URBACT

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(re-)attracting and maximising the use of talent to and in Roeselare

Stad Roeselare

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1. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

1.1 Introduction

This integrated action plan aims to attract, retain and maximise talent in and to Roeselare. The document was drawn up in 2025 in collaboration with various partners. The plan starts with a data analysis on the subject of the plan, followed by an overview of related strategies and action plans on the one hand and actions already taken on the other. The second part outlines the vision, objectives and planned actions. The final parts focus on the various actions (budget, planning, division of roles, etc.).

To draw up this action plan, the City of Roeselare received subsidies from the European Union through the URBACT programme and the Province of West Flanders.

1.2 Background

C4TALENT – Cities for Talent – is an Action Planning Network (APN) co-funded by the URBACT IV Programme of the European Union. It brings together ten small and medium-sized towns from across Europe that face a shared challenge: the steady loss of skilled and creative people, often referred to as brain drain.

The network's central question is simple but critical: How can smaller cities attract and retain talent by creating thriving local conditions for entrepreneurship, innovation, and quality of life?

Between June 2023 and December 2025, C4TALENT supported its partner cities in developing their Integrated Action Plans (IAPs) to tackle this challenge at local level. Each plan is based on the URBACT method – a structured, participatory process that helps cities design concrete actions through learning, exchange, and collaboration.

The network

C4TALENT is coordinated by Nyíregyháza (Hungary) as Lead Partner.

The partner cities are: Alghero (Italy), Alytus (Lithuania), Centar Sarajevo (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Nyíregyháza (Hungary), Piraeus (Greece), Pula (Croatia), Roeselare (Belgium), Rzeszów (Poland), Varberg (Sweden) and Vilanova i la Geltrú (Spain).

Together they represent a diverse mix of local contexts – from Northern to Southern Europe, EU Member States and IPA countries – but all share similar demographic and economic pressures linked to youth outmigration and limited local opportunities.

The thematic focus

C4TALENT addresses talent attraction and retention as its overarching theme, with a specific focus on entrepreneurship and startup ecosystem development as one of the main levers to make smaller cities more attractive for talent.

The network has explored three closely interlinked policy areas:

- Entrepreneurial ecosystems – how cities can create favourable conditions for starting and growing local businesses;
- Talent attraction and retention – how they can better understand and respond to the factors that influence people's decision to stay, return, or move;
- Place branding for talent – how cities can communicate their authentic identity and strengths to attract residents, investors, and professionals.

Rather than treating these topics in isolation, C4TALENT connects them into one integrated approach: a vibrant startup environment supports local talent to thrive; an attractive, inclusive city encourages people to stay; and a strong, authentic place identity provides a strong strategic framework for local development and communication efforts.

The URBACT approach

URBACT is the European Territorial Cooperation Programme that helps cities work together and develop integrated, sustainable solutions to urban challenges. It is built on the understanding that cities are on the front line of Europe's most pressing issues – from climate change and demographic shifts to digital transformation – but also hold the key to many opportunities through their diversity, creativity, and innovation potential.

URBACT promotes integrated development by supporting cities to connect policies across sectors and governance levels. This means ensuring horizontal integration – tackling economic, social, and environmental dimensions together – and vertical integration, through collaboration between local, regional, national, and EU actors.

At the same time, URBACT encourages cities to rethink traditional governance models and move towards more inclusive and participatory planning. Its action-oriented, co-creation approach builds ownership by involving stakeholders directly in defining problems, shaping solutions, and implementing change. Each partner city in C4TALENT has set up a URBACT Local Group (ULG) bringing together local government, businesses, education institutions, NGOs, and citizens to co-design their Integrated Action Plan.

Finally, transnational exchange and peer learning are central to the URBACT method. By sharing experiences and learning from other European cities, partners can adapt good practices to their own context and build stronger, more resilient local solutions.

Through this process, URBACT helps cities move from ideas to action — creating locally grounded strategies that are integrated, participatory, and ready for implementation.

1.3 Focus

Due to the tight labour market, it has been more difficult for organisations in Roeselare to find the right workers in recent years compared to the rest of Flanders. On top of this, there are forecasts of an ageing population and an increase in pensioners over the next fifteen years, and the proportion of the working population is expected to decline.

The aim of this action plan is, on the one hand, to increase the number of available workers by attracting and retaining talent in Roeselare. On the other hand, the aim is to make maximum use of the talent already present in Roeselare.

Various aspects determine whether people like to work and/or live in the city (see figure 1).[1] The actions in this plan are mainly focused on work on the one hand and the attractiveness of Roeselare on the other since we experience the most challenges in Roeselare within these aspects.

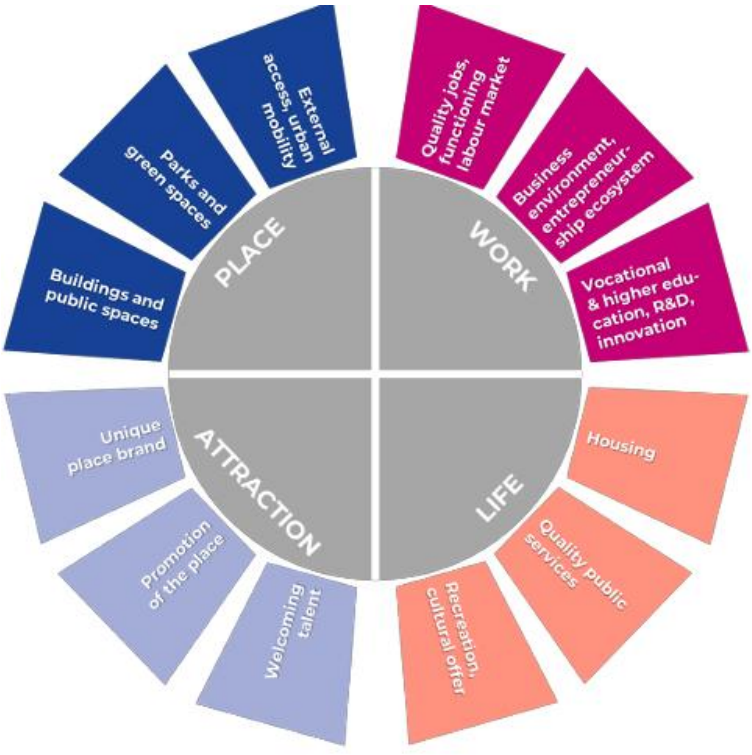


Figure 1: the 4 main attraction categories with 12 more specific attraction factors

[1] This model was developed within the TalentMagnet project, co-financed by the Interreg Danube programme, and is part of the baseline study of C4Talent.

