

# National Reform Programme **2019**

April 2019

# Contents

<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2. Macroeconomic scenario</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>3. Country-specific recommendations</b>	<b>4</b>
3.1. Budget and public debt (Recommendation 1)	4
3.2. Labour market and education (Recommendation 2)	6
3.2.1. Address labour market shortage and activate target groups	6
3.2.2. Education and training: pursue reforms and encourage STEM	8
3.3. Market performance and mobility (Recommendation 3)	10
3.3.1. Stimulating entrepreneurship	10
3.3.2. Retail, construction and professional services	12
3.3.3. Tackle the growing mobility challenges	13
<b>4. Strategic investments and use of structural funds</b>	<b>15</b>
4.1. Strategic investments	15
4.1.1. Mobility	16
4.1.2. Energy	17
4.1.3. Digitisation and cybersecurity	18
4.1.4. Education infrastructure and human capital	19
4.2. Structural funds and investment funds	20
<b>5. Europe 2020 objectives</b>	<b>22</b>
5.1. Employment	22
5.1.1. Create jobs and increase the employment rate	22
5.2. R&D and innovation	24
5.2.1. Digitisation	25
5.2.2. Research infrastructures and partnerships	25
5.3. Education and training	27
5.3.1. Higher education	27
5.3.2. Early school leaving	28
5.4. Energy and climate	29
5.5. Social inclusion	32
5.5.1. Ensuring the social protection of the population	32
5.5.2. Reducing child poverty	34
5.5.3. Active inclusion of people far from the labour market	34
5.5.4. Combating inadequate housing and homelessness	35
5.5.5. Reception and integration of people from a migrant background	35
<b>6. Other reforms</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>7. Involvement of stakeholders</b>	<b>40</b>
7.1. At political level	40
7.2. At the level of social dialogue	40
7.3. The involvement of the NHRPH/CNSPH and the CFDD/FRDO	41
<b>Annex 1: Reform programme of the Walloon Region</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>Annex 2: Reform programme of the Brussels Capital Region</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>Annex 3: Reform programme of the Flemish Region and the Flemish Community</b>	<b>117</b>
<b>Annex 4: Reform programme of German speaking Community</b>	<b>171</b>
<b>Annex 5: Reform programme of the French Community</b>	<b>189</b>
<b>Annex 6: Reporting table on the assessment of the policy response to CSRs: qualitative assessment</b>	<b>201</b>
<b>Annex 7: Reporting table on national Europe 2020 targets and other key commitments</b>	<b>215</b>
<b>Annex 8: List of cooperation agreements</b>	<b>225</b>

<b>Annex 9: Opinion of the Central Economic Council and the National Labour Council .....</b>	<b>231</b>
<b>Annex 10: Opinion of the National High Council for the Disabled .....</b>	<b>241</b>
<b>Annex 11: Opinion of the Federal Council for Sustainable Development.....</b>	<b>245</b>



# 1. Introduction

In this National Reform Programme (NRP), the various governments report on the structural reforms that have taken place since the country-specific recommendations of 2018 and indicate which measures may be expected in the near future. The measures are complementary to the budgetary measures developed in the Stability Programme. According to the governments, the reforms meet the findings contained in the Country Report, the country-specific recommendations for 2018, the priorities of the Annual Growth Survey, the path towards achieving the Europe 2020 goals, and contribute to the implementation of the European Pillar for Social Rights. The 2018-2019 vanguards are employment, investments and mobility.

On 24 July 2018, the federal government presented the Jobs deal, a package of 28 measures for *employment*. It focuses on both the supply and demand side of the labour market, but there are also social and fiscal measures. Addressing the skills shortage in certain professions through training and retraining, and the activation and reactivation of the unemployed, young people and older people in particular, are essential elements thereof. Most of the measures have already been taken. The Regions are closely involved in the implementation of the package.

The labour market - and more generally long-term economic growth - is also served by *strategic investments*. In interaction with the Regions, progress has been made on the National Pact for Strategic Investments (NPSI) of 2018. On 11 September 2018, the Strategic Committee set up in 2017 published a report with 82 recommendations, focusing on six cross-cutting topics as well as transversal themes. By 2030, the private and public sectors together will have mobilised around 150 billion euros for the investment needs of both sectors. An important area is mobility, with a lot of attention going to railways, roads and waterways, but also to bicycle routes and charging points for electrical vehicles and LNG. Another important area is energy, where work is being done on renewable electricity, geothermal energy, research into the processing of nuclear waste, and the energy efficiency of (public) buildings. In addition, a great deal of attention is being paid to investments in digitisation and the infrastructure for education. With the EFSI guarantee, the EIB contributes to the financing of 4 GW capacity offshore wind farms, but also to other projects such as the Liège tram.

In addition to infrastructure investments, the *mobility issue* is also addressed by investments in clean technology and the adjustment of modal choice. The federal government launched the mobility budget and the 'cash for cars' scheme as alternatives to the use of company cars. The Regions are working on the modal shift, co-modality, making buses more sustainable, phasing out fossil fuels, a kilometre-based charge for passenger cars and better bundling of freight.

In the process of structural reforms, there is an obvious engagement of the Regions, but also of the Communities and the social partners. The reform plans of the Communities and Regions are attached in full to this report as Annexes 1 to 5. They provide a detailed explanation of their measures for the implementation of the country-specific recommendations and investment challenges. Those programmes also identify regional progress in the Europe 2020 targets and the measures that support the achievement of those goals. The opinion of the social partners is also attached to this report.

In the framework of the European Semester, an intensive dialogue is taking place – both in the fact-finding mission and in bilateral meetings – between the departments of the European Commission and the respective levels of government in Belgium. Each of those levels (Federal, Communities, Regions) brings up its measures in the framework of the European Semester.

## 2. Macroeconomic scenario

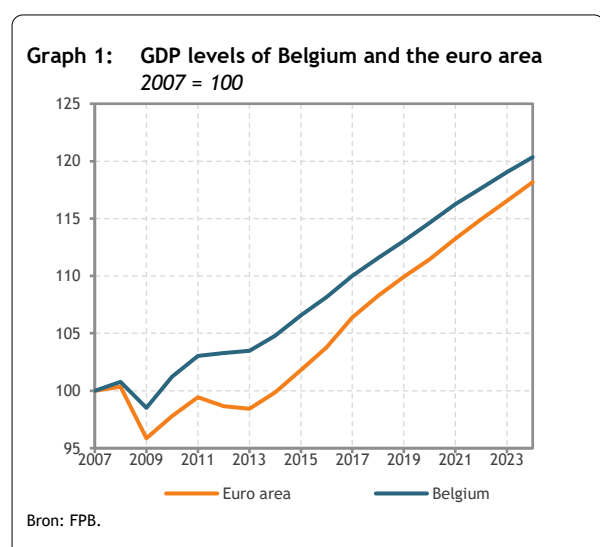
This outlook describes the main assumptions and results of the provisional version of the Federal Planning Bureau's (FPB) Economic Outlook 2019-2024 for the new stability programme and the NRP. The projection is based on an unchanged policy. The figures were approved on 7 February by the board of directors of the Institute for National Accounts (INA). The outlook is in line with the 2019 Economic Budget published by the FPB on 7 February.

**Table 1: Key figures of the economic medium-term projections**  
*Evolution in %, except when mentioned otherwise*

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
GDP in volume	1.4	1.3	1.4	1.4	1.2	1.2	1.1
Consumer price index	1.9	1.6	1.4	1.6	1.8	1.8	1.9
Domestic employment (change in '000)	58.1	44.3	48.7	37.6	28.2	24.2	21.7
Domestic employment (change in %)	1.2	0.9	1.0	0.8	0.6	0.5	0.4
Employment rate (persons aged 20-64 years)	69.2	69.7	70.3	70.7	71.1	71.5	71.9
Unemployment rate (FPB definition)	9.6	9.1	8.6	8.2	7.9	7.5	7.1
Unemployment rate (Eurostat definition)	5.9	5.5	5.3	5.3	5.5	5.1	5.0
Current account balance (National Accounts - % of GDP)	-0.0	-0.0	-0.3	-0.6	-0.6	-0.9	-1.0

Source: FPB.

The GDP growth assumptions for Belgium's trading partners in 2019 and 2020 are largely based on the European Commission's autumn forecast but have been updated on the basis of consensus forecasts. The euro area reached its cyclical peak in 2017, with GDP growth of 2.5%. Growth decelerated to 1.8%



in 2018 and is expected to fall further to 1.5% and 1.4% respectively in 2019 and 2020. Belgian GDP growth fell from 1.7% in 2017 to 1.4% in 2018. During 2019-2021, it is expected to be similar to that of the euro area (1.4% on average), with export growth weakening and domestic demand gaining strength. During the period 2021-2024, the Belgian economy is expected to grow by an average of 1.2%. Compared to the euro area, GDP growth was stronger in Belgium, especially immediately after the economic-financial crisis, as shown in Graph 1. The output gap – based on the EU reference methodology – was closed in 2017 and should remain close to zero in 2019-2024.

A total of 205,000 jobs would be created over the period 2019-2024, or an average of 34,000 per year.

The number of employees in the private sector would increase by 144,000 units. In the period 2014-2018, according to a study by KU Leuven (Prof. J. Konings, 2019), more than half (55%) of the 73,000 extra jobs created in the private sector, came about as a result of three government measures to restore competitiveness: the index jump, the tax shift and the new 2017 wage law. By 2024, the number of self-employed would increase by 50,000, and employment in the public sector by 10,000. Employment growth declines during the second half of the projection period due to the slowdown in economic activity and, to a limited extent, also to the increase in productivity gains. The employment rate (20-64 years) will gradually increase to 70.3% in 2020 and 71.9% in 2024. The total number of unemployed

(including the unemployed on benefits who are not jobseekers) would decrease by 126,000 units over the period 2019-2024, considering the further increase in the labour force.

Belgian inflation, measured by the national consumer price index, was 2.1% in 2017 and 2018, but is expected to slow down to 1.6% and 1.4% in 2019 and 2020 respectively, helped by a significantly lower price for a barrel of Brent oil. For the period from 2021 onwards, it is assumed that the Brent price will again evolve in an upward trend. At the same time, underlying inflation should gradually pick up as a result of the acceleration in labour cost growth, bringing headline inflation back to 1.8 % on average in the period 2021-2024.

## 3. Country-specific recommendations

### 3.1. Budget and public debt (Recommendation 1)

*COUNCIL RECOMMENDS that Belgium takes action in 2018 and 2019 to ensure that the nominal growth rate of net primary government expenditure does not exceed 1,8 % in 2019, corresponding to an annual structural adjustment of 0,6 % of GDP. Use windfall gains to accelerate the reduction of the general government debt ratio. Pursue the envisaged pension reforms and contain the projected increase in long-term care expenditure. Pursue the full implementation of the 2013 Cooperation Agreement to coordinate fiscal policies of all government levels. Improve the efficiency and composition of public spending at all levels of government to create room for public investment, in particular by carrying out spending reviews.*

Budgetary policy is dealt with in detail in the Stability Programme 2019-2022. This section describes the main measures relating to pension and fiscal reforms, as well as initiatives on expenditure and long-term care.

The Jobs deal concluded by the *federal government* in July 2018 contains various tax incentives to promote employment. These measures have been adopted. Accordingly, training in professions facing a labour shortage is encouraged. The premiums granted by the Regions to jobseekers to take up such training will be exempted from taxes on condition that they pass this training successfully. The number of overtime hours treated favourably for tax purposes will be temporarily increased from 130 to 180. The measure will then be evaluated to determine whether it should become permanent. Provisions are also adopted in favour of starter jobs to encourage the recruitment of young people between the ages of 18 and 21. Employers thus benefit from a reduction in the labour cost (between 6% and 18% depending on the age of the employee) and the young employee continues to receive the same net remuneration.

The mobility budget was concretised on 1 March 2019. It offers a fiscal alternative to an employee with a company car in favour of alternative transport modes. This mobility budget complements the 'cash for car' system with extensive mobility options (see section 5.4 for more details).

The final phase of the tax shift has been fully implemented. To strengthen the competitiveness of enterprises, employers benefit from a new reduction in employers' social security contributions for low wage earners. New measures are also designed to increase the purchasing power of citizens. The 40% income tax bracket is expanded, resulting in a lower tax rate on a larger part of the income. The basic amount of the tax-free allowance is harmonised and also increased for all workers. With regard specifically to low-wage workers, the tax work bonus (reduction of withholding tax on wages) is increased.

Several measures of the corporate tax reform, including the limitation of interest deduction in the context of the transposition of the Anti Tax Avoidance Directive (ATAD), will enter into force in 2019.

The federal government has continued its pension reform policy. The mixed pension was introduced in the public sector in 2018. Only services provided as civil servants statutorily appointed are now taken into account for a state pension. Contractual services give the right to a pension according to the employee scheme. At the same time, administrations and public enterprises are encouraged to develop a supplementary pension scheme for their contractual staff. The federal government has already decided to introduce a supplementary pension for its contractual staff.

With the same objective of developing such a second pillar, measures were adopted in 2018 to enable self-employed people who are active as natural persons, to build up a supplementary pension like self-



employed company managers. Moreover, an employee, for whom his employer or sector does not organise a supplementary pension or if the level is insufficient, can now ask his employer to withhold part of his salary in order to build up a supplementary pension.

From 2019, two measures will strengthen the link between actual work and the amount of the pension. On the one hand, the principle of career unity has been abolished. All working days actually worked before retirement are now taken into account in the pension calculation. On the other hand, for the pension calculation, the unemployment days in the 2nd period of unemployment (i.e. after one year of unemployment) and the days of unemployment with company top-up are based on the pension minimum wage and no longer on the last salary (reform of the assimilated periods). Exceptions are provided for.

Further reforms are currently being prepared. From April 2020, the half-time pension system should be introduced in the various pension systems (employee, civil servant and self-employed). Provided the conditions for early retirement are met, it should thus be possible to combine retirement (50%) with the continuation of a professional activity (50%), which will allow the worker to build up additional pension rights. The aim of this reform is to extend working life and therefore to benefit both the worker and the sustainable financing of pension systems.

It is planned to phase out certain specific pension schemes (namely those for the military, SNCB/NMBS mobile staff and preferential reference career fraction for certain categories of civil servants) in the context of the recognition of arduous occupations with access to early retirement. The necessary preparatory work and consultations have been completed. It is up to the next government to implement this reform.

The introduction of a points system is also planned for the longer term. Much preparatory work has already been done to implement this system. For example, the Federal Planning Bureau (FPB) has already modelled the points system and a final report has been drawn up of the discussions with the social partners within the National Pension Committee.

With the technical support of the Support Programme for Structural Reforms (SPSR), the *Flemish Region* intends to structurally integrate spending reviews into the budget process. A pilot project for the service voucher sector is being carried out as a first step to develop expertise. The aim is to complete this project in the spring of 2019. The *federal government* has also asked the support of the SPSR for spending reviews and to prepare a report on their usefulness and benefits, as well as the best way to use them at federal level (federal government and social security). The final objective is to define a strategic plan enabling the government to decide whether or not to integrate them into the budgetary process. The High Council of Finance – Public Sector Borrowing Requirements Section – will also be able to count on the support of the SPSR to examine whether the European expenditure rule can be transposed to the national level, taking into account the federal structure of the country and best practices in other member states. The project will contribute to strengthening the budgetary framework in Belgium.

These revisions will help to improve the composition and efficiency of public spending by identifying inefficiencies and thus freeing up resources for most productive expenditures, such as investments (see chapter 4).

As a result of the 6th State reform, a significant part of the organisation of long-term care was transferred to the *Federated Entities* in order to better match supply to local needs. This transfer was completed in January 2019. During the transitional period, the Brussels-Capital Region decided to rely on the existing situation and to maintain the system in place. The Walloon Region has introduced its social protection system, which includes long-term care. In the Flemish Region, long-term care and mobility

aids were integrated into the Flemish Social Protection (Vlaamse Sociale Bescherming – VSB). The objective is to adapt the financing models towards a financing method that would be based on an internationally validated system, namely the BelRAI system.

The entities have developed various initiatives to ensure strict follow-up and monitoring of expenditure. This concerns in particular the creation of new agencies, the preparation of multi-annual budgets, the preparation of health promotion plans, or the launching of studies. The federal growth norm for health care expenditure is also applied to the component ‘long-term care’. In addition, the BelRAI system is the subject of a cooperation project between the three Regions and the federal government with the aim of better matching supply to needs and increasing the efficiency of expenditure.

## **3.2. Labour market and education (Recommendation 2)**

*THE COUNCIL RECOMMENDS that Belgium takes action in 2018 and 2019 to remove disincentives to work and strengthen the effectiveness of active labour market policies, in particular for the low-skilled, people with a migrant background and older workers. Pursue the education and training reforms, including by fostering equity and increasing the proportion of graduates in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.*

### **3.2.1. Address labour market shortage and activate target groups**

The Belgian labour market is characterised by a high vacancy rate (3.5% in 2018) and low participation in the labour market. The inactivity rate of 20-64-year olds is one of the highest in the EU with 26.04% in 2018 and the share of inactive people due to illness or disability is constantly increasing. In recent years, various efforts have been made to (re)activate disabled workers on the labour market, such as the renewed reintegration procedure for long-term sick people and the extra attention given to psychosocial problems, such as burn-outs. It remains a challenge to (re)deploy these people as efficiently as possible.

On 24 July 2018, the *federal government* presented the Jobs deal, a package of 28 measures to fill vacancies in professions facing a labour shortage and to activate as many people as possible on the labour market. Training for professions facing a labour shortage is encouraged, while target groups experiencing difficulties in the labour market are more strongly supported. Those who are unemployed or made redundant will be able to move more easily to a new job. Those who are inactive receive additional incentives to participate in the labour market.

During the preparations, the *federal government* and the *Regional Authorities* decided to work together to find solutions for the large number of vacancies. All governments have expressed their priorities and identified the following lines of action: creating new jobs and pursuing social dialogue to bring about socio-economic recovery. Some measures were therefore implemented in consultation with the Regions.

In the autumn, the federal Council of Ministers approved the extension of the time credit for training courses for professions facing a labour shortage. The time credit for continuing training is extended by 12 months, from 36 to 48 months for workers undergoing training in a profession facing a labour market shortage. The extension of the time credit should make it more attractive to retrain for a profession facing a labour market shortage.

A measure aimed at encouraging the recruitment of people from specific target groups experiencing difficulties in the labour market was also adopted. It allows employers to take positive action with regard to groups at risk such as young people, the low-skilled, older workers and people with a migrant background.

An interprofessional agreement was concluded with the social partners on, among other things, wage setting and the welfare budget. As regards the former, the government approved a Royal Decree limiting wage developments in the sectors to 1.1% in real terms over the period 2019-2020. The social partners themselves agreed to increase the minimum wage by 1.1% from 1 July 2019 and to negotiate a more substantial increase. The social partners have submitted an opinion on the implementation of a welfare budget of 283 million euros in 2019, which will increase to 724 million euros, which the government will implement in full. Finally, the social partners also concluded autonomous agreements on commuting cost, the increase in the number of voluntary overtime hours from 100 to 120, the extension of a number of existing agreements such as innovation bonuses and contributions for groups at risk, and measures concerning career-ends.

A number of measures could no longer be adopted by the government due to its fall. Two legislative proposals concerning social and fiscal provisions were approved by Parliament. The main measure among the fiscal provisions of the Jobs deal as to active labour market policy is the exemption from income tax of certain regional training premiums. In addition, a solution was also found for the so-called fiscal pension trap, as a result of which the acquisition of an income from work after retirement is no longer fiscally punished.

The measures within the social part of the Jobs deal are: outplacement support for workers who lose their jobs for medical reasons; rapid registration with the regional employment service requiring dismissed workers, who are not required to work out their notice period, to register as jobseekers within one month of the last work performance; more flexible conditions for the training clause in employment contracts to encourage employers to invest in training for their workers; entry jobs for young people by reducing the gross wage cost for young people under 21 years of age; and sickness and disability benefits for workers aged 65 years or over so that they are not obliged to retire.

To address the shortage of human capital in the labour market, *Wallonia* has introduced three measures from July 2018 to support employers in training their employees and to financially encourage unemployed jobseekers to take up training for professions facing a labour shortage. *View.brussels*, the *Brussels* observatory for employment and training, has identified training needs in 2018 in collaboration with the French speaking and Dutch speaking public employment and training services. A first report published in January 2019 deals with the access of graduates from vocational training courses to critical jobs. *View.brussels* has also put its interactive statistical portal (*ViewStat*) online, which allows better access to the data of the public employment service with respect to employment and job vacancies in the Brussels-Capital Region. In *Flanders*, the public de employment service (*Vlaamse Dienst voor Arbeidsbemiddeling en Beroepsopleiding – VDAB*) launched a new service model, which focuses more on support during crucial career moments, digital services and cooperation with partners. This makes the VDAB service more accessible to jobseekers and companies. In the *German-speaking Community*, an online platform will be launched for employers and employees, where companies can introduce themselves and jobseekers can register, vacancies can be consulted, and documents can be requested.

All Communities and Regions have implemented their target group policy since 1 January 2019. The *German-speaking Community* has implemented its new policy on target groups, with particular attention to young people, the elderly, the long-term unemployed and some disadvantaged groups. In *Flanders*, some measures of the target group policy that was reformed in July 2016 with a focus on young people with low and medium levels of education, the elderly and people with disabilities were reinforced with effect from January 2019. Since 1 January 2019, low-skilled young people are fully exempt from employers' social security contributions in the first two years after their recruitment. Since 1 January 2019, the increased incentive for the recruitment of job-seekers aged 55 and over has also been converted into a total exemption from employers' contributions. For long-term jobseekers and welfare recipients, the aim is to strengthen career competences through a new system of temporary work experience. In *Wal-*

*lonia*, a reform of the employment programme (Aide à la promotion de l'emploi – APE) has been implemented with an emphasis on simplification, transparency and efficiency, and will enter into force from 1 January 2021, with a transitional phase in 2020. Wallonia has also submitted an application to the SRSP in order to develop the recognition of formal and non-formal training for those with the lowest level of education and who are far removed from the labour market. In the *Brussels-Capital Region*, the reform of the subsidised contractual staff scheme (Agents contractuels subventionnés – ACS / Gesubsidieerde contractuelen – GESCO) has continued. The main change is the transformation of the concerned jobs of local authorities and regional public interest bodies (instellingen van openbaar nut – ION / organisations d'intérêt public – OIP) into contractual relations pursuant to which the 3,000 jobs concerned will be managed directly by the public sector employers. A budgetary transfer on various terms and conditions is provided for, including in terms of maintaining employment. Based on the lessons and results from the Youth Guarantee, a 'solution for all' guarantee has gradually come into force as of March 2019. The systematic guidance towards employment through direct access, training or an internship, is extended to job seekers older than 30 years who register for the first time.

