or things.

Albert Einstein



Executive Summary

How can behavior be influenced so that people exhibit the behavior prescribed by the policy? After 2017, when Richard H. Thaler won the Nobel Prize in economics for his contribution to behavioral economics, the interest of governmental organizations grew to find out how nudging can improve policy. This thesis aims to understand how nudging can encourage a job seeker's intention to be present at an interview. It would mean that the jobseeker can be effectively guided to further guidance at VDAB, training, or employment and reduces his chance of a sanction. For VDAB, the Public Employment Service of Flanders, this would mean that it could work more efficiently, customers can be guided more sustainably, and the possibility that the customer will work increases.

In this study, a quantitative quasi-experimental survey was set up. In the VDAB appointment bundle, containing invitations for appointments and assignments, two nudges were tested in line with the formulated hypothesis. The first nudge capitalized on loss aversion by explicitly referring to the consequences of not showing up. The second nudge adjusted to the physical environment by explicitly highlighting the appointment time and person to call in case of absence. Based on four appointment bundles, a total of 121 jobseekers were surveyed. A quarter of the jobseekers received an appointment bundle without nudges. The two other quarters received a bundle with one of the two nudges. The last group received an example of an appointment bundle with both nudges.

Comparing the outcomes of the four appointment bundles, the intention of being present for all four groups of job seekers is relatively large, regardless of whether nudges were applied. In addition, the jobseekers estimate the chance of informing VDAB is rather large in case of absence. In case of non-compliance, job seekers consider the chance relatively high that a sanction will follow. However, no significant difference was found between these intentions based on the various bundles of agreements. The tested nudge often came out more clearly in the motivation why job seekers were assigned a particular score. There seems to be an influence on consciousness, but it could not be demonstrated that the nudges affected intentional behavior.

The most prominent limitation of this study is that intentions were questioned, and the study did not test actual behavior. In addition, a small sample size of active job seekers was reached where socially desirable answers prevailed. Nevertheless, research into nudging does not

always provide evidence. Yet, it can be successful. Goos and Rademakers (2023) proved that nudges can be successful in the communication of VDAB to job seekers. Their tested nudges, information simplification and reminders, proved evidence. This research clarified that if a job seeker is motivated, or at least pretends to be, a nudge pointing out a loss effect or explicitly referring to how to proceed in case of absence has no added value on intentional behavior. Building on the insight of this study and the knowledge of the study of Goos and Rademakers (2023), further research should assess which nudges to test for job seekers, and effective behavior must be measurable so that socially desirable responses are excluded. Finally, there is a clear added value in reaching passive job seekers in subsequent research so that it can be investigated which nudges are effective for them.



Table of Content

Executive Summary	2
1. Introduction to nudging	5
2. The theoretical framework of nudging	6
2.1. <i>Libertarian Paternalism</i>	6
2.2. <i>A typology of nudges</i>	7
2.3. <i>Behavioral terminology</i>	8
2.4. <i>The effectiveness of nudging</i>	9
2.5. <i>Ethics of nudging</i>	10
3. Nudging by the government	11
3.1. <i>Two cases from the federal government</i>	13
3.2. <i>VDAB's first study on nudging</i>	14
4. VDAB, the Public Employment Service of Flanders	15
4.1. <i>Digital job seeker service process</i>	15
4.2. <i>Design digital contact strategy</i>	15
4.3. <i>The control assignment of VDAB</i>	17
4.4. <i>Customer portrait of job seekers (in formal follow-up) missing registered appointments</i>	18
4.5. <i>Communication with the job seekers</i>	21
5. Research question	23
6. Research design	26
7. Results	28
7.1 <i>The intention of presence</i>	29
7.2 <i>Notify VDAB in case of absence</i>	30
7.3 <i>Chance of a sanction</i>	32
7.4 <i>Importance of the appointment and assignments</i>	33
8. Discussion	34
9. Acknowledgements	39
Bibliography	40
Appendix	41



1. Introduction to nudging

Drawing someone's attention to something and pushing him gently in a specific direction that is what nudging is all about (Thaler & Sunstein, 2021, p. 17). The goal is to influence behavior. One of the simplest and most well-known examples of nudging is the fly on a urinal, which ultimately ensures less pee outside the urinal. But nudging is also used for collecting taxes, organ donation or pension savings.

The book 'Nudge: improving decisions about Health, Wealth and Happiness' by Thaler and Sunstein (2008) has placed nudging in the spotlight. They investigated how nudging can influence behavior so that people exhibit the behavior prescribed by policy. Sunstein (2008) later implemented these insights in American regulation. In 2009, Cass Sunstein became head of the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs. It did not happen unnoticed. One year later, the United Kingdom also progressed, establishing the Behavioural Insights Teams called Nudge Units. Their focus was less on regulation and implementation and more on future exploration of research and experimentation of possibilities of behavioral insights in the policy.

Other countries gradually followed in developing nudge units. In recent years, the Flemish and Federal governments have also focussed on research into nudging. In 2016, Flanders set up a 'behavioural insights team' within the then-called Department of Chancellery and Governance. This team acts as a knowledge center, to inform, coordinate and facilitate research about nudging. The efforts made by the government for this are based on the idea that insights into nudging can ensure a more efficient policy so that they can achieve more (of the intended policy) with fewer resources.

In 2020, VDAB started an initial investigation into nudging, where it tested whether nudges positively influence the use of the online application of the VDAB that guides job seekers in their search for work. This thesis is the second study into nudging within VDAB and focuses on nudges in the communication that VDAB sends in the context of agreements made with job seekers. Before further exploring this thesis's research question, some essential theoretical frameworks around nudging will be explained. Then we will go further into nudging by the government, followed by an explanation of the functioning of VDAB so that the research question posed can be understood in its context.



2. The theoretical framework of nudging

Some key terms in the literature on nudging require clarification to understand what nudging is, what theoretical concepts it includes, and what types exist. To gain insights into the impact of nudging and look at it critically is also essential to take a closer look at the effectiveness of nudging and the ethical aspect. The following paragraphs will give an overview of the theoretical framework of nudging.

2.1. *Libertarian Paternalism*

In what Thaler and Sunstein wrote about nudging, they quickly refer to their movement of libertarian paternalism. The libertarian aspect refers to the freedom of choice or, as mentioned: “the fact that as long as they not harm others, people should usually be free to do as they please – and if they wish, to withdraw from situations they consider undesirable” (Thaler & Sunstein, 2022, p. 19). The paternalistic aspect approves of people’s behavior of being influenced with the condition that this will bring them positive benefits and, in this way, it contributes to a better life (Thaler & Sunstein, 2022). Thus calling their paternalism liberal is not seen as an oxymoron of a contradiction (Thaler & Sunstein, 2003) but rather as an advantage of bringing both together. Libertarian paternalism is, for them, a gentle way of intervening because the freedom of choice always remains.

Those who deploy nudges, the choice architects, make every effort to steer people’s behavior in a specific direction with the aim that that choice will make their lives better. Therefore, the focus should be on user-friendliness so that everything goes as smoothly as possible. The applicability of choice architecture is extensive and can be performed by, for example, a government, an entrepreneur, or an employer, and this is in various sectors. Nudging is happening today more than we are aware of, but less than could be possible. Finally, knowing that people make choices, insights into human behavior are essential (Thaler & Sunstein, 2022). In that sense, there are still many opportunities to understand better the insights and the choices people want to make to influence behavior in this way and possibly even save lives (Sunstein, 2014).



2.2. A typology of nudges

There are different nudges and various ways to apply nudges. Consequently, there are also methods to distinguish and classify nudges. Raymaekers et al. (2019) worked on a typology of nudges based on insights from House of Lords (2011) and Mont et al. (2015). They presented a four-part typology of nudges. The first typology of behavioral insight that Raymaekers et al. (2019, p. 17) determine is simplifying and framing information, for example, responding to loss aversion, using priming, and using reminders and feedback. Applied to the goal of getting people to move more, giving feedback on how much kcal is expended when taking the stairs is an example. A second typology of behavioral insight is to adapt to the information environment by strategically positioning a message, adding irrelevant options, or by an opt-out system automatically registering people for a particular scheme. An example is switching off the elevator that is strategically interesting to take so that the elevator becomes the default choice. Thirdly, there is the adaptation of the physical environment through prompts, priming by visual stimuli, or strategic positioning of goods. Foot stickers at the stairs are an example of this, providing sit-stand desks so that employees can stand up more often. Finally, a fourth typology of behavioral insight is adjusting to the social environment. This, for instance, by using injunctive and descriptive norms, reciprocity, or getting people to make commitments. Exercise challenges set up between colleagues at work with registration via exercise apps exemplify this. Each typology contains multiple nudge types. In function of policy, Sunstein (2014) mapped out a catalog of ten necessary nudges:

1. Simplification: making sure that making the desired choice can be as simple as possible, almost intuitive
2. Reminders: e.g., remind people that they have an appointment
3. Disclosure: reveal information in an understandable and accessible way
4. Informing people of the nature and consequences of their own past choices: a form of feedback
5. Default rules: automatic registration in programs without explicit permission
6. Warnings, graphic or otherwise
7. Increases in ease and convenience: reducing barriers to make the behavior easier
8. Uses of social norms: empathize how most people behave
9. Precommitment strategies: get people to commit in advance

10. Eliciting implementation intentions: having people announce their intent in advance or let them empathize with their plan

Based on the typology of Raymaekers et al. (2019), the nudges Sunstein (2014) mentioned can almost all be easily classified into one of the four types of behavioral insights. Simplification, reminders, disclosure, and informing people of their past choices are related to simplifying and framing information. Default rules connect to adapting the information environment. Warnings and graphics are complementary to adapting to the physical environment, just like increases in ease and convenience. And last, uses of social norms, pre-commitment strategies, and eliciting implementation intentions are related to the nudge of adapting to the social environment.

Nudging influences behavior through different nudge types divided into a 4-part typology. How behavior influencing takes place and how nudges differ from other behavioral influencing methods will be further explained by delving more profound into behavioral terminology.

2.3. Behavioral terminology

Daniel Kahneman is considered one of the founding fathers of bringing economics and psychology together. He was an economic psychologist praised for his contributions to cognition, judgment, and decision-making (Conlin, 2019). Kahneman was an economic psychologist and not a behavioral economist, and there, Kahneman and Thaler probably found each other. One of his significant contributions is how we think as humans. Kahneman speaks of a system I and a system II, and Thaler and Sunstein (2022) translated these two into an automatic system (system I) and a reflective system (system II), where nudging responds to the automatic system. In the automatic system, the thinking in our brain proceeds as follows: uncontrolled, effortless, associative, quickly, unconscious, and based on experience. Reflective thinking is just the complete opposite.

After Kahneman in 2002, Richard H. Thaler won the Nobel prize in economics in 2017 for his contribution to behavioral economics. It may be clear that Thalers and Sunstein's contribution to research into nudging is invaluable, but the lack of conceptual clarity and clear definitions is a disadvantage (Raymaekers et al., 2019). The result is that there is sometimes talk of nudging while there is no nudging, which impacts credibility in the nudging field (Oliver et al., 2017).

Nudging works with choice architecture and wants to push people gently in the right direction partly by making choices as easy as possible and starting from the idea of libertarian paternalism. On the other hand, there is also ‘boost’ as a part of behavioral insight (Raymaekers et al., 2019). Boost focuses more on empowerment and entrepreneurship of the person and thus increases people’s choice capacity and skills to make better choices (Hertwig & Grüne-Yanoff, 2017). Following the increasing attention for nudging, the concept of boost received some attention in the last few years. Although boost is not a nudge, it can, together with nudging, create more substantial behavioral effects (Raymaekers et al., 2019).