1.4 City context – data analysis[2]

1.4.1 Introduction

If you want to attract, retain and make the most of talent in a city, you first **need to understand the context in which that talent lives, learns, works and grows**. That is why we are starting this action plan with an overview of Roeselare today. This information provides insight into the opportunities and bottlenecks that have a direct impact on attracting new residents, retaining young talent and harnessing everyone's potential. By clearly identifying this context, we are laying the foundations for targeted and realistic actions that can make a difference to the future of Roeselare.

1.4.2 PLACE

Roeselare is located in the **province of West Flanders**, between the larger cities of Bruges and Kortrijk. Roeselare is part of the **intermunicipal association Midwest**, which consists of sixteen local authorities. Roeselare is the largest of these. Some projects and policy challenges are taken up by Midwest because they are relevant to all sixteen municipalities and/or because economies of scale can be achieved.

Roeselare is located along the European highway E403, between Bruges and Courtrai. The city also has a station along the train line between Bruges and Kortrijk, and one direct train per hour connects Roeselare with Brussels (incl. Brussels Airport) and Ostend. However, Roeselare **has no direct train connection to major Flemish cities** such as Ghent and Antwerp. Roeselare has several bus connections with nearby municipalities.

93.4% of Roeselare residents have a car available in the household. This is the highest figure of all Flemish central cities. About 86% of residents own a bicycle and 40% report owning an electric bicycle. 10.6% of Roeselare residents over 18 years old use public transport as their main means of transport to get to school or work. This is the second lowest score of the Flemish central cities. **In other words,** the car **is the main means of transport in Roeselare** and is often also necessary for travel within the region, the province and to other (central) cities, both for work and private purposes.

The **population density** in Roeselare is much **lower** than the average of the Flemish central cities. Roeselare consists of 6 040ha and the population density is on average 1 097 per km^2, the average in of Flemish central cities is 501 inhabitants per km^2. So there is (twice as much) open space compared to other central cities in Flanders.

[2] The majority of the data comes from "Roeselare in figures," a dashboard accessible to everyone at https://roeselare.incijfers.be/mosaic/dashboard/ . "Roeselare in figures" is a collaboration of the City of Roeselare, Team Stedenbeleid of the Flemish Domestic Administration Agency, the interprovincial operation Data & Analysis and the other Flemish center cities. The majority of the data are from 2024, 2023 or 2022.

Often the data are compared to the Flemish center cities. These are the thirteen largest cities in Flanders, including Roeselare. About one in four Flemish people live in one of these thirteen cities.

71% of Roeselare residents think there is enough green space in their neighbourhood. This is about the same as the average for central cities.

In 2018, the **Climate Plan #VANRSL** was published. This plan was written together with the inhabitants of Roeselare and contains all kinds of actions for a climate-friendly city. The goal here is a city with a high quality of life, ready for future challenges and with a positive impact on the climate. Roeselare hopes to achieve **energy neutrality by 2030**.[3]

1.4.3 LIFE

Roeselare is a **medium-sized city** with 66 821 inhabitants (01/01/2025). The number of inhabitants has increased by 10% over the last decade, making Roeselare **one of the fastest growing cities in Flanders**. Roeselare is expected to have more than 70,000 inhabitants by 2040. The distribution by age group today is as follows:

Age group	% of total number of inhabitants of Roeselare
0–19	21,6
20–39	25,2
40–59	26,2
60 – 79	20,5
80	6,5

By 2040, one in four residents of Roeselare is expected to be over 65 years old and approximately one in ten will be over 80 years old. The population of Roeselare will therefore **age** significantly. [4]

Roeselare has twelve secondary schools in its territory, offering general, technical and vocational courses. Unique in the region is the VABI, which offers courses in agriculture and horticulture. In terms of higher education, the choice in Roeselare is limited: Vives University College offers a few specific courses in agro- and biotechnology. **Most secondary school graduates in Roeselare have to move to other cities to continue their studies** at a college or university.

The level of education of Roeselare residents is comparable to the Flemish average: 31% of men in Roeselare between the ages of 25 and 64 have a higher education diploma (Flemish average: 33%), compared to 41% of women (Flemish average: 43%).[5]

[3] Source : Klimaatneutraal Roeselare – beleidsaanbevelingen klimaatplan #VANRSL, een roadmap tot een klimaatbestendige stad

[4] Source: Housing Needs Study Roeselare 2025

[5] Source: https://statbel.fgov.be/nl/themas/census/onderwijs/onderwijsniveau

Approximately 75% of Roeselare's inhabitants live in a house, while 23% live in an apartment. Roeselare has the **highest proportion of inhabitants living in houses** rather than apartments among Flemish city centres. The **average price of a house** in Roeselare is 259,000 euros, which is the **second lowest of all Flemish central cities.** The average monthly rent for an apartment is 540 euros (lowest of all central cities) and 690 for a house (third lowest of the central cities). Approximately two-thirds of Roeselare residents own their own home, while the remaining third rent. This percentage of homeowners is higher than the average for central cities (56%). Six per cent of residents in Roeselare have difficulty paying their rent or mortgage. This is the lowest figure of all Flemish city centres.