In the fight against discrimination, initiatives were taken in *Wallonia* to renew legislation to combat certain forms of discrimination and an action plan was introduced in the public sector to promote diversity. In the *Brussels-Capital Region*, a cooperation agreement was signed in May 2018 with the organisations for the promotion of equal opportunities within the framework of the implementation of the ordinance of 16 November 2017 with a view to combating discrimination. This cooperation agreement empowers the inspectors of the regional employment inspectorate to carry out discrimination tests by means of situation tests (sending similar CVs except for a plausibly discriminatory criterion) and/or mystery calls. Moreover, since May 2018, companies with more than 100 employees have had to adopt a diversity plan in order to be entitled to the aid provided by the reform of economic expansion. In order to respond to the growing number of job-seekers who do not master French or Dutch, the Brussels public employment service, Actiris, has been offering social interpreting services since May 2018 for initial contacts and conversations. In *Flanders*, the action plan against work-related discrimination (Actieplan tegen arbeidsgerelateerde discriminatie) is further rolled out, including the organisation of mystery calls in the service voucher sector and the temporary employment agency sector.

### **3.2.2. Education and training: pursue reforms and encourage STEM**

In 2018, the Communities introduced, implemented or completed several reforms and action plans. The *French Community* is undertaking a fundamental reform of its education structure and *Flanders* has already completed the legislative work on reforms at every level of education. In addition, the Communities are developing more flexible pathways to respond to changes in the labour market.

In order to optimise the effectiveness and equality of the school system, the new school governance decree was introduced in the *French Community* (décret sur le pilotage des écoles), whereby schools will have to commit themselves to achieving specific objectives that contribute to the objectives of the system, including those of equity. These specific objectives will be regularly evaluated. If objectives are not met, a follow-up procedure will be started. The new governance of schools will make it possible to intervene more precisely and address the root causes of inequality in the education system, such as the exclusion of certain disadvantaged groups and differences in school performance.

Additional efforts are being made for persons who do not have sufficient knowledge of the official national languages. In the French Community, the system of reception, education and support for people who do not speak the language has been reformed in such a way that it is possible to intervene more strongly from an early age. In *Flanders*, adult education centres will receive more resources if they have more students with Dutch as a second language. The *Brussels-Capital Region* has continued its objective of providing linguistic training to the inhabitants of Brussels. During this year, 6,556 job-seekers received language training under the language voucher scheme (Chèques langues / Talencheques),

which allows them to follow courses free of charge in French, Dutch and English. 8,784 new users were also counted on Brulingua, the online language training platform, which has more than 40,000 registered job-seekers and which since October 2018 has been accessible to all Brussels residents aged 18 and over (and no longer only to job-seekers).

*Flanders* promotes equal opportunities horizontally through reforms implemented by decree, in the following areas: pupil guidance, the modernisation of secondary education, the new attainment targets, the new dual learning, the financing system of adult education, part-time art education, graduate courses and the adjustment of the new framework mechanism to support pupils with a mental, visual, motor or auditory disability as fellow pupils with a speech and language development disorder in ordinary education. In the *French Community*, the improvement of the quality of pre-school education is continued by strengthening the framework, the free-of-charge aspect and its use. Seven objectives for improving the education system were set, such as reducing by half the number of students who repeat their year or drop out.

Action plans and projects were launched to increase the number of STEM graduates and improve gender balance. In the *French Community*, various initiatives have been translated into policy measures, whether or not in cooperation with the Walloon and Brussels-Capital Regions. The common curriculum will focus more on STEM and digital skills during the school career from the age of 3 to 15. The strengthening of digital competences is at the heart of the digital education strategy (Stratégie numérique pour l'éducation) adopted in October 2018. It aims to make up the digital education deficit by strengthening pupils' digital competences and the initial and continuing training of teachers, by defining a coherent approach to digital equipment in schools, and by developing digital administration at system and school level. The help of the SRSP was requested to support this reform. The French Community also works in close collaboration with Wallonia and the Brussels-Capital Region, where the Fiber to the School project aims to connect all schools to the broadband Internet, to equip schools, to develop pedagogical projects and digital practices. A Committee on women and science (Femmes en science) will be set up to encourage equal participation of men and women in academic research and training activities and to exchange good practices. Other initiatives were launched to combat stereotyping and promote STEM and digital skills.

*Flanders* is continuing to implement the STEM action plan 2012-2020 and is already working on the preparation of a new action plan 2020-2030. The STEM portal was opened that collects all information about STEM in Flanders. Following the 2nd Flemish climate summit, 92 schools received a budget for the long-term project linking STEM to energy and climate. Investment was made in STEM learning networks in primary and secondary schools to ensure a sustainable STEM policy, good practices were disseminated, and an in-depth research paper on technical and vocational education, notably on STEM, was published. Several initiatives in cooperation with regional technology centres and vocational training institutes will be implemented in 2019.

In the *German-speaking Community*, several measures were taken including promoting science in schools through additional subsidies, renewed cooperation with universities and vocational training centres. The project Diversity makes it possible to combat gender stereotypes in jobs.

Throughout the country, dual learning is increasingly becoming a fully-fledged form of education, equivalent to all other forms of education. By combining learning at school and learning at work, this learning path increases the motivation of many young people and responds better to the needs of the labour market. With the decree on dual learning, the *Flemish government* introduced a regulatory framework that will roll out dual learning in ordinary secondary education from 1 September 2019 (decreet inzake duaal leren). On 1 September, 87 dual training courses will be established in cooperation with

the sectoral partnerships and the Flemish partnership. Since the end of 2018, dual learning is also possible within special secondary education. Currently, the possibilities of dual learning within higher and adult education are also being investigated.

Dual learning is a successful concept in the *German-speaking Community*, with 97 % of pupils finding apprenticeships between 2006 and 2016. The age limit of 29 years to start an apprenticeship is lifted for people with a replacement income (e.g. unemployment benefit, integration income, etc.). The criteria for taking up an apprenticeship with exemption from active availability were relaxed. *Wallonia* approved a project for the renovation and creation of IFAPME training centres (Institut wallon de formation en alternance et des indépendants et petites et moyennes entreprises, see also section 4.1.4) to support the development of key sectors in the field of dual learning. In August 2018, an agreement was signed with more than 21 sector federations and funds. In close cooperation with the French Community, the Region is continuing to develop the 3 'Cités des métiers', which provide free information and advice on working life for all. In the *Brussels-Capital Region*, the overall policy on the development of work-linked learning includes, among other things, the rationalisation of aid to companies working on this formula by means of a one-off incentive of 1,750 euros per tutor in companies since July 2018; the simplification of exemptions for job-seekers in dual training courses or the creation of a unit of consultants within Actiris to look for dual training places in companies. In *Flanders*, the training incentives were reformed into 3 coordinated measures: the Flemish training leave (Vlaams opleidingsverlof – compensation for the employer for the days the employee is absent to attend a training or take an examinations), the Flemish training credit (Vlaams opleidingskrediet – premium for those who temporarily work part-time or stop working to pursue training) and the Flemish training cheques (Vlaamse opleidingscheques – compensation for the cost of training for employees).

### **3.3. Market performance and mobility (Recommendation 3)**

*THE COUNCIL RECOMMENDS that Belgium takes action in 2018 and 2019 to reduce the regulatory and administrative burden to incentivise entrepreneurship and increase competition in services, particularly retail, construction and professional services. Tackle the growing mobility challenges, in particular through investment in new or existing transport infrastructure and reinforcing incentives to use collective and low-emission transport.*

#### **3.3.1. Stimulating entrepreneurship**

Administrative procedures can be an obstacle to setting up a business. For improved guidance for SMEs, an agreement has been concluded with two institutes of accountants and tax experts (Beroepsinstituut van Erkende Boekhouders en Fiscalisten – BIBF / Institut professionnel des comptables et fiscalistes agréés – IPCF; Institut des experts-comptables et des conseils fiscaux – IEC / Instituut van de Accountants en de Belastingconsulenten – IAB). By calling upon these professionals, it is possible for candidate entrepreneurs to be exempted from multiple administrative formalities. They will also support access to various regional measures.

In *Wallonia*, a one-stop shop was opened at SOWALFIN in December 2018. It should serve as a first point of contact for start-ups and existing businesses. Interested entrepreneurs have access to simplified online information, but also to personalised advice. The establishment of this one-stop shop will facilitate the access by SMEs to public support and provide them with an appropriate response to their needs (be it guidance, financial assistance, financing and investment solutions).

In *Flanders*, the requirement to hold a basic business management knowledge certificate (Basiskennis Bedrijfsbeheer) to carry out self-employed activities was abolished on 1 September 2018. An action plan was adopted which focusses more on the constant development of skills. In addition, access to the agency for innovation and enterprise (Agentschap Innoveren en Ondernemen – VLAIO) was greatly

simplified and made more business-friendly. Since the beginning of 2018, an entrepreneur can submit his/her business case to the business advisors of non-profit association Team Bedrijfstrajecten and ask for some feedback on his/her ideas and discuss his/her plans. The entrepreneur can then count on further tailor-made advice. In the field of digitisation, VLAIO, in collaboration with the programme 'Vlaanderen radicaal digitaal' (Flanders radically digital), set up the digital counter for entrepreneurs. This e-window was launched in a first version in September 2018. This version allows entrepreneurs to consult the status overview of their current files for some Flemish government measures. Work is currently continuing on this, with additional measures and new functionalities being added. Also, the instruments aimed at supporting companies in innovating, investing, training or buying advice were also further simplified and digitised.

In July 2018, the *Brussels-Capital Region* introduced Mybusinesspass, which offers a complete and readable offer to support entrepreneurs and future entrepreneurs, from public and private actors, each according to their speciality, with an information website tailored to the needs of entrepreneurs at each stage of their business project. Mybusinesspass concerns among others: simplifying and making more readable the existing offer of support for the different target groups, better articulating the offer around the life cycle of the company and addressing gaps in the existing offer of support for the target groups.

In addition of being an obstacle in setting up businesses, administrative procedures can also be an obstacle to investments. Following the adoption of the Walloon investment plan (Plan wallon d'investissement), the *Walloon government* announced in October 2018 50 simplification measures to facilitate investments. These include facilitating and accelerating administrative procedures, including through digitisation, improving the management of projects and grants, simplifying and facilitating local investment and facilitating access for businesses to public procurement. Within the framework of this programme, a pilot project for the digitisation of planning permissions will start in some municipalities at the end of 2019. In the *Brussels-Capital Region*, the reform of the land use planning code (Brussels wetboek van ruimtelijke ordening – BWRO / Code de l'aménagement du territoire – CoBAT) aims to simplify and rationalise urban planning procedures by replacing the current planning deadlines with stricter, i.e. mandatory, deadlines. These new procedures, scheduled for September 2019, will provide greater clarity and predictability in this area.

Specific for SMEs, the Brussels-Capital Region is working to reduce the negative impact that regulation can have. A system is developed that identifies, measures and, where possible, minimises these consequences. To this end, a study was carried out to identify the most appropriate mechanisms. The necessary regulations will be drawn up in the course of 2019. At the *federal level*, a study is being carried out on the evolution of the participation of SMEs in public tenders. This is in the context of the charter on the accessibility of public tenders for SMEs. The benefits of digitisation are also brought to the attention of micro-enterprises. Among other things, a temporary website will be set up for exchanging ideas and good practices and an awareness campaign will be launched to promote it.

In addition to these entrepreneurship-specific measures, more general efforts are being made to simplify administration. Of course, entrepreneurs also benefit from this. *Wallonia* and the *French Community* are working on the digitisation of public administration on a large scale. More and more applications can be made digitally (see also section 4.1.3). In Wallonia, for example, the possibilities of the personal web space (Mon Espace) are gradually being extended to businesses and the number of online forms available is increasing. In the French Community, attention has been paid, among other things, to the extension of SUBside, the transversal management tool for all subsidy, accreditation and accreditation processes. The *Brussels-Capital Region* is working on an ordinance anchoring the principle of unique data collection in the operation of its services. The digitisation of the government in *Flanders* is supported by the programme on innovative public procurement (Programma innovatieve overheidsopdrachten) and the operation of the Flemish agency for information (Agentschap Informatie Vlaanderen – AIV). The digitisation of municipalities is supported by the operation of Smart Flanders, the call Smart

Cities of the VLAIO and the experimental space that Imec is given in Antwerp. At the *federal level*, work is underway on the digitisation of the judicial system. Important for enterprises is, for example, the possibility of digital transmission of official documents such as the company statutes. In addition, a central platform for the extra-judicial settlement of uncontested claims is being developed.

### **3.3.2. Retail, construction and professional services**

Since the 6th state reform, the Regions have been responsible for the location of retail outlets. In *Flanders*, the new licensing system came into force on 1 August 2018. In this system, the commercial establishment permit (Handelsvestigingsvergunning) is integrated into the environmental permit (Omgevingsvergunning), which had previously been unified. Matters will be simplified by the integrated application and the one-stop shop, inherent to the new system. There is a strong focus on the vision development by municipalities, which is good for the predictability of the procedure. There is also a handbook on the new system, which municipalities, entrepreneurs and project developers can use. A monitoring system will be set up to assess the effectiveness of this legislation. In *Brussels*, the new legal framework will enter into force in September 2019. The obligation to submit a town planning declaration will be abolished for any project for the construction of new buildings providing for the establishment of a retail business, or for the modification or extension of the commercial activity within a building already intended for trade, or for the establishment of a new business within a building intended for a use other than trade. In addition, a new retail development plan was adopted in July 2018. In *Wallonia*, the decree on commercial establishments (décret relatif aux implantations commerciales) was thoroughly evaluated. On the basis of the results of this evaluation, proposals for improvements have been submitted to the government, which should adopt them shortly. The evaluation focused in particular on an analysis of the feasibility of the decree and the problems encountered, the award criteria and the human and material aspects. As in Brussels, a global vision is being developed. To this end, the Regional retail development plan (Schéma régional de développement commercial – SRDC) is being updated. It will thus become a guide to the criteria for the grant of licences, allowing the acts to be directly justified and more easily read by the various interested parties.

Apart from the commercial location policy, *Brussels* and *Wallonia* take other initiatives for the retail trade. On 1 May 2018, a Walloon decree on short-term commercial rent came into force (décret relatif au bail commercial de courte durée). This will simplify the establishment of temporary stores. The Brussels-Capital Region has also adopted an ordinance providing for short-term commercial leases, which will enter into force in April 2019. The ordinance of 3 May 2018 on construction sites on public roads provides for a new model for the coordination of construction sites, but also for accompanying measures and compensation for businesses affected by a construction site on public roads and has entered into force in March 2019. In July 2018, the Walloon Government already adopted a decree to this effect (décret relatif au rétablissement des indemnités compensatoires pour les commerçants lésés par des travaux sur la voirie publique ou le domaine public). The Walloon government has also worked on professionalising, and establishing a network of, traders' associations in order to combat their isolation and to inform them professionally about trade issues.

In addition to the commercial location policy, since the 6th state reform the Regions have been competent for a total of 27 regulated 'artisanal' professions. In 2018, the professional qualification requirements for all these professions were lifted in *Flanders*. Eleven of them belong to the construction sector. There is now no need to prove professional competence. For five of these regulated professions, *Wallonia* has decided, after consultation with the sectors concerned, to abolish the qualification requirements as from December 2018. The quality of the services concerned will continue to be guaranteed by other existing regulations. The evaluation is still ongoing for the remaining 22 professions. In addition, the requirement of a basic knowledge of business management is thoroughly considered. On this basis, reforms will be proposed to the government. In the *Brussels-Capital Region*, preference will now be given to certification following a validation test for skills, studies or vocational training. This orientation,



which emphasises certification, implies the gradual replacement of the central jury system by competency validation tests. A pilot project conducted in 2018 was rated positively. The *three Regions* are discussing the conclusion of a cooperation agreement to regulate, in particular, the issue of mutual recognition in the context of the establishment of European nationals.

The *federal government* retained competence over the 'intellectual' professions. At this level, two initiatives have been taken for accounting professionals. Firstly, the Royal Decree of 14 August 2018 amended the code of ethics. Accounting experts are now also allowed to carry out other activities, which can simplify the exercise of the profession. Secondly, the aforementioned IPCF/BIBF and IEC/IAB institutes will merge. This merger should lead to better customer service, easier access for graduates, a single point of contact - outside the statutory audit remit of the accounts - for companies and professionals from other Member States, gradual alignment with digitisation, and more uniformity and transparency in the regulatory environment. The bill was approved by Parliament at the beginning of 2019.

### **3.3.3. Tackle the growing mobility challenges**

In Belgium, there are major challenges in the area of mobility. In particular, there is increasing road congestion and there are high emissions of harmful substances. The federal and regional governments are therefore working hard to meet the challenges. This is done in three areas: investing in infrastructure, investing in clean technology, and adjusting the modal choice. The measures mainly fall under some of the major themes addressed in this NRP: strategic investments in section 4.1.1 and energy and climate in section 5.4. They are discussed in these headings. This section merely lists a few measures that are not directly related to investment and energy-climate issues.

Infrastructure and clean technology investment programmes are underway at all levels of government in the country. At *federal level*, and in cooperation with the Regions, the network of suburban railways around Brussels (Gewestelijk expressnet – GEN / Réseau express régional – RER) will be completed. Within the framework of the integrated investment plan of *Flanders* (Geïntegreerd investeringsplan – GIP), work is underway to expand the road, waterway and cycle paths networks. In addition, work is underway on the extension of the major urban ring roads, the expansion of the capacity of the inland waterways network and the maritime accessibility of ports. The *Brussels-Capital Region* is committed to charging points for electric cars. The *Walloon Region* is doing the same and is also investing in gas-fuelled car filling stations and multimodal mobility poles (Mobipôles). The *Flemish Region* is also rolling out the basic charging infrastructure further and is on schedule to have 5,000 new charging points by the end of next year. With regard to public transport, investments are being made in clean buses and the expansion of tram and metro networks in *all three Regions*. *Flanders* aims to have completely emission-free public transport in all city centres by 2025. In *Brussels*, this should be the case in 2030.

Emission reduction measures are also taken at all levels. To reduce the spread of tax-efficient company cars, the *federal government* developed the 'mobility budget' and the 'cash for car' scheme. The excise duty on diesel oil will be aligned with that on petrol. In *Wallonia*, proposals are being prepared to adapt vehicle taxes - which will become a regional competence in January 2020 - to encourage the purchase of low-emission cars. *Brussels* commissioned a study of it. Under the special finance act *loi spéciale de financement / bijzondere financieringswet*), however, a certain level of coordination among the Regions is required. A low emission zone (LEZ) was introduced in Brussels in January 2018. ANPR cameras are used since October to ensure compliance with the new regulations. Until 2025, the criteria for entering the LEZ will be gradually tightened. The Regional mobility plan (Good Move) was approved by the Brussels government in April 2019 and will be subject to a public consultation until 15 October 2019. This plan sets out the broad lines to be followed in order to improve mobility over the next ten years, taking into account the living environment and improving safety. The aim is to reduce car use by 24% and quadruple the number of bicycle trips, as well as to significantly increase the supply of public

transport. In May 2018, the government decided to launch a consultation with the interested parties and sectors affected by the diesel ban by latest 2030 (and the ban on petrol vehicles in a subsequent phase) and the development of alternative technologies in the short and medium term. *Flanders* adapted the decree on the LEZ in March 2019. This was done on the basis of the experiences in Antwerp and the needs of Ghent, where the LEZ will be introduced on 1 January 2020. In 2018, the Flemish government continued to implement the Clean Power for Transport action plan, in particular by adding more target groups and more types of vehicles.

In order to further shape the sustainable transport policy, the *Flemish government* is investigating whether, in addition to the existing kilometre-based charging system for lorries, a system for other vehicles can also be introduced in a budget-neutral framework. In the freight sector, a support mechanism is being developed for better bundling of fragmented consignments, thus contributing to the modal shift.

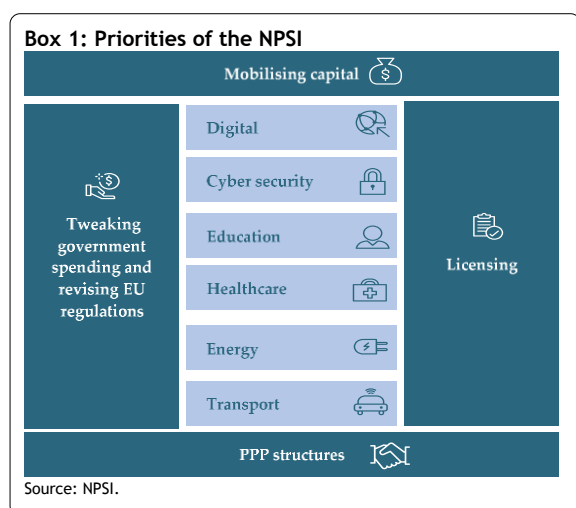
The *Walloon* mobility vision FAST (Vision FAST - mobilité 2030, see also sections 4.1.1 and 5.4) with ambitious objectives aims to promote a modal shift, reduce congestion, ensure accessibility for all, and reduce accidents and environmental damage. At the beginning of 2019, the Regional public transport company (TEC Group) was reformed and the six regional business units were brought under one structure. This should improve efficiency. A new management contract was approved in February. The contract is for a period of five years. It is structured around four objectives: improving the quality of services in order to increase customer satisfaction, ensuring the speed of implementation of the services offered, further digitising the services offered and improving environmental performance. A regional mobility centre will also be set up in 2019 to coordinate all transport offers. This concerns in particular buses and other means of public transport, but also other available transport services: taxis, individual transport, 'social' and 'specific' transports. It will have support points at local level.

## 4. Strategic investments and use of structural funds

The measures picking up on the country-specific recommendations (chapter 3) and those that contribute directly to achieving the goals of the Europe 2020 strategy (chapter 5) are not the only ones that are of significant importance for structural economic growth. Other facets of economic policy also play a role, particularly strategic investments and use of the European structural funds.

### 4.1. Strategic investments

In line with the economic priorities identified in the 2019 Annual Growth Survey, the country's various governments have put strategic investments high on their political agendas. In addition to regional investment strategies, the *federal government* has initiated the National Pact for Strategic Investments (NPSI), which should make it possible to define a national investment strategy capable of generating sustainable growth and employment. The NPSI should also become the pillar of inter-federal coordination of strategic investments.



After an in-depth analysis by eight working groups, the Strategic Committee presented its report to the various governments of the country present on 11 September 2018. The report lists 70 concrete recommendations in 6 thematic areas and 12 transversal recommendations divided into 4 themes relating to the investment climate in Belgium (see box 1). The total amount of investments in the different areas is about 150 billion euros by 2030, of which 55% would come from the private sector and 45% from the public sector.

Following the publication of the Strategic Committee report, the Consultation Committee of 7 November 2018 mandated an inter-federal working

group to validate a list of strategic investment priorities, the nature of which requires further inter-federal coordination. In addition, an interministerial conference on strategic investments (Interministeriële Conferentie voor Strategische Investeringsen – ICSI / Conférence interministérielle pour les investissements stratégiques – CIIS) was created to facilitate coordination between all levels of government. Two task forces are responsible for preparing the work of this ICSI/CIIS with regard to national investment projects ('Projects' task force) and improving the investment climate in Belgium ('Regulation and Governance' task force) respectively.