2.4. The effectiveness of nudging

The possibility of creating more substantial behavioral effects first requires insights into how strong the impact of nudging is and how effective it is when it is applied. To gain insights into the effectiveness of nudging, Hummel and Maedche (2019) did research through a quantitative review of the effect sizes and limits of empirical nudging studies. For the literature review, 100 papers were used, and 317 effect sizes were reported, of which 61% could demonstrate a significant effect. Effect sizes are diverse by application context and by nudging category. For context, median effect sizes for the environment (39%), finance (28%), and health (21%) were similar, while the median for privacy (44%) was higher. The median for energy (13%) and policymaking (8%) was the lowest. From the viewpoint of the category, defaults had larger median and average effect sizes. It has to do with the fact that there were more samples of those categories and that nudge types are also related to the context - each context has specific nudges that it deploys. Based on the research Hummel and Maedche (2019) did, the conclusion is that there is no guarantee of success when applying nudging, but it can be effective.

In a governmental context, the demand to actively focus on nudging became louder and louder. Compared to classical policy tools, nudge interventions prove their added value viewed from a cost perspective (Benartzi et al., 2017), and starting from the objective of which the nudge is used, nudge interventions had a relevant and statistically significant impact on the outcome (DellaVigna & Linos, 2022). Partly because nudging in the context of governmental policy is still in a primary phase, there is a need for the exchange of knowledge and good practices, more investments in the application of nudging, and research into effects (Benartzi et al., 2017). If



further investments were made in this area, the effectiveness could increase, and nudging could prove its added value even more decisively.

2.5. Ethics of nudging

Before continuing with nudging in the policy function and how Flanders has already committed through this, it is essential to briefly touch on the ethical aspect of nudging. Where proponents of nudging summarize that: “nudging offers the promise of cost-effective, evidence driven, freedom-preserving, nonpartisan, and comparatively popular policies” (Schmidt & Engelen, 2020, p. 3), his opponents are much less laudatory. Schmidt and Engelen (2020) summarize counterarguments in four significant concerns. The first one is autonomy which is further elaborated by explaining that by influencing the choice someone can make, ownership of choice can get lost, irrational thinking is played, and there is some form of governmental control. The second one is manipulation and dignity, which would be affected by nudges. The third goes about elicited ends, where the question is which behavior and so nudge is most desirable. Nudges steer behavior in a specific direction, but is that also the most desired direction? The last argument raised is whether nudging touches the problem's root. When nudging to support job seekers in attending their appointment, will we solve the problem of job seekers who need to be more motivated and present? According to critics, many social issues have a socio-economic reason, and these do not get enough attention. Valuable arguments are best considered and ask for some discussion when applying nudges. Including this concern, the conclusion of Schmidt and Engelen (2020) is that no arguments of that order of magnitude should withhold the use of nudges. And therefore, this thesis wants to follow this statement in the further elaboration of research without ignoring the arguments cited, which will be referred to later.



3. Nudging by the government

In 2016, Flanders established a Behavioral Insights team within the then-called Department of Chancellery and Governance. In doing so, Flanders believes in nudging and is willing to invest research in it. The Flemish team for behavioral insights acts as a knowledge center and advises departments and agencies within the Flemish government. Further, they participate in knowledge sharing and training, experiments, and publications about nudging through cooperation with partners. In parallel with the behavioral insights team of the UK, the behavioral insights team of Flanders wants to make services to citizens more efficient, both in terms of cost efficiency and use (Departement Kanselarij en Buitenlandse Zaken, 2021). The idea is to test human behavior against policy choices with a view to improvement while giving citizens a gentle push to make improved choices.

On March 10, 2020, a hearing took place in the Flemish parliament with the Behavioral Insights Team on nudging. There the team defined four levers of their operation. The first is cooperation with universities and universities of applied sciences. Studies set up with the team are academically supported, reinforcing results and increasing knowledge sharing. A second lever is setting up practical sessions to let people, for example, middle managers or Policy Officers, experience the power of nudging. So, no dry theoretical transfer of knowledge. A third lever is a search for partners to strengthen specific skills, such as Exploring Behavioural Insights, a tool developed by the Flemish government. The tool can be used in an interactive session to translate a policy problem into ideas for behavioral interventions. The last lever is to create a network of behavioral experts who work closely with universities so that knowledge is passed on.

After 2016, research into the use of nudging within the domains of the Flemish government gradually started. In doing so, the pace at which investigations were launched increased yearly. The study of Raymaekers et al. (2019) tried to bundle research up to that point and to indicate the results. Based on their overview, various departments acted and set up studies. Studies have been carried out focussing on the topic of litter and waste in the fight against illegal waste dumping in collaboration with OVAM, the Flemish waste company. In those studies, they used nudging, for example, to get people to throw their garbage in the bin and to collect their cigarette butts in a butt tile. The latter technique is painting around the butt bin so that attention is drawn and people would be aware the butts could be thrown there. The interventions succeeded. In the first study, the waste decreased by 25%. In the cigarette butt study, 47% of the butts were in the

tile. In the health domain, experiments were set up in buildings of the Flemish government to encourage people to take the stairs and by applying foot stickers, banners, and posters. In these studies, the results varied. There was an apparent increase in stair use in one study, while in another study, only one of the three field studies measured an effect. The Flemish environment department set up studies on environmentally responsible consumption. These studies aimed to encourage people to make sustainable choices in a market or a company restaurant by offering smaller portions, cleverly positioning the food, and using priming. Both studies noted a short-term effect and, in some cases, a long-term effect.

The expertise that Flanders had developed in nudging was most welcome in 2020 when the world was held hostage by a pandemic. Vaccinations were not yet on the market, so a behavioral change was crucial in the fight against corona. A campaign was developed that used nudges. The ‘#ISAVELIVES and do the check-check-check’ campaign wanted to encourage people to perform three behaviors or three checks. (1) Stay home and wash your hands, (2) Stay in contact with older people only digitally or by phone, (3) Keep a distance of 1,5 meters if you have to go outside. The government builds the campaigns on principles of the EAST model (Van Zandycke & De Vocht, 2020). EAST stands for; Easy, Attractive, Social, Timely. It’s a commonly used model with the aim of better-influencing behavior. The principle is broadly explained by Owain Service et al. (2014). Easy means that you can influence behavior more smoothly by making it as easy as possible to perform the desired behavior by keeping communication simple, for example. Attractive is based on the idea that you want to attract attention to stimulate particular behavior. Social refers to making the behavior social by, for example, indicating how many people are already displaying the desired behavior. Finally, the time element is that you will use the time to direct desired behavior by sending a reminder text message, for example. The #ISAVELIVES campaign used different techniques. For instance, their campaign photo used a bright yellow color to attract attention. In addition, influencers were used because someone known has a higher exposure effect, increasing the message's reach (Van Zandycke & De Vocht, 2020).

At the same time, VDAB, the Public Employment Service of Flanders, also started to conduct a study on nudging. This study will be explained in more detail later. However, the motivation to get started with this research was the fact that Flanders stimulated research into nudging and that there were inspiring cases at the Federal level.



3.1. Two cases from the federal government

The first study is research (Luts & Van Roy, 2018) that was carried out for the Federal Public Finance service in collaboration with Prof. J.E. De Neve (Oxford University) and Prof. J. Spinnewijn (London School of Economics). They investigated how citizens can be efficiently encouraged to meet their payment obligations, aiming that the money is collected faster and that (vulnerable) citizens avoid collection costs. Through a randomized controlled trial (RTC), different reminder letters with different nudges were sent to arbitrarily composed taxpayers to determine which nudge had the most substantial effects. The letter with the so-called active penalty, whether or not in combination with the active choice, gave the best results. The letter with the explicit penalty resulted in 20% (or 10,9 percentage points) more payments after 14 days compared to the control letter. No sanction is imposed in this letter, but it is clearly stated which collections can be invoked in the event of non-payment. It, therefore, responds to what a taxpayer can lose if he does not pay.

The general directory for persons with disability, part of the Federal government for social security, researched how nudging could reduce the 'no show' percentage (FOD Sociale zekerheid, 2020). A point of attention, as 10% of the people invited for a doctor's appointment did not show up or notify in advance. A missed appointment is a cost for the government, both in the time itself and in the administration preparation, but also for the patient because he can miss certain appointments. One investigated assumption is that nudge interventions lead to a higher positive response. Using a stratified randomized study with a control group, the effects of a new convocation letter, a new convocation letter and brochure, or a new convocation letter and an SMS reminder were examined. The letter used several nudge techniques like commitment, a clear action perspective, a message regarding profit and loss, and social norms. The research shows that the new convocation letter, the brochure, and an SMS reminder were effective. The new convocation letter strongly affected its own, and the SMS reminder and brochure reinforced this. The results were promising. The research was carried out at two test locations, and at one of the two test locations, only 1% was absent without timely notification, while this was still 14% in the control group. At the other location, 6% were still absent without timely notification, while this was 13% in the control group.



3.2. VDAB's first study on nudging

VDAB goes all out for digital services, a challenge for job seekers who need to be more digitally skilled. VDAB provides solutions to support them, but ideally, VDAB pushes all efforts to let them make maximum use of digital services. In this context, a study was set up with the University of Utrecht to find out how nudges can stimulate job seekers to use the digital services of VDAB. Can an intervention in the 'start communication' of first communication sent after registration with VDAB impact the decision on whether or not to join the digital services? The study, therefore, set up experimental designs. The research consisted of three phases; a data exploration, a survey, and an experiment. The general aim was to find out how to design the 'start communication' so that all job seekers, regardless of their digital skills, are motivated to start working online in their job search. Before we discuss the details of the results in the next chapter, we will first outline the operation of VDAB and then go deeper into the research conducted, the control assignment of VDAB, and the research questions that arise today.



4. VDAB, the Public Employment Service of Flanders

VDAB aims to give everyone a chance at a meaningful and sustainable job, from the belief that work makes people happier and creates structure, self-esteem, and involvement. The organization's mission is to 'get everyone moving' by giving all citizens a career perspective and every employer a perspective on talent. VDAB does this as a director and connector by collaborating extensively with partner organizations. As a data director, by giving advice based on the data at its disposal. Moreover, finally, as a service provider, by estimating, orienting, matching, trajectory determination, and trajectory follow-up of job seekers and offering a wide range of online and face-to-face training courses.

4.1. Digital job seeker service process

VDAB has opted for a radical digital path in services to customers. So many services are digitized, and the customer job seekers can be fully mediated from a distance digitally at home in their search for work. However, a complete digital service is not desirable for every customer. So, a digital contact strategy is applied to give every customer the best support starting from a 'digital first' approach. It means there are three layers in the service. Primarily a digital layer which means that the customer is expected in the first place to make maximum use of the digital service whereby VDAB offers him an online account and digital tools to get started. Second is a human digital layer, whereby customers receive telephone or online support when using online tools. Finally, a third face-to-face layer is added where added value is offered in the regional services through personal contact (e.g., by appointment, telephone, hangout, ...). Here it's VDAB consultants from the region who support the service.

4.2. Design digital contact strategy

So, if the job seeker registers with VDAB, he will first and foremost receive digital support from the Serviceline, VDAB's contact center. If the Serviceline judges that there is a need for face-to-face support, for example, due to the lack of digital skills, then they ensure that the region can help the job seeker further by forwarding the file to a local consultant. The Serviceline can support the job seeker, but this is limited in time and with mandatory interim



checks to examine how the job seeker's job search is processing. A maximum of 10,5 months after registration and without fruitful results to work, the Serviceline must refer the job seeker to the region to start face-to-face guidance. In the face-to-face service, the VDAB consultant uses the so-called 'channel mix'. It means that the consultant chooses the channel that, according to him and the job seeker, best suits the purpose of the conversation. The conversation can therefore occur at a VDAB office, by telephone, or via video. In certain circumstances, there is no choice. The interview is necessary at a VDAB office, for example, when a job seeker has to sign documents, if he is not digitally skilled, or if a job seeker needs to cooperate better.

VDAB's first study on nudging is in the initial process of the digital contact strategy, where the Serviceline is still following up with the job seeker. On behalf of VDAB, the University of Utrecht investigated the impact of two nudge interventions by the Serviceline. A first nudge is a telephone conversation with a job seeker where reference is made to the application 'Mijn LoopBaan' or 'MLB'. VDAB's online portal allows job seekers to consult their file, update their CV and search for vacancies and training courses. The research of Goos and Rademakers (2023) showed that the effect of this nudge was apparent; job seekers log in more to the application on 'MLB' when they have phone contact with the Serviceline. The odds increased tenfold, and job seekers saved twice as many job postings. The effect is immediate but temporary. There is an effect at the moment of contact but no effect afterward.