As in the rest of Flanders, the average taxable income per taxpayer has risen in recent years. In Roeselare, **the average income is lower than the Flemish average**. However, housing prices (rent and purchase) are also lower.

Approximately 10% of families in Roeselare have problems paying one or more bills on time (average 12% in Flemish city centres). For 13% of Roeselare residents, it is difficult to make ends meet with their monthly income, which is lower than the average for Flemish city centres (16%).

Over the past ten years, **the proportion of residents of non-Belgian origin in Roeselare has almost doubled**. However, according to the City Monitor survey, **only 17.4% of Roeselare residents have a positive attitude towards different cultures**. This is the lowest of all central cities and only half the average (35%). This mindset is a challenge that also has an impact on the labour market.

1.4.3 WORK

Roeselare is an **entrepreneurial city** with a **diverse range of shops and restaurants in the city centre**. 84% of Roeselare residents are satisfied with the city's shopping facilities, which is the highest figure of the city centre cities.

Over the past decade, Roeselare, like the rest of Flanders, has seen an **increase in the number of enterprises** (= number of VAT payers). The bankruptcy ratio (= the number of bankruptcies per 100 active enterprises) has remained stable over the last decade with 0.7 in 2023. This is significantly lower than the average of 1.1 in the Flemish central cities. In other words, **the survival rate of enterprises in Roeselare is on average higher** than in the other Flemish central cities.

The number of jobs in Roeselare is also on the rise, Roeselare **has the third largest increase in the number of jobs in the last decade in Flanders**. About half of the jobs in Roeselare are in commercial services, about 1/3 in non-commercial services (e.g. AZ Delta hospital as the largest employer in Roeselare) followed by 14% in industry. The **food industry** is a major player here: 30% of the Flemish food industry is located in the region around Roeselare. Over the years, Roeselare thus popularly acquired the name "**capital of the valley of food**."[6] 1.3% of jobs in Roeselare are in agriculture

[6] Source : https://www.roeselare.be/stad-bestuur/feiten-en-cijfers/roeselare-hoofdstad-van-de-vallei-van-de-voeding

which is the highest percentage of the Flemish central cities.

Roeselare has **the highest employment rate** among Flemish city centres: 72% of the total active population (aged 18-64) is effectively in work. However, due to the ageing and retirement trends, the proportion of active residents is expected to decline by 2040[7] .

34% of Roeselare residents currently live in Roeselare but also work or study there. This is slightly lower than the average for Flemish city centres (average: 38%).

The **number of job seekers** in relation to the number of residents is 5% in Roeselare. This is **lower than the average** for Flemish city centres (6.5%). However, when we look at residents with non-European nationality, Roeselare has the highest unemployment rate of all Flemish city centres: **one in five non-European residents of Roeselare is unemployed** (compared to 15% in Flemish city centres). Since 2014, this number has been slowly declining, but in 2023 there was another small increase.

The number of job seekers with an occupational disability as a percentage of the total number of job seekers is 19% (2023). This is the same as the average for Flemish city centres.

Among the total number of job seekers, 18% have an occupational disability (2023). This number has fallen by 5% compared to five years ago. Roeselare scores average in comparison with the other central cities.

Roeselare has **the lowest number of job seekers per vacancy** registered in the VDAB database of all Flemish city centres, namely 2.1 (2021). By way of comparison, the tension ratio (= the number of job seekers per vacancy registered with VDAB) in Flemish city centres is 6.1. In West Flanders, the tension ratio averages 3.7. In other words**,** it is **on average more difficult for companies and other organisations in Roeselare to find the right employees** than in other Flemish (central) cities. For ten years now, there has been a shortage on the Roeselare labour market, both in comparison with other central cities, West Flanders and the Flemish Region.

The labour market is fairly accessible: there are often no or limited educational requirements. However, this also means that average wages are lower. In addition, a relatively high proportion of jobs are temporary or seasonal.

Just under half of the jobs in Roeselare are in commercial services, followed by around one third in non-commercial services.

1.4.5 ATTRACTION

The number of inhabitants in Roeselare is increasing **mainly due to migration from abroad.** Over the past five years, the average migration balance (immigration minus emigration) to and from other Belgian municipalities has been rather small: 50. Although the city attracts many people from other municipalities every year, Roeselare loses about the same number of inhabitants annually.

[7] Source: Housing Needs Study Roeselare 2025

However, the difference between immigration and emigration from/to other countries over the past five years is much bigger: 550. Roeselare attracts about twice as many people as it loses. The most represented nationalities in Roeselare, besides Belgians, are Eastern Europeans such as Romanians and Ukrainians. The largest number of migration movements from abroad to Roeselare are in the 25 to 34 age group, followed by 18-24 year olds and 35-49 year olds.

On the other hand, there is **a negative migration balance within the 18 to 34 age group** from/to all places in and outside Belgium for all nationalities. Meanwhile, the share of the two oldest age groups is growing. In other words, Roeselare tends to have young people leaving the city. Most people move to the smaller neighbouring municipalities of Izegem, Staden and Hooglede. However, in the 18 to 34 age group, the largest outflow is to larger cities such as Kortrijk, Bruges and Ghent. In Kortrijk, for example, the highest number of new residents come from Roeselare.[8]

An important note here is that these figures include domicile data and that students (mainly in the 18 to 24 age group) usually still register their official adres in Roeselare, even when they study and stay in cities such as Ghent, Kortrijk, Brussels or Leuven during the week.

The actions of Roeselare within city marketing and place attraction until now was with a focus on tourism. The city did not do any interventions yet on attracting and retaining talent.