In the light of the political agenda and taking into account the findings of the European Commission's 2019 Country Report, the Consultation Committee of 27 March 2019 decided to continue the work of the ICSI/CIIS and to focus on four areas: (1) inter-federal governance and synergy with European authorities; (2) regulatory and administrative framework (improvement of licensing procedures); (3) capital mobilisation (public-private partnership); and (4) revision of the European budgetary rules. The Consultation Committee also mandated the task force 'Projects' to start work on two additional fields of (1) environment and (2) energy. Following the Consultation Committee, an ICSI/CIIS meeting was organised to discuss in particular the specific issue of the revision of the European budgetary rules.

In addition to these steps forward in inter-federal coordination, all the country's governments have continued to make strategic investments. Without claiming to be exhaustive, the following sections

provide more detailed information on the investments of the Federal Government and federated entities in the areas of mobility (section 4.1.1), energy (section 4.1.2), digitisation and cyber security (section 4.1.3) and school infrastructure and human capital (section 4.1.4).

#### 4.1.1. Mobility

In the field of mobility, with regard to the extra billion freed up by the *federal government* to complete the Brussels suburban railway network (RER/GEN, see also section 3.3.3), since 5 October 2018 a cooperation agreement between the federal government and the Regions has been in place, consolidating the commitments of the various parties after this legislature. On 31 January 2019, the House of Representatives adopted the draft law approving this cooperation agreement, which guarantees the sustainability of the amounts released until 2031. The extra billion will make it possible to release 79 million euros in 2019, of which 10 million for NMBS/SNCB and 68 million for Infrabel. In addition to this billion, the federal government allocated 500 million euros to NMBS/SNCB and 700 million euros to Infrabel for their respective investments in 2019.

Within the framework of the Walloon mobility vision FAST (Vision FAST – mobilité 2030), *Wallonia* continues to encourage the modal shift and sustainable mobility by investing in the installation of electric charging points (256 points for an amount of 1 million euros from 2019) and natural gas refuelling sites (12 CNG stations and 7 LNG stations for an amount of 6.75 million euros from 2019). In addition to the reform of the TEC group with a view to greater efficiency, the Walloon government has also made additional budgetary resources available to improve the provision of public transport (new lines and greening of the fleet, see section 3.3.3). The public service contract of the Walloon transport operator (Opérateur de Transport de Wallonie – OTW), approved in early February 2019, provides for an annual refinancing of almost 35 million euros over a period of 5 years. At the end of January 2019, the contract for the Liège tram line was signed between the manufacturer Tram'Arden and the Walloon authorities. The project is structured as a public-private partnership and benefits from a 200 million euros loan from the EIB under the EFSI. Finally, within the framework of the Walloon investment plan (Plan wallon d'investissement), a subsidy of 7.5 million euros was granted to SOFICO for the construction of 5 'pilot mobipôles' (mobility hubs) and an overall study on the placement of the 95 other 'mobipôles' in Wallonia. Investments are also planned for the development of the port areas.

During this legislature, *Flanders* has invested 33% more in smoother and safer traffic. In the last year of the legislature (2019), the integrated investment plan (Geïntegreerd investeringsplan – GIP) provides over 2 billion euros for the entities in the mobility and public works policy area (Mobiliteit en Openbare Werken – MOW). The total for the legislature thus comes to 9.7 billion euros. And then there is the large expenditure for Oosterweel (on the Antwerp ring road, 3.5 billion euros) and the works on the ring road around Brussels (Werken aan de Ring, 3 billion euros). Investments are concentrated in the biggest mobility bottlenecks. Werkvennootschap NV had 312 million euros at its disposal during this legislature period. In addition to optimising the R0 around Brussels, the programme Werken aan de Ring also includes the construction of 60 km of high-quality public transport (Brabantnet) and 60 km of bike paths (fietsGEN). The budgets of the Antwerp mobile management company (Beheersmaatschappij Antwerpen Mobiel – BAM) also increased by 386%. The investment budget for public transport will grow to over 300 million euros in 2019 for new buses and trams, new tram tracks and refurbished station surroundings. The share of inland navigation in total freight transport is increasing year after year. Important projects supported by the CEF such as the Terneuzen lock, the Seine-Scheldt project and the raising of the bridges over the Albertkanaal will be continued. In addition, Flanders also wants to make crucial investments to allow the Flemish ports to grow further, with the least possible impact on the environment. At the end of 2018, the Flemish government announced a draft decree of preference for a second sea lock in the Port of Zeebrugge. For the extra container capacity project in the Port of Antwerp, a draft preferential decree is expected in April 2019. Both projects each have an order of magnitude of approximately 1 billion euros.

In the *Brussels-Capital Region*, 5.2 billion euros will be invested in the period 2015-2025 in the modernisation and extension of the metro lines to the north of Brussels and in tram lines. Furthermore, the fleet of the urban transport company (Maatschappij voor Intercommunale Vervoer – MIVB / Société des transports intercommunaux de Bruxelles – STIB) will be renewed with less polluting vehicles; 250 hybrid and electric buses will be added. The first electric buses will be tested with a view to complete electrification of the fleet in 2030. The new bus masterplan (Plan directeur bus / Buslasterplan) will systematically connect districts and open up parts of the city that were less well served in the past. In July 2018, the Region granted a concession for the creation of a uniform network of around 100 charging points for electric vehicles on the territory of the Region. In addition, following the model of the 750 million euros multiannual investment programme for tunnels approved in 2016, the Region approved a 24 million euros multiannual investment programme for bridges and viaducts, for inspections, safety works, maintenance and repairs planned between 2018 and 2021. Finally, the Region will continue to implement its plan to strengthen the supply of transfer car parks (P+R).

#### **4.1.2. Energy**

Energy is also a central concern for all governments in the country. Within the framework of the NPSI, the *federal government* has firmly undertaken to support research into nuclear waste management by deciding, at the Council of Ministers on 7 September 2018, to allocate 558 million euros to the MYRRHA project over the period 2019 -2038 and 52 million euros to the SMART project. With the support of the federal government, MYRRHA is well on its way to receiving European financial support. In addition, within the framework of the energy transition fund (Energietransitiefonds / Fonds de transition énergétique), 17 projects were selected for a federal government grant of approximately 28 million euros. Finally, the federal government has made progress in its strategy to develop the production of offshore wind energy by approving a new support mechanism for three offshore wind farms (Mermaid, Seastar and Northwester 2) and by granting a domain concession to ELIA for the construction of the Modular Offshore Grid. This public support was combined for Mermaid and Seastar with an EIB loan of 250 million euros under the EFSI. In addition, the Green Bonds issued by the federal government have so far yielded some 5 billion euros, which are invested, among other things, in financing projects in the field of energy and energy transition.

The *Flemish Region* has also developed an ambitious energy investment strategy. At the end of 2018, the Flemish government decided to grant a maximum of 6.88 million euros in support of large-scale solar energy projects. In addition, a new support mechanism for small and medium-sized wind turbines (up to 300 kW) was introduced. In 2018, the energy fund (Energiefond) allocated 4.3 million euros for this purpose. The first call was launched in December 2018 with a budget of 1.5 million euros. Under the sustainable heating plan (Verwarmingsplan), the annual calls for green heating (average 10.5 million euros per year) were extended to support geothermal projects, (also smaller) biomass and biomethane projects and a significant number of heating networks. At the end of 2018, 10 major battery pilot projects were launched thanks to 1.2 million euros support. These projects focus on various sub-themes such as the reuse of batteries from electric vehicles, tackling grid overload, the use of batteries in ESCO services, short and long-term storage, etc. Finally, the Flemish government has already invested 52 million euros in numerous energy-saving projects in primary, secondary and higher education school buildings. An additional 21 million euros will be allocated in 2019 to improve the energy efficiency of schools in compulsory and higher education. In total, between 2016 and 2019, the education sector will invest more than 75 million euros in climate initiatives to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

In the *Brussels-Capital Region*, the SolarClick and NRClick programmes, supported by the Brussels government to the tune of 20 million euros and 7 million euros respectively over a four-year period (2017-2020), achieved their first concrete results in 2018. The Brussels government has also committed itself to implementing 52 measures within the framework of the integrated National Energy and Climate Plan 2021-2030 (NECP). Of these measures, 20 concern buildings, 17 transport and 14 renewable energy.

These measures will mainly be implemented from 2021 to 2030, but some of them are an extension of measures already implemented in 2018 or starting in 2019. The development of an extramural investment policy is also on the agenda. The Region therefore plans to invest in renewable electricity generation units outside its territory in order to have 600 GWh of additional renewable production by the end of the 2021-2030 decade.

In *Wallonia*, at the end of January 2019, the government adopted a preliminary draft decree establishing a geothermal guarantee for deep underground exploration projects. This new scheme is designed to cover a natural risk that private operators cannot insure and is necessary to create an investment climate favourable to the production of heat from deep geothermal energy. Under the ERDF programme, the Walloon government approved the modalities of the 'low carbon' measure (Utilisation durable de l'énergie 2020 – UDE2020), which complements an existing measure (UDE) with an amount of 32 million euros to support the sustainable use of energy for SMEs. In addition, 20 million euros were allocated to the Walloon public management and investment company (Sogepa) under the 'Kyoto Fund' (Fonds Kyoto) for the implementation of third-party projects investing in energy efficiency and renewable energy. Finally, in the context of improving the energy efficiency of public buildings, the RENOWATT project is now being extended to the whole of Wallonia. The aim is to invest a minimum of 100 million euros in more than 500 buildings through energy performance contracts (Contrats de performance énergétique – CPE). A budget of 5.2 million euros is planned for a maximum period of 3.5 years: 3.5 million euros financed by Europe (ELENA/EIB) and 1.7 million euros by the Walloon government. Finally, the projects for the replacement of lighting on the Walloon motorway and road network were approved. The EIB Advisory Hub has supported the financing of the Lumière 4.0 plan (motorways and national roads).

Finally, the *French Community* has also developed an energy efficiency programme for its school buildings and other buildings, with the aim of reducing consumption by 35% by 2030 and 90% by 2050. Thanks to the collection system, the savings of around 500,000 euros in 2019 to 3 million euros in 2022 can be reinvested in new projects. The aim is to create a fund comparable to the 810 Index of the school buildings fund (Fonds des bâtiments scolaires), to recover and reinvest 80% of the savings for non-school buildings. In addition, the French Community is involved in several projects to install solar panels on up to 30,000 m<sup>2</sup> of roofs in the Brussels-Capital Region alone. The aim is to develop and implement financial arrangements involving private investors (third party investments) without affecting the public debt. The same type of financing is envisaged for the switch to LEDs and for the replacement of oil-fired heating systems by renewable energy sources (operational leasing).

#### **4.1.3. Digitisation and cybersecurity**

In the field of digitisation, the federal government has continued to support and guide the digital transformation by supporting various companies and organisations within the framework of the Digital Belgium action plan. In 2018, under the Digital Belgium Skills Fund's second call for projects, 37 projects were supported for an amount of approximately 6 million euros. A third call for projects (for 2019) was published in June 2018. For its part, the *Brussels-Capital Region* continues to promote the development of digital ecosystems on its territory as part of the *bedigital.brussels* strategy. This strategy is based more specifically on three instruments: the Smart City strategy, the Regional plan for innovation (Plan régional pour l'innovation / Gewestelijk plan voor innovatie) and the NextTech plan. In December 2018, the Brussels Initiative on Cybersecurity Innovation (BICI) was also launched to ensure that new knowledge about cyber security is transferred to companies more quickly. The BICI brings together the Brussels university research centres and SIRRIIS (collective centre for the technological industry in Brussels) and is managed within *icity.brussels*, an initiative whose mission is to strengthen innovation and ICT research in the Brussels Region, co-financed by the ERDF. The *French Community* and *Wallonia* have done important work to enable users to submit their applications electronically to the public authorities. The number of dematerialised transactions is therefore constantly increasing. At the end of 2015, 24 of

the 75 identified transactions were dematerialised (i.e. a dematerialisation rate of 32%). At the end of 2018, 84 of the 158 identified transactions were dematerialised. This means that the 50% mark has been exceeded (53%). On 6 December 2018, the Walloon government also presented its new Digital Wallonia 2019-2024 plan, which aims to extend the existing plan. Actions to implement this plan include the financing of digital coverage of the territory (in particular rural industrial zones and white zones) for 50 million euros, the opening of two BeCode campuses in Liège and Charleroi, the financing in 2018 of 325 projects to promote the use of digital tools in schools for 6 million euros, and the implementation of Demos 4.0 to stimulate the development of technologies in companies, or the launch of a call for 'intelligent territory' (Territoire intelligent) projects with a budget of 4 million euros. In the field of cyber security, an awareness and support tool has been introduced. Finally, in *Flanders*, the digitisation of municipalities is supported by the Smart Flanders operation, the VLAIO call for smart cities and the experimental space available to Imec in Antwerp. The aim is to strengthen this by providing additional incentives (companies, research sector and government) in four key areas: artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, virtual reality and autonomous driving. In preparation of the 2019 budget, 30 million euros were earmarked for the artificial intelligence action plan (actieplan betreffende kunstmatige intelligentie) and 20 million euros for the cybersecurity action plan (actieplan voor cyberveiligheid). VLAIO already plays an important role in the digitisation of businesses and the dissemination of innovation through all its instruments (reformed support for innovation, leading pool of innovative business networks), and certainly also through the transition to Industry 4.0.

#### **4.1.4. Education infrastructure and human capital**

Under the pact for excellence in teaching (Pacte pour un enseignement d'excellence), by September 2019 the *French Community* will have invested 50 million euros in pre-school education, with an additional 400 teachers, 1,594 nurses, speech therapists and a strengthened status for specialists in mental and motor disorders. The French Community also invests in specific administrative or educational assistance for nursery and primary school principals. In 2018, this aid amounted to almost 15 million euros. Thanks to funding from the European Structural Funds, the French Community has also been able to continue developing a strategy to combat early school leaving. The French Community invests 24 million euros annually in school infrastructure to create the necessary places. Finally, in the context of its digital strategy for education (Stratégie numérique pour l'éducation) adopted in October 2018, the French Community undertook to establish a strengthened and formal framework for cooperation with the Regions on investments in school and digital infrastructure and to develop a more integrated approach to financing digital education as part of the preparation of the new programming of the European structural and investment funds (ERDF and ESF).

In *Flanders*, the process of renovation and modernisation of school buildings is continuing as part of the school building masterplan (Masterplan scholenbouw). In 2018, loans in the amount of 401 million euros were foreseen for grants. The multiannual plan allocates a capacity of 150 million euros for the period 2016-2018, at the rate of 50 million euros per year. These funds were allocated to projects to strengthen the capacity of schools which were identified as priorities by local working groups. For the period 2019-2021, a new budget of 150 million euros will be allocated to the cities and municipalities where capacity needs are estimated to be greatest. Flanders has also launched a movement to improve school infrastructure through public-private funding, DBFM (Design, Build, Finance and Maintain). The full programme includes 182 school construction projects, accounting for approximately 200 school buildings in all education networks. On 5 March 2017, a new DBFM call was sent to school commissions for a first investment of 300 million euros. The Flemish government has increased this amount to 550 million euros in investment volume in 2017. In addition, Flanders also grants rent subsidies for the modernisation of the existing school infrastructure, with a total annual allocation of 7.5 million euros and an investment volume of more than 211 million euros. The third call for these rent subsidies was launched in November 2018. From 1 September 2019, the resources for basic education will be open-

ended and based on the number of pupils. This will allow the centres to respond to more requests for literacy offerings. Future graduate courses will be funded during the first years of setting up on the basis of an open-ended mechanism. In this way, the budget follows the number of students: for each additional student, extra resources are added. The graduate programmes can thus be expanded without reducing the resources for bachelor's and master's programmes.

As part of the Walloon investment plan (Plan wallon d'investissement), the *Walloon government* has approved a project for the renovation and creation of IFAPME training centres, with the aim of supporting the development of centres of expertise in dual learning. The budget is 10 million euros for the period 2019-2022. A call for projects for the construction of new childcare centres has also been published, which foresees the creation of 2,086 new places for over 48 million euros. This call for projects is part of Plan Cigogne 3.

Finally, adapting school infrastructure to demographic growth is one of the priorities of the *Brussels-Capital Region*. The diversification of urban regeneration instruments, which allowed investments of 337 million euros through neighbourhood contracts, urban regeneration contracts, new urban policy programmes and school contracts, has made it possible to optimise land use through the renovation of school facilities. In addition, the intervention capacity of the Brussels Regional municipal treasury refinancing fund (Fonds régional bruxellois de refinancement des trésoreries communales – FRBRTC / Brussels Gewestelijk Herfinancieringsfonds van de Gemeentelijke Thesaurieën – BGHGT) has been set at 100 million euros for the years 2017 to 2019, allowing local authorities to submit investment projects, most of which relate to the education sector. The total amount of investments included in the budget of the Brussels municipalities in 2017 for investments in the field of education was almost 130 million euros. Education is thus the third largest item in terms of municipal investment expenditure, which have quickly and effectively created new places, both in primary and secondary education. In the period 2015-2025, 25,060 new places in primary education are planned and 16,091 places have already been made available to pupils to date.

## 4.2. Structural funds and investment funds

The programming of the structural and investment funds is currently at cruising speed: at the end of September 2018, 76% of the funds (in total cost) had already been decided on. As explained in the various sections of this NRP, these funds are part of the concrete realisation of the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy and the fulfilment of the Council's recommendations. This concerns in particular support for entrepreneurship and competitiveness of SMEs (18% of the Funds), R&D and innovation (12%), education and training (12%), employment (16%) and social inclusion (14%), resource efficiency, adaptation to climate change and the low-carbon economy (26%).

In the context of the roll-out of the regional smart specialisation strategies (S3), there is a strong emphasis on investment, technology diffusion and the commercialisation of innovation, in particular through measures to support SMEs (including in the form of financial instruments), pilot and demonstration projects, etc. ERDF programmes also focus on the development of the low-carbon economy and sustainable urban development. In *Flanders*, the ERDF funds still available (30 million euros) will be allocated to innovation projects and to support the internationalisation of local entrepreneurship. In *Wallonia*, two calls for cooperation projects for the deployment of industrial pilot projects were launched in 2019, including one dedicated to plastics (circular economy), and a measure to support energy efficiency in SMEs was launched. In the *Brussels-Capital Region*, a call for projects was launched in June 2018 to support energy renovation projects for public buildings.

The projects developed under the ESF respond to recommendation 2. In particular, they concern life-long learning and integration into the labour market, in particular for young people and the most vul-



nerable groups, social inclusion and combating discrimination and early school leaving. In 2019, *Flanders* will place a new focus on 'workable' work, through the roll-out of workability vouchers. *Wallonia* places particular emphasis on the response to labour shortages. In the *Brussels-Capital Region*, additional resources from the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) have led to the development of new actions, also for young people with a migrant background and sometimes far removed from the labour market, to motivate them to remobilise professionally through individual and personalised support.

*Wallonia* is continuing its cooperation with the Commission in the framework of the pilot project for industrial transition. The *various entities* have begun to reflect on the preparation of the next programming exercise, in particular on the basis of the first guidelines drawn up by the European Commission in the context of the European Semester.

## 5. Europe 2020 objectives

### 5.1. Employment

**Table 2: Employment targets**  
In % (unless stated differently)

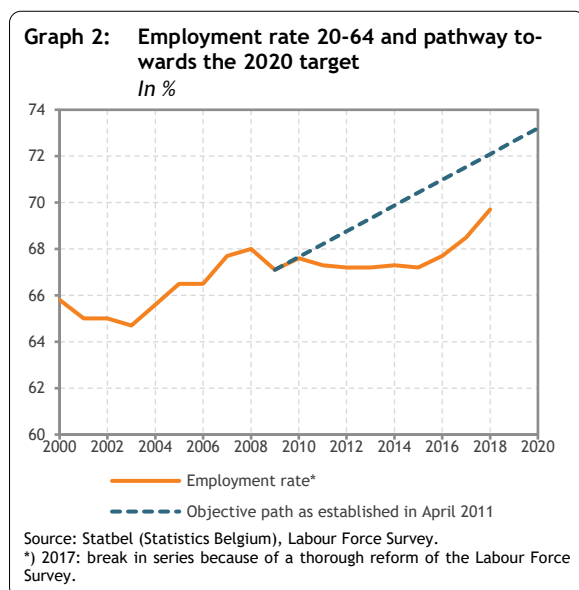
	BE2010	BE2015	BE2016	BE2017*	BE2018	Target BE2020	Required job creation 2018-2020**
Employment rate 20-64	67,6	67,2	67,7	68,5	69,7	73,2	263 280
Female employment rate	61,6	63,0	63,0	63,6	65,5	69,1	130 102
NEET (percentage of young people neither in employment, education or training)	10,9	12,2	9,9	9,3	9,2	8,2	
Employment rate 55-64	37,3	44,0	45,4	48,3	50,3	50,0	
Employment rate gap between non-EU citizens and Belgians	28,4	25,8	27,2	28,2	27,5	<16,5	

Source: Eurostat.

\*) Break in series because of a thorough reform of the Labour Force Survey. \*\*) Numbers.

#### 5.1.1. Create jobs and increase the employment rate

The job creation and activation policy continue to bear fruit. Employment will continue to rise, and unemployment will continue to fall in 2019, too. After 58,000 new jobs in 2018, according to the economic forecasts of the Federal Planning Bureau (FPB) 44,300 jobs will be created in 2019.



The situation on the Belgian labour market in terms of employment and unemployment has never been this good. We note the highest employment rate ever recorded in Belgium with a rate approaching for the first time 70% for people aged 20-64 (69.7%). This approaches the Europe 2020 target (73.2%). In absolute figures, this is illustrated by 4,645,536 persons employed. As regards the growth level of growth, a positive trend can be observed since the post-crisis period, with growth of 2.91 percentage points compared to 2009 and growth of 2.71 percentage points compared to 2014.

As regards unemployment, the situation is also positive. We are effectively setting the lowest unemployment rate for decades in 2018 with a rate of 6.0%. We note a fall of 2.6 percentage points in the

unemployment rate compared to 2014 and 2.0 percentage points compared to the period after the crisis (2009). We therefore note a reduction in the number of unemployed since the post-crisis period, with a 20.89% decrease. Compared to 2014, we see a reduction in the number of unemployed by 29.05%.

The reduction in the burden on labour has increased the labour intensity of economic growth and created additional jobs in the private sector, including for vulnerable groups such as the low-skilled and the long-term unemployed.

In order to activate as many people as possible for the labour market and to fill vacancies in professions subject to a labour shortage, the federal government concluded an agreement in the form of a Jobs Deal

in the summer of 2018. The social and fiscal provisions of this package of 28 measures, which have in the meantime entered into force, are discussed in the chapter on recommendation 2 (section 3.2).

For the employment rate, it is important to further support measures on the reconciliation of work and family life. The Regions and Communities are continuing their efforts to increase the number of child-care places. The *Walloon* government has validated the launch of a call for projects for the construction of new day-care centres. There are 2,086 places foreseen for an amount of more than 48 million euros. The *Flemish government* has planned a broad investment plan of 20.4 million euros for 2018 and 2019 to create additional childcare places. The system of service vouchers (*dienstencheques*) also continues to grow in Flanders and ensures that the combination of work and family life and care tasks is supported. In the *Brussels-Capital Region*, following a joint ONE-COCOF call for projects in 2014, a budget of 16 million euros is planned, of which 12 million euros have already been allocated to 50 projects.

