

**SUMMARY DOCUMENT PRESENTED AT
EU4BT PRESS CONFERENCE – 15 JUNE 2016**

EU4BT - Engaging Users for Business Transfer

Commissioned by the European Commission, the EU4BT Project aims to develop standards, good practices and policy implications related to buyer-seller matching platforms for business transfers, in order to ensure the quality of the services provided. In order to do so, a better and wider approach on the topic was needed, and the EU4BT consortium proposed to develop an academic study involving and being validated by matching platforms from all over Europe.



The consortium

The EU4BT project (Engaging Users for Business Transfer) is carried out by an international consortium composed by Transeo Association and 3 of its Members:

- **Hogeschool Utrecht** (Netherlands)
- **Centre de Reempresa de Catalunya** (Spain)
- **SOWACCESS** (Belgium)
- **Transeo** (Europe), the EU Association for SME Transfer, gathers SME transfer (sale/acquisition) experts from the private, public and academic sectors.

EU4BT is part of the **COSME** (Competitiveness of Enterprises and Small and Medium-sized Enterprise) from the European Union.

Methodology

The EU4BT project aims to develop standards related to **buyer-seller matching platforms** for business transfers to ensure the quality of the services provided. At the same time, it looks at the potential platform features to provide for more exposure, a better transparency and the type of services provided.

We have worked on the development of a unique methodology, which combines:

- **An academic and scientific study** to obtain an up-to date state of the art of matching platforms, to understand their working in details and point out good practices.
- **A partnership with matching platforms from all over Europe** to take into consideration their reality and needs: we involved matching platforms through on-line surveys, in an assessment and expert group meetings.

PARTICIPATING PLATFORMS IN NUMBERS

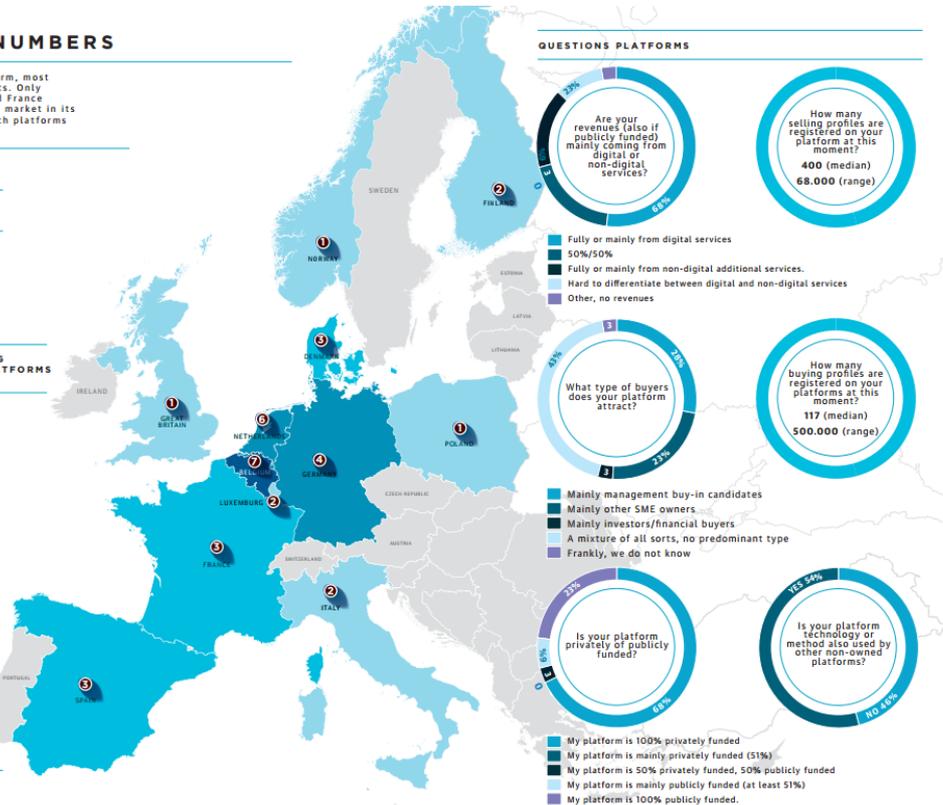
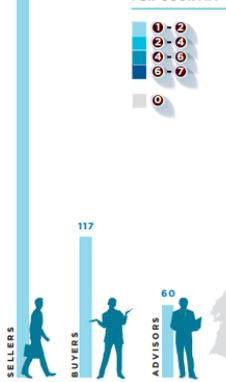
In countries with more than one platform, most report to operate in developing markets. Only platforms in Italy, the Netherlands and France deviate. Italian platforms consider the market in its early beginning, while Dutch and French platforms consider their markets as mature.