1.5 Key policies and strategies

The following strategies and actions plans have been made up the past years who have al link with this action plan:

Title of policy document	**Summary of description**	**Relevance to the focus of this action plan**
Governing agreement 2025-2030/Strategic multiyear plan 2026-2031	After the local elections in October 2024, a coalition agreement was drawn up between CD&V-Lijst Burgemeester (christian democratic party), Vooruit (socialist party) and Lokaal Liberaal (liberal party). This agreement sets out the policy direction for the next six years.	One of Roeselare's ambitions is to become an “entrepreneurial Roeselare”, where the city wants to (further) develop the health, technology and food valley. One of the points under the heading “Together for Roeselare” concerns strengthening access to the labour market. One of the concrete actions with a clear link with this action plan is the following: “We are committed to developing a residential marketing strategy to keep young people and

[8] Source: https://www.kortrijk.be/nieuws/kortrijk-blijft-groeien-en-begint-2025-met-81000-inwoners

		creative/entrepreneurial talent in Roeselare, encourage them to return or attract new talent".
PRO plan	The "Roeselare Entrepreneurship Plan" focuses on the development of SMEs and industry in Roeselare	The PRO plan has four ambitions relevant to this action plan: 1. *Proactively* driving innovation 2. Filling jobs and productive employment 3. Optimal interpretation and promotion of available space 4. Roeselare, bustling professional city of entrepreneurs
Midwest's socio-economic regional plan: The Next Midwest	An action plan drawn up by Midwest, in cooperation with the Province of West Flanders and its agencies and the socio-economic actors ABVV, ACV, the Boerenbond, Unizo and VOKA.	This plan includes three major pillars: 1. Economy: giving future to the economic fabric and keeping ahead with the region's businesses 2. People: attract, retain and activate talent and entrepreneurship 3. Environment: strengthening the qualities of the living and working environment

1.6 Summary of interventions in the policy area so far

Roll-out of the PRO plan

In 2018, the PRO plan (Plan Roeselare Ondernemen) was launched with the following ambitions:

1. *Pro*actively stimulate innovation
2. Filling jobs and *pro*moting productive employment
3. Optimising the use and *pro*motion of available space
4. Roeselare, a vibrant city for *pro*fessional entrepreneurs

Various actions from the PRO plan have now been implemented in collaboration with various stakeholders and give Roeselare an innovative character in the food and health sector. These include amongst others:

- **Agrotopia**, a unique rooftop greenhouse above the REOveiling by Inagro. Here, through research and collaboration, answers to specific questions from farmers and horticulturalists can be sought.
- **RADar**, an innovative centre next to AZ Delta where health, innovation and technology play a key role. Think of projects related to artificial intelligence and data.
- The **Food Innovation Park**, a science park that brings food and health together, by POM, Vives and Flanders' Food.

In addition, various actions have been taken within the PRO plan to highlight jobs in Roeselare and to engage in job matching:

- The development of a **job lab on nutrition**: an interactive centre where visitors can learn more about (the various jobs in) the food sector by Alimento
- The roll-out of various **job matching and activation initiatives** such as #JOBROAD, Midwest En Route and RSL4WORK
- Collaboration with educational institutions on **STEM**

Activating talent

Through Midwest and POM West Flanders, Roeselare has a partnership agreement with VDAB (the Flemish Employment and Vocational Training Service) with the following ambitions:

- Getting more people into work
- Resilient companies in a future-proof labour market
- Strong careers in a stimulating learning environment
- A comprehensive range of jobs tailored to each job seeker

The City of Roeselare sometimes facilitates job fairs organised by external partners such as VDAB, with a particular focus on sectors that the City would like to promote, such as food. The City does this by, for example, providing a location. There is also a job bus that aims to promote a particular sector at events.

In order to enable as many people as possible to participate in the labour market, clients of the Welzijnshuis (Public Centre for Social Welfare) who receive a living wage/social benefits of the local government are also activated. The City of Roeselare has a specialised activation unit and works together with organisations such as Jobroad, which guides and supports clients and their social workers. These actions are mainly aimed at activating existing talent in Roeselare who are not (yet) employed.

Attracting talent

The city council is not (yet) taking any specific policy measures to attract new, young talent from outside Roeselare. Roeselare recently (2022) recruited a city marketer, but with a focus on attracting visitors rather than workers. However, Roeselare is investing heavily in making the city

a pleasant place to live and work by creating space for and investing in greenery, recreation, culture, housing, etc.

As an employer, the City of Roeselare has experience with **employer branding** and attracting talent. For example, City Ambassadors visit various schools in Roeselare to introduce final-year secondary school students to what working for a local government entails and what jobs are available. The City also tries to attract students for student jobs and/or internships with a view to future recruitment. The city has already won several awards, such as the Employee Engagement Award.

2. INTERVENTION LOGIC AND INTEGRATED APPROACH

2.1 Summary of key problems/challenges

On average, it is more difficult for organisations in Roeselare to find the right workers.

a) The number of potential employees that organisations can recruit is limited by
   - The low unemployment rate
   - A higher average number of young people leaving the city compared to other (central) cities

b) Not all talent in Roeselare is being utilised.

A) Limited number of potential employees

(The region around) Roeselare has a **limited supply of potential workers**.

Only 5% of Roeselare's inhabitants are looking for work, which is one of the lowest unemployment rates in Flanders. Roeselare also has **the lowest number of job seekers per vacancy of all Flemish city centres.** On the one hand, this is positive because it means that most people in Roeselare who are able to work actually have a job. On the other hand, these figures also mean that it **is on average more difficult** for companies and other organisations in Roeselare **to find the right employees** than in other Flemish city centres. Organisations in Roeselare indicate that they have difficulty finding the right qualified employees for their vacancies. This can lead to companies moving to other cities in order to grow and attract new employees.

However, with a population increase of 10% over the past decade, Roeselare is one of the fastest growing cities in Flanders in terms of population. It is predicted that Roeselare will have more than 70,000 inhabitants by 2040. However, this upward trend is **not reflected in the 25-34 age group in Roeselare:** here, there is even **a negative balance,** which means that more young talent is leaving the city than arriving. At the same time, there is also a trend towards ageing and silverisation in Roeselare: by 2040, one in four Roeselare residents is expected to be over 65 and approximately one in ten will be over 80.