A second quasi-experiment was set up in the mail communication sent to job seekers when they registered at VDAB. Three types of mail were tested, with very little, more, and a lot of information, aiming to look at the click-through behavior. This test shows that emails with very little initial communication ensure 1/3 more chance of clicking through and doubling the chance of logging in to 'MLB'. Goos and Rademakers (2023) explain that the nudge shows that job seekers often receive an information overload that make them less likely to find their way into 'MLB'. In summary, this nudge experiment shows that the tested nudges had enormous effects, and nudges can therefore influence the search behavior of job seekers. Nudges are also valuable for other parts of the service. For example, which will be the subject of this research, in encouraging job seekers to attend their interview with their consultant. In this way it reduces the chance that job seekers will lose their benefits because they are absent from the interview. To understand how the process of losing benefits works, more information has to be provided about the operation of the control assignment of VDAB. This will be explained in the next section.



4.3. *The control assignment of VDAB*

In 2016, VDAB became responsible for monitoring the client's job search behavior. Previously this was a federal competence, which became assigned to the Flemish government by the sixth state reform. In practice, that means that from that moment, VDAB has to check whether job seekers made sufficient efforts in their search for work and, if not, they had to sanction them, meaning a reduction or (temporary) loss of benefits. Two important things to note. First, the Flemish government must carry out this assignment within an existing and valid federal framework, as the federal government still ensures the benefits payments for the unemployed. Second, where that control of the search process at the federal level was a separate service in addition to the job placement and mediation process, the VDAB has chosen to implement this in their mediation process.

Suppose a job seeker does not cooperate reasonably and receives benefits. In that case, this must all be properly documented to work legally. Evidence has to be presented if the job seeker is sanctioned for it and goes to the labor court. VDAB has implemented formal follow-up in its operations to guarantee that service and comply with the Federal legislative framework. Formal follow-up is a service that the consultant can choose for a job seeker. It is only possible for customers who are required to be registered, already being mediated face to face, and of whom the consultant estimates that it is necessary to follow up with the customer more strictly. For example, the job seeker always fails to show up for an appointment. In the case of formal follow-up, the job seeker must sign a digital appointment bundle. Working with digital face-to-face contacts is no longer possible, so telephone or video calls are not an option anymore. In case of formal follow-up, the job seeker receives appointments where he must be physically present and carry out assignments. Failure to keep an appointment for an interview and/or failure to carry out these assignments may have consequences for the job seeker's benefits.

To pronounce a sanction, VDAB's Control Service authority is competent. The VDAB Control Service is centrally managed from a separate department and works independently of the provincial VDAB directorates. If a job seeker does not respond to a registered invitation without a valid reason, a transmission will, in principle, follow. Valid reasons to be absent at an appointment include employment, illness, or a job interview on the day of the planned contact. Transmission is the process by which the job seekers file is transferred to VDAB's Control Service. VDAB's Control Service must guarantee an objective assessment of the transmission by only assessing a file based on facts provided by the job seeker and the consultant who made



the transmission. If valid, VDAB's control service can award a fair sanction. This can range from a warning, a few weeks of reduced or no benefits, to permanent suspension of unemployment benefits. In December 2022, 2115 transmissions were sent to VDAB's control service about not responding to a registered appointment. Not every appointment whose file is closed as 'without a valid reason' becomes a transmission immediately, partly because specific categories of job seekers are sometimes invited by registered mail by the consultant but cannot receive a sanction, for example, because they do not receive any benefits from the government.

Suppose nudges ensure that job seekers are more present at the interview. In that case, the chance will decrease that they would have to undergo formal follow-up and a consultant would forward their file to the control service, which could affect their benefits. A better presence at the interview also ensures a better customer follow-up and can positively affect the guidance so that the job seeker can find work faster. Internally, within the VDAB, a higher attendance would ensure a more efficient working process. The question is, what order of magnitude are we talking about? How many customers miss an appointment at VDAB, and who are those customers? We will discuss this further in the next session.

4.4. Customer portrait of job seekers (in formal follow-up) missing registered appointments

To provide insight into the customer groups, an analysis based on December 2022 is provided. The time series for all months in 2022 can be found in Appendix A. In December 2022, VDAB counted 140.765 unemployed job seekers. Of these, there were 4208 unemployed job seekers in formal follow-up at VDAB. To be clear, it does not mean that the other unemployed job seekers always cooperate reasonably and, if invited, are present at interviews. In formal and non-formal follow-up, the consultant can record appointments for interviews at which the job seeker must be present. If the job seeker is absent and has no valid reason, the consultant can invite the job seeker by registered invitation. Not responding to a registered appointment without a valid reason can lead to sanction, even if the job seeker is not in formal follow-up. Recently, this also became possible for telephone appointments with a registered telephone appointment in advance. The job seeker, therefore, has obligations when VDAB calls.

In total, VDAB recorded 5845 registered invitations for December 2022, and of those, 3234 job seeker files were completed as absent. 32,3% of these files did not receive a valid justification

from the job seeker for his absence, and 23,0% were marked as validly absent, for example, due to reported employment or illness. The amount of job seekers that were present after a registered invitation cannot be determined based on the data. However, we know that the attendance at a registered appointment is lower than 50%. This group of 5845 job seekers invited by registered mail can be divided into 340 job seekers in formal and 5505 non-formal follow-up. Looking at the proportion of absent job seekers, more job seekers in formal follow-up do not show up without a valid reason (41,2%) for a registered appointment than job seekers who are not in formal follow-up (31,8%) in December 2022. For appointments that are not sent by registered mail, the invalid absence in December 2022 is at a minimum of 9,6%, and as a result, the percentage of unfinished files is higher (68,4%). The presence of job seekers at the appointments is likely higher, but exact numbers are unavailable. This is because, again, whether an unfinished file is a present, rescheduled, or other type of appointment it's not visible. For job seekers in formal follow-up, the absence rate without a valid reason is at a minimum of 16,6%. In summary, the more strictly the job seeker is monitored/invited, the greater the absence share without a valid reason.

On the side-line, the fact that there needs to be more monitoring of the appointments held is a limitation of which VDAB is aware. VDAB is developing an application that should better monitor the management of appointments.

Seven customer characteristics will be discussed, which are; gender, age, diploma, duration of employment, migration background, knowledge of Dutch, and whether the job seeker has an occupational disability. Based on examining those customer characteristics, the question is whether there is a difference in the job seekers' profiles who do not accept a registered appointment without a valid reason. And how do these seven characteristics relate to the group of registered invitees and the entire group who receive mediation support from VDAB? Here too, the analyses have been made of the same group invited by registered mail in December 2022. In this way, double counting is avoided as much as possible. Every time a job seeker is invited by registered mail, he is counted in the figures. In that case, annual figures could give a more distorted picture. The disadvantage is, of course, that properties are different every month. In Appendix B, all data for 2022 can be found.

Starting with the duration of unemployment, the largest group (62,0%) of unemployed people who do not show up for a registered appointment without a valid reason have been unemployed for less than a year. The share of job seekers with an unemployment duration between 1 and 2 years (16,1%) and more than two years (16,7%) is about the same. Concerning the entire group

of job seekers in mediation, there are also more job seekers with a short unemployment period than long-term job seekers, but their share is slightly lower (57,6% vs. 62,0%). Very striking in the group of invalid absentees is the proportion of men (68,0%) relative to women (32,0%). Their share in the total group of job seekers in mediation is only 53,3% and increases proportionally for the group of registered invitees (64,0%), thus peaking at 68% in case of invalid absence. For the age of unemployment, there is a large population (34,6%) of invalid absent job seekers under the age of 25 and little or no job seekers (0,6%) aged 60 years and older. For education level, short-educated job seekers (57,6%) are more presented in terms of education than high-educated job seekers (7,8%). While for the middle-educated job seekers, the share in December 2022 is proportional to the entire group of ‘job seekers in mediation.’ The same trend for gender is observed here. The proportional representation increases for the short-educated and decreases for the high-educated compared to the group of all job seekers in mediation, those invited by registered letter, and ultimately those invalidly absent. Job seekers with an occupational disability are less represented (5,4%), and the share of job seekers with a migration background is also slightly lower in December 2022. VDAB does have job seekers in mediation (26,9%) who indicate that their knowledge of Dutch is minimal. Still, the share of job seekers in the group who did not attend a registered appointment without a valid reason is lower (18,8%).

It is essential to know what the characteristics are of the job seekers who missed a registered appointment and how they differ from the others to form a representative group in the thesis research. But a complete analysis of each character to explain and discuss this customer group of job seekers would lead us too far and is irrelevant to this thesis. This thesis's most relevant demographic characteristic and outcome is the higher representation of short-educated job seekers. The question must be asked why the short-educated share is so high. Do short-educated customers understand VDAB's communication well, always know what is expected of them, and can nudges help?

Finally, the results should not be seen separately from those in the driver's seat, the consultants. Could consultants be more lenient towards certain groups of job seekers, as a result of which they are less represented in the group of registered invitations? This question will not be explored further in this thesis but should be preserved because the consultant impacts the process. VDAB invests in the quality follow-up of files to monitor this impact and make necessary adjustments.



Before moving to the next chapter, the concrete formulation of a research question based on theoretical insights gathered about nudging and the functioning of VDAB and its clients, it is essential to consider how VDAB communicates to job seekers because meaningful changes have recently taken place here.

4.5. Communication with the job seekers

As outlined in the figures about the customer portrait of job seekers (in formal follow-up) missing registered appointments, depending on how the consultant follows up with a job seeker and the phase he is in the invitation process, the percentage in which the job seeker is invalidly absent varies. The way the job seeker receives communication and how he consequently receives his appointment invitation is also different, although the job seeker is in the driver's seat here. Via communication preferences, the customer can indicate how he wishes to receive communication from VDAB: only digitally via his online account or both digitally and by mail post. In addition, VDAB also sends notification emails to its customers. Notification emails are emails in which they inform citizens of updates in their online VDAB account. For example, if the citizen has received a new message or assignment, he will receive a notification email to inform him. With all those daily updates only one notification mail is sent daily. If there are no updates, VDAB will send no email. If a consultant schedules an appointment, the job seeker will receive an SMS reminder the day before the planned contact. The customer receives the same communication with a registered invitation, but the appointment bundle is sent by registered mail. Concretely, when the job seeker has an appointment with a consultant, he will (1) see it in his online file, (2) receive a notification email, (3) receive a digital information bundle by mail or post in the function of his communication preference and whether or not it is sent by registered mail and (4) an SMS reminder. VDAB will no longer send separate invitations—the appointment bundle states when the customer has an appointment.

VDAB introduced the appointment bundle at the beginning of 2023. There were three main reasons for this. First, job seekers often receive a lot of (different) communication from VDAB. This information is often not clear and sometimes very confusing. That's why all information is brought together in a bundle. In the appointment bundle, the job seeker can see the current training program and the services and get an overview of new, outstanding, changed, and canceled assignments and conversations. Second, VDAB introduced the appointment bundle because of a legal principle that says the communication a job seeker receives must be the exact



digital and analog, affecting the document's layout. Finally, the bundle must also meet several requirements in the context of VDAB's sanctioning authority.

The implementation of this appointment bundle had its obstacles. Also, it garnered some internal criticism, for example, in the case of customers such as foreigners and computer-literate people, as it must be clear to them based on the appointment bundle what is expected. In response, VDAB has set up a working group that captures this criticism, interprets changes, and implements possible adjustments. This thesis wants to build on the principles of the appointment bundle, consider existing limitations, and test nudges within it. The nudges we wish to test are based on our research question, which will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.