Entrepreneurship continues to be promoted. *Wallonia* supports the creation of employment by stimulating the professional transition to the status of self-employed as a main occupation (*Airbag* plan). The plan is aimed both at self-employed persons in a secondary occupation (subject to various conditions regarding duration and training course) and at persons who will become self-employed for the first or second time. After analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of *Airbag*, certain adjustments have proved necessary, including the processing time and a clarification of the plan for the applicants, as well as for the public employment service (*Office wallon de la Formation professionnelle et de l'Emploi – FOREM*). In 2018, the *Flemish government* launched the transition premium (*Transitiepremie*), a financial support for job-seekers (at least 45 years old) who want to take the step towards entrepreneurship. This premium relieves the financial uncertainty in the start-up months of a new company. In the *Brussels-Capital Region*, a premium also came into force on 1 March 2018 for unemployed job-seekers who establish themselves as self-employed workers as their main occupation in order to develop their own employment.

There is also a growing focus on social entrepreneurship and the opportunities it offers for the creation of jobs for vulnerable target groups. Two measures in support of social and cooperative entrepreneurship were adopted in *Wallonia*. A new financing of 4.5 million euros is granted for the *Brasero* plan, which supports investment in social economy cooperatives. It will be complemented by a new financial product, in the form of start-up capital, with a budget of 600,000 euros. A new normative framework in the *Brussels-Capital Region* aims to open up new horizons for entrepreneurs who opt for the social economy. In *Flanders*, on 1 January 2019, 'collective tailor-made work' (*Collectief Maatwerk*) was launched in the social economy. It removes the old distinction between social and sheltered workplaces. The reform simplifies and aligns subsidy conditions and support measures for social economy enterprises. The new regulations not only make it possible for 'tailor-made companies' (*maatwerkbedrijven*, at least 65% of the staff is far removed from the labour market), but also for 'tailor-made departments' (*maatwerkafdelingen*) within companies from the normal economic circuit.

In Flanders, efforts are also being made to attract employees outside the Flemish borders. The main focus is on Brussels and Wallonia, but also across national borders. In February 2018, the public employment service (*Vlaamse Dienst voor Arbeidsbemiddeling en Beroepsopleiding – VDAB*) concluded a new cooperation agreement with its Walloon counterpart *FOREM* to lead job-seekers to Flemish jobs in, among others, the West-Flemish border region and the outskirts around Brussels. A similar cooperation agreement will be concluded with the Brussels government in 2019.

In addition, a new policy on attracting and retaining foreign talent was launched in Flanders. Flanders' potential to attract foreign talent was strengthened. Medium- and highly-skilled people who wish to exercise a profession that appears on a dynamic list of professions subject to a labour market shortage

are given access to the Flemish labour market without the need for a labour market survey. The maximum duration of the work permit is extended to 3 years for highly skilled workers, managers and researchers, instead of the former 12 months restriction.

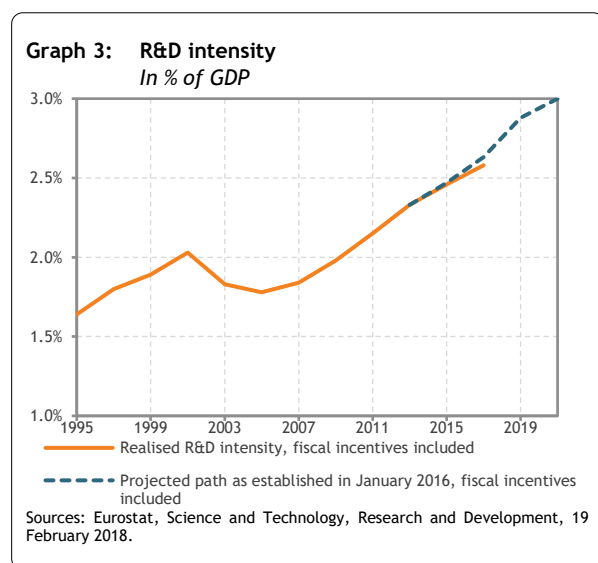
## 5.2. R&D and innovation

**Table 3: R&D target**  
In % of GDP

	BE2013	BE2014	BE2015	BE2016	BE2017	Target BE2020	Required change 2017-2020
R&D intensity, fiscal incentives included	2.33	2.39	2.46	2.55	2.58*	3.00	+0.42

Sources: Eurostat, Science and Technology, Research and Development, 19 February 2018.

\*) Provisional number.



In 2017, Belgium spent 2.58% of its GDP on research and development (R&D). This puts Belgium again in 6th place within the EU, just like last year. As in previous years, it is the private sector that accounts for the lion's share of research expenditure. Nevertheless, growth of the public sector R&D expenditure in the last two years has been greater than that of the private sector: R&D expenditure by the education sector has grown by 15% and the government sector R&D expenditure by as much as 35%.

An initial analysis (not yet published) of the 2018 budget appropriations for research (GBARD) shows a very slight decrease in the Belgian amount compared to 2017. This decrease is due to

a decrease in the *federal government's* appropriations. On the other hand, there has been a strong expansion of research credits in the *three Regions*, with a 20% growth in Wallonia and 15.8% in the Brussels-Capital Region. In Flanders, there were both one-off and recurrent budget increases in the same order of magnitude.

As was the case last year, tax support for research and innovation continued to increase. The various research and innovation-related tax deductions amounted to 2,272 million euros, an increase of roughly 500 million euros compared to the amount reported last year. If all national resources (GBARD and tax aid for research) are added up, the various authorities in Belgium spend well over 1% of GDP on research.

The common thread in the 2018 research and innovation policies of the various Belgian authorities can be summarised as follows:

- a strong focus on research and innovation in the field of the digitisation of society;
- additional investments in the research infrastructures by all the country's governments with attention to strengthening the partnerships between different research actors (private/public or public/public);
- in addition, a number of new initiatives were developed.

### 5.2.1. Digitisation

This chapter only deals with the research related aspects of digitisation. The other aspects are dealt with in section 4.1.3. Hence, the two chapters complement each other.

In the course of 2018, all governments have made a strong commitment to digitisation. Following the recommendations of the European Commission on the digitisation of cultural heritage, the *federal government* has committed new funds to take further steps in this area.

In *Flanders*, digitisation is supported by the innovative public procurement programme (Innovatieve overheidsopdrachten, which was extended to 2023 by the Flemish government on 22 March 2019) and the Flanders information agency's work (Agentschap Informatie Vlaanderen – AIV). In cooperation with various government partners, a number of projects will be carried out to promote the digitisation and data management of government agencies (Mobilidata, Smart Highway, Internet of Water, Smart Retail, etc.). Other projects are described in section 4.1.3.

Following the evaluation of the Digital Wallonia plan, a new Digital Wallonia 2019-2024 plan was approved in *Wallonia*. The first part focuses on the further development of education and training activities (training for web developers, digital schools, etc.). The other parts of that plan are explained in section 4.1.3.

Through the new innovative platform INAH (Institute of Analytics for Health), Wallonia also wants to position itself as a leader in the field of e-health. In a first phase, the aim is to develop and test essential tools for securing and anonymising data, making data available, and using data, as a first step towards a real Walloon research network for analysing health data.

The *Brussels-Capital Region* is also investing heavily in the development of the digital economy. The digital economy is one of the smart specialisation areas of the Regional innovation plan (Gewestelijk innovatieplan / Plan régional pour l'innovation). In this context, the Brussels-Capital Region selected seven new projects in 2018 with the aim of encouraging effective cooperation between academia and industry in the field of decentralised systems (Blockchain). In 2018, Innoviris, the Brussels institute for research and innovation, launched a new programme called START, a new financing tool for business development. START focuses on the technical (Proof of concept) and commercial (Proof of business) validation of future projects and services.

### 5.2.2. Research infrastructures and partnerships

The *federal government* aims to maintain the excellent expertise in the field of nuclear safety and nuclear infrastructures through an investment in a large research infrastructure (MYRRHA) at the SCK-CEN research centre in Mol, which is further explained in section 4.1.2. Secondly, financing and outsourcing of the construction of a new research vessel (worth 54 million euros) to replace the Belgica was provided for. Cooperation agreements between universities and federal scientific institutions (établissements scientifiques fédéraux – ESF / federale wetenschappelijke instellingen – FWI) were made possible through the Fed-Twin programme, and a new phase of the multi-annual Brain research programme was also approved.

Through endowments to the Flemish strategic research centres (Imec, VIB, Flanders Make, VITO), *Flanders* invests approximately 250 million euros each year in building up a strategic research portfolio with these strategic research centres. A spearhead in the strategic research centres strategy, and one of Flanders' focuses in the conventions, is maximum regional impact of this technology through the creation of large-scale Flemish spin-offs or critical technology collaboration with Flemish companies. The fur-

ther development of a technology platform into a mature prototype that can be used for various applications is extremely capital-intensive. That is why Flanders wishes to invest 75 million euros in an evergreen fund, Flanders Future Techfund, the creation of which was approved by the Flemish government on 29 March 2019. The mission of this new fund is to bring the technology expertise present in the Flemish strategic research centres and spearhead clusters (see also chapter 6) to the market through start-ups with a broad product portfolio and strong growth potential or through licensing agreements with existing companies. In Flanders, additional resources were provided to Imec Mobildata (28.9 million euros), Flanders Make (15 million euros), R&D innovation support (15 million euros) and the fund for scientific research (Fonds Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek – FWO; 7.5 million euros).

The *Walloon government* has launched several initiatives as part of the Regional investment plan (Plan wallon d'investissement). Firstly, it is intended to finance collective research infrastructures through a new programme in the field of industrial infrastructure. Subsequently, three competitiveness poles/clusters (Plastiwin, Greenwin and Mecatech) united in a technological platform focused on the transition from plastics processing industry to a circular economy (PEPIT). In this area, a call for cooperation projects was also launched in early 2019 with a budget of 10 million euros to support industrial 'pilot units' and 'demonstrators' co-financed by the ERDF (COOPILOT). Finally, the Walloon government approved several projects for research infrastructures and invested in animal facilities, universities, proton therapy and the industrial excellence platform Reverse Metallurgy. For the proton therapy centre, a partnership for technological innovation (PROTHER-WAI) was approved in December 2018 with a budget of 46 million euros. Finally, 12 million euros was allocated to WELBIO, the Walloon interuniversity institute for research in life sciences, to continue strategic research and its industrial valorisation until 2021.

In the *French Community*, the decree on free access (décret sur le libre accès) of 3 May 2018 makes free access compulsory to all research financed (even partially) by public funds and to all published articles as from 14 September 2018, with a maximum embargo period of 12 (STEM) or 6 (SSH) months. The decree strengthens research potential with scientific, economic and social consequences and, at the same time, renders researchers and their research activities more visible.

The scientific research fund F.R.S.-FNRS is further refinanced with an additional annual indexed amount of 6 million euros, bringing the total refinancing to 14 million euros in two years time. At the end of 2018, the French Community adopted a decree on the reform of the financing of universities of applied sciences, in which the financing mechanisms were thoroughly reviewed by simplifying them and adding 35% of the refinancing amount for higher education for the period 2018-2019, representing an additional amount of 8 million euros over two years. Furthermore, as of 2019, the funding of research in the universities of applied sciences was also revised upwards. This reform will make it possible to bring the criteria for funding universities of applied sciences and other universities closer together, resulting in more coherent funding for higher education in the future.

Belgium will participate in the Finland-led consortium for the purchase of a pre-exascale supercomputer (EuroHPC). The *federal government* (BELSPO) and the *three Regions* have committed to jointly contribute 15.5 million euros. This guarantees our Belgian scientists and industry 6% of the total access time to the supercomputer infrastructure (corresponding to Belgium's participation in the total cost).

Moreover, in September 2018, the three Regions signed a cooperation agreement (MoU) in the field of green chemistry and plastics, in collaboration with the Flemish (Catalisti) and Walloon (Greenwin) competitiveness poles both active in these sectors, as well as with Brussels institute for research and innovation (Innoviris). The aim is to support cooperation projects on innovation between companies and universities from the different Regions of the country.

## 5.3. Education and training

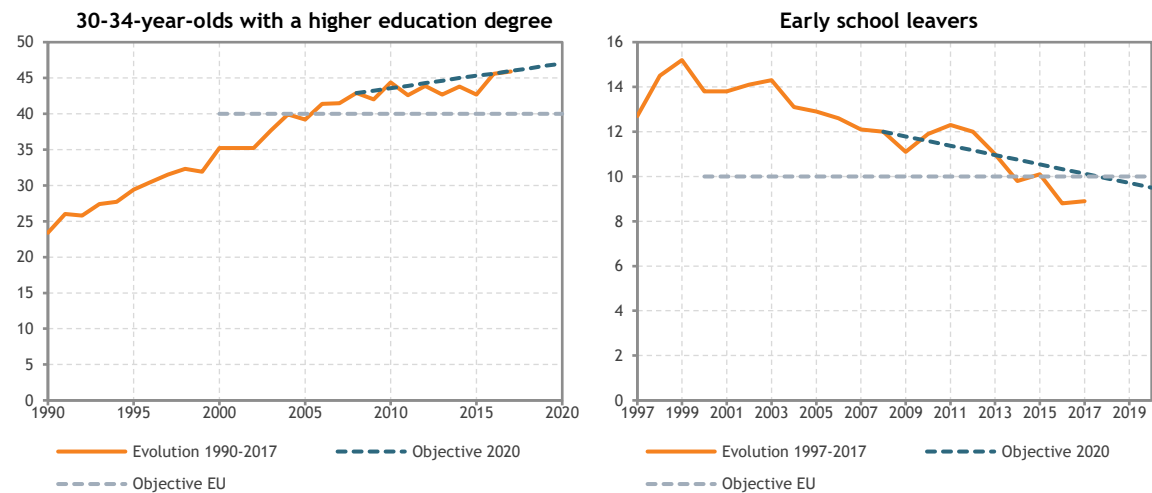
**Table 4: Education targets**  
In %

	BE2016	BE2017	EU2017	Target BE2020	Required change 2017-2020
30-34-year-olds with a higher education degree	45.6	45.9	39.9	47.0	1.1
Early school leavers	8.8	8.9	10.6	9.5	-

Source: Eurostat.

Education policy in Belgium falls within the remit of the Flemish, French, and German-speaking Communities; training policy is included in community and regional competences. Below, new regional and community initiatives relating to the Europe 2020 targets for education and training are presented. For a more in-depth examination, please see the reform programmes of the Communities and Regions (Annex 1 to 5 of this report).

**Graph 4: Education and training indicators**  
In %



Source: Eurostat.

### 5.3.1. Higher education

Belgium has committed to raising the percentage of persons aged 30-34 with a higher education degree to 47 % by 2020. This objective is more ambitious than the overall EU objective (40 %). In 2017, Belgium was ranked eleventh within the EU with 45.9 %.

The courses of higher vocational education already belonged to higher education, but by transforming them into graduate courses, they will attract students who today do not choose higher education and thus contribute to a further democratisation of *Flemish* higher education. The Columbus orientation test for all pupils in the final year of secondary education is being further developed. At the beginning of 2018, the Flemish Ministry of Education launched the 'training in figures' website (Opleiding in cijfers). The purpose of the website is to further support students in their study choice process and to provide more information about the chosen programme and institution. On 18 May 2018, the Flemish government ratified the decree that definitively establishes the new quality assurance system in higher edu-

cation. This decree consolidates the institutional review in the quality assurance system for higher education. The institutional review will be the basis of the entire process of accountability for the quality of programmes in Flemish higher education.

On 29 November 2018, a decree on the reform of the financing of universities of applied sciences was adopted by the government of the *French Community*. The decree revises the financing mechanisms of universities of applied sciences by simplifying and strengthening them. Furthermore, the decree also provides a specific budget to finance actions to promote the chances of success in universities of applied sciences. In order to improve the success rate of first-year first cycle students, and to facilitate the transition from secondary to higher education, the government of the French Community has, since 2018, provided a specific grant to the five academic poles to organise activities in preparation for higher education and to increase the chances of success. In February 2019, the Parliament of the French Community adopted the decree on the reform of the initial education and training for teachers. The measures of the decree, which involve major changes in higher education institutions, include, among other things, longer studies and strengthening the skills of future teachers, a better command of the French language, and strengthening their knowledge across all disciplines. In the context of education for social promotion (enseignement de promotion sociale – E.P.S), the decree of 14 November 2018 on various measures concerning education for social promotion provides the necessary means for the appointment of educational advisors in E.P.S institutions. The tasks of these educational advisors include developing and coordinating pedagogical initiatives in relation to guiding students and helping adults returning to school to succeed in E.P.S institutions.

The *German-speaking Community* is considering expanding the dual learning offer in higher education. A new bachelor's programme in the field of social and youth work is planned for 2019.

### **5.3.2. Early school leaving**

By 2020, the percentage of early drop-outs in Belgium should be reduced to 9.5%. This objective is more ambitious than the overall EU objective (10%). In 2017 the Belgian drop-out rate was 8.9%, compared to 8.8% in 2016 and 10.1% in 2015.

In the framework of the pact for excellence in teaching (Pacte pour un enseignement d'excellence), the *French Community* has adopted a systemic target of halving the rate of repeated school years and early school leaving by 2030 (Steering Decree / décret pilotage; September 2018). Each institution should set specific objectives and actions to contribute to the achievement of the objectives of the system (see also the description of the reform of the steering plan). At the same time, the French Community is working on a global plan to reduce early school leaving. The aim of this plan is to provide the administration with effective systems for collecting data and information on pupils' pathways, to redefine the roles and tasks of the intervening parties (prevention, intervention, compensation) and to strengthen their coordination. The global plan will be applicable from September 2020 and will aim to strengthen the measures aimed at keeping pupils in school currently being developed with the support of the ESF (72 joint projects for education and support for young people from 2015 to 2018). Regular attendance at nursery school is also an important point in the fight against truancy and early school leaving. From September 2020, the third nursery class will become compulsory and this level of education will be subject to the measures to combat truancy and early school leaving applicable to primary education.

The reform of the regional programmes to keep pupils in school, aimed at combating school failure, truancy, violence and inappropriate behaviour, was approved by the *Brussels government* in April 2018. One of its aims is to improve the coordination of actions and to consolidate them by means of multi-annual funding.



In 2018, the education policy of the *German-speaking Community* continued to work towards inclusive education. Since 1 September 2017, a system 'compensating for disadvantages' (compensation des désavantages) has been in place. The 'protection of grades' (protection des notes) followed on 1 September 2018 and was the subject of a series of requests. The Time-Out project, which aims to provide space for pupils aged 12 to 18 who experience difficulties at school or even leave school early, is anchored in the legislation by the decree of 18 June 2018 on measures concerning education and training (décret portant mesures en matière d'enseignement et de formation).

In *Flanders*, pupil guidance was reformed. This will have a key role in preventing unqualified outflow. The action plan against early school leaving (Samen tegen schooluitval) will be further rolled out. The plan includes more than 50 actions on the right to learning, truancy and early school leaving (32 actions have already been completed, the other half are ongoing). In Flanders, the adoption of the decree on dual learning ensures a fully-fledged qualifying learning pathway, in addition to full-time secondary education. The new system is meant to motivate students to make a positive and conscious choice for technical and vocational secondary education. This will contribute to reducing phenomena such as truancy, lack of motivation or a wrong choice of course of studies. The reformed adult education has a funding system that focuses more on vulnerable groups and on obtaining a secondary education diploma or a training certificate. In this way, adult education can continue to roll out as an alternative learning path leading to a diploma, in order to guide early school leavers towards a qualification. A new, more transparent and simpler classification of the second- and third-degree courses, and the possibility of setting up so-called 'domain' and 'campus' schools will benefit the process of study choice and orientation. One of the strategic objectives of the strategic literacy plan (Strategisch plan geleterdheid, 2017-2024) is to achieve a significant increase in the number of young people leaving secondary education with sufficient literacy skills, so that they are able to function independently and participate in society, as well as develop personally and continue to learn.

## 5.4. Energy and climate

Table 5: State of affairs in 2016 and 2017 and climate-energy objectives for 2020

	BE2016	BE2017	Target BE2020	Required change 2017-2020
Greenhouse gas emissions non ETS, scope 13-20 (Mt CO <sub>2</sub> eq)*	72.1	70.7	68.2	-2.5
Share of renewables (%)**	8.6	9.1	13.0	3.9 pp
Primary energy consumption (Mtoe)**	49.3	49.1	43.7	-5.4

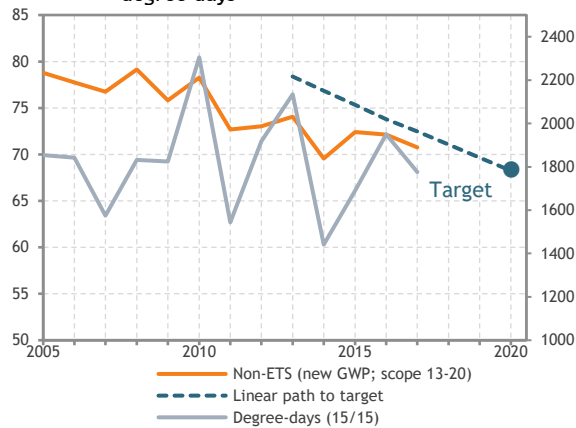
Sources: \*) [www.climat.be](http://www.climat.be) (February 2019); \*\*) Eurostat (February 2019).  
pp: percentage point.

The climate and energy package of the Europe 2020 strategy contains three targets for Belgium, to be achieved by 2020: (1) a 15% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) compared to 2005, in sectors not included in the European emissions trading system (non-ETS sectors), following a linear trajectory (yearly emission ceilings) from 2013 to 2020, (2) a 13% share for renewable energy in the gross final energy consumption and (3) an indicative target to reduce primary energy consumption by 18% compared to projections for 2020. The table and figures below visualise these targets and show Belgium's current position vis-à-vis the targets.

In 2017, greenhouse gas emissions in non-ETS sectors decreased for the second subsequent year to 70.7 Mt CO<sub>2</sub>-eq. They are well below the 2005 level (-10.2%) and stay below the reduction trajectory laid out for the 2013-2020 period (72.5 Mt CO<sub>2</sub>-eq in 2017). Emissions depend for a large part on heating requirements and 2017 was warmer than 2016.

**Graph 5: Greenhouse gas emissions reduction target in non-ETS sectors (scope 13-20)**

Left axis: Mt CO<sub>2</sub> eq.; right axis: number of degree days



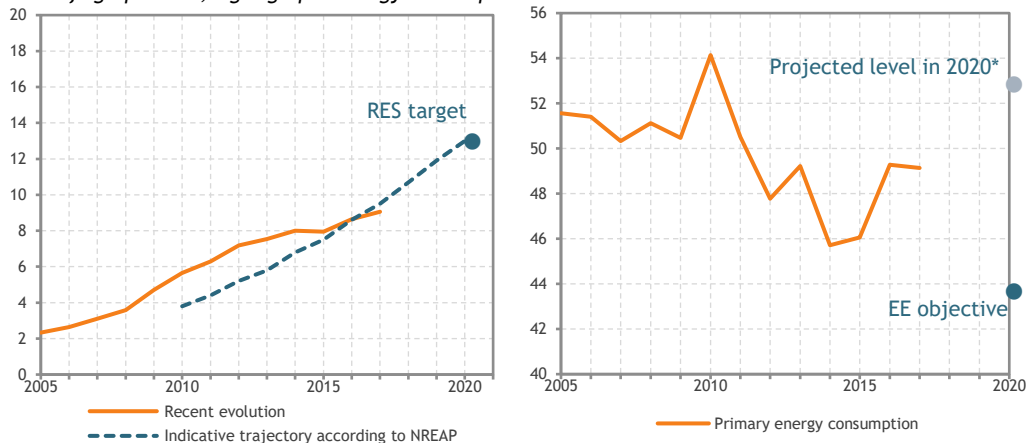
Source: www.climat.be (February 2019).