Retaining young talent in Roeselare is a challenge, partly because the city does not have a university. As a result, young people have to study in larger cities such as Bruges, Ghent, Leuven or Kortrijk. Sometimes they also stay there to live and/or work after their studies. A university not only provides education in a city, but also indirectly contributes to the 'vibe' of a young city.

(Young) people who leave Roeselare to live elsewhere give the following reasons for their departure:

- Change in family circumstances (30% of those leaving)
- The desire to buy their own house or flat instead of renting (10% of people who move to another city)

In other words, in this survey, participants indicated that they were moving less because of Roeselare itself and more for personal reasons[9] . The city monitor data also shows that life stage is the most important reason for moving away from Roeselare (44%), which is higher than in other Flemish city centres (33%).

[9] Source: Van den Broeck, K. & Dreesen, S., 2022

B) Not all potential talent in Roeselare is being utilised

Meanwhile, Roeselare has **a relatively high number of non-European residents who are currently unemployed**: one in five non-Europeans in Roeselare does not have a job (compared to an average of 15% in Flemish cities). **On average**, **fewer people with disabilities** are **employed** in Roeselare than in the rest of the Flemish city centres. This is not only a question of integrating this target group into the labour market, but also of the mentality of companies and other organisations. According to them, employing foreign-language newcomers and people with disabilities sometimes requires extra effort that they do not always have at their disposal. In other words, there are still steps to be taken towards a more **inclusive labour market.**

2.2 Our vision

Organisations in Roeselare can easily fill vacancies with qualified talent. Everyone who is able to do so participates in the labour market, ensuring that all potential talent in Roeselare is utilised. People who experience barriers to participating in the labour market receive guidance.

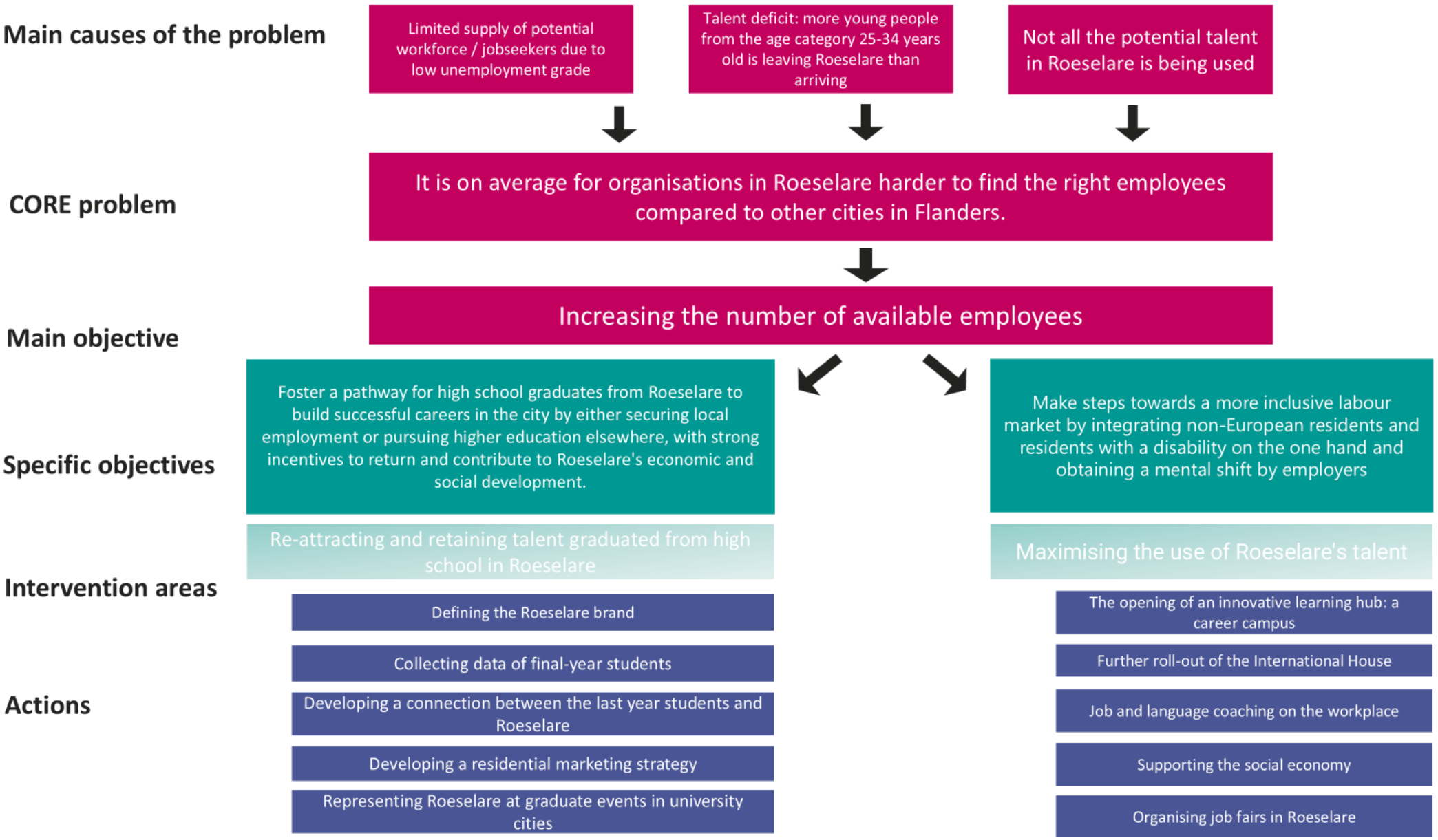
After successfully completing secondary education in Roeselare, the majority of young people choose either to start working in an organisation in Roeselare or to continue their studies in higher education in other cities. During their studies, young talents still feel connected to Roeselare. After obtaining a diploma, young talents are keen to return to Roeselare as an attractive and future-proof city where they can use their knowledge and experience in local businesses. This makes SMEs, companies and other organisations in Roeselare innovative and competitive.