5. Research question

From the previous chapter, we learned that in December 2022, almost one in three job seekers did not attend a registered appointment without a valid reason. The stricter the job seekers are invited and followed up, the greater the share of job seekers invalidly absent. In that sense, there is a constructed outflow effect because job seekers who do not cooperate reasonably or do not show up for an interview go through a particular standard flow and will eventually be sanctioned because of their absence. The fact that a sanction can follow is in line with the fact that a job seeker has rights and obligations. From a positive approach and the idea of applying an intervention with a positive outcome, what a nudge stands for, the question should be asked whether the job seeker is sufficiently aware of his obligation, particularly to the consequences and/or nudges can help.

Therefore, the following research question will be addressed in this thesis:

Does nudging help to increase the intention of job seekers to be present at an interview?

Starting from the rights and obligations of job seekers, in this thesis, we want to examine whether clarifying the consequences of not being present at an interview influences the intention to be present. In a previous study by the tax authorities (Luts & Van Roy, 2018), clarifying what a taxpayer could lose had its effects. So, there was a response to loss aversion by indicating what to lose in case of not paying. The first hypothesis is, therefore, the following:

Hypothesis 1: job seekers who receives appointment bundles with nudges that explicitly refer to the consequences of not showing up for an interview without a valid reason have a higher intention to be present at an interview.

The objective is to learn whether nudges can increase the intention of job seekers to be present and thus reduce the invalid absence of job seekers. Why job seekers are invalidly absent can be diverse, without being exhaustive, some examples: forgotten, not interested, not seeing the importance of the interview, the time chosen doesn't suit the job seeker anymore, or the job seeker never read the communication of VDAB. This last reason should certainly not be

underestimated. As Goos and Rademakers (2023) already analysed, only 60% of the job seekers open the e-mail that is sent after registering with VDAB. In addition, the VDAB already applies a proven successful nudge (FOD Sociale zekerheid, 2020) to interventions for interviews in the sense that the job seeker receives an SMS message the day before the interview as a reminder. This way, job seekers who do not read their e-mail or appointment bundle sent by post are also reminded that they have an interview with a VDAB consultant.

At the moment, the bundle of agreements contains a lot of information. In line with the research of Goos and Rademakers (2023) would be expected that simplifying the information is a nudge that has a strong effect. In this thesis, we do not test an adjustment to a simplified appointment bundle because it is currently being discussed at VDAB what is feasible and not feasible to change. Omitting certainly implies a more complex flow, partly because the communication that the job seeker receives must be the same, both digital and analog. The added value of this research lies precisely in which nudges can be added that work within the existing appointment bundle and in a possible modified version. In the context of the research question, these are nudges that draw attention to the essence and thus encourage job seekers to act. The second hypothesis is, therefore, as follows:

Hypothesis 2: Job seekers who receives appointment bundles with nudges that explicitly refer to how to proceed have a higher intention to attend the interview or notify in case of absence.

In that sense, the belief is that adding nudges to the physical environment using warnings, graphs, or others and simplifying and framing information by capitalizing on loss aversion will help the job seeker adopt the expected behavior. The result will be that this will bring him the most outstanding benefits (given the idea he wants to find a job). Being present for the interview has many advantages, in addition to the fact that the job seeker fulfils his obligation to keep his benefits. By being present at the interview, the consultant can adequately guide and orient the client to take positive steps in his path to work and ultimately effectively move on to intensive coaching, training, or direct employment. For the VDAB, this means an increase in the organization's efficiency. At a higher level, it also means a broader range of customers who take their chance at a meaningful and sustainable job.



It is clear which research question has to be answered and which hypothesis has to be tested. The next chapter will elaborate on what research will be set up to test the hypothesis and answer the research question.



6. Research design

The research design aims to test the hypotheses to answer the research question of how nudges can help the job seeker better understand the awareness and importance of the interview so that their intention of being present increases. A quasi-experiment is the type of quantitative research that will be conducted to answer this research question.

The population consists of Flemish job seekers. For the sample, job seekers registered with the VDAB and in mediation with a consultant will be selected. It refers to the fact that they are no longer in the initial process of their registration with VDAB and thus no longer followed up by the Serviceline. The job seeker who participates in the research may be followed up by a consultant or follow a course or guidance at VDAB or a partner organization.

The job seekers will be divided individually into four groups by the researcher. One group is given the classical appointment bundle without added nudges. The second group gets an appointment bundle testing hypothesis 1. The third group receives an appointment bundle testing hypothesis 2. And the last group gets an appointment bundle with all applied nudges in groups 2 and 3 to test the formulated hypothesis 1 and 2 together.

To test hypothesis 1, a nudge that addresses the loss effect will be used. In the appointment bundle, the consequences of not showing up will be made explicit, namely (1) excluded from benefits from 4 to 52 weeks sanction, (2) or a warning. To test hypothesis 2, nudges that use graphics and color are used. The intention is to work with color and pictogram(s) in the appointment bundle to highlight some aspects of the bundle more.

How many job seekers will be selected in each group will depend on the answers and the demographic distribution of the participants. The aim is to survey at least 30 job seekers per sub-group, so a minimum of 120 job seekers in total – but the higher the proportion, the better. So, if possible, the share will be gradually increased.

The researcher will approach job seekers to ask if they would like to participate in a study. They are job seekers present at a training course, during an information session, or a meeting with their consultant. In research methodology, this selection is also referred to as a non-random method, characteristic of quasi-experimental design (Shadish et al., 2002). The consent participants will receive digital access to a questionnaire created using Qualtrics. It is essential to indicate a particular bias in the surveyed group, as these are already job seekers who are present and, thus, already somewhat activated. On the other hand, it is not the case that this

group never misses an appointment and is always present. They may have missed a meeting with their consultant in the past or will not be attending next time.

For the internal validity of the research, the respondents must know how the researcher will process their data. The researcher will indicate this information at the start of the questionnaire. It is written in the survey; data is processed confidentially and anonymously. There is also no possibility of linking the data to the file of VDAB so that answers do not affect the file at the VDAB or the ongoing guidance. The researcher will also explain this orally before the job seekers confirm participation. The researcher will also always indicate how VDAB can consult a file (name, national register number, customer number, e-mail address) and specify that none of this data are queried, making it impossible to link answers to the personal file at VDAB. The researcher will also explain that only she can access the data (and not their consultant). In addition, written reference is also made to the privacy policy of VDAB during research; the possibility to ask questions in writing and the researcher's contact details are stated so that there is the possibility to contact her afterward.

Finally, before discussing the results, let us briefly discuss the ethical character of this research based on the critics of Schmidt and Engelen (2020). Their first concern was around autonomy. The nudges applied here will not affect the job seeker's autonomy or ensure tighter governmental control. Second, the dignity of the job seeker is not touched here. The third talks about the elicited ends and the most desirable behavior. In the context where jobseekers receive benefits, it should be clear that they are present. In this way, they do not lose benefits and will have a higher chance of finding work, which usually gives them more advantages. The last argument was about nudging and touching the problem's root. And no, with these nudges, we will not turn unmotivated jobseekers into motivated job seekers. This requires other ingredients, and so this critic remains.



7. Results

The final sample consisted of 121 job seekers, of which 30 job seekers received appointment bundle one without added nudges (group 1), 31 job seekers received appointment bundle two with the nudge that referred to the consequence of not showing up (group 2), 30 job seekers received appointment bundle three that explicitly highlight the appointment and the contact details of the consultant (group 3) and finally 30 job seekers received appointment bundle four that referred to the consequences of not showing up and highlighted the appointment and the contact details of the consultant (group 4). These 121 job seekers were found willing to cooperate through their presence during the training course, at a VDAB information session, during a job fair, or after a conversation with their consultant.

After going through the appointment bundle, the job seeker had to answer three main questions. First, he had to estimate the chance that a job seeker who receives this appointment bundle will be present for an interview with their consultant. Second, he had to estimate the probability that a job seeker who receives this bundle will notify VDAB in case of absence. Finally, based on the same appointment bundle, he also had to estimate the chance that a job seeker absent for an interview at VDAB (without valid reason) would receive a sanction from VDAB. On a Likert scale of 4, the choice was between very small (1), rather small (2), rather large (3), and very large (4). The reason for his score could be motivated in a free text field afterward. To clarify. The job seeker was asked to empathize with ‘Lorenzo the jobseeker’, who received this appointment bundle, living at Genkse weg 20 in Genk. In this way the respondent was brought in a setting to assess the intentions of a third-party job seeker.

To provide insights into the demographic characteristics of the groups, this paragraph will briefly explain the distribution of the groups according to six demographic characteristics who were queried; gender, age, diploma, duration of employment, knowledge of Dutch, and whether the job seeker has an occupational disability. All the data can be found in Appendix E. By gender, men are more represented in total, with the most prominent presence (73,3%) in group 3, followed by group 4 (56,7%), group 2 (54,8%) and group 1 (53,3%). By age, the average age is the highest in group 4 ($M = 38,9$; $SD = 10,6$), followed by 34,7 years in group 2 ($SD = 11,5$), 34,2 years old in group 3 ($SD = 9,3$), and 31 years old ($SD = 10,6$) in group 1. The distribution by age group mainly represents job seekers between 25 and 60 years old. The survey had virtually no older job seekers ($= < 60$ years old). By level of study, group 4 has the highest percentage of low-skilled people (46,4%), followed by group 2 (37,9%), group 3 (32,1%), and

group 1 (30,0%). Medium-skilled people were more represented in group 3 (60,7%), followed by group 1 (50,0%), 2 (27,6%), and 4 (60,7%). High-skilled people were most represented in Group 2 (34,5%), followed by group 4 (32,1%), group 1 (20,0%), and group 3 (7,1%). By unemployment duration, the average is between 4,4 months ($SD = 3,7$) for groups 2 and 5,5 ($SD = 4,7$) and 5,6 ($SD = 5,1$) months for groups 4 and 1. Group 3 has a slightly higher average unemployment duration of 7,2 months ($SD = 5,6$). Regarding language skills, most job seekers (90% or more) in all groups scored themselves as good to very good in their knowledge of Dutch. In addition, in groups 2 and 4, each time, four job seekers indicated they had an occupational disability. All the others stated that they had no occupational disability.

7.1 The intention of presence

The first main question that probes the intention of presence was estimated to be rather large on average for all appointment bundles. The average for all the respondents is 3,00 (rather large) with a standard deviation of 0,62. Table 1 shows that the lowest average score was for group 2 ($M = 2.94$; $SD = 0.77$), and the highest was for group 1 ($M = 3.10$; $SD = 0.55$).

Table 1 Estimated probability of attendance

	Total	Group 1 (none)	Group 2 (sanction)	Group 3 (format)	Group 4 (both)
Mean	3.02	3.10	2.94	3.03	3.00
Median	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00
Standard Deviation	0.62	0.55	0.77	0.41	0.69
Standard Error	0.06	0.10	0.14	0.08	0.13

An independent sample t-test was conducted to compare the bundle without added nudges to the three other types of bundles. As Table 2 shows, no significant difference was measured between the bundle of agreements without added nudges and the three other bundles of agreements. As said, the probability that the job seeker would be present was estimated to be the highest by the group that received an appointment bundle without nudges. Still, the difference is not significant compared to any of the other groups.

Table 2 t-test - Estimated probability of attendance differences without added nudges and with nudges

	Group 1 (none)	Group 2 (sanction)	Group 1 (none)	Group 3 (format)	Group 1 (none)	Group 4 (both)
Mean	3.10	2.94	3.10	3.03	3.10	3.00
Variance	0.30	0.60	0.30	0.17	0.30	0.48
N	30	31	30	30	30	30
df	54		54		55	
t-value	0.962		0.532		0.619	
P(T<=t) 2-tailed	0.340		0.597		0.538	

The job seeker respondents were asked to explain their scores. The result of the qualitative input is that there are five main recurring reasons job seekers give a particular score. The first reason is related to the fact that the appointment bundle is clear or not. Second, being present at an interview is good because VDAB can support the job seeker. Third, employment. The higher chance of finding a job was sometimes cited as a reason. In addition, the fact that the appointment is mandatory was also regularly mentioned, and as the fifth reason, being absent can affect your unemployment benefits. Depending on the type of appointment bundle a job seeker received, specific topics came more to the fore- or background. Group 1, who received a bundle without added nudges, gave the most feedback about the bundle's clarity (and sometimes ambiguity). While in group 2, following the applied nudge, the loss of benefits came more up as a reason. In group 3, where the nudge highlighted the appointment and contact details, employment and the clarity of the bundle were the most common motivations. Finally, in group 4, testing both added nudges, job seekers gave the most feedback about the obligation to be present and the clarity of the bundle.