After a more moderate growth between 2012 and 2015 (see graph 6), the percentage of renewable energy in the gross final energy consumption increased steadily in 2016 and 2017. However, the percentage in 2017 is for the first time below the indicative trajectory as laid out in the Belgian Action Plan for renewable energy which was presented to the European Commission in November 2010: 9.1% vs. 9.5%. In 2017, the gap with the 13% target for 2020 was 3.9 percentage points.<sup>1</sup>

Finally, primary energy consumption, which is one of the two indicators used to define the indicative energy efficiency target, has decreased slightly compared to 2016. In 2017, primary energy consumption (49.1 Mtoe) was 5.4 Mtoe over the Belgian target of 43.7 Mtoe by 2020.

**Graph 6: Target for the share of renewable energy sources in gross final energy consumption (left) and the energy efficiency objective (right)**

Left graph: in %; right graph: energy consumption in Mtoe



Sources: Eurostat (February 2019), NREAP, EC (DG Energy, PRIMES baseline 2007).

NREAP = National Renewable Energy Action Plan (November 2010); RES = renewable energy sources; EE = energy efficiency.

\*) According to PRIMES baseline 2007.

Climate and energy competences are distributed over the federal level and the three Regions. On 20 January 2017, a cooperation agreement was signed with regards to the distribution of 2020 climate and energy targets over the Regions and the federal level and relating opportunities. More recently (December 2018), Belgium has completed and transmitted to the European Commission, its draft National Energy and Climate plan (NECP) which, among others, describes the Belgian objectives and policies as regards greenhouse gas emissions in non-ETS, renewable energy and energy efficiency in 2030. The main policy actions (excluding the investment strategies which are described extensively in chapter 4)

<sup>1</sup> Energy statistics for the year 2018 are not yet available. However, partial and provisional statistics exist for renewable electricity production. Thus, solar, wind and hydroelectric power generation would amount to 10.8 TWh in 2018 compared to 9.3 TWh in 2017, an increase of 16%.

that various entities have defined and decided in the context of the climate-energy objectives for 2020 and 2030, are briefly summarised below.

The *federal government* has committed to implementing new policy actions in the fields of mobility, renewables and energy taxation. Actions targeting mobility include the mobility allowance or ‘cash for car’ and the mobility budget (budget mobilité / mobiliteitsbudget). The mobility allowance provides an alternative to company cars provided by employers. This employees’ allowance is subject to the same fiscal and parafiscal system as the company cars. The relating act was approved by Parliament on 16 March 2018 (and entered into force retroactively on 1 January 2018). The mobility budget – based on proposals by the social partners – gives employees access to a more flexible mobility package in place of the company car. This budget is determined based on the ‘total cost of ownership’, the total yearly cost that the employer covers for the company car and relating costs (fuel, insurance, maintenance, taxes, etc.). Within this budget the employees can choose either (1) a cleaner car and/or (2) sustainable transport alternatives and/or (3) cash (balance). The relating act was approved by Parliament on 28 February 2019 to enter into force on 1 March 2019. Other actions focus on stimulating electrically-assisted cycling, reducing the energy consumption for the national railroad company for tractions as well as for other purposes, levelling excise duties on petrol and diesel, increasing the share of biofuels in petrol and diesel to 8.5% as from 1 January 2020 and elaborating an interfederal cooperation agreement on sustainable mobility by 2020 based on a common vision on mobility. As to fiscal matters, a plan for an environmental energy tax system will be elaborated jointly by the regional governments by 2021. Finally, it is worth noting the implementation of the Ecodesign directive and the regulation on fluorinated greenhouse gases.

In the *Brussels-Capital Region*, the government adopted the Region's contribution to the draft NECP in July 2018. This contribution comprises 52 measures of which at least 9 measures directly focus on the exemplarity of the public authorities. These measures will mainly be implemented from 2021 to 2030. In the building sector, the Brussels Climate Energy Plan consists mainly of the strategy to reduce the environmental impact of existing buildings in order to bring the building stock up to a high level of energy performance by 2050 (average 100 kWh/m<sup>2</sup>/year for the residential sector and energy neutrality for the tertiary sector). The decarbonisation of domestic heating and hot water production is also discussed: over the next decade, the installation of coal-fired (2021) and oil-fired (2025) heating systems will cease. With regard to renewable energy, the Brussels government hopes to produce 470 GWh of renewable energy by 2030 by giving more support to photovoltaic and thermal solar energy and heat pumps. In the field of transport, the concrete actions are described in the regional mobility plan *Good Move*, which could contribute to a 21% reduction in vehicle kilometres by 2030 (see section 3.3.3). The government has agreed to end diesel engines for light vehicles in 2030; petrol engines are expected to follow in the next decade. Finally, it should be noted that the Brussels government has decided to make progress on indirect emissions and measures that also contribute to improving air quality and thus the health of the population.

*Wallonia* has planned new climate and energy policies and measures in the framework of the draft NECP approved by the Walloon government in December 2018. These policies and measures aim to contribute to a 37% GHG emission reduction in the non-ETS sectors by 2030 compared to 2005 and to increase the share of renewable energy in gross final energy consumption from 12.1% in 2016 to 23.5% in 2030. To this end, emphasis is placed on wind energy and photovoltaic installations for electricity production and biomass for heat. Concrete measures include the *Pax Eolienica* approved in March 2018, which provides for 15 key measures to support the development of wind energy, and the definition in September 2018 of a global approach to the future of green certificates. In the field of energy efficiency, the cornerstone of Walloon policy is the long-term strategy for energy renovation of buildings adopted in April 2017. In addition to the energy efficiency projects covered by strategic investments, the reform of energy and renovation premiums for private dwellings and interest-free loans for the vulnerable population should also be highlighted. For transport, the mobility vision *FAST* (*Vision FAST – mobilité*

2030, see also section 4.1.1) aims at significantly reducing the energy consumption of passenger and freight transport. Of these actions, we should mainly emphasise a modal shift (to bicycles and public transport) and the greening of the vehicle park. Wallonia is also elaborating measures in flexible and smart energy networks, particularly with the adoption in July 2018 of a decree about smart meters deployment and flexibility.

*Flanders* committed to reducing non-ETS emissions by 15.7% by 2020 compared to 2005. The path towards and the actions to achieve this target are described in the Flemish mitigation plan (Vlaams mitigatieplan 2013-2020). On 9 February 2018, the second progress report was presented to the Flemish government. On 20 July 2018, the Flemish government approved a draft Flemish energy plan (Vlaams energieplan 2021-2030) and a draft Flemish climate policy plan (Vlaams klimaatbeleidsplan 2021-2030). By implementing this climate plan, Flanders aims to achieve a 35% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions in the non-ETS sectors by 2030 compared to 2005. The draft energy plan not only sets the framework for long-term energy policy, but also contains numerous concrete actions and initiatives to reduce energy consumption, to increase the share of renewable energy and to make the energy infrastructure smarter and more flexible. Flanders is taking various steps to improve energy efficiency. For example, the residential building sector sees the introduction of a renewed energy performance certificate, a unique digital home pass for each house, the gradual tightening of E-level requirements in the case of major building renovations, a ban on oil fuelled heating boilers (in case of new homes or deep renovations), etc. For the industry, the energy agreements for energy intensive industry were prolonged with 2 years, and 5 pilot projects on mini energy agreements for SMEs were set up. Initiatives taken in 2018 to increase renewable energy production include the implementation of the actions laid out in the concept notes on solar and wind energy (Zonneplan 2020 and Windkracht 2020, respectively) and a guarantee scheme for geothermal heat projects. The transport sector will see the implementation of the Flemish action plan Clean Power for Transport. Flanders is investing in flexible and smart energy networks: in 2019 the first digital meters will be installed for electricity and natural gas. In the framework of the fight against climate change, the Flemish government has adopted the climate action plan (Actieplan klimaat) on 29 March 2019 and has decided on the use of 75 million euros allocated to the climate fund (Klimaatfonds) as from May 2019.

## 5.5. Social inclusion

**Table 6: Social inclusion target**  
*In absolute figures x1000*

	BE2008	BE2017	Target BE2018	Required decrease 2017-2018
Population at risk of poverty or social exclusion	2 194	2 296	1 804	482

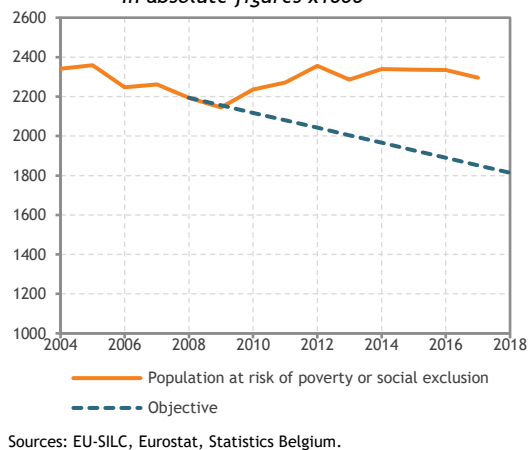
Sources: EU-SILC, Eurostat, Statistics Belgium.

The risk of poverty or social exclusion remained roughly stable between 2016 and 2017. There has also been no significant change since 2008. The percentage of people living in households with severe material deprivation has decreased from 5.6% to 5.1% since 2008, while the percentage of people living in households with very low work intensity has decreased since 2015 after previous increases but is still above the 2008 level: 13.5% compared to 11.7%. The percentage of people at risk of poverty rose steadily from 14.7% to 15.9%. The increase in the risk of poverty was mainly in specific groups such as the low-skilled population of working age and tenants.

### 5.5.1. Ensuring the social protection of the population

Social security must protect and activate. In the context of the tax shift, social security contributions have been significantly reduced in recent years to help more people find work, and on 1 January 2019, the last part of the increase in the net salary of employees (tax reduction) took effect in parallel. The

**Graph 7: Population at risk of poverty or social exclusion (EU2020 objective)**  
In absolute figures x1000



increase in net wages is highest for low wages. People who cannot work or who have few opportunities on the labour market must be guaranteed adequate social protection. Several measures were taken in this respect during the past year. On 1 May 2018, some amounts in the pension schemes for employees and the self-employed (holiday pay, welfare premium for older self-employed) and the catch-up premium for long-term disabled employees were increased on top of the price index adjustment. On 1 July 2018, the income replacement allowance for disabled persons and the integration income (category of family expenses) and the income guarantee for the elderly (amount for single persons and co-habitees) were increased. The integration allowance for people with disabilities also increased. As of

1 August 2018, the exemption on the income of the partner of a person with a disability for the calculation of the integration allowance was significantly increased. In January 2019, the MyBenefits app was launched that allows people to easily verify to which benefits they are entitled and to apply for a certificate themselves online. Paternity leave will be introduced in the social security system for self-employed persons and the waiting period for disabled self-employed persons will be reduced from 14 to 7 days (periods of illness longer than 7 days will be reimbursed from day one). In addition, the parliamentary committee decided that there would be an extension of the existing bridging right for self-employed persons in economic difficulties.<sup>2</sup> This will double the right from 12 months to a maximum of 24 months and also broaden the definition of the situations in which the applicant can benefit from the bridging right in order to better meet the needs of self-employed workers in economic or financial difficulties. The implementation of the welfare budget for the period 2019-2020 will further contribute to the effectiveness of social protection.

On 22 November 2018, the *Walloon Parliament* adopted the decrees on the social cohesion plan 2020-2025 (décrets relatifs au plan de cohésion sociale 2020-2025). The allowances are intended for the municipalities and social services (centres publics d'action sociale – CPAS / openbare centra voor maatschappelijk welzijn – OCMW). They will be calculated on the basis of population and a synthetic indicator of access to fundamental rights. The action plans should improve effective access to fundamental rights and promote solidarity and co-responsibility. The plan makes it possible to promote cooperation at local level. The Walloon government has also approved the creation of a civic service (Service citoyen), the aim of which is to employ 1,500 young volunteers by 2021 in order to promote their smooth integration into society. A final evaluation report on the implementation of the *federal* poverty reduction plan 2016-2019 (Federaal plan voor armoedebestrijding / Plan fédéral de lutte contre la pauvreté) will be submitted to the Council of Ministers in June 2019. In 2018, a new decree on local social policy came into force in *Flanders*, which should lead to local authorities playing an active role in directing social policy. In *Flanders*, action is taken to avoid food waste and to distribute surpluses to the most vulnerable. A web application 'De schenkingsbeurs' boosts the donation of quality food surpluses. In March 2019, the government of the *French Community* approved a draft decree that provides for the development of a comprehensive strategy against poverty and child poverty and for the reduction of social inequalities in all community policies. The government will be called upon to approve a five-year plan within six months of its arrival. The decree provides for the recognition and financing of

<sup>2</sup> The bridging right is a financial arrangement for self-employed people to bridge difficult circumstances by not paying social security contributions without losing social rights.

a maximum of two general knowledge centres and a specific centre 'experience experts' (Experts du vécu). Calls for projects will be organised every year.

### **5.5.2. Reducing child poverty**

While the implementation of the reforms in the various entities is continuing, the Parliament of the *German-speaking Community* adopted in April 2018 the decree on family benefits (décret relatif aux prestations familiales), which regulates the management and payment of benefits as from January 2019. The same basic amount (157 euros per month) and the same annual supplement (52 euros) were fixed for each child. From the 3rd child, a supplement is granted (135 euros per month). A new social supplement is particularly beneficial for economically weaker families (also for low-income earners (employees or self-employed)). The provisions of the new decree will contribute to reducing the risk of poverty. In *Flanders*, the focus of the poverty reduction policy remains on families with young children. The child benefit, paid by Flanders since January 2019 and converted into the Groeipakket (growth package), is more geared to children from low-income families. Furthermore, innovative, easily accessible initiatives are subsidised that support future families and families with young children. Support is now provided even earlier. In March 2019, *Wallonia* launched an information site and a network of reference persons for single-parent families. The aim is to better inform these families, who are more prone to the risk of poverty, about their rights. Since September 2018, the government of the *French Community* has been funding a pilot project on the distribution of free nutritious meals in nursery schools with differentiated supervision (for the most disadvantaged pupils). This project will make it possible to offer the children of the selected schools a free meal for 4 days per week for 2 years (approximately 650,000 meals per year offered to 5,000 children). From the school year 2019, free education will apply to nursery education. Save for a few exceptions, the amounts of which will be capped (sports and cultural activities and school trips), schools will no longer be allowed to charge school expenses to parents. The schools will provide the school supplies free of charge. A recent reform of childcare in the French Community aims to improve access to crèches for all families, with specific support measures for crèches which take care of the children of parents in a precarious situation. The *Brussels-Capital Region* has also adopted its new model of family benefits aimed at supporting families and combating child poverty. The model increases selectivity according to the financial needs of the families (mainly thanks to the social allowances that take into account the family income) so that the socio-economic profile of the Brussels population is taken into account. In 2018, a call for projects to combat child poverty (Bestrijding van kinderarmoede / Lutte contre la pauvreté infantile) was launched *at the federal level*. Since 1 November 2018, 20 social services (OCMW/CPAS) have started developing a local consultation platform. The aim is to contribute effectively to identifying problematic situations and to provide integrated support to children and their families.

### **5.5.3. Active inclusion of people far from the labour market**

In *Flanders*, ESF and VDAB are running several outreach projects to activate people far removed from the labour market, including people (households) in poverty, ex-prisoners and low-skilled women with a migration background. From 1 July 2018, work and care programmes started for people with medical, mental, psychological, psychiatric and/or social problems (this includes activation programmes and professional activities). There are also 22 subsidised projects that strengthen the informal networks of people in poverty through 'buddy work' based on the 'personal friend' model (Buddywerking and Persoonlijke vriend, respectively). Actiris, the *Brussels* regional employment service, is implementing a partnership with local operators to encourage migrants and newcomers to have their qualifications obtained abroad recognised. An agreement has been concluded for the period 2018-2022, which provides for the processing of 1,150 equivalence files for 2018. The *Walloon government* has announced the renewal for three years of the agreement with the non-profit organisation Lire et Ecrire en Wallonie, which is active in the fight against illiteracy, through, among other things, training courses for socio-professional integration. A specific focus is on foreigners. *At the federal level*, the individualised project

for social integration (Projet individualisé d'intégration sociale – PIIS / Geïndividualiseerd project voor maatschappelijke integratie – GPMI) is intended for the mutual empowerment of the beneficiary and the social services, with a view to the social and professional integration of people in a precarious situation. In 2018, 84,408 beneficiaries concluded a general PIIS/GPMI with their social services, representing 41.06% of social assistance beneficiaries. In mid-2018, a 2nd MIRIAM project was launched at 6 new OCMW/CPAS. This is a project for the empowerment of women in single-parent families who are entitled to the integration income. This project aims to break through social isolation and reduce poverty, with a particular focus on social-professional integration.

#### **5.5.4. Combating inadequate housing and homelessness**

In the *Brussels-Capital Region*, the ordinance of 14 June 2018 on emergency aid and the integration of homeless people provides for the creation of two public-law non-profit organisations. New Samusocial will act as an emergency reception operator, while Bruss'Help will act as coordinator of emergency and integration facilities. To strengthen the fight against discrimination in access to housing, the ordinance of 21 December 2018 amending the housing code (huisvestingscode / code du logement) tests that allow the existence of discrimination to be assumed and gives the administration the power to sanction discriminatory practices. Another ordinance of 21 December 2018 introducing a housing allowance in the Brussels-Capital Region, provides for the existing allowance to be generalised to all potential tenants of social housing in order to extend it to a wider public, particularly affected by poor housing. In June 2018, the *Walloon government* adopted a decree on the rental conditions for social housing, which will enable a better and faster response to the needs of tenants. The mechanisms to support renovation works for a more vulnerable public through a 0% loan will be simplified, as will the insurance against the risk of loss of earnings (intended for owners who have taken out a mortgage loan). Other initiatives relate to simplifying energy bills and reducing the costs of public service obligations in the context of energy bills. In November 2018, the government adopted a preliminary draft decree aimed at reforming the reception of Travellers, which aims to extend reception throughout the Region by means of adapted sites. As of 1 January 2020, recurring subsidies are provided for municipalities that already have a reception area. The Housing First project, which enables homeless people to find their place in society in the long term, will be strengthened and made sustainable. In *Flanders*, extra resources were invested in the prevention of evictions. The fund set up for this purpose was reformed to increase its effectiveness. The growth path for social housing will be continued with particular attention to energy renovation. The Flemish government has drawn up an energy poverty programme (Energiearmoedeprogramma) with 34 concrete actions which - according to the annual evaluations - has been almost completely implemented.

#### **5.5.5. Reception and integration of people from a migrant background**

As of 1 July 2018, three projects were launched at *federal level* to provide specific training for social services staff on how to recognise psychosocial disorders among newcomers from third countries (non-EU) and how to respond to them. In December 2017, the *German-speaking Community* adopted a decree on the integration of people with a migration background (décret concernant l'intégration des personnes issues de la migration). The integration programme provided for by the decree consists of four stages: reception, a language course, an integration course and a discussion about social-professional integration. It is compulsory for some people, but open to all migrants. A reference centre for integration, in charge of guidance, organises legal advice, supports organisations working with migrants and raises awareness among the population. In addition to the integration process, other measures were taken and provided for in the decree on integration and coexistence in diversity (décret relatif à l'intégration et au vivre ensemble dans la diversité). In *Flanders*, extra resources were made available for the tailor-made integration offer that should contribute to the full participation of persons of foreign origin in society. One project concerns the importance of parental involvement for sustainable participation of children aged 3 to 6 years. The approach of the successful project that stimulates integration

through work (Integratie door werk; with 45% outflow to work after two years; Flanders is a forerunner in Europe) was further finetuned and embedded in the regular operation of the VDAB. In November 2018, the *Walloon Parliament* adopted the decree on the integration process, which provides for an increase in the budget. Particular attention is paid to unaccompanied minors. With the help of the ERDF, the government of the *Brussels-Capital Region* supports the cross-cutting work of the humanitarian centre, located near the North Station of Brussels, run by Doctors of the World in collaboration with 7 other non-governmental organisations offering various services to migrants (medical and psychological care, social, legal and administrative support).



## 6. Other reforms

At the *federal level*, a notable reform of economic law has taken place. It consists of several components. The first one relates to insolvency law. Insolvency law now applies to enterprises in the broad sense. Not-for-profit organisations, the liberal professions and farmers experiencing financial difficulties may now also assert the right to insolvency, which was not previously the case. Legislators have decided to digitise insolvency files, which are turning into electronic files managed by means of the insolvency register (Centraal Register Solvabiliteit / Registre central de la solvabilité). Second-chance entrepreneurship is being encouraged. Failure should no longer have a stigmatising effect. A debtor may now, during bankruptcy proceedings, start a new business the earnings of which are not included in the insolvency estate. An amicable settlement outside of a judicial reorganisation procedure is made more attractive by the introduction of an informal procedure making possible the approval of the settlement and its enforceability, if the parties so wish.

The second component of the reform relates to business law. The concept of ‘enterprise’ will now also include the liberal professions, farmers and the non-profit sector. It will also constitute a connecting factor for the crossroads bank for enterprises (Banque-carrefour des entreprises – BCE / Kruispuntbank voor Ondernemingen – KBO), financial accountability, the jurisdiction of the commercial court (rechtbank van Koophandel / Tribunal de commerce) and insolvency law. The commercial court has been renamed into ‘enterprise court’ (Tribunal des entreprises / Ondernemingsrechtbank) and it has jurisdiction over the new concept of ‘enterprise’.

The third component of economic law reform relates to the draft law on companies and associations. In the future, both companies and associations will be able to be profit-making. A distinction between the two will be made based on the criterion of direct or indirect distribution of profits. At the same time, the draft law reduces, for the sake of simplification, the number of company forms to four, namely the ordinary partnership, the private limited company, the public limited company and the cooperative company. In addition, the registered office doctrine is being introduced in Belgium, alongside the possibility of the cross-border transfer of registered offices. This will enable Belgium to attract foreign companies, even though their centres of economic interest are located elsewhere. Finally, association law is being integrated into the companies and associations code (Wetboek van Vennootschappen en Verenigingen / Code des sociétés et des associations) in the framework of which the common provisions are, where possible, made applicable to associations and foundations.