2.3 Our objectives

The aim is to increase the number of available workers in Roeselare. The intention is to increase the tension ratio of the number of job seekers per vacancy in Roeselare to 1 by 2030, so that it is equal to the average of the West Flemish central cities.

This will be achieved by focusing on the following areas:

- Increasing the number of available workers in Roeselare by attracting talent back to the city. The focus here is on young people who have graduated from secondary education in Roeselare and are continuing their studies in other cities.
- Enabling everyone to integrate as fully as possible into the labour market in Roeselare and giving them opportunities.


Main causes of the problem
Limited supply of potential workforce / jobseekers due to low unemployment grade
Talent deficit: more young people from the age category 25-34 years old is leaving Roeselare than arriving
Not all the potential talent in Roeselare is being used
CORE problem
It is on average for organisations in Roeselare harder to find the right employees compared to other cities in Flanders.
Main objective
Increasing the number of available employees
Specific objectives
Foster a pathway for high school graduates from Roeselare to build successful careers in the city by either securing local employment or pursuing higher education elsewhere, with strong incentives to return and contribute to Roeselare's economic and social development.
Make steps towards a more inclusive labour market by integrating non-European residents and residents with a disability on the one hand and obtaining a mental shift by employers
Intervention areas
Re-attracting and retaining talent graduated from high school in Roeselare
Maximising the use of Roeselare's talent
Actions
Defining the Roeselare brand
Collecting data of final-year students
Developing a connection between the last year students and Roeselare
Developing a residential marketing strategy
Representing Roeselare at graduate events in university cities
The opening of an innovative learning hub: a career campus
Further roll-out of the International House
Job and language coaching on the workplace
Supporting the social economy
Organising job fairs in Roeselare

3. ACTIVITY PLAN

Intervention area 1	**Increase the number of available workers in Roeselare by re-attracting talent**		
Definition	**Result indicator**	**Baseline**	**Target value (2030)**
Increase the number of job seekers per vacancy registered in the VDAB database (the tension ratio) towards the average for Flemish city centres.	The tension ratio of the number of job seekers per vacancy	2	6

Action	**Output**	**Result**	**Responsible**	**Time**
1.1 Defining the Roeselare brand	A Roeselare brand that is widely supported by stakeholders	Based on the defined brand, actions will be taken to promote the image and attractiveness of Roeselare as a city to live and work in.	City of Roeselare	2025
1.2 Collecting data on final-year secondary school students in Roeselare	A database with anonymised data on students who have graduated in Roeselare, including their current job, place of work and place of residence.	Based on the data collected, analyses will be made of the number of young people who do or do not return after studying in other cities and the impact of the actions taken.	City of Roeselare	Start-up in the 2025-2026 school year
1.3 Developing a connection between final-year secondary school students in Roeselare and the city of Roeselare	Final-year students are aware of the employment opportunities in Roeselare through company visits and/or presentations by local entrepreneurs.	After completing their higher education, students think positively about Roeselare and consider living and/or working in the city.	City of Roeselare	To be determined

1.4 Developing a residential marketing strategy	A residential marketing strategy	Young people and creative/entrepreneurial talent remain in Roeselare, return or are attracted to the city	City of Roeselare	By 2030 at the latest
1.5 Participating in graduation fairs in university cities in Flanders	The city of Roeselare is present at various graduation fairs in Flanders.	Students see Roeselare as an opportunity to work and/or live due to its visual presence at graduation fairs.	City of Roeselare and companies located in Roeselare	Ongoing

Intervention area 2	Make maximum use of the talent available in Roeselare			
Definition		**Result indicator**	**Baseline (2023)**	**Target value (2030)**
Maximising the integration of existing talent into the labour market in order to achieve an inclusive labour market.		•Job seekers with non-European nationality compared to residents with non-European nationality (aged 18 to 64) •Job seekers with a work disability compared to the number of job seekers in Roeselare	•20 •18	•15 •15
Action	**Output**	**Result**	**Responsible**	**Time**
2.1 Opening an innovative learning hub career campus in Roeselare	A one-stop shop for VDAB services in Roeselare: mediation, guidance and training.	The organisation of training courses in Roeselare that respond to the specific needs of employers and offer the most modern techniques.	VDAB	Completion planned for 2027
2.2 Further roll-out of the International House	The International House assists expats in West Flanders with the following matters: • A single point of contact for expats for all their needs and questions • Information in English: on the website, through information sessions or one-to-one guidance	Expats and their family members are supported so that they continue to live and work in (the region of) Roeselare.	VOKA in collaboration with POM West Flanders and the City of Roeselare	Ongoing

	Social integration through the organisation of networking events			
2.3 Publicising the job and language coaching initiative in the workplace	Raise awareness of the job and language coaching initiative offered by VDAB. This initiative means that employees with a foreign language background and/or medical problems are entitled to free job and/or language coaching during their first year of employment.	Prevent employees from dropping out due to medical and/or language-related challenges.	VDAB in collaboration with the City of Roeselare	2025
2.4 Supporting the social economy	On the one hand, socio-economic initiatives in Roeselare are supported by subsidies from the City. On the other hand, these initiatives are included in public contracts awarded by the City of Roeselare.	Employing people who are not (yet) able to enter the regular labour market.	City of Roeselare	Ongoing
2.5 Organising job fairs in Roeselare	At a job fair, job seekers and/or final-year students can meet employers.	Job seekers and/or graduates in Roeselare are encouraged to apply for jobs in Roeselare.	VDAB, Roularta and several groups of enterprises	Ongoing

4. IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

4.1 GANTT

Action	2025				2026				2027				2028				2029			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Intervention area 1: Increase the number of available workers in Roeselare																				
1.1 Defining the Roeselare brand																				
1.2 Collecting data on final-year secondary school students in Roeselare																				
1.3 Developing a connection between final-year secondary school students in Roeselare and the city of Roeselare																				
1.4 Developing a residential marketing strategy																				
1.4 Participating in graduation fairs in university cities in Flanders																				
Intervention area 2: Maximizing the talent available in Roeselare																				
2.1 Opening an innovative learning hub career campus in Roeselare																				
2.2 Further roll-out of the International House																				
2.3 Publicising the job and language coaching initiative in the workplace																				

2.4 Supporting the social economy	
2.5 Organising job fairs in Roeselare	

4.2 Governance of implementation and monitoring

The action plan is delivered to the administrative and political responsible person of the CitiesForTalent project within Roeselare.

The Strategic Unit monitors the implementation of the action plan by organising a working group meeting on this theme two to three times a year. The aim is not only to monitor the progress of the actions but also to discuss cross-fertilisation between the actions. Finally, this ensures that the theme remains on the agenda.

This consultation is initially with the current project team with the following representation:

- Project leader, Strategic Unit
- Policy Officer for the Economy
- Policy Officer for Employment
- City marketer

If necessary, external stakeholders may also be invited.

Actions for which an external stakeholder is responsible and/or involved will be followed up separately for each action in separate consultations. Feedback will be provided to the broader project team several times a year.

Financial opportunities related to this theme (e.g. calls for subsidies) will also be followed up by the Strategic Unit.

4.3 Resourcing and funding

Action	**Cost (EUR)**	**Organisation owning the mentioned budget**
Intervention area 1: Increase the number of available workers in Roeselare		
1.1 Defining the Roeselare brand	30 000	Stad Roeselare (citymarketing)
1.2 Collecting data on final-year secondary school students in Roeselare		*Not available (yet)*
1.3 Developing a connection between final-year secondary school students in Roeselare and the city of Roeselare		*Not available (yet)*
1.4 Developing a residential marketing strategy		*To be decided in MJP2026-2031*
1.5 Participating in graduation fairs in university cities in Flanders	25 000 yearly	Stad Roeselare (Human resources)
Intervention area 2: Maximizing the talent available in Roeselare		

2.1 Opening an innovative learning hub career campus in Roeselare	71 000 000	VDAB (EDRF 6,7 million euros)
2.2 Further roll-out of the International House	5 000 yearly	Stad Roeselare
2.3 Publicising the job and language coaching initiative in the workplace		Jobroad (ESF)
2.4 Supporting the social economy	N/A	Stad Roeselare during all procurement procedures
2.5 Organising job fairs in Roeselare		*Not available (yet)*

4.4 Risk analysis

Risk	**Likelihood**	**Impact**	**Mitigation**
Funding limitations for planned initiatives	High	High	• Keep the topic on the political agenda in order to have own city budgets • Actively pursue subsidies • Set up partnerships with private and public partners
Local capacity limitations to follow up on and/or carry out the planned actions	Medium	High	Clear agreements on the implementation and follow up of the actions, including the roles of all departments/stakeholders
Low participation of targeted youth	Medium	Medium	Strengthen engagement with schools and student ambassadors
Low participation of schools	Medium	Medium	Brining the topic/action plan on the meeting of the secondary school groups
Insufficient employer engagement in inclusive practices	Medium	Medium	• Include the employers in the preparatory meetings

			• Organize incentives
Delays in the building process of the innovative learning hub	Medium	Low	Monitor construction progress closely and have contingency plans

5. THE PLANNING PROCESS

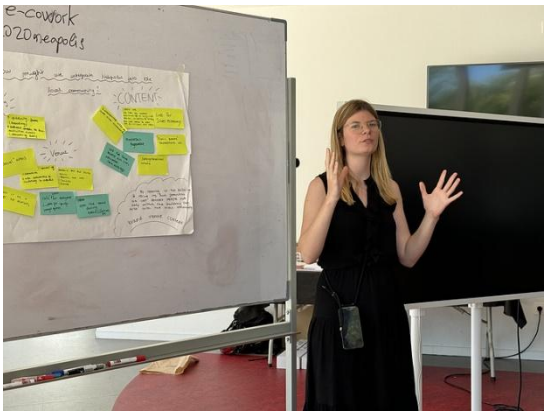
5.1 Summary description of the planning process

The topic of talent attraction and retention was already relevant for (the region of) Roeselare the last decade given the low unemployment grade but was maybe not fully yet on the agenda of the local government of Roeselare. For example, employer representative organisations indicate the difficulties about finding the right talents for their companies. But the role of the City within this topic is not fully clear yet.

Several actions were happening already spread by several stakeholders (internally and externally). URBACT and its expertise and tools made it possible to work in a more integrated way and connect several internal and external stakeholders and (planned) actions by those stakeholders.

The project was launched in the first months (August, September and October 2023) during the contacts with several internal and external stakeholders while making the baseline study, setting up the ULG and preparing the LE visit to Roeselare (25/10/2023).

An important milestone in that activation stage was the internal kick off of the project on 06/09/2023. For the first time, we connected several departments on the topic of talent attraction and retention: economics, employment, city marketing and HR. The commitment of the involved colleagues increased after the opportunity for them to join the transnational meetings, study visits and masterclasses in Vilanova i la Geltru (June 2024), Alghero (October 2024) and Roeselare (March 2025). This made the action planning process sped up and bringing the topic on the agenda.



During the planning of actions, we gathered information from relevant stakeholders (ULG members) about the topic of talent attraction and retention. For example, what type of actions secondary schools, interim offices, VDAB, local entrepreneurs… are rolling out and/or planned to roll out. This fostered the integrated approach of this project.