NUMBER OF PROFILES AVAILABLE PER MATCHING PLATFORM

Median Registered Profiles

400

PARTICIPATING MATCHING PLATFORMS PER COUNTRY



RATED QUALITY INDICATORS AND CHARACTERISTICS

This overview shows the rating on quality indicators of business transfer matching platforms.

RELEVANT & AUTHORITY	MULTI-LANGUAGE & TEXT	SECURITY/PRIVACY
CLEAR INDICATION OF OWNERSHIP HISTORY	ACCESSIBLE IN OTHER LANGUAGES	SECURED APPLICATIONS SECURED DATABASES
NUMBER OF AVAILABLE PROFILES	READABLE	CLEAR PRIVACY PROTECTION POLICY
CONTACT DETAILS	EASY TO UNDERSTAND	CUSTOMIZATION
BUSINESS MODEL	TIMELY	SUBSCRIPTION SERVICES
SPONSORS	DATE OF PLACEMENT	COOKIE POLICY
LISTING OF STAFF MEMBERS	IDENTIFIABLE REPLACEMENTS	
	UP TO DATE WEBSITE	
ACCURACY		
CLEAR MATCHING PROCEDURE	SUCCESS RATIO	SEAL OF APPROVAL
TYPE OF CHECKS SELLERS	TYPE OF CHECKS BUYERS	THIRD PARTY RECOGNITION
TYPE OF CHECKS ADVISORS	TRANSACTION RECORDS	PRICES
VARIETY OF NON-DIGITAL SERVICES	VARIETY OF DIGITAL SERVICES	SUCCESS FEES
INTERACTIVE SERVICES		
SEARCH BY SECTOR	COMMUNICATION WITH PLATFORM	USER RATING AND SATISFACTION
SEARCH BY FTE	PHONE, E-MAIL, CHAT	SECURED DATA/DEALING ROOMS
SEARCH BY SALES TURNOVER	RESPONSE TIME	LIMITED SEARCH ENGINE/OUTCOMES
SEARCH BY REGION/CITY	EASY TO FIND PROFILES	DIRECT CONTACT BUYER/SELLER
SEARCH BY PRICE INDICATION	SHARING OF PROFILES	CHECK FOR IMPLICIT PREFERENCES
SEARCH BY DATE OF PLACEMENT	COMPLAINT FORMS AVAILABLE	EASY TO MAKE/CHANGE PROFILES
LINKS & INDEX & MAPPING		
LINKS TO OTHER PARTIES	USABILITY & WEB-INTERACTION	TECHNICAL RELIABILITY
DO LINKS WORK	APPROPRIATE/EASY URL	SHORT DOWNLOAD TIME
CLEAR INDEX	CLEAR INSTRUCTIONS	TABLET
CLEAR WEBSITE MAP	FAQ	SMART PHONE
EASY TO NAVIGATE	HELP AND SEARCH FUNCTIONS	MULTI BROWSER SUPPORT
		UPTIME