7.2 Notify VDAB in case of absence

In the second main question, the chance had to be estimated that VDAB would be notified in case of absence. The total result had an average of 2.83 ($SD = 0.89$) for all the appointment bundles. Again, this is a 4 Likert scale where 3 equals 'rather large'. So, it was estimated that the chance is rather large for all the appointment bundles a job seeker will notify.

Table 3 Estimated probability to notify in case of absence

	Total	Group 1 (none)	Group 2 (sanction)	Group 3 (format)	Group 4 (both)
Mean	2.83	3.10	2.84	2.70	2.70
Median	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00
Standard Deviation	0.89	0.61	0.93	0.95	0.99
Standard Error	0.08	0.11	0.17	0.17	0.18

The chance that a job seeker would notify VDAB in case of absence was estimated to be the lowest in group 3 ($M = 2.70$; $SD = 0.95$) and group 4 ($M = 2.70$; $SD = 0.99$). The highest in group 1 ($M = 3.10$; $SD = 0.61$). As Table 4 shows, the difference is just not significant compared to group 1, even for the nudge in group 3 ($t(49) = 1.940$; $p = 0.058$) as the nudges in group 4 ($t(48) = 1.889$; $p = 0.065$).

Table 4 t-test Estimated probability to notify VDAB in case of absence - differences without added nudges and with nudges

	Group 1 (none)	Group 2 (sanction)	Group 1 (none)	Group 3 (format)	Group 1 (none)	Group 4 (both)
Mean	3.10	2.84	3.10	2.70	3.10	2.70
Variance	0.37	0.87	0.37	0.91	0.37	0.98
N	30	31	30	30	30	30
df	52		49		48	
t-value	1.299		1.940		1.889	
P(T<=t) 2-tailed	0.200		0.058		0.065	

Based on the qualitative data, the motivations of the job seekers respondents to give this score can also be attributed to four different reasons. First of all, the obligation to notify in case of absence. In addition, some job seekers again indicated that it is clearly stated in the bundle. A third reason that was also sometimes cited is that it is crucial to notify in the context of retaining benefits. Finally, some job seekers also cited employment as a reason, where a job seeker mentioned: “If you’re willing to work, you act like this,” and vice versa by another job seeker who indicated, “Who does not want to work, will not notify.” As with the previous question, specific reasons occurred more often depending on the type of contract bundle. Group 1, who received a bundle without added nudges, referred mainly to the clarity of the contact details and the obligation to notify and/or the associated impact on benefits due to not informing VDAB.

Group 2, again, in line with the added nudge, most often referred to the benefits and/or the obligation to notify. In group 3, there was a lot of reference to the duty to inform in case of absence. In group 4, benefits and the obligation to notify were also most prominent but less pronounced than in group 2.

7.3 Chance of a sanction

In the third main question, the probability had to be estimated that a job seeker who is invalidly absent receives a sanction from the VDAB. The chance is estimated to be relatively high, looking at the average of all answers. ($M = 3,02$; $SD = 0,91$). As shown in Table 5, the average scores of the different groups are also close.

Table 5 Estimated probability to receive a sanction in case of invalid absence

	Total	Group 1 (none)	Group 2 (sanction)	Group 3 (format)	Group 4 (both)
Mean	3.02	3.07	2.94	3.03	3.07
Median	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00
Standard Deviation	0.91	0.83	0.96	0.89	0.98
Standard Error	0.08	0.15	0.17	0.16	0.18

Finally, the independent t-test, as can be seen in Table 6, excludes that there are significant differences between the appointment bundle without added nudges and the three other bundles of agreements.

Table 6 t-test Estimated probability to receive a sanction in case of invalid absence - differences without added nudges and with nudges

	Group 1 (none)	Group 2 (sanction)	Group 1 (none)	Group 3 (format)	Group 1 (none)	Group 4 (both)
Mean	3.07	2.94	3.07	3.03	3.07	3.07
Variance	0.69	0.93	0.69	0.79	0.69	0.96
N	30	31	30	30	30	30
df	58		58		56	
t-value	0.571		0.150		0	
P(T<=t) 2-tailed	0.570		0.881		1	

In the reason why the job seeker estimated the chance of a sanction as rather high, one main reason emerged based on qualitative input: the obligation to be present and the consequences given if a job seeker is absent. It appeared as the main reason for all four types of bundles. Sometimes some job seekers also discussed the clarity of the obligation and/or the sanction in the bundle. Some other job seekers referred explicitly to the VDAB or governmental policy perceived as strict or soft. Since the same apparent reason emerges and the other reasons only occur sporadically, it is not relevant here to describe the differences per group as they are limited.

7.4 Importance of the appointment and assignments

The appointment bundle contains an overview of the appointment with a consultant on the front page and the three assignments the job seeker must complete by a specific date. The job seeker was asked to rank it by importance, in this way to check whether the job seeker estimated the priority differently with or without nudges. Concretely it involved a conversation with a consultant at a specific time and three assignments, of which the deadline for two of the three assignments was on the same date as the conversation. Only the assignment to draw up a resume was planned earlier. As a result, the global average score for being present at the interview ($M = 1.83$; $SD = 1.06$) is close to the average score ($M = 1.96$; $SD = 0.77$) for completing the resume. Some job seekers will have rated the importance as a function of when a task must be completed, while other job seekers, regardless of the timing, rated the conversation as more critical. The third most important was applying for jobs via temporary employment agencies ($M = 2.56$; $SD = 0.89$), and the fourth was asking for feedback ($M = 3.65$; $SD = 0.65$). Except for group 3, each group followed the same order of importance. Group 3 rated the CV ($M = 1.73$; $SD = 0.74$) as more important than the conversation with the consultant ($M = 2.00$; $SD = 1.08$). Neither for the CV ($t(57) = 0.920$; $p = 0.362$) nor for the conversation with the consultant ($t(58) = -1.087$; $p = 0.282$), a significant difference was found compared to group 1. No significant difference was found either between the bundle without nudges and each of the three other bundles. The test could not demonstrate an effect of the nudges here either. The full results with totals, score per bundle, and the t-test performed can be found in Appendix F.

8. Discussion

This study wanted to investigate how nudges can help increase job seekers intention to be present at an interview. Based on the four appointment bundles, the purpose of being present for all four groups of job seekers is relatively large, regardless of whether nudges were applied. In addition, they estimate the chance of informing VDAB is rather large in case of absence. In case of non-compliance, job seekers consider the chance relatively high that a sanction will follow. The motivations for these scores lie in the fact that it seemed clear to most of the surveyed job seekers what the obligation to VDAB is and what the consequence is in case of non-compliance. In addition, some job seekers also clearly saw the added value that VDAB guidance helps them to find a job.

The measured intention to be present and inform VDAB does not match the behavior observed when inviting job seekers. Remember, for appointments not sent by registered mail, the invalid absence in December 2022 was at a minimum of 9,6%; for the registered email, the invalid absence rate was 32,3%. There are several possible reasons why the intent does not immediately match the actual attendance reporting. First, most job seekers who participated in the survey prioritize their job search and, therefore, the succession of VDAB. This result may be because these job seekers have already shown commitment in one way or another at VDAB. After all, they were present at an information session, a conversation with a consultant, or they were following a training course at VDAB. Those job seekers willing to participate in the study may be even more motivated as this was still voluntary participation. Second, the relatively small sample size may affect the results; this will be further explained in the discussion of the hypothesis. Thirdly a group of job seekers has been reached to a limited extent. It concerns job seekers who speak little or no Dutch and highly digitally vulnerable job seekers. Job seekers who speak little or no Dutch were approached but more often did not participate because they needed help understanding the Dutch questions in the survey and/or the Dutch bundle's content. Those with a limited knowledge of Dutch who participated used the Google translate function on their mobile phones or were helped by other job seekers. Additionally, completing the questionnaire required having an email address and a particular digital skill in working with Qualtrics. The question is how this affects the results, because job seekers who do not have an email address are obliged to create one when registering. Unless it turns out that they are digitally low literate. They will be registered by telephone and immediately referred to a specific course where basic digital skills are taught. A final reason why the intention of the

behavior cannot immediately reflect the effective behavior may lie in the fact that intentions were questioned. Social desirability may have played a role in it. As explained before, attention is paid to the internal validity and the reliability of the anonymity of the answers. But that does not distract from the fact that some of them probably wanted to show their best version of themselves with the intention of their behavior.

The study aimed to test two hypotheses. The first hypothesis wanted to test the nudge that explicitly refers to the consequences of not showing up at an interview and, thus, response to what the job seeker could lose. In a previous study by the tax authorities of Luts and Van Roy (2018), an effect through a randomized controlled trial was proven. In this experimental study, the hypothesis has to be rejected. No significantly higher intention to attend was measured, nor a significantly higher intention to notify VDAB, nor was there a significant difference in the estimated probability that a job seeker who was not validly absent would be sanctioned. It is striking only within the qualitative data that the nudge did emerge in the substantive justification for why a job seeker made a particular assessment. So, if that nudge was tested, the specified reason to be present or to notify in case of absence was more often the chance of losing benefits or the obligation to notify. In that sense, the nudge does influence awareness to a limited extent, but it could not be demonstrated here that it impacts behavior intention. The second hypothesis tested a nudge that explicitly highlight the appointment time and person to call in case of absence. Through icons and a clear yellow color, the attention was drawn to the appointment and the consultant they could call in case of absence. Here too, the hypothesis that assumes that job seekers have a higher intention to be present or to notify due to the nudge must be rejected. The bundle without added nudge scored highest when the intention of notifying VDAB in case of invalid absence was questioned. Only the difference was just not significant. The limited sample size here plays to the disadvantage of the results and is a limitation of the study. Even though it was insignificant, it is surprising that the original bundle scored the highest. This study uses a prototype of an excellent example of a bundle of agreements. In practice, some appointment bundles are less precise than these bundles because the consultant chooses which assignments and the number of tasks. These choices influence the text field in the invitations, which may also affect job seekers' behavior. An effect that was not investigated here.

From a demographic point of view, it became clear in the literature study that the more vulnerable group to end with a registered appointment are mainly males, relatively young and with a low level of education. In this study, it was necessary to reach a sufficient number of low-skilled job seekers because it was interesting to check whether they always understand

VDAB's communication correctly and whether nudges can help. The study reached 34,7% of low-skilled job seekers. A lower share that finally reaches the phase of not responding to a registered appointment but is still sufficiently represented to indicate what the nudges did (not) to them. An essential element to consider is the short duration of the unemployment of the respondent job seekers. The average unemployment duration of this group was 5,6 ($SD = 4,8$) months, whereby no less than 82,7% had been looking for a job for less than one year. This result is somewhat surprising. Since according to the digital contact strategy, job seekers are less likely to go that quickly to an information session or training unless the consultant has deviated from this or the job seekers themselves have taken the initiative to go to the information session. On the other hand, the question must be asked, or the job seeker themselves have correctly estimated their duration of employment. For example, those in training did not take the beginning of the training as the beginning period of their employment duration. Finally, a note from the sideline, and partially in relationship with the demographic characteristics. The participating job seekers may have been in a different phase of the service. From non-formal to formal follow-up or even had a sanction in the past. However, based on the demographic characteristics, there is a suspicion that most of the interviewed job seekers were still in the non-formal follow-up.