The Committee on Trade and Economic Law of the *federal Parliament* has approved an amendment to Book IV (on protection of competition) of the economic law code. The purpose of the amendment is to improve compliance with competition law and the functioning of the Belgian competition authority (Belgische Mededingingsautoriteit – BMA / Autorité belge de la concurrence – ABC) in order to make procedures more efficient and to avoid further disputes before the market court (Cour des marchés / Marktenhof). Moreover, the Parliament has approved a legislative proposal to amend Book VI (on abuse of a significant dominant position). The amendment of the law – also called the B2B Act – introduces a general legal framework regulating such practices. The essence is a ban on four practices in business-to-business relations: (1) abuse of a position of economic dependence; (2) abusive terms; (3) aggressive market practices; and (4) misleading market practices.

The policy of the competitiveness poles remains central to the economic conversion strategy of the *Walloon Region* and forms the backbone of the regional strategy for smart specialisation (Stratégie régionale de spécialisation intelligente). Its implementation will continue through regular calls for projects, while giving new impetus to internationalisation and participation in European programmes, training, innovation and digitisation, and inter-polar cooperation. An example from the field of plastic recycling can

be found in section 5.2.2 of this report. A process is also under way to renew the jury of the poles and the financing modalities of the operational cells are being considered. At European level, Wallonia is notably actively involved in the pilot projects of the Vanguard Initiative and will participate in several partnerships for interregional cooperation selected by the European Commission. To support the internationalisation of Walloon companies, the government launched an export council (Conseil wallon de l'exportation) in January 2019. One reason for this is the observation that Walloon exports are concentrated in certain sectors and large companies and are very dependent on neighbouring countries as customers. The council is composed of actors from the field and experts. Before 1 October, an internationalisation strategy for Walloon companies must be drawn up. The export council will also have to make concrete recommendations each year, both in terms of the internationalisation of businesses and the attractiveness of the Region to foreign investors.

In January 2019, the government of the *Brussels-Capital Region* adopted a new vision and industrial strategy (Vision et stratégie industrielles bruxelloises), which sets the tone for an urban industry over the next 20 years. The driving forces behind this urban industrial renewal are based on Brussels' talent pool, the search for urban value chains, a more intensive application of the circular economy, an industry anchored in the city of the future and the optimisation of urban logistics in favour of productive activities.

In *Flanders*, the cluster policy is at cruising speed with 6 spearhead clusters<sup>3</sup> and 20 innovative business networks (innovatieve bedrijfsnetwerken – IBN). In 2018, 6 new IBNs were selected and the 5th and 6th spearhead clusters were launched: Flanders' Food in the agro-food sector and De Blauwe Cluster in the marine and maritime sector (blue economy). The latter was signed on 15 February 2019 by the Flemish government and companies from various sectors. The intention is for the government, together with companies and researchers, to work on sustainable and innovative possibilities in and around the North Sea. The Flemish government invests up to 500,000 euros per year in the operating resources of the cluster for a period of ten years. In addition, a reserved amount is earmarked for project funding (for all clusters together approximately 60 million euros in 2018 and 80 million euros in 2019). As part of Industry 4.0, ten new pilot projects were selected at the beginning of 2019 that will start operating as from April. 4 million euros is available, and the aim is to cover even more industrial sectors and themes.

The issue of entrepreneurship has already been discussed largely in the context of administrative simplification in section 3.3.1. There are still a few initiatives for target groups to be mentioned. There are three *federal level*, three initiatives are notable to report. In order to encourage and promote the entrepreneurial initiative of persons of foreign origin, a call for projects was launched. Each winning project received a grant of 35,000 euros. Within the framework of the student-entrepreneur status, a symposium was organised to highlight the advantages of the status. In the framework of the calls for projects for female entrepreneurship – launched in 2017 – the achievements of the four winning projects that received a grant were monitored. In order to support female entrepreneurship, the *Walloon Region* will also be introducing a measure for managers on maternity leave. As from 2019, the Region will contribute, under certain conditions, 75% of the salary of the replacement manager. The annual budget available is 450,000 euros.

Within the framework of the *Flemish* climate plan (Vlaams klimaatbeleidsplan 2021-2030, see also section 5.4), the Flemish government intends to use the potential of the circular economy for reducing greenhouse gas emissions by: (1) establishing an investment plan for companies switching to product/service combinations; (2) examining a tax shift from labour to non-circular products; and (3) including circular priority rules among the criteria for public tenders. The agency for the circular economy (Vlaanderen Circulair) continued to work on circular purchases, the circular city and circular business

---

<sup>3</sup> Catalists, Sim, Flux50, VIL, Flanders' Food and the Blue Cluster

in 2018. A second call for funding of innovative projects within the framework of the circular economy was launched. Thus, in 2018 an amount of 5.3 million euros was reserved for new projects. In 2018, the innovation agency VLAIO launched a continuous, open call for transition priorities (Transitieprioriteiten) within the spearhead clusters. The Green Deal on circular purchases has 165 participants at the beginning of 2019, with each purchasing party committing to carry out at least two circular economy pilot projects by June. In early 2019, Green Deal on building will also be launched, with additional funds for a pilot project to experiment with new building and dismantling methods with more sustainable material management methods. Via the holding that focuses on the environment (Vlaamse Milieuholding), 30 million euros of extra risk capital has been reserved for participation in companies that invest in new technologies or new business models able to contribute to the circular economy. In March 2018, the *Walloon government* adopted a waste reduction plan (Plan wallon des déchets-ressources). More than 700 actions are proposed through 157 measures, including actions on food packaging, repair cafés, leasing of (household) appliances, waste sorting and recycling as industrial raw material. In June 2018, the *FPS Economy* published a brochure on the circular economy. A study day on the subject will be held in 2019 as part of the Single Market Forum. The knowledge centre on sustainable economy (Centre de connaissance économie durable / Kenniscentrum Duurzame Economie) regularly updates a roadmap for the circular economy and develops indicators for it.

In addition to the European structural and investment funds, and as part of the NPSI, the *federal* participation and investment company (Federale Participatie- en Investeringsmaatschappij – FPIM / Société fédérale de participations et d’investissement – SFPI), AG Insurance and Synatom jointly established the Infrastructure Fund I4B – The Belgian Infrastructure Fund – in February 2019. This fund is intended for investments of up to 2 billion euros in the infrastructure sector over the long term to promote its development in Belgium and to support Belgian companies in their infrastructure projects in Europe.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> With 150 million euros, or 50 million euros from each of the founders, the fund's capital can be increased at a later stage to 250 million euros, making it possible to support infrastructure investment projects to the tune of approximately 2 billion euros.

## 7. Involvement of stakeholders

### 7.1. At political level

The elaboration of the National Reform Programme (NRP) is the result of intensive cooperation between the federal government and the governments of the Regions and Communities. The regional and community governments in turn involve various actors in the development of their own programmes (Annexes 1 to 5). Cooperation between the federal government and the Community and Regional governments is also reflected in the bilateral meetings between the European Commission and Belgium, which are organised throughout the European Semester, as well as in preparation for and during the fact-finding mission.

In addition, the implementation of reforms in a federal state requires good coordination between the different levels of government. The consultation committee (Comité de Concertation / Overlegcomité) provides the institutionalised and permanent framework for this structured coordination. The Jobs deal and the National Pact for Strategic Investments are two concrete examples of reforms and investments the implementation of which involves the coordination and active participation of the various governments. Moreover, this coordination leads to the conclusion of cooperation agreements between the Federal State and the federated entities or between federated entities themselves in their respective areas of competence. Numerous cooperation agreements were concluded in 2018, including in the areas of health, child benefits, climate and energy, digitisation, the transposition of European directives on the free movement of third-country nationals, the promotion of the international role of Brussels and environmental protection, etc. The list of these agreements is included in Annex 8.

Likewise, the social partners and civil society were also involved in the development and progress of the programme. Their contributions are attached to the document (Annexes 9 to 11). Dialogue and mutual cooperation with the different sectors of our economy are a priority for the different governments. In section 7.2, the participation of the social partners within the central economic council (Centrale Raad voor het bedrijfsleven – CRB / Conseil central pour l'économie – CCE) and the national labour council (Conceil national du travail – CNT / Nationale Arbeidsraad – NAR) in the preparation of the NRP and – more generally – their contribution to the European Semester will be discussed in more detail. The opinions given by the national high council for disabled persons (Nationale Hoge Raad voor Personen met een Handicap – NHRPH / Conseil supérieur national des personnes handicapées – CSNPH) and the federal council for sustainable development (Conseil fédéral du développement durable – CFDD / Federale Raad voor Duurzame Ontwikkeling – FRDO) are summarised in section 7.3.

### 7.2. At the level of social dialogue

Belgium has a strong tradition of collective bargaining and social dialogue. The social partners conclude on an ongoing basis collective bargaining agreements and other agreements at intersectoral, sectoral and company level. Furthermore, they are on the management committees of most social security institutions. They are also members of federal and regional consultative bodies and are informed and consulted by public authorities at all levels on all policy areas of concern to them. They are also often asked to help implement policies decided on by the authorities. The Law of 1996 gives the CCE/CRB the permanent task of monitoring the state of Belgium's competitiveness. This law, which was amended in 2017, requires the CCE/CRB to draw up an employment and competitiveness report (Verslag werkgelegenheid-concurrentievermogen / Rapport emploi-compétitivité). This year, the report will not be published until May.

This approach has also been pursued in the context of the European Semester. The federal social partners are kept constantly informed of the progress of the semester via the representatives in the committees (the EMCO and SPC delegations periodically inform the CNT/NAR, the EPC delegation is regularly invited by the CRB/CCE). They are invited annually to contribute to the NRP. The social partners were again involved this year.

Likewise, they are also consulted between the publication of the draft country-specific recommendations and their discussion in the Council committees and bodies - although often under time pressure, as the procedural deadlines are very short.

The Regions and Communities also organise consultations with the social partners, each according to their own practices, within the framework of the semester. The European Commission itself also organises regular meetings with the social partners, including in the run-up to the drafting of the Country Report, and traditionally the Belgian partner organisations are also very active in their respective European umbrella organisations.

The design and implementation of the policy within the framework of the European Semester takes place, in particular in the field of employment and social policy, generally also in cooperation with the social partners. This may involve prior advice on the proposed policy, such as federal measures within the framework of the law on flexible and workable work (*loi sur le travail faisable et maniable / wet wendbaar en werkbaar werk*), or prior agreements between the social partners, which are then transposed into legislation, such as the Flemish reform of training incentives for employees.

In its opinion, as given in Annex 9, the CRB/CCE identifies the priorities and challenges for Belgium's economic policy, namely social cohesion, wealth creation, environmental sustainability, the sustainability of public finances and the current account balance. In addition, various focal points are highlighted: good regulation, lifelong learning, the development of multimodality, the development of high-growth companies, the links between productivity and employment, energy and climate. Finally, the following economic challenges are listed: disruptive innovation and the spread of innovation, the transition to a circular economy, sustainable social security, the labour market mismatch, price development, the energy transition to a low-carbon economy and sustainable and smooth mobility. The CRB/CCE also recalls the importance of structural measures to consolidate public finances by focusing on increasing productivity and the employment rate, while striking a balance between budgetary rules and the capacity to strengthen growth through productive investments.

The CNT/NAR focused its opinion on the second and third specific recommendations (given in Annex 9 as well). In this context, it refers to its work on the regulation of the reintegration of workers with health problems, diversity and equality policies, the employment of older workers, administrative simplification and the mobility budget. In addition, the CNT/NAR worked on the prevention of burn-out, forward-looking work organisation, the digitisation of the economy and collaborative economy, temporary work, restructuring with a view to adapting the so-called 'Renault Act' and the link between welfare and social benefits.

### **7.3. The involvement of the NHRPH/CNSPH and the CFDD/FRDO**

In its opinion (No 2019/03 of 7 March 2019, see Annex 10), the NHRPH/CNSPH refers to several priorities for people with disabilities, such as the effective increase in employment rate, reform of the regulatory framework for their social protection, accessibility and quality of training, accessibility of transport, the pension and end-of-career schemes for people with disabilities and their carers, the use of European structural funds for policies to support people with disabilities and their families. It also calls for the adoption of a plan to combat poverty and social exclusion of all vulnerable groups. Finally, it calls for a uniform definition of disability to be applied across the board.

Finally, in its opinion of 15 March 2019 (Annex 11), the CFDD/FRDO emphasises the horizontal integration of the objectives of the Sustainable Development Agenda 2030 into the different policies and their vertical integration between the various government levels (as in the National Energy and Climate Plan, for example). In particular, it advocates an inter-federal vision on mobility and underscores the need for a large-scale energy efficiency investment programme. The CFDD/FRDO calls for such investments to be excluded from the public deficit calculation. It calls for a tax system that promotes the energy transition. As far as mobility is concerned, it advocates intermodality, which requires an increase and integration of transport supply, with a structuring role for rail transport at national and European level

## Annex 1: Reform programme of the Walloon Region

### 1 Introduction

Based on the new **Regional Policy Declaration** adopted in July 2017, the Walloon government has continued its reform programme, with priorities being employment creation, innovation, the competitiveness of the Walloon economic fabric, and in particular that of SMEs, and the response to labour shortages. With this in mind, the government has also continued its implementation of the **Walloon Investment Plan** which was adopted in January 2018. This Plan is part of the National Strategic Investment Pact.

Improving both governance and the efficiency of public policy are the government's guiding principles.

The following chapters will set out the main measures adopted or being developed as part of the implementation of government priorities, in line with the Country Specific Recommendations (CSR) and the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy. This year, specific focus is also given to investment projects (chapter 3).

### 2 Response to the Country Specific Recommendations

#### ***2.1 Recommendation n°1: Consolidation and sustainability of public finances, tax reform***

##### **Budgetary consolidation**

In accordance with the commitments made as part of the regional policy declaration, the Walloon government has decided to continue implementation of a budgetary policy aimed at ensuring a return to balance.

Two main principles have guided the work to prepare the initial budget for 2019:

- A better matching of expenditure to real needs, by safeguarding priority policies, and a reorientation of operating expenditure towards investment;
- A mobilisation of revenues that does not affect the purchasing power of Walloons.

Given the relatively favourable situation in terms of revenues, Wallonia has chosen a responsible path by prioritising a return to balance rather than strict compliance with the path adopted by the Stability Pact. In effect, although the commitments under the Pact allowed a deficit of €117 million in 2019 and a return to balance in 2020, Wallonia preferred to achieve a balance as early as 2019.

In doing so, the government aims to ensure that Wallonia is ready to fully take over the powers transferred by the 6<sup>th</sup> state reform and the impact of accountability mechanisms. 2019 is a turning point in this respect, with the takeover of responsibilities in various areas, primarily social matters (including family allowance). It should be noted that in terms of taxation, a budget has been set aside to ensure smooth takeover of responsibilities for withholding tax on income from real estate, in 2021.

€ million	2019	2020	2021	2022
Nominal objective	0	11	14	0

Continuing the reforms initiated in 2018, and making them permanent, the government has decided to intensify the policies considered structural and promising for the socio-economic development of the Region. As such:

- **Investments** have been intensified by ramping-up the Walloon Investment Plan and extending the Infrastructure Plans. In this way, Wallonia fully meets the federal government's policy of pursuing an ambitious investment policy. In this respect, the Region actively supports the steps taken by the Federal Government to relax the flexibility rules, to boost potential growth.
- As regards policies to support economic activity and employment, the government has decided to **make the initiatives under the previous plans structural** by making the actions that have proved their effectiveness permanent, in order to guarantee an economically attractive, innovative and internationally recognised region.
- In the area of **social policy**, the Walloon government has consolidated the schemes for solidarity and social integration, and has laid the foundations for an insurance scheme for autonomy, aimed at meeting the challenge of ageing, among other things.
- In order to meet the challenge of the **energy transition** and tackle the climate challenges, the government has set aside significant resources to strengthen the policies already initiated. In addition to the lasting solution finally provided to the photovoltaic issue, the government has set aside the resources to take on the new guidelines for renovation bonuses and energy efficiency bonuses, to ensure the large-scale deployment of charging points for electric vehicles, to guarantee the implementation of the Energy Pact, etc.

Various measures to make **structural savings** are also planned: Savings on the operating costs of the Wallonia Public Service (SPW) and Public Administration Units (PAU), the non-indexation of PAU contributions, reform of employment subsidies, and reduction of the allocation to the Provincial Fund.

In order to improve the Region's budgetary and financial management, the government has decided to create a **Strategic Centre for Fiscal and Financial Expertise** (CSEFF in French), which will merge three existing structures (Tax Unit for expertise and strategic support, Financial Information Unit (CIF in French), and the Debt Agency, in creation). The objective is to ensure professional management of debt, and greater efficiency and synergy in the Region's fiscal and financial policy. Its missions taken over from the Debt Agency will focus on financing and managing Wallonia's debt, treasury management, monitoring guaranteed debts and supporting Walloon institutions with funding issues. It will also advise the government upstream of the tax process, during the design or redefinition phase of a given tax, as well as downstream, when it comes to assessing the impact of tax provisions (whether the budgetary, socio-economic or legal impact).

Finally, in terms of **evaluating public policy**, an assessment of the Marshall Plan 4.0 is ongoing, under the supervision of IWEPS (Walloon Institute for Assessment, Forecasting and Statistics). The various reports will be published by May 2019.



## Tax

Various tax reforms have also been implemented. Firstly, it was decided to take over **services for the withholding tax on income from real estate** from 1 January 2021, with the aim of helping to improve the levying and collection of these taxes, as part of a policy of administrative simplification, improving the quality of service to taxpayers and providing the necessary tools to organise the government's tax policy.

Secondly, a range of tax provisions have been simplified, in particular as regards **donations**. As regards 'lines' (direct line, spouse and cohabitants, siblings, etc.), this has been brought into alignment with the other two regions, with only 2 lines being retained (one direct line between children, spouses and legal cohabitants, and one between other persons) and 4 brackets; as such, the previous 39 different tax rates have been reduced to 8. As regards main residences, it was decided to abolish the current system with multiple tax rates, which simplifies the system and brings it into line with the other two regions. From now on, homeowners will be able to retain 100% of the usufruct of their main residence at a much lower rate than in the past.

The aims of this reform are to generate additional revenue by enabling an increase in donations, give people a free choice on the type of rights donated, strengthen the tax attractiveness of the Region and facilitate mobility in real estate.

To support the **new districts** (management of urban sprawl by regenerating brownfield sites, among other things), an exemption from the withholding tax on income from real estate will be applied to buildings located in these areas.

Finally, it was decided to implement **a mechanism for conditional exemption from sharing, donation and succession duties for properties listed as monuments**. This tax regime implies that the amount of the exempted duties will have to be allocated to maintenance, repair or restoration work. The decree entered into force on 1 January 2019.

It should also be noted that **vehicle taxation** is also currently being considered, in order to take into account the climate and environmental efficiency criteria for vehicles (see section 2.3).

## Sustainability of public finances and long-term care

In order to meet the challenges of sustainable public finances, particularly in the long-term care sector, the Walloon government has continued the projects undertaken following the transfer of powers, and has launched new policies.

As such, **Walloon social protection** has been implemented. This includes long-term care, mobility aids and insurance for autonomy in order to facilitate independence at home for as long as possible. It also allows for recourse to long-term care when the situation requires it.

Wallonia has set up an agency responsible for social protection, in which a financial and budgetary monitoring unit is tasked with developing mechanisms to define, follow up and monitor expenditure and revenue. This agency issues opinions which are then submitted to the General Council which is responsible for arbitration and ensuring the sustainability of the Walloon social protection system. In addition, seven 'Agreements Committees' per discipline (Hospitals, Mental Health, Autonomy and High Dependency, etc.) have been set up with the aim of determining funding needs, among other things, and three 'Branch Committees' (Disability, Families, Welfare and Health) responsible for drawing up the budgets that concern them and submitting a decision on the work of the Agreements Committees.

The planning is linked to the transfer of powers as of 1 January 2019. However, measures have been adopted to ensure continuity, such as setting out the budget model, financing and monitoring procedures, using specific tools.

The government has also adopted a reform of the **support to seniors** and the modalities for implementing **insurance for autonomy** (see section 4.4). The first contributions will be paid in 2020, and services will be provided from 2021 onwards.

In addition, the Walloon government has validated the decree framework that **reforms the sector for prevention and health promotion** in Wallonia. The reform envisages a modification of the modalities of support to actors (multi-year approval, annual funding and no longer per project), and the implementation of monitoring and forecasting tools. In this context, the **first Prevention and Health Promotion Plan** (PPPS in French) in Wallonia was adopted in December 2018. This PPPS is made up of 5 thematic strands defined according to their importance in terms of health: (1) Promoting living environments; (2) Promoting good mental health and overall well-being; (3) Preventing chronic diseases; (4) Preventing infectious diseases including vaccination policy; (5) Preventing trauma and promoting safety.

Finally, a **Walloon Anti-Smoking Plan 2018-2030** was adopted in May 2018. The envisaged actions are based on 3 objectives: prevention, quitting smoking and reducing exposure to smoke. The plan is based on various strategic strands, including training professionals, targeting the most disadvantaged people at the socio-economic level, a comprehensive approach to addiction, and assessing the effectiveness of actions.

## ***2.2 Recommendation 2: Improving the effectiveness of active labour market policies, continuing reforms of education and training systems***

With regard to employment and training policies, the Walloon government has given priority to three major projects: reforming employment aid and the response to labour shortages, and the development of sectors of excellence for work-study training.

As such, the government has adopted the **reform of the Aid for Promoting Employment (APE in French)**, however the legislative process is not completed. The reform is based on six key principles:

- Simplification: one single subsidy, scrapping of the points-based system, simplification for employers, scrapping of the APE passport;
- Transparency: publication of a registry with the entry into force of the decree;
- Fairness and efficiency: equal treatment in terms of the activity deployed and social performance, subsidies granted on the basis of objective criteria (set by each functional minister);
- Accountability: Increased accountability of functional ministers in rebalancing subsidies;
- Structural assistance to local authorities, the non-profit sector and education: support and re-financing of key services such as early childhood services, assistance for people with disabilities, out-of-school care, etc., and projects that are essential to the community and meet the principles of good governance;
- Budget control: increased budget envelope, indexed but closed, control of the budgetary trajectory following the 6<sup>th</sup> State reform.

A transitional phase is planned for 2020 before the entry into force of the reform on 1 January 2021, with a phasing-out period over this first year.

In order to **tackle labour shortages**, three key measures were adopted in July 2018:

- The reform of the Training and Integration Plan (PFI in French): this aims to simplify the scheme, make it more flexible and bring it into line with the needs of companies in order to make it more useful. This entered into force in early 2019.
- The introduction of a new financial incentive for training in professions with a labour shortage (Incentive+): a financial incentive of €350 is offered to any jobseeker who successfully completes training in a profession with a labour shortage. In addition to this incentive, jobseekers receive coaching to prepare them for the job interview that will be guaranteed at the end of their training. The measure was adopted at the end of February 2019, with retroactive application from 1 September 2018. The new list of professions with a labour shortage has also been published by Forem.
- The "Helping hand for labour shortages" action: this aims to act rapidly and in a targeted manner on serious shortages facing companies, whether large or small businesses. Specifically, as soon as one or more companies are looking for at least 8 workers for the same function, they can submit an application to Forem. Forem will propose a tailor-made programme: joint selection of candidates and a flexible training plan. At the end of the training, recruitment for at least 80% of jobseekers who have successfully completed their training is guaranteed.