5.2 Presentation of the ULG – its members and roles

The ULG was set up in several ways:

- We invited everyone of the ULG of the previous URBACT Transfer Network TechRevolution2.0 given the link between the topics between the two networks.
- We reached out to possible ULG members during a one-to-one call or a visit at their organisation. For example: co-working spaces, employer-organisations and schools. While the scope of the IAP was changing, more organisations were contacted.

The first ULG meetings were with the (almost) full group:

- 27/09/2023: get-to-know each other and presentation about the project
- 01/02/2024: brainstorm/determination of the push- and pull-factors for (young) talent in Roeselare
- 16/05/2024: problem tree exercise

These first three meetings of the full ULG made it possible to discuss the intervention logic: (causes of the) problem, vision, objectives and actions.

After the finalization of that, we made the decision to set up several working groups and one-to-one meetings according to the intervention areas and actions. These groups/meetings are being set up or will be set up with the relevant stakeholders for each intervention area/action.

Name	**Organisation represented, position**	**Relevance to the policy challenge**
Jasmien Wellens	Stad Roeselare, strategic unit	Project manager
Bo Vanbesien	Stad Roeselare, strategic unit	EU funds expert
Nils Vanantwerpen	Stad Roeselare, director of public space	Project sponsor
Bregt Vermeulen	Stad Roeselare, department of communication and citymarketing	Citymarketeer
Angelie Vancoillie	Stad Roeselare, department of local economics	Policy expert local economy and entrepreneurship
Ellen Coghe	Stad Roeselare, department of policy development for human	Policy expert work and social economy
Steven Deseure	Stad Roeselare, department of human resources	Head of the team human resources
Bruno Daems	Innovation and development manager, ARhus	ARhus open knowledge centre is a library that focuses on literacy in the broadest sense of the word, thereby enabling every citizen to participate in a constantly evolving society.
An-Sofie Pinket	Cluster manager Food, POM West-Vlaanderen	POM West-Vlaanderen is one of the lead partners of the Food Innovation Park in Roeselare.
Nathalie Neirynck	Event and community manager, OC West	OC West hosts a co-working space and start up hub in Roeselare.
Bart Pynket	Network manager local governments, VDAB	VDAB is the Flemish agency of employment services and vocational training. VDAB will open a career campus in Roeselare
Kristof Dewaele	Director of the biggest secondary schools group in Roeselare “Sint Michiel"	To engage schools within some actions, the role of the school group is important
Ruben De Ruyck	Startup incubator, Howest University of Applied Sciences Kortrijk	Link with the university of applied sciences in Kortrijk and with startups
Bernard Declerck	CEO, co-working space PANDD and architect office	Coworking spaces and engaged entrepreneur

Steven Sanders	CEO, Quicksand	Quicksand is a micro-electronics design company in Roeselare. Quicksand is also a partner in several smart city projects of the City.
Annick De Wulf	Sector consulent region West-Vlaanderen, Travi	Travi is the central information point and the expert in training (candidate-)temporary workers.
	Jobroad	Jobroad is responsible for the roll-out of the action „Inclusive workplaces".
Ivy Goutsmit	FMDO vzw	FMDO has a project called "Team Up" which connects a job-looking person with a foreign origin with someone who has a network and can help finding a job.
Joyce Simoens	VOKA	VOKA is a representative organization of the employers of middle and bigger entreprises. VOKA is responsible for the testing action International House
Martin Boisen	For The Love of Place	For The Love of Place is the private partner to define the brand Roeselare.

5.3 Role and impact of transnational learning – the URBACT added value

The URBACT programme has been a critical catalyst for the topic of talent attraction and retention in Roeselare. By being part of C4Talent, Roeselare has gained not only financial support but also enhanced the local capacity. The URBACT methodology provided a structured way of working on the one hand such as the action plan template, toolbox… On the other hand the programme stimulated the integrated way of making the action plan such as involving stakeholders internally and externally.

The whole URBACT journey was useful but we would like to highlight the following events which had the most impact on the action plan(ning process):

- The workshops about the tools about vision and stakeholder involvement during the URBACT University (August 2023) gave us starting points to work in our city group and ULG in Roeselare.

- The presentation of LE Béla about the integrated approach of the action plan during the transnational meeting in Vilanova I la Geltru (June 2024) helped us in involving internal and external stakeholders in different ways.
- The masterclass talent attraction and retention of Marcus during the transnational meeting in Alghero (October 2024) inspired us to set up some actions.
- The masterclass place branding during the transnational meeting in Roeselare (March 2025) has improved the knowledge within our organization on this topic.

In addition, the feedback of our peer cities (Alytus, Pula, Piraeus and Center Sarajevo), Lead expert Béla and ad hoc experts made every draft version of the IAP better. Last but not least, the network of cities made it possible to not only celebrate successes but also share struggles which made us learn from each other.

5.4 Testing actions and key learnings

5.4.1 International House

Together with stakeholder/ULG-member VOKA West-Vlaanderen (which is the Chamber of Commerce in West Flanders), Roeselare carries out the International House West Flanders. As mentioned before, enterprises in (the region of) Roeselare are experiencing difficulties to recruit the right workforces. Therefore, enterprises started to recruit already people from abroad. When expats arrive in Belgium they often struggle with finding housing, building a social network, enrolling the children in a school and so on.

The goal of the International House is to help expats and their families with finding their way here, in other words, to stimulate the integration process. International House West Flanders would like to act as a one-stop-shop for all type of questions of expats and their families on the one hand and organize social activities for this target group on the other.

As testing action, Stad Roeselare asks VOKA the following:

- Gathering and analyzing data about the needs of expats and the enterprises who employ them in Roeselare
- Develop a business plan for the International House together with stakeholders and possible funders
- Develop a review methods with KPI's and attention for the local storytelling towards the local governments and enterprises

After doing this testing action, Stad Roeselare and VOKA decided to continue this collaboration for the International House.