Hummel and Maedche (2019) have already concluded that success is not always guaranteed in applying nudges. In their review study, 61% of the reported effect sizes found significance. The nudging category and the context were also related to this outcome. From the context, the effect sizes were the most minor (8%) in studies on policymaking. In that sense, there was a clear chance for this study that no significant effect would occur. On the other hand, VDAB conducted an earlier study with a successful impact of nudges. Goos and Rademakers (2023) showed that by limiting communication, click-through behavior increased, doubling the chances of logging in to 'MLB.' Furthermore, effectively calling job seekers also impaired to improve login behavior. One of the differences between the research of Goos & Rademakers and other research of the Federal Public Finance Service and the Federal government for social security is that clients/job seekers have not been effectively invited in this research. It remains an open question what the result would have been in this study if bundles with and without added nudges had been tested with invited job seekers. As mentioned, this study's limitation is that this could not be investigated. The reason, therefore, was multiple. On the one hand, there was an internal change at VDAB from sending separate invitations to setting up the appointment bundle and the teething problems there. On the other hand, such an investigation substantially

impacts the operations. It requires fast cooperation from several services, including an overburdened IT service, which was not possible within the time frame of this master thesis.

What was not possible in this study does lead us to the desire for what might be interesting for future research. As mentioned above, a practical test in which the behavior and not the intentional behavior is tested is undoubtedly recommended. This will also eliminate the effects of socially desirable behavior. In that case, consideration must be given to which nudges to test. Following the research by Goos and Rademakers (2023) it is interesting to try whether their nudges, information simplification, and reminders also affect the context of inviting job seekers. In addition, it should be remembered that VDAB already applies a nudge in inviting job seekers, namely, sending a text message as a reminder for the appointment. It would be interesting if that nudge is also tested for effectiveness compared to the nudge of a telephone contact before. In addition, we only tested the paper appointment bundle in this study. It would also be better to include the digital component in subsequent research and see which digital nudges work. An advantage of digital testing developed by Goos and Rademakers (2023) is that they could see that only 60% of the job seekers opened their email that was sent after registering with VDAB. We don't know that for mail by letters. There may also be job seekers who do not open letters from VDAB. It is interesting to map that out further and whether nudges can be used there. That remark leads us to the difference between active and passive job seekers. In this study, the previously active job seeker was reached. A challenge for future research is trying to find passives. This is not easy because they are relatively invisible, and after they go through a process of a specific duration, they disappear from the radar. The voice of the job seeker itself is a final theme in the recommendation for further study. Not only as a test object to know how they will act but also to know their opinion about the appointment bundle. What is clear to them, and what is not? Do they indeed experience a difference between an excellent example of the bundle of agreements and an example from practice? This last recommendation is not linked to a future study on nudging. Still, it is a fact that has not been investigated, and mapping this qualitative data can certainly imply an added value for VDAB and the job seeker themselves.

This study was conducted from a need from VDAB to improve the bundle of agreements based on signals from the workplace. Based on the same condition, VDAB was in sync with this research running a working group. The working group of VDAB discusses how they could enhance the bundle of agreements based on the feedback of consultants and team leaders. The final possible adjustments went wide, from technical issues to layout changes. The research of

this thesis investigates a nudge technique within the existing framework of the bundle of agreements and in parallel with the current working group to provide added value in that direction. Meanwhile, it is known that VDAB will only make a limited number of adjustments in the short term. Therefore, the question can be asked to what extent the existing need had been met.

From the viewpoint of libertarian paternalism, it should be the goal to make it the job seeker as easy as possible to be present and influence them to act like this. Still, finally, if they don't want to be present and are aware of the consequences, they are free to do so. The nudges tested in this study capitalized on this idea, only we could not demonstrate the effect. One of the possible main reasons is that the jobseekers already intended to attend and are aware of the consequences when not attending, so the tested nudges do not provide added value. Maybe the following research can. But then VDAB should cross bridges. Remember again, essential elements in working with the appointment bundles and the final layout were legal principles about mandatory equal communication, digital and analog, and specific requirements to VDAB's sanctioning authority. In addition, the impact of the changes to the layout is significant for an overloaded IT service. A subsequent study must therefore be expanded sufficiently and provide adequate evidence where improvement is possible so that it can demonstrate the IT investment. Thus, the following researchers should be strongly encouraged to conduct extensive research outside existing legal paths. Again, in the job seeker's interest, future research should examine legal requirements and, if necessary, how they can be adapted because a legal framework that is a cage for proven improvement can be questioned.

With the knowledge of this master thesis, existing literature, and research about nudging, the message can only be to VDAB, governmental institutions, and other policy implementers to conduct further research into nudging. Find out where it can prove its added value in policy-making, and, consequently, for society. And finally, if a research result does not yield the hoped-for outcome, there is Winston S. Churchill with a wise quote to keep in mind; "Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it's the courage to continue that counts."



9. Acknowledgements

Once upon a time, a little girl was walking through life. She had yet to learn where the professional path would lead or what dreams or goals she would cherish. Supportive parents who stimulate her to study and look for happiness in what you do. But then what is that? On the way down the path, she looked around. Many mountains, high mountains. Could little girls climb mountains? The logical gate from technical education was that of the University of applied science. She learned that if you work for it, a lot is possible. So, she studied hard and enjoyed little; that diploma was a milestone in her life three years later. The girl was eager to learn and ready to try University. Again hard on herself at first, and as she walked down the road from college, she had more fun, and the diploma followed. The professional road of life is mainly on the job itself. So there began a new route. Similarly, up and down a hill, meet yourself on the way and continue climbing mountains step by step.

Years went by, climbing mountains. Higher and higher peaks in the landscape came into view, and the curiosity to go there. An MBA? The grown confidence and the wisdom of the present helped. Before she knew it, the MBA started. This climb was great. This woman looking back, can say she enjoyed it. It was instructive, challenging, and lovely to develop professionally, work together, and make it such a great two years with cohort 10. But no pain, no gain. It took an effort to keep going, with evening meetings, weekend study, and a working life beside.

The final piece of this MBA is this master's thesis. I am proud of myself that I also climbed this beautiful mountain. First, thanks to Professor Piet Pauwels for the support, insights, and shared wisdom. Secondly, thanks to Aline Theuns for your help in proofreading this work. Thirdly I would like to thank my organization, the VDAB. And the colleagues and friends behind me who supported me when I started and those who helped me from a path on the back to a listening ear. Thank you all! Most especially, I would like to thank my lovely parents, who were present visibly and invisibly and ensured that my dearest catty ghost always received the care he needed. And to Noah, my sweet godson, Metie promises to give you insights into the mountains she climbed; soon, we will set out together.

Finally, do I already have an insight into which mountain I want to climb next and which direction of the path I want to take? No. On the contrary. That was also part of my MBA journey. Only I know much more than in the past what makes me happy, what I can do, and what paths there are. The rest will then follow.

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Appendix

Appendix A: number of job seekers finishing contact & formal follow-up

Table A1 Number of job seekers finishing contact

finishing contact	cancelled	finished: available	finished: validly absent	finished: invalid absent	unfinished	total
jan/22	175	191	737	1.415	1.561	4079
feb/22	201	189	905	1.628	1.778	4701
mar/22	212	232	1.262	2.008	2.121	5835
apr/22	169	148	1.157	1.766	1.770	5010
may/22	287	263	1.184	1.843	2.289	5866
june22	229	236	1.394	2.216	2.192	6267
july/22	240	221	904	1.608	1.654	4627
aug/22	241	356	947	1.759	2.069	5372
sept/22	395	371	1.406	2.057	2.647	6876
oct/22	238	252	1.460	2.054	2.388	6392
nov/22	267	276	1.376	2.057	2.384	6360
dec/22	247	241	1344	1890	2123	5845

Table A2 Number of job seekers in formal follow-up

formal follow-up	yes	no	total
jan/22	5.591	180.156	185747
feb/22	5.517	178.693	184210
mar/22	5.293	177.149	182442
apr/22	5.150	175.902	181052
may/22	4.978	172.888	177866
june22	4.793	167.937	172730
july/22	4.597	180.355	184952
aug/22	4.566	184.218	188784
sept/22	4.478	178.863	183341
oct/22	4.252	178.334	182586
nov/22	4.245	178.010	182255
dec/22	4.208	180.568	184776



Appendix B: customer characteristics of job seekers to service status

Table B1 Unemployment duration

month of contact	2022-01	2022-02	2022-03	2022-04	2022-05	2022-06	2022-07	2022-08	2022-09	2022-10	2022-11	2022-12
unemployment duration	number of job seekers											
invited by registered appointment												
(01) -1 years	2.104	2.431	2.891	2.574	3.186	3.392	2.741	3.105	3.897	3.529	3.597	3.550
(02) 1 years -2 years	828	922	1.054	901	970	1.044	714	821	1.027	1.030	1.002	803
(03) 2 years and +	756	935	1.236	986	1.028	1.132	760	898	1.172	1.064	1.051	847
(xx) <not filled in>	391	413	654	549	682	699	412	548	780	769	710	645
invited by registered appointment finishing contact invalid												
(01) -1 years	730	830	986	904	1.013	1.239	943	988	1.151	1.191	1.137	1.171
(02) 1 years -2 years	345	393	441	353	356	421	295	332	367	376	409	304
(03) 2 years and +	289	346	476	415	385	451	304	359	457	401	425	316
(xx) <not filled in>	51	59	105	94	89	105	66	80	82	86	86	99
job seeker jobplacement status in jobplacement												
(01) -1 years	71.725	70.446	69.505	69.555	68.797	69.154	81.253	85.420	81.201	80.644	79.379	81.106
(02) 1 years -2 years	25.421	24.508	24.032	23.542	23.021	22.077	22.929	23.109	21.534	21.052	20.656	21.180
(03) 2 years en +	42.217	42.094	41.744	41.165	39.877	38.301	39.422	39.552	37.838	37.376	37.934	38.479



Table B2 Gender

month of contact	2022-01	2022-02	2022-03	2022-04	2022-05	2022-06	2022-07	2022-08	2022-09	2022-10	2022-11	2022-12
gender	number of job seekers											
invited by registered appointment												
male	2.682	3.147	3.871	3.373	3.826	4.171	2.988	3.414	4.400	4.237	4.064	3.762
female	1.397	1.554	1.964	1.637	2.040	2.096	1.639	1.958	2.476	2.155	2.296	2.083
invited by registered appointment finishing contact invalid												
male	991	1.127	1.416	1.194	1.226	1.541	1.066	1.140	1.428	1.457	1.374	1.286
female	424	501	592	572	617	675	542	619	629	597	683	604
job seeker jobplacement status in jobplacement												
male	75.283	74.588	73.610	72.672	70.788	68.711	74.912	76.507	73.979	73.599	73.305	74.996
female	64.080	62.460	61.671	61.590	60.907	60.821	68.692	71.574	66.594	65.473	64.664	65.769



Table B3 Age

month of contact	2022-01	2022-02	2022-03	2022-04	2022-05	2022-06	2022-07	2022-08	2022-09	2022-10	2022-11	2022-12
age	number of job seekers											
invited by registered appointment												
(01) -25 years	1.285	1.542	1.875	1.604	1.863	1.873	1.376	1.566	2.328	2.056	2.109	1.956
(02) 25 until 59 years	2.761	3.119	3.899	3.358	3.943	4.337	3.203	3.767	4.495	4.264	4.178	3.845
(03) 60 years and +	33	40	61	48	60	57	48	39	53	72	73	44
invited by registered appointment finishing contact invalid												
(01) -25 years	454	546	641	566	604	717	519	540	664	672	671	654
(02) 25 until 59 years	951	1.075	1.345	1.188	1.226	1.484	1.074	1.199	1.379	1.365	1.369	1.224
job seeker jobplacement status in jobplacement												
(01) -25 years	22.719	22.567	21.580	20.890	20.075	19.943	26.461	28.581	28.118	26.288	24.391	24.506
(02) 25 until 59 years	105.475	103.344	102.331	101.990	100.858	99.278	106.565	108.873	102.208	102.474	101.937	104.212
(03) 60 years and +	11.169	11.137	11.370	11.382	10.762	10.311	10.578	10.627	10.247	10.310	11.641	12.047



