



Press Release

Business Transfer Matching platforms prevent the loss of hundreds of SMEs and thousands of jobs per day

This is the price paid by the EU economy, due to companies simply giving up on their activities without finding any buyer.

- According to the EU Commission's statistics, Europe is losing approximately 150,000 firms – which accounts for some 600,000 jobs – a year due exclusively to business transfers inefficiencies.
- The number of transfers to third parties is increasing. It has become increasingly important to facilitate the matching of potential buyers and sellers of businesses, thus contributing to the successful transfer of enterprises in Europe.
- Thanks to the EU4BT project, 35 Business Transfer Online Platforms from 12 countries have committed themselves to quality standards for more transfers of SMEs in good conditions in Europe.
- In Cologne on May 24th, 19 matching platforms from 9 countries signed a 'Code of Conduct' and commit to respecting minimum quality standards.

Brussels, June 15th 2016 – According to EU Commission's statistics, Europe is losing approximately 150,000 – thereby 600,000 jobs – a year due exclusively to inefficiencies in business transfers. The European Commission also estimated that business transfers affect up to 450.000 SMEs and 2 million jobs every year.

Every day in Europe, entrepreneurs/business owners want or need to transfer their company to a new owner. If they are not able to do it in optimal circumstances (for example thanks to good information and advice but also through an efficient platform that helps them find the most suitable buyer for their company), this will lead to a loss of wealth and employment, as well as all the social drama it can imply.

« Our core mission is to guarantee the EU economic growth, amongst other things by instilling the entrepreneurship mindset and reinforcing our economic fabric, essentially composed of SMEs. », says Jean-Pierre Di Bartolomeo, Transeo Chairman. “Then it is essential to grant them an access to adapted solutions that can help transfer the business to a new owner in right conditions”.

EU4BT, Improving Business Transfer Matching Platforms:

The EU4BT “Engaging Users for Business Transfer” project conducted the first European study to set minimum quality standards for all matching platforms active in Europe. To do so, this unique project involved 35 platforms from 12 countries, both from the public and private sector. These platforms have been screened, interviewed



and invited to discuss findings during several expert group meetings. In this way, it has been possible for the first time to **define minimum quality standards for an optimal and sustainable working of SME business transfer matching platforms in Europe** (to access the complete study, please [click here](#)).

Commitment to Quality Standards:

In order to provide improved services, to create trust among their users (sellers/buyers of SMEs), it appears crucial for matching platforms to **commit themselves to minimum quality standards**. During the EU4BT project, quality standards have surfaced from the academic study, the results of the survey and meetings with platform owners/managers.

- **Up to date & checked profiles**
- **Transparency in services** (terms & conditions, matching methods used, efficient search engines, ratings of customer satisfaction, ...)
- **Confidentiality** of sellers and buyers, regular **security** controls, clear privacy & cookie policies, ...
- Commitment to give **access to additional support services**
- **Self-regulation**: matching platforms know they can improve their services and are willing to do so through an agreement on shared values in a defined Code of Conduct.

*“Conclusions from the EU4BT project are promising, with this clear sign of matching platforms willing to improve quality in order to meet users’ needs. This is crucial for the European economy as they are the owners of today’s and tomorrow’s SMEs. More than expected matching platforms contribute to the exposure of SMEs in cross border transactions. Therefore, it is important that sellers and buyers have access to high-quality services.”, concludes **Professor Van Teeffelen**, HU Business School Utrecht.*

*“The number of transfers to third parties is increasing in Europe and it is becoming more and more important to facilitate the matching of potential buyers and sellers of businesses, thus contributing to the successful transfer of enterprises in Europe. EU4BT has allowed to improve the performance of participating platforms for more European transfers of SMEs in good conditions.”, adds **Jean-Pierre Di Bartolomeo**, Transeo Chairman. “The indirect but crucial objective of the project is to start defining the needed actions to create connections between platforms from different European countries and in doing so, increase the profiles’ search scope and offer sellers as well as buyers the possibility to transfer or buy easily an SME in other European countries.”*

Main learnings :

The unique methodology developed for the EU4BT project combines an academic and market-based study, focused on both private and public matching platforms. The **main learnings** from the study about matching platforms are hereunder :

- Matching platforms increase exposure of sellers and buyers, including international exposure.
- So far, matching platforms are unable to overcome most information asymmetries between buyers and sellers in business transfers. They should



- make sure to implement the standards to guarantee, among others, up-to-date and validated profiles.
- Regarding additional services provided by platforms to sellers and buyers of companies, most platforms limit their services to “passive” matching with a few core services, abstaining from more sophisticated support. Though platform owners/managers recognize the importance of more support services, especially for micro firms, they fear the loss of advisors as key customers.
 - Most business models gear limited revenue streams for matching platforms, both for private and public platforms alike. Most platforms lack resources to innovate and grow new digital services.
 - Private and public platforms have more similarities than differences and platform owners/managers see room for both in the market.

Achievements & Next Steps:

During the EU4BT final event in Cologne on May 24th 2016, EU4BT has presented the main results of the study to the EU Commission and to the project’s expert matching platforms. This led to the signature of the ‘Code of Conduct’ by 19 matching platforms from 9 countries, which commit to respecting the minimum quality standards presented above. The EU4BT team and the signatory matching platforms will meet within 6 months to organize its implementation and define the next steps for an effective self-regulation of business transfer matching platforms in Europe.

Transeo and the EU4BT partners underlined the need for the EU Commission to help matching platforms speed up progress and implement standards. It would also be interesting to organize such a EU study about matching platforms on a regular basis, coupled with EU conferences on the topic where matching platforms from all over Europe could exchange good practices. Besides, consulting these platforms users with a satisfaction survey would prove very useful to further improve the services offered by platforms and make sure they meet their users’ needs.

About Transeo (www.transeo-association.eu):

Transeo is the European Association for SME Transfer. Transeo gathers SME transfer (sale/acquisition) experts from the private, public and academic sectors. Our objective is to improve SME transfers by exchanging good practices and stimulating collaboration between experts from different sectors and different regions and countries. Transeo also works closely with the EU Commission. Transeo increases awareness of the business transfer issue at regional, national and European level. Transeo works on solutions and projects to improve business transfer at European scale.

About EU4BT (www.EU4BT.eu):

The EU4BT project has been conducted for 18 months by an international consortium lead by Transeo Association. Its members are: **SOWACCESS** (Belgium), a subsidiary of the SOWALFIN Group, is the Walloon company for SME transfer and takeover; **HU Business School Utrecht** (the Netherlands), considered one of the leading parties in business transfer research in Europe; and **Centre de Reempresa de Catalunya** (Spain),





business transfer marketplace working in Catalonia, Spain and co-financed by the ERDF fund.

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