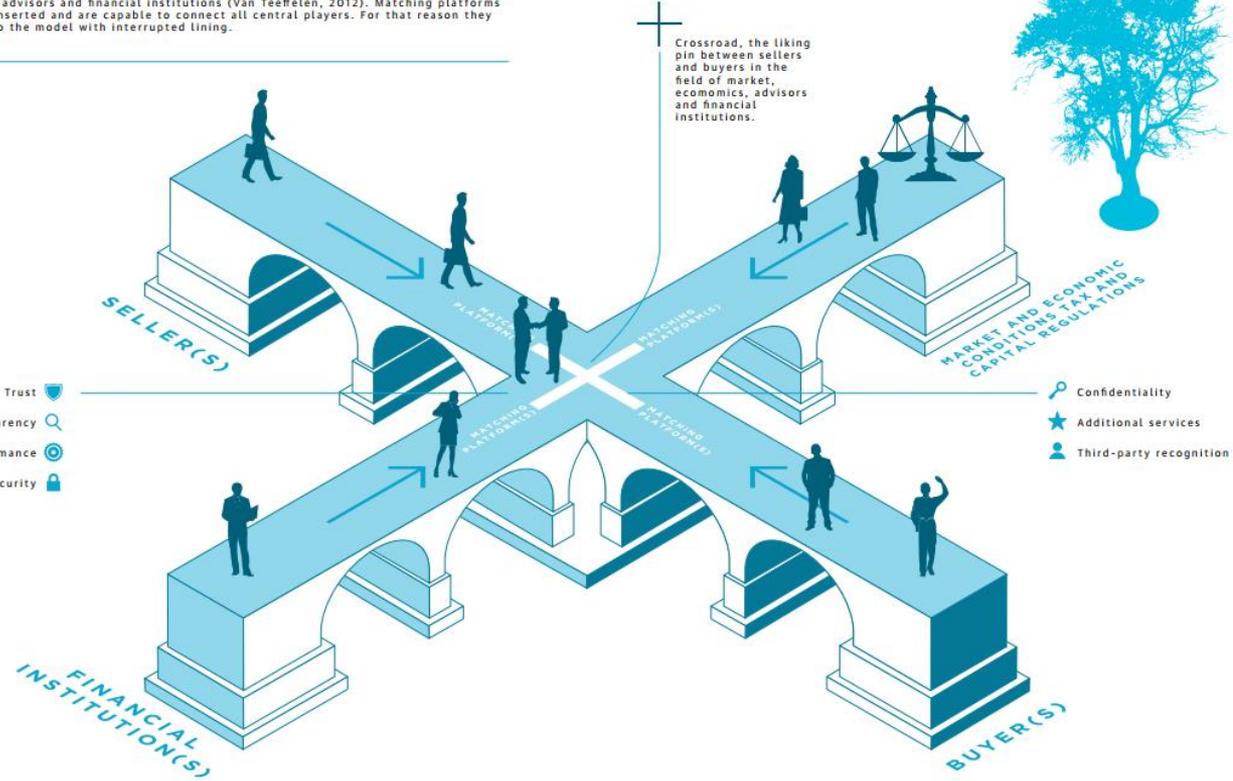
★★★
GREEN = GOOD QUALITY SCORES OF 60% OR HIGHER

★★
BLUE = LIMITED QUALITY SCORES BETWEEN 40%-60%
GRAY = NOT RATED

★
BLACK = INSUFFICIENT QUALITY SCORES BELOW 40%

PARTIES AND CIRCUMSTANCES IN BUSINESS TRANSFERS

The most important parties in business transfer are present: the selling party, the buying party, their advisors and financial institutions (Van Teeffelen, 2012). Matching platforms have been inserted and are capable to connect all central players. For that reason they are added to the model with interrupted lining.



Key Factors of Success for Matching Platforms

1. Transparency in services.
2. Confidentiality and Security.
3. Third party recognition.
4. Additional access to support services.
5. Up-to-date and checked profiles and information.
6. Self-regulation and cooperation among matching platforms.