Table B4 Level of Study

month of contact	2022-01	2022-02	2022-03	2022-04	2022-05	2022-06	2022-07	2022-08	2022-09	2022-10	2022-11	2022-12
level of study	number of job seekers											
invited by registered appointment												
(01) Low-skilled	2.211	2.659	3.295	2.838	3.174	3.501	2.480	2.781	3.644	3.394	3.372	3.079
(02) Medium-skilled	1.517	1.692	2.092	1.822	2.218	2.256	1.764	2.071	2.570	2.377	2.399	2.176
(03) High-educated	351	350	448	350	474	510	383	520	662	621	589	590
invited by registered appointment finishing contact invalid												
(01) Low-skilled	828	971	1.200	1.023	1.068	1.315	950	998	1.164	1.193	1.200	1.089
(02) Medium-skilled	503	557	668	645	661	760	552	639	746	724	741	654
(03) High-educated	84	100	140	98	114	141	106	122	147	137	116	147
job seeker jobplacement status in jobplacement												
(01) Low-skilled	60.189	59.747	59.270	58.800	57.797	55.826	59.619	60.376	57.047	57.454	58.030	60.025
(02) Medium-skilled	49.716	48.551	47.851	47.122	45.913	45.535	50.357	51.958	49.653	48.511	47.964	48.430
(03) High-educated	29.458	28.750	28.160	28.340	27.985	28.171	33.628	35.747	33.873	33.107	31.975	32.310



Table B5 Migration background

month of contact	2022-01	2022-02	2022-03	2022-04	2022-05	2022-06	2022-07	2022-08	2022-09	2022-10	2022-11	2022-12
migration background	number of job seekers											
invited by registered appointment												
yes	1.467	1.649	2.058	1.739	2.007	2.210	1.580	2.039	2.505	2.268	2.176	1.979
no	2.612	3.052	3.777	3.271	3.859	4.057	3.047	3.333	4.371	4.124	4.184	3.866
invited by registered appointment finishing contact invalid												
yes	478	551	658	581	602	712	541	673	754	742	728	652
no	937	1.077	1.350	1.185	1.241	1.504	1.067	1.086	1.303	1.312	1.329	1.238
job seeker jobplacement status in jobplacement												
yes	49.417	48.978	49.035	49.707	49.955	48.984	52.250	53.798	52.079	53.074	53.077	53.872
no	89.946	88.070	86.246	84.555	81.740	80.548	91.354	94.283	88.494	85.998	84.892	86.893



Table B6 Work disability

month of contact	2022-01	2022-02	2022-03	2022-04	2022-05	2022-06	2022-07	2022-08	2022-09	2022-10	2022-11	2022-12
work disability	number of job seekers											
invited by registered appointment												
yes	284	401	467	345	410	435	304	326	406	381	400	356
no	3.795	4.300	5.368	4.665	5.456	5.832	4.323	5.046	6.470	6.011	5.960	5.489
invited by registered appointment finishing contact invalid												
yes	93	143	160	122	142	153	105	90	124	123	111	102
no	1.322	1.485	1.848	1.644	1.701	2.063	1.503	1.669	1.933	1.931	1.946	1.788
job seeker jobplacement status in jobplacement												
yes	18.771	18.667	18.443	18.109	17.653	17.292	18.157	18.063	16.889	16.622	16.823	17.029
no	120.592	118.381	116.838	116.153	114.042	112.240	125.447	130.018	123.684	122.450	121.146	123.736



Table B7 Limited knowledge of Dutch

month of contact	2022-01	2022-02	2022-03	2022-04	2022-05	2022-06	2022-07	2022-08	2022-09	2022-10	2022-11	2022-12
limited knowledge of Dutch	Number of job seekers											
invited by registered appointment												
yes	778	880	1.074	827	1.086	1.051	827	1.088	1.365	1.184	1.053	1.033
no	3.301	3.821	4.761	4.183	4.780	5.216	3.800	4.284	5.511	5.208	5.307	4.812
invited by registered appointment finishing contact invalid												
yes	245	287	379	286	328	358	283	367	423	390	352	356
no	1.170	1.341	1.629	1.480	1.515	1.858	1.325	1.392	1.634	1.664	1.705	1.534
job seeker jobplacement status in jobplacement												
yes	31.325	31.296	31.732	32.698	33.369	32.396	34.284	35.703	35.164	36.618	37.130	37.855
no	108.038	105.752	103.549	101.564	98.326	97.136	109.320	112.378	105.409	102.454	100.839	102.910



Appendix C: questionnaire job seekers

Q1

Goeiedag,

VDAB zou graag meer weten over de communicatie die ze stuurt naar werkzoekenden. Jouw ervaring helpt ons in het verbeteren van onze dienstverlening.

Er zijn geen foute of juiste antwoorden. Deze bevraging is geen test. Alleen jouw mening telt. Je antwoorden worden vertrouwelijk verwerkt, volledige anonimiteit wordt gewaarborgd. De herkomst van je deelname kan dus niet achterhaald worden en gegevens kunnen dus niet gekoppeld worden aan je dossier bij VDAB. Je antwoorden hebben dan ook geen invloed op je verdere traject bij VDAB. Je kan op elk moment je vrijwillige deelname aan deze bevraging stopzetten.

Het invullen van de vragenlijst duurt ongeveer 5 à 10 minuten.
Start door op de blauwe startknop met witte pijl rechts onderaan deze pagina te klikken.

Op de [VDAB-website](#) vind je meer informatie over het privacybeleid bij onderzoek. Indien je nog bijkomende vragen of opmerkingen hebt over de verwerking van je persoonsgegevens, mag je mailen naar info@vdab.be. Bij vragen of opmerkingen over de inhoud van deze bevraging mag je mailen naar anne.caelen@vdab.be

Q2 Wat is het nummer van de afsprakenbundel die je ontvangen hebt?

- 1 (1)
- 2 (2)
- 3 (3)
- 4 (4)

Q3 VDAB wil graag weten hoe ze de afsprakenbundel kan verbeteren. Daarom volgen nu een paar vragen over de afsprakenbundel die je zonet gekregen hebt. Je mag de afsprakenbundel eerst lezen en dan de vragen beantwoorden. Tijdens het beantwoorden van de vragen mag je de afsprakenbundel ook altijd raadplegen.

Q4 Wat is volgens jou de kans dat een werkzoekende, die deze afsprakenbundel ontvangt, aanwezig is op gesprek bij zijn bemiddelaar?

Deze kans is volgens mij:

- Erg klein (1)
- Eerder klein (2)
- Eerder groot (3)
- Erg groot (4)

Q5 Waarom schat je deze kans zo in?

Q6 Wat is volgens jou de kans dat een werkzoekende, die deze afsprakenbundel ontvangt, VDAB verwittigd als hij niet aanwezig kan zijn?

Deze kans is volgens mij:

- Erg klein (1)
- Eerder klein (2)
- Eerder groot (3)
- Erg groot (4)

Q7 Waarom schat je deze kans zo in?

Q8 In de afsprakenbundel staan geplande gesprekken met de bemiddelaar en opdrachten die de werkzoekende moet doen. Hieronder staan ze opgesomd, rangschik ze volgens belangrijkheid.

Rangschik ze van 1 (meer belangrijk) tot 4 (minst belangrijk) door de blokjes naar boven of onder te slepen:

- _____ Gesprek met bemiddelaar (1)
- _____ Opdracht CV (2)
- _____ Opdracht solliciteer via interimkantoren (3)
- _____ Opdracht vraag feedback (4)

Q9 Wat is volgens jou de kans dat een werkzoekende, die niet aanwezig is op een afspraak voor een persoonlijk gesprek bij de VDAB en hier geen geldige reden voor heeft, een sanctie krijgt van de VDAB?

Deze kans is volgens mij:

- Erg klein (1)
- Eerder klein (2)
- Eerder groot (3)
- Erg groot (4)

Q10 Waarom schat je deze kans zo in?

Q11 Wat is je geslacht?

- Man (1)
- Vrouw (2)
- Andere (3)

Q12 Wat is jouw leeftijd?

▼ 18 jaar of jonger (1) ... 65 jaar of ouder (48)

Q13 In welke provincie of gewest woon je?

- Antwerpen (1)
- Brussels Hoofdstedelijk Gewest (2)
- Limburg (3)
- Oost-Vlaanderen (4)
- Vlaams-Brabant (5)
- West-Vlaanderen (6)
- Andere (7) _____

Q14 Wat is jouw hoogst behaalde diploma?

- Geen diploma (1)
- Lager onderwijs (2)
- Lager secundair onderwijs (min. 3 jaar) (3)
- Hoger secundair onderwijs (min. 6 jaar) (4)
- Graduaat of HBO (5)
- Hoger onderwijs korte type (bv. Bachelor) (6)
- Hoger onderwijs lange type (bv. Master) (7)
- Andere: (8) _____

Q15 Hoe lang ben je werkzoekend?

Vul hieronder het aantal maanden in:

▼ Net geen maand (1) ... Langer dan 15 maanden (17)

Q16 Hoe is je kennis van het Nederlands?

- Heel goed (1)
- Goed (2)
- Beperkt (3)
- Geen kennis (4)

Q17 Heb je een arbeidsbeperking?

Een arbeidsbeperking wil zeggen dat je bijvoorbeeld een arbeidshandicap hebt en dit vastgesteld door VDAB of een partner na onderzoek

- Ja (1)
- Neen (2)

Q18 Bedankt voor je deelname aan het onderzoek! Jouw antwoorden zijn erg waardevol voor VDAB.

Q19 Heb je nog opmerkingen over dit onderzoek?

Dan kan je ze hieronder achterlaten.

Appendix D: Appointment bundles

Appendix D1: bundle 1 – without added nudges



Ons kenmerk:
ASB/1/document
Klantnummer: 126...
Datum:
24-04-2023

Lorenzo de werkzoekende
Genkse weg 20
BE-3600 GENK

Hallo Lorenzo,

We hebben een overzicht gemaakt van je gesprekken en opdrachten bij VDAB of één van onze partners. In bijlage vind je je nieuwe (of gewijzigde) gesprekken en opdrachten. Alle gesprekken en opdrachten zijn terug te vinden in je online account op vdab.be, net als dit document.



Gesprekken

JUN
27
10u00

Gesprek met je bemiddelaar
met Rani Geenen - Europalaan 37, 3600 GENK

NIEUW



Opdrachten

MEI
10

Opdracht
CV

NIEUW

JUN
27

Opdracht
Solliciteer via interimkantoren

NIEUW

JUN
27

Opdracht
Vraag feedback

NIEUW

Gesprekken en opdrachten zijn verplicht.

Je moet je aan deze plichten houden. Kom je de gesprekken niet na en/of voer je de opdrachten niet uit, dan kan dit gevolgen hebben. Meer info op vdab.be/rechtenenplichten.

Klantnummer:
126...
Datum:
24-04-2023

We verwachten dat je zelf actief naar werk zoekt.

Het is belangrijk dat je op elk moment kan aantonen dat je actief naar werk zoekt. Hou je sollicitatie-acties goed bij. Je kan hiervoor je online account gebruiken. Gebruik je hiervoor je account niet, hou dan je sollicitatiebewijzen of andere documenten die aantonen dat je actief naar werk zoekt goed bij.

Ontvang je een bedrijfstoelage (brugpensioen)? Dan gelden er andere regels, meer info op vdab.be/rechtenenplichten/plus.

Vriendelijke groeten
VDAB

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Plaats hieronder je handtekening als je bemiddelaar het vraagt.
Opgemaakt op maandag 24 april 2023 om 09:15.

Handtekening werkzoekende

Lorenzo de werkzoekende

Handtekening bemiddelaar

*Plaats
je handtekening
in het voor jou
voorzien vakje*

Rani Geenen



Klantnummer:
126...
Datum:
24-04-2023



Gesprek NIEUW
27 juni 2023 10u00

Adres: Europalaan 37, 3600 Genk
Met: Rani Geenen
Duur: 30 minuten

Gesprek met je bemiddelaar

VDAB helpt je bij het zoeken naar een job. Met je bemiddelaar bespreek je wat je kan doen om werk te vinden.

Bereid je alvast voor: bekijk nog eens je opdrachten. Heb je interessante jobs gevonden of ondertussen gesolliciteerd? Hou deze gegevens goed bij. Je kan hiervoor je online account gebruiken.

Jouw aanwezigheid is verplicht.