In addition, a memorandum of understanding was signed in August 2018 with more than 21 sectoral federations of companies and sectoral funds, who have undertaken to raise awareness among employers of these measures, and develop collaborations with Competence Centres, FOREM, IFAPME and businesses, in order to ensure their implementation.

In December 2018, the government also adopted the decree **repealing the decree on the integration contract**. This measure, in effect since 2017, had not met its objectives. The freed-up budgetary resources have been reallocated towards measures to tackle labour shortages.

It was also decided to invest in **developing sectors of excellence for work-study training**. As part of the Walloon Investment Plan, the government has approved a project for the renovation and creation of IFAPME training centres, with a budget of €10 million for the period 2019-2022.

As regards integrating the people furthest from the labour market, Wallonia obtained support from the **Support programme for structural reform** at the end of February 2019 to help it develop recognition for the results of formal and non-formal training for the least qualified people who are furthest from the labour market.

In collaboration with the Wallonia-Brussels Federation, Wallonia is also pursuing actions to **promote scientific training and digital skills**. As such, in the area of science promotion, a grant of €462,000 was awarded in December 2018 to the 5 French-speaking universities to finance the "PROMOSCI 14" programme which is implemented by the network of dissemination units for science and technology of the 5 Faculties of Science of the French-speaking universities. This programme aims to valorise scientific and technical studies and careers. In addition, the investment drive in schools is continuing through the 'Digital Schools' project, and the launch of several initiatives for awareness-raising and training in coding for young people and jobseekers (see section 4.2).

Various initiatives can also be highlighted in the **fight against discrimination and the promotion of diversity**. Firstly, at the second reading, the Walloon Government adopted a preliminary draft decree

amending the decree of 6 November 2008 on the fight against certain forms of discrimination. The objective is to reinforce the prevention of, fight against and possibilities for action and criminalisation of discrimination, in particular by refining and clarifying the various forms of discrimination, extending the list of protected and related criteria, and extending protection to a wider public (people directly affected but also relatives, whether or not they are witnesses).

Then, as part of the year of **Diversity in the Public Service** launched in October 2018, a Charter was signed to encourage all staff of the Walloon administration to commit to combating all forms of discrimination. The Charter sets out a range of general principles, which have been translated into an action plan for 2018-2020. Among the envisaged actions are the promotion of the 'e-div' tool, a free online tool that helps people learn about anti-discrimination legislation in a fun and accessible way, training in diversity and equality management, and the development of communication tools that will enable people with disabilities to be better integrated into a public service.

### **2.3 Recommendation 3: Reduce the administrative and regulatory burden to boost entrepreneurship, increase competition in service sectors and address mobility challenges**

#### **Administrative simplification for entrepreneurs and SMEs**

Administrative simplification and rationalising the business support schemes are priorities for the Walloon government. Various projects have been continued or initiated in this regard.

**Administrative simplification** measures are at the heart of the Administration Plan of the SPW, in particular through its strategic objective "So simple, so digital", which is still being implemented, particularly in terms of digitising procedures. In particular, we can highlight the digitisation of reporting on research grants and the creation of a single online portal for company cheques. The Walloon government has also approved a new Digital Strategy for the SPW, with the aim of improving user services and the management of related processes by implementing e-administration.

As part of the Walloon Investment Plan, in October 2018 the Walloon Government also announced **50 simplification measures to facilitate investment**. This includes facilitating and accelerating administrative procedures, in particular by digitisation (environmental and urban planning permits, expropriation procedures, reviews of sector plans, etc.), improving governance in the management of projects and grants, simplifying and facilitating local investment, facilitating companies' access to public procurement contracts (by digitising procedures, increasing dialogue between SMEs and buyers via the Observatory for public procurement, supporting SMEs during public procurement procedures, making the use of standard specifications for buildings more widespread). The first phase of the digitisation project for the urban planning permit is planned for the end of 2019, for a selection of maximum 8 pilot municipalities. This will include the filling-in, submission and follow-up of applications online, and access to a helpdesk.

In addition, the major project to **reform economic and financial tools** initiated in 2017 resulted in a rationalisation of the structures in 2018. Two clusters have been consolidated: one dedicated to investment and financing of companies, as well as economic development, and therefore merging the activities of SRIW, SOWALFIN and the Agency for Enterprise and Innovation. The other is dedicated to companies in turnaround or restructuring, including site remediation, and therefore comprising the current activities of SOGEPA and SPAQuE. In this context, a **one-stop shop (www.1890.be)** aimed at anyone wishing to start or develop an economic activity in Wallonia, has been available since December 2018. Implemented by SOWALFIN, this one-stop shop will be used to guide entrepreneurs according to their situation, and will be the first point of contact for Walloon SMEs. Specifically, this one-stop shop is based around three channels. In the first instance, interested entrepreneurs will have access to simplified

online information. They can then be put in contact with an agent by telephone. Finally, in the case of specific situations, an appointment can be made to pinpoint needs and provide an appropriate solution. These interviews may be conducted either by SOWALFIN's internal advisors, or by public partners (from operators active in economic development) or private partners (consultants or auditors, for example). Thanks to the implementation of this one-stop shop, SMEs will consequently have easier access to public support and benefit from a solution tailored to their needs (whether in terms of support, financial assistance, financing or investment solutions).

In parallel to this reform, a **memorandum of understanding was signed with the IPCF (Professional Institute of Chartered Accountants and Tax Consultants) and the IEC (Institute of Chartered Accountants and Tax Consultants)**, organisations representing accountants, in order to strengthen the support for Walloon SMEs. Specifically, in the context of the 'Airbag' scheme, if the applicant is accompanied by a professional recognised by either of the Institutes, they will be exempted from various administrative formalities. This new possibility available to self-employed candidates, together with the substantial administrative simplification, has brought the system more into line with the expectations and needs of Walloon entrepreneurs. In addition, accountants will become reference points in the context of obtaining information on the PFI (Training and Integration Plan). Finally, accountants will also be able to play an active advisory role in obtaining information on Walloon financial tools and the SESAM schemes (which consists of financial aid to enable small businesses to recruit jobseekers registered with FOREM) and company cheques, which make it possible to support the creation, development and advancement of Walloon companies, and which are subdivided into 11 themes, including "international development" cheques and "coaching in business start-up" cheques.

## **Retail trade and services**

The **decree on commercial establishments** has recently been subject to a comprehensive assessment. Based on the final assessment report, in particular regarding the identified strengths and weaknesses, proposals for improving the draft bills were submitted to the government, which should adopt them at first reading in 2019. The assessment work was based primarily on the dossiers studied within the administration, as well as on surveys of stakeholders (promoters, geomarketing businesses, legal advice, etc.). This assessment primarily analyses the feasibility of the draft bills and the problems encountered by both the administration and the reform actors, the impacts and challenges related to the 2,500 m<sup>2</sup> threshold and a hypothesis of reducing to 1,000 m<sup>2</sup> or increasing to 4,000 m<sup>2</sup>, and the human and material aspects related to the practical aspects of the decree.

In addition, the **Regional Commercial Development Perspective** (SRDC in French), for which the procedure for adopting the updated draft bill is ongoing, will outline a comprehensive vision of the retail trade. It will constitute a reference document for the criteria for granting authorisations, which will allow a direct justification of acts and a simplified reading for the various actors.

To support the dynamism of the sector, Wallonia has also created a legal framework to encourage the emergence of **pop-up shops** in city centres. The decree on short-term commercial leases entered into force on 1 May 2018. The aim is also to allow (young) entrepreneurs to try out new store concepts without long-term commitment.

In addition, on 28 February 2019, the Walloon Parliament adopted a decree on restoring **compensatory allowances for shopkeepers injured by work** on public roads or public property. In concrete terms, a sum of €100 will be granted per day out of action, with a minimum of 20 consecutive days of work and a maximum of 60 days of compensation, i.e. a maximum amount of €6,000. The procedure for submitting a case and the follow-up will be greatly simplified thanks to a dedicated mobile app. This measure will enter into force in September 2019.

The Walloon government has also adopted a measure to support the **professionalism and networking of shopkeepers' associations**. The aim is to make these structures more professional, improve communication, exchange best practice and initiate new projects in the world of commerce.

Also in the area of retail trade, the Walloon government has decided to amend the legislation on the practice and organisation of **itinerant activities**. The objective is to simplify, for both municipalities and traders, the provisions relating to the allocation of sites on market days and concessions for these sites.

For regulated professions, Directive 2013/55 on the recognition of **professional qualifications** was transposed in the three Regions in the first half of 2017. Since the 6<sup>th</sup> State reform, the Regions have been responsible for the 27 regulated professions, while the intellectual professions have remained a federal responsibility. For 5 of these regulated professions (meat wholesalers, degreaser-dry cleaner, masseur, pedicurist, dental technician), Wallonia has decided to abolish the qualification requirements as from December 2018, following consultation with the sectors in question. Other existing regulations will continue to guarantee the quality of the services in question. For the remaining 22 regulated professions, the evaluation is ongoing with all stakeholders.

In addition, a comprehensive reflection is ongoing, in consultation with the various stakeholders, on the **scheme for basic management knowledge**. Based on this reflection, reforms will be proposed to the government in order to develop a favourable environment for entrepreneurship in Wallonia.

The different regions are in contact with each other, with a view to concluding a cooperation agreement to settle the question of mutual recognition in the context of the establishment of European nationals.

## **Mobility**

In 2018, Wallonia adopted an ambitious vision for mobility by 2030 - **FAST 2030** (Fluidity, Accessibility, Safety, Health and Modal Shift). This is accompanied by ambitious objectives, in particular to encourage a modal shift and reduce congestion, ensure access to goods and services for all, drastically reduce road accidents and environmental impacts (this was detailed in NRP 2018).

In this context, in order to encourage public and private actors to roll out **electric charging stations**, the Walloon government intends to launch one call for projects every year for 5 years (the first call in 2018 and the last in 2022). It is proposed to start by covering the areas where demand for charging is potentially higher than supply, and then ensure a roll-out aimed at a minimum coverage of the Walloon territory. By 2020, the Walloon government intends to have 9,605 rechargeable vehicles and 688 charging points. With the arrival of more affordable models, the number of rechargeable vehicles registered in Wallonia has increased significantly, reaching 1,725 vehicles as of 1 February 2019. At the end of 2018, there were almost 483 public charging points (all types combined) in Wallonia. By 2030, it will likely be necessary to have around 6,900 charging points in Wallonia.

Since the first call for projects launched in April enjoyed major success, an additional budget, via the Kyoto funds, has been allocated for the installation of these charging points, and nine projects have been selected to date, i.e. 256 stations (or 512 charging points) for a total amount of €1 million. The installation of these 256 charging stations will start in 2019 and a new call for projects will be launched.

The Walloon government also adopted a legal framework (sectoral conditions) at the first reading making it possible to support the installation of **liquefied natural gas (LNG) refuelling points** in Wallonia. The same procedure is also ongoing for hydrogen-dispensing infrastructure. A second call was launched for the roll-out of natural gas infrastructure (CNG and LNG), with a budget of €6.75 million; since 2019, it has enabled the roll-out of 12 CNG stations and 7 LNG stations.

**Vehicle taxation** is also being considered, in particular an overhaul of road traffic taxes to adapt them to the climatic and environmental efficiency of the vehicle, based on a university study. The proposal is currently being debated in the Walloon Parliament. However, a complete reform is only planned for the next legislature. Nonetheless, amendments are envisaged in the shorter term - the bills are being drafted - to promote the use of electric and gas-powered vehicles: a minimal road fund tax for zero emission vehicles and a zero-rated ecology tax for vehicles fully or partially powered by compressed natural gas.

In the area of public transport, the reform of the **TEC group** has been implemented and has been fully operational since the start of 2019. The 6 companies have been merged into a single structure to improve the efficiency of the Walloon public transport network (buses, trams and metros). In addition, budgetary resources will be made available in 2019 to improve the service offering: express lines will be created between the city periphery and city centres, and the greening of the fleet (hybrid buses in particular) will be accelerated.

The public service agreement of the Walloon Transport Operator (OTW in French) was also approved in February 2019. This covers a period of 5 years, and envisages annual refinancing of around €35 million. It is structured around 4 objectives: Improve the quality of service with a view to greater customer satisfaction (reliability and punctuality of service); Ensure the speed of implementation of the service offering; Continue digitising the service offering; and Improve environmental performance.

In addition, at the end of January 2019, the contract for the **Liège tramway** was signed between the OTW and the Tram'Ardent consortium. Its missions involve construction of the electrified network, the supply of rolling stock, the creation and management of the maintenance and storage centre, the integration of TEC ticketing equipment, the development of urban spaces adjacent to tramlines along the entire route and promoting soft mobility, and maintenance throughout the duration of the contract. The project is a public-private partnership, with a loan from the EIB and support from the EFSI. The Liège tramway will be connected to two Park + Rides, the historic centre of Liège and major development hubs. A multimodal triangle will be formed by the Gare des Guillemins, the tram station and the TEC bus station. The tram project, as a new structural axis, will profoundly change urban mobility and will lead to a restructuring of the bus network. The works are scheduled to start in May 2019, with the aim of finalising them in June 2021. The vehicles will be delivered between May 2021 and April 2022, and the tram is scheduled to go into commercial service in October 2022.

A **regional mobility centre** will also be set up in 2019 to coordinate all transport services (buses and public transport but also the other available transport services: taxis, private transport, "social" and specific transport). It will have connections at local level - local mobility centres, some of which already exist and others will be created. Among other things, this will make it possible to better connect the offering in rural areas, and provide information about them.

As part of the Walloon Investment Plan, the Walloon government has also decided to award a €7.5 million grant to SOFICO for the construction of 5 pilot **mobipôles** (mobility hubs) and a comprehensive study into setting up 95 other mobipôles in Wallonia. The mobipôles will be hubs where different mobility offerings and infrastructure will converge. Users will benefit from a quantitative, qualitative and efficient offering. This may take several forms, and its size will be according to the situation and the local context. They will be the gateways to a network that will change mobility in Wallonia.

At the end of February 2019, the Walloon Parliament adopted the draft decree approving the cooperation agreement on the financing of **strategic rail infrastructure** between the federal government and the three regions of the country. This will make it possible to finalise the RER, for which a total budget of €1 billion will be set aside. Wallonia was able to apportion an additional €255 million. The cooperation agreement also provides a framework for the priority rail investments to be carried out on Walloon territory, for which Wallonia has also decided to provide co-financing worth €32.5 million. These in-

clude: the Brussels-Luxembourg link (Link 3), the Athus - Mont-Saint-Martin link, the North Sea-Mediterranean corridor, access to Gosselies airport, the Mons-Valenciennes link, the Walloon backbone and Charleroi-Erquelines-Paris link, the Park & Ride in Viville (Arlon), and the Dinant-Givet link.

## 3 Investment support

### 3.1 Walloon Investment Plan

As a reminder, in January 2018 the Walloon Government presented the **Walloon Investment Plan** (WIP) for the period 2019-2024, covering investment of around €5 billion. The priority sectors targeted are mobility, energy, research and digital technologies. It will also support investments in social action and housing, training and the environment. This Plan is part of the National Strategic Investment Pact.

In May 2018, the Walloon Government adopted a range of projects as part of this Walloon Investment Plan. These can be summarised as follows:

- Renovating and setting up IFAPME training centres, with the aim of supporting the **development of sectors of excellence for work-study training**;
- **Financing collective research infrastructures**, for a budget of €79 million: this involves funding shared infrastructure between companies, investments in university animal facilities, as well as buildings to house proton therapy research and the Reverse Metallurgy platform;
- **Financing the digital coverage of the territory**, especially in rural areas and white areas (€50 million);
- Funding worth €330 million for projects to develop and/or extend **economic activity zones and port areas**, as well as the recycling and conversion of **brownfield and polluted sites** to develop housing or new economic activities;
- The equipment of **BIOPARK** (Charleroi) for a building intended to house biopharmaceutical companies;
- **Funding agricultural 'relay-halls'** (€15 million);
- Funding for improving security at the **airport sites** at Charleroi and Liège,
- **Funding for the 'Swimming Pool Plan'**, for which the aim is to renovate all Walloon swimming pools, reducing their energy consumption and promoting the use of renewable energies;
- Increasing the budget envelope allocated to the **Regional Fund for Municipal Investments** to €20 million per year. The works funded by the municipalities in this context must be linked to mobility and energy. In addition, the criteria excluding borrowing benchmarks for municipalities have been reviewed in order to remove a barrier to investment;
- Funding for the creation of 2,086 new **daycare centre** places for more than €48 million;
- Funding for 37 major **tourism infrastructure** projects, worth €40 million;
- The creation of 5 pilot **mobipôles** (mobility hubs) as well as a global study for locating the 95 other mobipôles in Wallonia (budget of €7.5 million).



In addition, in February 2019, the Walloon government launched a call for projects concerning the creation of a **Walloon plastic recycling sector**. This has been launched with a public-private partnership approach, with a public budget of €60 million, to which will be added the corresponding amount in private funds. The aim is to create a recycling unit. This call has been supplemented by budgets to support collaborative innovation projects involving SMEs (COOPILOT, see section 4.2).

In addition to the WIP, the government has also created budgetary margins to pursue ambitious investment projects in mobility, energy, innovation and digitisation, etc. We refer to the various thematic sections for more details on these projects. As outlined above, in October 2018 the Walloon Government also announced 50 **simplification measures to facilitate investment**.

### **3.2 European Structural and Investment Funds**

The 2014-2020 programme of the Structural and Investment Fund is underway. The selected thematic priorities are closely linked to the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy and supplement the regional strategy developed in this context, particularly in terms of the recommendations issued by the Council. The specific contribution of the Funds is individually highlighted in the various sections.

As regards the ERDF's OP for Wallonia, this involves supporting the competitiveness of the economy, particularly SMEs, R&D and innovation, digitisation, the development of renewable energies and the efficient use of resources, the rehabilitation of former industrial sites, as well as the development of training infrastructures and of large infrastructures, for example related to intermodality. Decisions have been made on more than 85% of the budgets. Recent measures include the launch, in 2019, of two calls for COOPILOT projects, including one dedicated to the plastics sector, intended to support the development of collaborative industrial demonstration projects. The measure to support investment in energy efficiency for SMEs (UDE2020) was also launched.

Along with border regions in Belgium, France, Germany and the Netherlands, Wallonia is involved in the implementation of the INTERREG V programmes "France-Wallonia-Flanders", "Greater Region", "Euregio Meuse-Rhine" and "North-West Europe", for which most of the budgets are now committed, to support projects aimed at strengthening cross-border cohesion in the regional economic fabric.

In terms of the roll-out of the regional smart specialisation strategy (S3), particular focus has been placed on investment, the dissemination of technologies and the commercialisation of innovation, particularly through measures to support SMEs (including financial instruments), pilot projects and demonstrators, etc. The aim is also to support the roll-out of smart cities projects. In addition, as part of its selection by the European Commission as a pilot region for the industrial transition, Wallonia has worked closely with the Commission (and the other selected regions) to develop its S3 in line with the challenges of industrial transformation; the project continues in 2019.

The priorities developed as part of the ESF are in line with the response to recommendation n°2. They relate to high added-value, lifelong training and integration into the employment market, particularly for young NEETS (through the Youth Employment Initiative) and the most vulnerable, support towards and in employment, entrepreneurship, social inclusion and the fight against discrimination, and the fight against school drop-out. The projects are in line with the reforms set out above in the area of integration into the employment market and the matching of qualifications. Decisions have been made on all of the funds.

In the context of the ESF, the 'AMIF' Operational Programme (Asylum, Migration, Integration, Training) also contributes to strengthening the effective management of migration flows and the implementation and development of the common asylum and immigration policy. A new project designed to rapidly integrate third-country nationals into the labour market through enhanced cooperation and mobilisation of employers and economic and social partners started in 2019.

Finally, with regard to the Walloon rural development programme 2014-2020 (PWDR), financed by EAFRD, decisions have been made on 66% of the funds. The PWDR also finances a wide range of measures to help farmers and all the parties involved in agriculture. These measures involve setting up young farmers, professional training in agriculture and forestry, organic agriculture, nature conservation, investment in rural areas and tourism.

## 4 Thematic objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy

### 4.1 Employment

In addition to the reforms of the employment market outlined in chapter 2, several other employment measures should be mentioned, particularly those aiming to support job creation and entrepreneurship.

Firstly, the government has adopted two measures to **support social and cooperative entrepreneurship**. On the one hand, new funding of €4.5 million has been provided for the "Brasero" scheme, which supports cooperative and social entrepreneurship through SOWECSOM, and which is meeting increasing demand. On the other hand, the system is supplemented by a new financial product, in the form of seed capital, for a budget of €600,000. Called "Pre Seed", this will also be accompanied by support.

Secondly, in November 2018, the Walloon Government adopted the decree on **support for job creation at the first reading by promoting professional transitions to self-employed status as a main priority ('Airbag' scheme)**. The scheme is aimed both at self-employed persons as their secondary profession (subject to various conditions of duration and training courses) and at persons who undertake to set up as self-employed for the first or second time. As of 31 May 2018, 834 people (out of a total of 1,538 workers) had completed the compulsory two-year course to benefit from the scheme. Almost 85% are still involved in their activity to date, demonstrating the robustness of the activities supported. After analysing the strengths and weaknesses of the Airbag scheme, some adjustments were necessary. The first concerns processing times, which have proved to be too long. After the implementation of an action plan, the situation returned to normal in August 2018 (i.e. 4 months, according to the legal deadlines). The second, which is the main focus of the ongoing reform, highlights the need to simplify and clarify the scheme for jobseekers and FOREM.

Finally, in order to facilitate a private life and work life balance, the Walloon government has validated the launch of a call for projects for the construction of new **daycare centres**. 2,086 places are planned for an amount of more than €48 million, funded through the WIP. This call for projects is part of the Plan Cigogne 3 (Stork Plan 3).

### 4.2 Research, Development and Innovation

The **budget funds allocated to R&D** were higher in 2018 compared to 2017: €287 million (initial budget) versus €265 million in 2017. In terms of commitments, we can highlight the upward trend in resources allocated to R&D: €307 million per year for the 2014-2017 period compared to €257 million for the period 2009-2013, as well as to innovation: €30 million per year respectively compared to €21.3 million over the same periods. Wallonia is therefore continuing its efforts to achieve the 3% target.

Among other things, the resources have been allocated to the launch of a new **Business Infrastructure Programme** (as part of the WIP), for the funding of collective research infrastructure between companies. It is open to consortia of SME-SME, or consortia of large companies-SME, and aims to promote technological, scientific and technical developments among SMEs. The 2018 call had a budget of €6 million. The projects submitted must be of an outstanding technological nature, in line with the needs of the consortium and other duly identified potential users, in terms of development, validation, transferability and valorisation of research activities for the development of innovative products.

Also in the context of the WIP, the government has approved several **infrastructure projects in the area of research**: an investment for the standardisation of animal facilities in universities (€7 million), the creation of a centralised animal facility for "model" animal strains (€10 million), a building to house proton therapy research (€7 million) and a building to house the industrial excellence platform 'Reverse Metallurgy'.