1. Transparency in services

Standards	Additional Good practices	Policy implications
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clear information on the terms and conditions of all services. - Clear information on the matching methods used. - Easy to use, accessibility and multi-functional search engine services. - Ratings of customer satisfaction, best by independent customer- or business-to-business rating platforms. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Business ethics in providing facts and figures to prevent cheating on performance - Sharing of blacklist of users: sellers, buyers, advisors. - Public listings on success rate and the way this is measured by the platforms. - Implement an ethical committee to agree and monitor advisers who collaborate with the matching platform 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Raising awareness among platforms about importance of transparency and business ethics

2. Confidentiality and security

Standards	Additional Good practices	Policy implications
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Arrangements in place to detect fraudulent or misleading profiles. - Full confidentiality of buyers and sellers, unless they consent in direct interaction. - Regular safety controls online and off-line to minimize security risks in databases, internet access and all IT-applications. - Clear privacy and cookie policies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sharing of blacklist of users: sellers, buyers, advisors. - Implement an ethical committee to agree and monitor advisers who collaborate with the matching platform 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide for (inter)national innovation budgets

3. Third party recognition

Standards	Additional Good practices	Policy implications
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ratings of customer satisfaction, best by independent customer or business-to-business rating platforms. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Matching platforms generate trust and actively build on reputation by assessment by third independent party. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promote third party recognition by public certification - Subsidies to facilitate third party assessment of matching platforms - Launch an international standardized customer satisfaction survey

4. Additional access to support services

Standards	Additional Good practices	Policy implications
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The commitment to give access for more one-to-many or one-to-one (digital) services. These provisions aim to lower thresholds especially for micro firms. - The commitment to share on anonymized sellers and buyers profiles if this is legally permitted and if this is in the user's direct interest and by consent only. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implement agreement procedure or ethical committee to agree and monitor advisers who collaborate with the matching platform and provide additional support services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Give incentives and subsidies to help buyers and sellers to access to additional support services and private advisers services.

5. Up to date and checked profiles and information

Standards	Policy implications
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure up-to-date profiles and the possibility to search on the period of placement. - A clear statement what is checked on profiles, by whom and in what frequencies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide for (inter)national innovation budgets

6. Self-regulation and cooperation among matching platforms

Standards	Additional Good practices	Policy implications
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An agreement on shared values in a defined Code of Conduct. - A shared Code of Conduct is expected to increase trust of the users, but also to lower thresholds for cooperation among matching platforms. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop cooperation with others national or international matching platforms to exchange good practices and experience and manage risk (sharing blacklists for instance) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consider public and private matching platforms as complementary actors and promote cooperation between platforms - Organize specific conferences for matching platforms

...Epilogue

- **EU4BT Event** during the 2016 Transeo EU SME Transfer Summit, on 24th May 2016 in Cologne
- Presentation of the **final results & main recommendations**
- Presentation of the “**Code of conduct**” and signing ceremony :
 - in total **19** matching platforms in **9** European countries signed the Code of conduct.
 - also **4** other platforms, not present at the Transeo Summit, have shown strong intentions to undersign the Code of Conduct before the end of this project (end of June 2016).



How about the needed next steps?

- **Need to hear the voice and needs of entrepreneurs now!** Launch an **international standardized customer satisfaction survey** to measure the expectations of platforms's users (sellers of SMEs and acquirers)
- **Good recommendations but need for raising-awareness about them!**
 - Raising awareness among **matching platforms** about the importance of transparency and business ethics
 - Raising awareness among **Ministries of Economy and government agencies in charge of business transfer** in the Member States (implementation of standards / setting up of matching platforms)
 - Organizing specific (annual) **conferences for matching platforms** (implementation of the minimum quality standards, good practices, exchange experiences, ...)
- **Keep the good work going with matching platforms and help them get better!**
 - Work on the recognition and participation in the **Code of Conduct** : check the implementation of standards in the platforms that have signed the Code of conduct
 - Define the **governance** principles of a EU self-regulation
 - Provide for (inter)national **innovation budgets** to enable matching platforms to improve their services to entrepreneurs
 - Promote **third party recognition** by public certification & grants to facilitate third party assessment of matching platforms
- **Need to further study cooperation between platforms and cross-border transfers**
 - With the Single Market Strategy, the EU Commission is also encouraging more cross-border transfers of SMEs in Europe. The question of **cross-border transfers and inter-connection of platforms at EU level should be further discussed** with the EU4BT participating platforms.
 - Now we know that public and private matching platforms may be considered as complementary actors, we should **further research and discuss with them how they can work together to contribute to more cross-border transfers of SMEs in Europe.**