Kan je niet aanwezig zijn? Laat het ons dan weten vóór de geplande datum en bezorg ons een bewijs van de reden ten laatste op de derde werkdag na de geplande datum.

Afwezigheid kan gevolgen hebben voor jouw recht op uitkeringen. Meer informatie over je rechten en plichten en de geldige redenen voor afwezigheid vind je op vdab.be/rechtenenplichten.

Vragen? Contacteer Rani Geenen
rani.geenen@vdab.be
0479 26 87 72

Klantnummer:
126...
Datum:
24-04-2023



Opdracht NIEUW
Deadline: 10 mei 2023

CV

Maak een CV op basis van de gegeven tips.

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Opdracht NIEUW
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Kijk of de interimkantoren in jouw buurt een interessante vacature voor jou hebben en maak een afspraak om deze te bespreken. Vraag zeker tijdens het gesprek naar het takenpakket en hoe je moet solliciteren.

Noteer welke kantoren je gecontacteerd hebt, met wie je gesproken hebt en op welke vacatures je gesolliciteerd hebt.

Solliciteer 3x/week.

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0479 26 87 72



Opdracht NIEUW

Deadline: 27 juni 2023

Vraag feedback

Heb je gesolliciteerd en hoor je niks meer? Vraag dan feedback aan de werkgever.

Lees op vdab.be/feedbackvragen hoe je dit doet.

Kreeg je feedback van de werkgever? Zet deze feedback in je online account.

Hoe doe je dit? Bekijk de video op vdab.be/video/mijnloopbaan/hoe-bewaar-ik-vacatures-en-sollicitaties.

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Gesprekken

JUN 27 10u00	Gesprek met je bemiddelaar met Rani Geenen - Europalaan 37, 3600 GENK	NIEUW
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Opdrachten

MEI 10	Opdracht CV	NIEUW
JUN 27	Opdracht Solliciteer via interimkantoren	NIEUW
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Gesprek NIEUW

27 juni 2023 10u00

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Met: Rani Geenen
Duur: 30 minuten

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Opdracht NIEUW
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Opdracht NIEUW
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Opdracht **NIEUW**

Deadline: 27 juni 2023

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Opdrachten

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Gesprek **NIEUW**

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Adres: Europalaan 37, 3600 Genk

Met: Rani Geenen

Duur: 30 minuten

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rani.geenen@vdab.be
0479 26 87 72



Opdracht NIEUW

Deadline: 10 mei 2023

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Opdracht NIEUW

Deadline: 27 juni 2023

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Opdracht NIEUW

Deadline: 27 juni 2023

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Ons kenmerk:
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Klantnummer: 126...
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Lorenzo de werkzoekende
Genkse weg 20
BE-3600 GENK

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Gesprekken

JUN 27 10u00	Gesprek met je bemiddelaar met Rani Geenen, Europalaan 37, 3600 GENK		NIEUW
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Opdrachten

MEI 10	Opdracht CV	NIEUW
JUN 27	Opdracht Solliciteer via interimkantoren	NIEUW
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Het is belangrijk dat je op elk moment kan aantonen dat je actief naar werk zoekt. Hou je sollicitatie-acties goed bij. Je kan hiervoor je online account gebruiken. Gebruik je hiervoor je account niet, hou dan je sollicitatiebewijzen of andere documenten die aantonen dat je actief naar werk zoekt goed bij.

Ontvang je een bedrijfstoeslag (brugpensioen)? Dan gelden er andere regels, meer info op vdab.be/rechtenenplichten/plus.

Vriendelijke groeten
VDAB

Gesprekken zijn opvolgingsgesprekken zoals bedoeld in het Besluit van de Vlaamse Regering van 5 juni 2009 houdende de organisatie van de arbeidsbemiddeling en de beroepsopleiding. Opdrachten zijn afspraken zoals bedoeld in datzelfde besluit.

Plaats hieronder je handtekening als je bemiddelaar het vraagt.
Opgemaakt op maandag 24 april 2023 om 09:15.

Handtekening werkzoekende

Lorenzo de werkzoekende

Handtekening bemiddelaar

*Plaats
je handtekening
in het voor jou
voorzien vakje*

Rani Geenen



Klantnummer:
126...
Datum:
24-04-2023



Gesprek NIEUW
27 juni 2023 10u00

Adres: Europalaan 37, 3600 Genk
Met: Rani Geenen
Duur: 30 minuten

Gesprek met je bemiddelaar

VDAB helpt je bij het zoeken naar een job. Met je bemiddelaar bespreek je wat je kan doen om werk te vinden.

Bereid je alvast voor: bekijk nog eens je opdrachten. Heb je interessante jobs gevonden of ondertussen gesolliciteerd? Hou deze gegevens goed bij. Je kan hiervoor je online account gebruiken.

Jouw aanwezigheid is verplicht.

Kan je niet aanwezig zijn? Laat het ons dan weten vóór de geplande datum en bezorg ons een bewijs van de reden ten laatste op de derde werkdag na de geplande datum.

Afwezigheid kan gevolgen hebben voor jouw recht op uitkeringen. **Je kan uitgesloten worden van het recht op uitkeringen gedurende 4 tot 52 weken, of een verwittiging krijgen, als je niet ingaat op een afspraak en geen geldige reden hebt.** Meer informatie over je rechten en plichten en de geldige redenen voor afwezigheid vind je op vdab.be/rechtenenplichten.



Vragen? Contacteer Rani Geenen
rani.geenen@vdab.be
0479 26 87 72

Klantnummer:
126...
Datum:
24-04-2023



Opdracht **NIEUW**
Deadline: 10 mei 2023

CV

Maak een CV op basis van de gegeven tips.

Je kan gebruik maken van deze website: https://www.canva.com/nl_nl/maken/cv/

Meer tips: <https://www.vdab.be/jobs/cv>



Vragen? Contacteer Rani Geenen
rani.geenen@vdab.be
0479 26 87 72



Opdracht **NIEUW**
Deadline: 27 juni 2023

Solliciteer via interimkantoren

Kijk of de interimkantoren in jouw buurt een interessante vacature voor jou hebben en maak een afspraak om deze te bespreken. Vraag zeker tijdens het gesprek naar het takenpakket en hoe je moet solliciteren.

Noteer welke kantoren je gecontacteerd hebt, met wie je gesproken hebt en op welke vacatures je gesolliciteerd hebt.

Solliciteer 3x/week.



Vragen? Contacteer Rani Geenen
rani.geenen@vdab.be
0479 26 87 72



Opdracht **NIEUW**

Deadline: 27 juni 2023

Vraag feedback

Heb je gesolliciteerd en hoor je niks meer? Vraag dan feedback aan de werkgever.

Lees op vdab.be/feedbackvragen hoe je dit doet.

Kreeg je feedback van de werkgever? Zet deze feedback in je online account.

Hoe doe je dit? Bekijk de video op vdab.be/video/mijnloopbaan/hoe-bewaar-ik-vacatures-en-sollicitaties.



Vragen? Contacteer Rani Geenen
rani.geenen@vdab.be
0479 26 87 72

Appendix E: demographic characteristics of the sample by group

Table E1 Demographic Characteristics of the sample by group

<i>Demographics</i>		Number appointment bundle / group				
		Total	1	2	3	4
<i>Gender</i>	Man	72.0	16.0	17.0	22.0	17.0
	Woman	47.0	14.0	13.0	8.0	12.0
	Other	2.0	0.0	1.0	0.0	1.0
	Average	1.4	1.5	1.5	1.3	1.5
	Median	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
<i>Age</i>	< 25 years	23	10	6	5	2
	25 - 59 years	97	20	25	25	27
	>= 60 years	1	0	0	0	1
	Average	17.7	30.8	34.7	34.2	38.9
	Median	16.0	29.5	31.0	33.0	39.5
	Standard Deviation	10.5	9.0	11.5	9.3	10.6
<i>Study level</i>	Short educated	42.0	9.0	11.0	9.0	13.0
	Medium skilled	46.0	15.0	8.0	17.0	6.0
	Highly educated	27.0	6.0	10.0	2.0	9.0
	Other	6.0	.0	2.0	2.0	2.0
	Average	4.0	3.7	4.2	3.8	4.3
	Median	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0
	Standard Deviation	4.7	4.7	4.7	4.7	4.7
<i>Unemployment duration</i>	Less than 1 year	100.0	25.0	28.0	22.0	25.0
	1 year or longer	21.0	5.0	3.0	8.0	5.0
	Average	5.6	5.6	4.4	7.2	5.5
	Median	5.0	5.0	5.0	7.0	6.0
	Standard Deviation	4.8	5.1	3.7	5.6	4.7
<i>Knowledge of Dutch</i>	Very good	81.0	22.0	22.0	18.0	19.0
	Good	31.0	7.0	6.0	10.0	8.0
	Limited	9.0	1.0	3.0	2.0	3.0

<i>Work disability</i>	No knowledge	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	yes	8.0	0.0	4.0	0.0	4.0
	No	113.0	30.0	27.0	30.0	26.0

Appendix F: importance of the appointment and assignments

Table F1 Scores per group

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Group 1 (none)</i>	<i>Group 2 (sanction)</i>	<i>Group 3 (format)</i>	<i>Group 4 (both)</i>
Average (conversation consultant)	1.83	1.70	1.87	2.00	1.73
Average (assignment CV)	1.96	1.90	2.23	1.73	1.97
Average (assignment apply for jobs temporary employment agencies)	2.56	2.60	2.39	2.73	2.53
Average (assignment ask feedback)	3.65	3.80	3.52	3.53	3.77
Median (conversation consultant)	1.00	1.00	1.00	2.00	1.00
Median (assignment CV)	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00
Median (assignment apply for jobs temporary employment agencies)	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00
Median (assignment ask feedback)	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00
Standard Deviation (conversation consultant)	1.06	1.06	1.12	1.08	1.01
Standard Deviation (assignment CV)	0.77	0.66	0.88	0.74	0.72
Standard Deviation (assignment apply for jobs temporary employment agencies)	0.89	0.81	1.02	0.91	0.82
Standard Deviation (assignment ask feedback)	0.65	0.41	0.72	0.78	0.63
Standard Error (conversation consultant)	0.10	0.19	0.20	0.20	0.19
Standard Error (assignment CV)	0.07	0.12	0.16	0.14	0.13
Standard Error (assignment apply for jobs temporary employment agencies)	0.08	0.15	0.18	0.17	0.15
Standard Error (assignment ask feedback)	0.06	0.07	0.13	0.14	0.11

Table F2 Independent sample t-test

<i>Independent sample t-test</i>	<i>Group 1 (none)</i>	<i>Group 2 (sanction)</i>	<i>Group 1 (none)</i>	<i>Group 3 (format)</i>	<i>Group 1 (none)</i>	<i>Group 4 (both)</i>
Conversation with consultant						
Mean	1.70	1.87	1.70	2.00	1.70	1.73
Variance	1.11	1.25	1.11	1.17	1.11	1.03
N	30	31	30	30	30	30
df	59		58		58	
t-value	-0.614		-1.087		-0.125	
P(T<=t) 2-tailed	0.541		0.282		0.901	
Assignment CV						
Mean	1.90	2.23	1.90	1.73	1.90	1.97
Variance	0.44	0.78	0.44	0.55	0.44	0.52
N	30	31	30	30	30	30
df	56		57		58	
t-value	-1.634		0.920		-0.374	
P(T<=t) 2-tailed	0.108		0.362		0.710	
Apply for jobs via temporary employment agencies						
Mean	2.60	2.39	2.60	2.73	2.60	2.53
Variance	0.66	1.05	0.66	0.82	0.66	0.67
N	30	31	30	30	30	30
df	57		57		58	
t-value	0.901		-0.599		0.316	
P(T<=t) 2-tailed	0.371		0.551		0.753	
Ask for feedback						
Mean	3.80	3.52	3.80	3.53	3.80	3.77
Variance	0.17	0.52	0.17	0.60	0.17	0.39
N	30	31	30	30	30	30
df	48		44		50	
t-value	1.895		1.667		0.245	
P(T<=t) 2-tailed	0.064		0.103		0.808	