As regards the **proton therapy centre**, a Technological Innovation Partnership (PROTHER-WAI) was approved in December 2018 for a budget of €46 million. It will cover research at the technological level (via equipment or the study of materials), biological level (via radiobiology and preclinical models) and medical level. Thanks to the funding of the project, it will be possible to set up the Walloon proton therapy centre and therefore welcome patients both in the context of clinical studies and therapeutic treatments. This partnership project will bring together four universities (ULB, ULiège, UMONS and UNAMUR) and two companies, IBA and ProtonW.be scrl. An additional €1.95 million has been allocated to enable UCLouvain to participate in collaborative research projects with other French-speaking universities.

In order to position Wallonia as a leader in e-health while preserving the security and confidentiality of health data, the new innovative system **INAH (Institute of Analytics for Health)** has been launched within the Walloon Health Network. Specifically, the Walloon government has agreed to award a €1.2 million grant to CETIC to implement a system and four pilot projects in the fields of oncology and rheumatology, but also in early detection, particularly of diabetes and burnout. This first phase aims to build and test the essential elements of data security, anonymisation, availability and use, and is the first step towards a veritable health data analysis network for research in Wallonia. This pilot scheme is a smart tool that will aim to facilitate the development of innovative therapeutic solutions and enhance medical prevention through data structuring and early identification of potential pathologies, while strictly respecting data confidentiality.

Also in the field of health, a budget of €12 million has been allocated to **WELBIO**, the Interuniversity Institute for Life Sciences, to pursue its strategic research and industrial development activities in the various fields of biotechnology. This funding will allow WELBIO to continue its activities until 2021, ensure the continuation of its ongoing projects, and launch a 5<sup>th</sup> call for projects in 2019.

In addition, in the context of the WIP, and following the government's decision to develop a Walloon plastic recycling sector, three competitiveness clusters (Plastiwin, GreenWin and MecaTech) have joined forces for the implementation of a **collaborative technological platform in the plastics recycling sector** which will be dedicated to the transition from the plastics industry to a circular economy (PEPIT). Specifically, the actors have set up an operational unit dedicated to projects on the circularity of plastics, an ideas receptacle, the management of calls, and information and communication management. The Approved Research Centres (CRAs in French) will support PEPIT, providing specific skills and infrastructure on the theme of the circularity of plastics, including the alignment and complementarity of skills, the positioning on each link of the value chain and defining a common methodology. In addition, a call for projects dedicated to the plastics sector was launched in 2019 as part of the **COOPILOT** scheme (co-financed by the ERDF) to support the financing of industrial pilot and demonstration projects, with a budget of €10 million. Collaborative projects in this sector may also be supported within the framework of the calls for projects of the Competitiveness Clusters.

It should also be noted that the three regions have signed a MoU to finance **interregional collaboration projects in the green chemistry and plastics sectors**, in collaboration with the Flemish (CATILISTI) and Walloon (GREENWIN) competitiveness clusters. This agreement has resulted in the launch of a call for projects to support collaborative industrial innovation projects in these sectors. Also in terms of interregional collaboration, the call for **BEL-SME** projects aimed at collaboration between SMEs in the 3 regions is being relaunched in 2019.

In the context of the **call for projects Win<sup>2</sup>Wal 2018**, 12 research projects were selected for funding in December 2018, with a budget of €10.3 million. This programme aims to support innovative research projects with a high potential for valorisation in themes related to industrial needs identified in one of the areas selected in the regional Intelligent Specialisation strategy. It is intended to stimulate strategic research carried out within universities, higher education institutions or their associated research centres, in order to meet essential future needs identified by Walloon companies. The 2019 call was launched at the start of the year. The **Cwality 2019** call for projects was also launched; this aims to support collaborative development projects in companies.

In order to encourage SMEs to submit European projects, the government has adopted the modalities of the new '**Horizon Europe**' grant. This involves the preparation, submission and negotiation of research, development or innovation projects in the context of international partnerships. The proposed grant consists of a contribution to the costs incurred by SMEs in the preparation, submission and negotiation phase of European RDI projects. Also in the area of European collaboration, Wallonia, like the other Belgian entities, has decided to join the **EURO-HPC** project. Indeed, investment in high-performance computing is one of the priorities identified in the WIP.

Finally, in April 2018 the government adopted new funding and organisation modalities to **support the valorisation of research results** originating from public funding (universities and colleges). A Valorisation Committee is responsible for steering the conventions and deciding on the future of non-valorised results (Easy Access IP or public domain). An analysis unit is responsible for reporting on the reasons why research results are non-valorised, or a valorisation is deemed too low by the Valorisation Committee. An advisory body for intellectual property (OCPI in French) is responsible for anticipating problems with IP transfer, by advising the Minister for Research (clauses in calls for projects, best practice, etc.), analysing the reports of the analysis unit and acting as a mediator in the event of conflicts.

In the area of innovation, Wallonia has placed an important priority on digitisation in all spheres of society and the economy. Based on the assessment of the Plan Digital Wallonia, a **Plan Digital Wallonia 2019-2024** was presented on 6 December 2018, it will retain the same structure, and expand certain aspects of the current plan. The implementation of the Plan Digital Wallonia has been continued, with actions launched in relation to its various priorities: education and training, public services, a smart territory, digitisation of the economy, strengthening of the digital sector and support for start-ups. The following actions can be highlighted in particular:

- The award of a grant for **the opening of two BeCode campuses**, one in Liège and the other in Charleroi. As a reminder, BeCode is an initiative that allows jobseekers, who are furthest from the job market, and in particular young people under 25 years of age, to benefit from free training in the profession of web developer. The training is based on the needs of the labour market and on an adapted learning. The initiative will enhance the digital ecosystems of Liège and Charleroi since synergies with start-up incubators or Coder Dojos are planned. Nearly 150 jobseekers per year will be trained in web professions.
- **#WallCode**: development of an activity and continuous training offering throughout the year, based on increased resources (and no longer concentrated on a week/fortnight of code).
- **Digital school**: for the year 2018, 325 projects have been selected by the jury, for a budget of €5.85 million. These projects will enable 325 educational teams in 317 school locations, bringing together more than 1,800 teachers, to develop advanced digital applications for the benefit of around 320,000 pupils. Since the launch of the "Digital School" initiative, nearly 1,200 schools have been equipped with a total budget of more than €19 million. A new call for projects is being launched in 2019, with the objective of supporting 500 projects at all levels of education (basic, secondary and social promotion at secondary level) with a budget of €7.6 million.

- Launch of the **WWW – Wallonia Wonder Women** campaign: a communication campaign to encourage women to choose scientific studies and careers, especially in the digital field.
- Adoption of the **Digital Plan of the Wallonia Public Service (SPW)**: the Walloon government has endorsed the project aimed at providing the SPW with a new long-term structure and strategy for administrative IT. Due to constant evolutions and the sustained pace of technological progress, but also the legitimate expectations of citizens in terms of access to e-administration, not only do Wallonia's Public Services need to provide a quality "e-service" but also assume the role of innovation facilitator. To ensure implementation, a Digital Delivery Unit (DU) will be put in place within the SPW.
- Introduction of **Coworking cheques**: Since 1 May 2017, Wallonia finances the registration and subscription to Walloon coworking spaces up to 50% of the costs excluding VAT, for starters and 75% for project managers.
- **Coordination of the Walloon digital landscape**: with a view to ensuring the effective coordination of the Walloon digital ecosystem, an IT tool shared by all digital ecosystems and WING will be implemented. This tool will aim to valorise the collaboration of ecosystems, increase their level of information regarding projects that they do not host, pool their expertise and avoid the artificial creation of competition between ecosystems by project managers. The digital ecosystems are also invited to specialise according to their expertise and the strengths present in their territory. The local economic operators, namely the CEIs and the digital subsidiaries of the local Investis, are responsible for supporting project managers in their SEED acceleration phase.
- In terms of disseminating digital technologies, the **ICT Cluster 'Infopôle'** has been given three new missions by the government: (1) chart and valorise the offering of the digital sector, (2) identify and develop digital ecosystems based on the sectoral offering, competitiveness clusters (and demand in general) and research, and (3) coach and support sectoral companies in their internationalisation. In addition to these new activities focused on innovation, the cluster also intends to redeploy actions around "soft" technologies in order to raise awareness among SMEs of "primary" digital transformations (management tools, CRM, electronic invoicing, automation, etc.).
- **WING Fund**: after two years of operation, the fund received 367 applications for start-up funding, made favourable decisions to invest in 67 start-ups (41 applications finalised, 17 abandoned and 9 were in the process of being finalised). The acceptance rate for financing is almost 16%, making it an "aggressive" fund. The amount invested (released) is €4.2 million for the €6.3 million committed. On average, WING commits €1 for every €3.66 invested by other investors (private or public). The portfolio is composed of 64% B2B start-ups (36% B2C) and 59% seed start-ups (41% pre-seed, < €50,000).
- **Construction 4.0**: a roadshow was organised in the second half of 2018, in which 220 companies took part. In addition, 112 companies completed the self-diagnosis tool, which enabled them to assess themselves in terms of digital maturity and define their priorities in this area. The 2<sup>nd</sup> half of 2018 and the 1<sup>st</sup> half of 2019 have been devoted to supporting companies in their digital transition, by organising around thirty thematic workshops for a limited number of companies affected by similar digital transformation issues.
- Implementation of two **demonstrators 4.0**, one dedicated to the construction sector (€2.8 million) and the other to industrial SMEs (€1.2 million). The Industry demonstrator 4.0 involves the creation of an industrial demonstrator and two Mini-Factory demonstrators. The aim is to disseminate the concepts and technologies of the fourth industrial revolution as widely as pos-

sible among industrial SMEs. In addition to raising awareness, the support will allow companies to perform technological tests on a test rig, acquire new skills or facilitate and accelerate implementation within the company.

- The Construction demonstrator 4.0 will be intended to raise awareness among companies by highlighting the potential of digital technologies, to improve their productivity, profitability and product quality, as well as linking these technologies to training needs. This demonstrator will be made up of two specific infrastructures. The first is dedicated to the construction phase and the second to buildings in the design and use phase.
- Awareness-raising action for **electronic invoicing**: this was launched in June 2017, 393 companies with 678 participants took part.
- Launch of the 'Keep It Secure' tool to raise awareness and provide support in **cybersecurity**: the aim is to make as many economic actors as possible aware of this crucial aspect, and enable them to put the essential elements in place to ensure their cybersecurity as much as possible, among other things by accompanying them with service providers with proven skills and dedicated financial assistance (cybersecurity cheque).
- Launch of the **Digital champions** network, whose mission is to promote digital technology and its uses, broadcast Digital Wallonia, and issue proposals.
- At the international level, around twenty **international promotion and prospecting** missions and actions in the digital sphere are planned for 2019.
- **Digital coverage of the territory**: following the agreement signed at the end of 2016 with the 3 main digital operators, an interim review was carried out (May 2018). The review revealed that €32 million in investments have been made out of the €60 million planned, and that the mobile coverage of white areas has been improved (27 municipalities out of 39 - 70%, compared to 4 municipalities at the beginning of 2017). The connectivity of the zones was mapped out. This will serve as a basis for the planned investments in the WIP (€50 million), for which the project sheet has been approved by the government.
- Launch of a call for projects for "**Smart Territory**", with a budget of €4 million. The aim is to encourage Walloon cities and municipalities to develop digital projects, whether in the fields of energy, the environment, mobility or governance. In concrete terms, the Region will contribute 50% of the funding for projects with a minimum contribution of €20,000 (the maximum being set at €250,000).

It should also be noted that in the context of its participation in the European **INNOSUP IOT4Industry** project (inter-cluster collaboration), the MÉCATECH competitiveness cluster launched a first call for projects aimed at SMEs. This will make it possible to fund SMEs up to €60,000 for collaborative projects (feasibility, prototypes or demonstrations) aimed at integrating digital technologies (IoT, Big Data, Artificial Intelligence, Cybersecurity) if they can be used in "Industry of the Future" (or Industry 4.0) cases. There were 54 projects, of which 46 were eligible, including 7 involving Walloon companies. The 2<sup>nd</sup> call will be launched in April 2019.

### 4.3 Education

In the field of education, Wallonia works in partnership with the Wallonia-Brussels Federation at various levels: developing sectors of excellence for work-study training, digital equipment in schools, awareness-raising and training activities in scientific and technical careers, and developing digital skills.

We refer to other sections which provide more details on the various initiatives relating to these themes.

### 4.4 Social cohesion and social action

In the area of social cohesion, the Government is continuing an integrated policy to combat vulnerable situations, facilitate access to housing, facilitate socio-professional integration and provide concrete solutions for people who have lost their autonomy.

#### Social inclusion and poverty reduction

As part of the transfer of **family benefits**, in July 2018, the Walloon government approved the decrees approving private family benefits funds. In addition to a public fund, 4 private funds have managed the payment of family benefits in Wallonia since 1 January 2019. Specifically, as of 1 January 2019, nothing has changed for Walloons, their current provider has been automatically transferred.

In March 2019, an information website, a contact e-mail address and a network of reference persons were launched in Wallonia for **single-parent families**, who are more at risk of poverty. The aim is to give them access to all useful information concerning their rights.

On 22 November 2018, the Walloon Parliament adopted the decrees on the **Social Cohesion Plan (PCS in French)**, which will constitute the new framework for 2020-2025 planning. The PCS is a cross-cutting plan implemented at the local level that makes it possible to involve partners and stimulate collaboration. In the future, subsidies will be available to all local authorities (municipalities and CPASs). The text also provides for the accountability and autonomy of municipalities, which will be required to draw up their action plans in accordance with their local situations and the needs identified. The actions will no longer be limited to poverty reduction, they will need to meet the following two objectives: improving effective access to fundamental rights at the individual level, and promoting solidarity and co-responsibility at the community level. The subsidies will be calculated not only on the basis of the number of inhabitants, but also according to the synthetic indicator of access to fundamental rights calculated by IWEPS. A total budget of €21 million has been set aside. The 219 candidate municipalities (out of 253) received the call for projects at the start of 2019. These must be returned by 30 June 2019. Methodological coaching support is provided by the Walloon administration for municipalities drawing up their plan.

In addition, the Walloon government approved the establishment of a **Citizen Service** in Wallonia in September 2018. This is aimed at all Walloons aged between 18 and 25 years old. The Citizen Service is operational over a continuous 6-month period. It alternates between a mission time (80%) and a training time (20%). Psycho-social support for young people is also provided at various stages of the programme, particularly at the end, with a success rate of 83% leading to resumption of studies, employment or job training. The aims of the project are to increase social cohesion, encourage engaged citizenship, strengthen solidarity and finally foster the personal development of young people and, indirectly, their transition to working life. Implementation of the project will be spread over three years and will take place in three phases, from September 2018 to August 2021, with the final objective of enabling 1,500 young Walloons to perform Citizen Service, promoting their integration into society.

Another initiative aimed at young people, the **"été solidaire, je suis partenaire 2019" (Solidarity summer, I'm a partner 2019) campaign** has also been launched. Wallonia continues to grant subsidies to

local authorities, so that young people can carry out solidarity-based projects throughout July and August. The objectives of these projects are to promote and reinforce solidarity between young people and disadvantaged people, but also to foster social links between young people and citizens, especially the elderly.

In terms of socio-professional integration, the Walloon government announced that the agreement with the non-profit organisation 'Lire et Ecrire en Wallonie' (Read and Write in Wallonia) would be renewed for three years. This organisation is active in Wallonia in **tackling illiteracy**, by implementing socio-professional integration training, among other things. The added value of this framework agreement is to ensure the inclusion of specific groups such as people being reintegrated into society, workers, awareness-raising and training of partners in detecting illiteracy, and also through the strengthening of skills, and organising the in-service training of workers and volunteers who are active in the sector. A specific strand has been developed regarding literacy among foreign nationals.

The decree on the integration process for foreign nationals was adopted in November 2018 by the Walloon Parliament. Its aim is to strengthen the mechanisms of the integration process, particularly in terms of training, in order to increase its impact and the number of beneficiaries. Wallonia will earmark an additional €8 million for the scheme every year, bringing the budget to nearly €23 million in 2019.

As for tackling precariousness, the Walloon government adopted the draft decree on the **simplification of the energy bill** at the first reading, bearing in mind that the complexity of electricity bills is felt above all by disadvantaged groups and people in a precarious situation with their energy supply. On the same subject, in July 2018 the government also adopted a decree adapting public service obligations, with the aim of avoiding the increase in the costs associated with these obligations in the energy bill. Specifically, the aim is to limit the installation of budget meters and local electricity commissions.

It should also be noted that in March 2018, a legislative framework was adopted to encourage municipalities to create **synergies and common support services with their CPASs**, with the aim of increasing the efficiency of the services provided.

Regarding the fight against discrimination, we can highlight the approval of the Walloon component of the **Inter-federal action plan against discrimination and violence against LGBTI Persons 2018-2019**. The plan includes 14 actions tackling discrimination and violence against the target group, which has been extended to intersex people.

Finally, in February 2019, the Walloon government adopted its **Plan to combat violent radicalism**, consisting of 10 specific measures. Among these, a Regional Centre of Expertise for preventing violent radicalism will be set up, and various training actions will be launched for administrations, actors in the field working to prevent and detect radicalisation and promote social cohesion, as well as vocational training actions for prisoners. The government also adopted a preliminary draft decree at the first reading organising the Region's competence to prevent violent radicalism in the context of the creation and operation of local integrated security cells against radicalism, extremism and terrorism (CSIL-R). A call for applications to municipalities was launched in January 2019, aimed at developing initiatives to prevent violent radicalism in local areas, by supporting the creation of CSIL-Rs, or by developing existing structures.

## Housing

A range of measures have been adopted to facilitate access to decent housing and to encourage the renovation houses, including energy efficiency.

As such, in June 2018 the Walloon Government adopted a decree on the **rental conditions for social housing**. This provides for a new allocation procedure, making it possible to respond more effectively



and rapidly to the needs of tenants. In addition, in order to address the under-occupation of housing, Public Service Housing Companies will be required to terminate leases for households under-occupying a home with at least two bedrooms (with the exception of households with a person over 65 years of age or a person with a disability). This is subject to the condition that they have been offered adequate housing in the same municipality. Thirdly, a new method of calculating rents is planned. This will take into account not only household income, but also the rental values of the territory (via the indicative rental scale, which is now available online), as well as the energy performance of the house. Finally, a simplification of the procedures is planned.

In addition, **insurance against the risk of loss of income due to loss of employment or work incapacity**, which is intended to protect homeowners who have taken out a mortgage loan, has been simplified as of March 2019. The conditions for benefiting from this insurance have been eased, and the amounts of the intervention increased in order to stimulate its use.

To support the reintegration of homeless people, in July 2018 the Walloon government decided to fund a social reintegration project carried out as part of the "**Housing First**" project in Mons (which already operates in 3 Walloon cities: Liège, Charleroi and Namur), for an amount of €435,000 over 3 years. The objective is to enable 25 homeless people to permanently regain their place in society through accessible housing and appropriate support. The Housing First scheme was legislated from 1 March 2019. It was also decided to make the funding for the 4 current "Housing First" schemes permanent, through regulatory subsidies. This funding may also be granted to new projects organised by other social facilitators.

In January 2019, the Walloon government also approved the draft decree on **accommodating people in social difficulty in homeless shelters and community homes**. Wallonia will increase its reception capacity by 24 additional places in 2019, for a budget of €556,000, bringing the capacity in 56 homes to 1,632.

As regards **students**, in January 2019 the Walloon government approved a decree at the first reading to provide financial assistance in the form of a housing allowance. This bonus, amounting to €1,000 (the cost of student housing is estimated at an average of €4,200 per year), will be granted to students domiciled in Wallonia and whose residence is at least an hour's drive from their campus. In total, this aid will benefit around 10,000 students in 114 locations in Wallonia.

Regarding renovation, in November 2018 the Walloon government decided to merge the Ecopack and Rénopack schemes aimed at **supporting renovation work for more vulnerable target groups through a 0% loan**. The aim is to simplify the schemes. The new scheme also incorporates two improvements: an increase in the loan ceiling from €30,000 to €60,000 and an increase in the maximum duration of the loan from 15 to 30 years. The bonuses will also be pre-financed. In parallel with this merger, two new interest-free loans will be launched in 2019: the first to fund works to adapt housing for disabled people, and the second to finance the cost of purchasing a first home.

Finally, on 30 November 2018, the Walloon government approved a preliminary draft decree aimed at reforming the **reception of Travellers**. This reform plans to extend reception throughout Wallonia via developed areas with access to water, electricity, sanitary facilities and the organisation of refuse collection. A budget of €5 million is planned to support the creation of ten new reception areas over 10 years. A call for projects will be launched in 2019. In addition, for municipalities that already have a reception area, recurrent operating subsidies of €30,000 per year are planned from 1 January 2020.

## **Combating the loss of autonomy**

The final phase of Wallonia's takeover of powers in the area of health following the 6th state reform has been completed, as has the implementation of a **Walloon social security system**. As such, in November 2018 the Walloon Parliament adopted the decree on insurers and their recognition. This will eventually

be supplemented by new rights and obligations, in particular the future **insurance for autonomy**. The modalities of this future insurance were presented in June 2018. Anyone living in Wallonia will have to join via their insurance company and pay an annual contribution of €36 (with certain exceptions). The insurance will cover home services through approved family and elder care services (SAFA in French) and a flat rate benefit for autonomy (AFA in French). The first contributions will be paid in 2020, and the first services will be provided in 2021.

In December 2018, the government also adopted various texts on the **reform of assistance for seniors**. This aims to improve the quality of reception, the control of prices, create nearly 12,000 new places up to 2030 and reform support for infrastructure financing. The text provides for the introduction of an agreed price (optional). Only institutions that adhere to the agreement will be able to benefit from the new method of financing infrastructure. The aim is to support the financing of infrastructure on condition of financial accessibility for residents. At the same time, all new nursing homes will have to provide a customised first basic price, calculated on the basis of a dossier breaking down the price. In addition, a range of supplements has been scrapped. The institutions must also commit to a continuous quality improvement process in which the resident is at the centre of the actions undertaken (architectural and material standards, organisation of supervision, care and management). A quality assessment system is being implemented, this will be subject to self-assessment and control by the AViQ.

As part of the WIP, nearly 12,000 additional nursing home places will be created by 2030. In addition, the Region will encourage the development of day care centres. These centres allow seniors to stay at home longer, and supplement the insurance for autonomy services.

From 2021 onwards, support for infrastructure financing will be provided through a mechanism that will supplement the historical intervention of the RIZIV/INAMI in the housing cost of nursing homes and care homes, under certain conditions. All interventions will be pooled in the flow of insurers (by the day) by integrating the intervention in favour of the infrastructure. This intervention will therefore be strictly linked to the actual occupancy of the place by a resident.

Regarding **persons with a disability**, in January 2019, the Walloon government approved a call for projects (launched in March) to improve their accommodation and care. An additional budget of €5 million has been set aside for these projects. Three themes are targeted: strengthening reception capacity, adapting living spaces and renewing home automation/telephony in services to support day-to-day activities.

## **4.5 Energy-Climate**

---

### **Reducing greenhouse gas emissions**

In July 2018, the Walloon government approved the **Walloon Energy-Climate Plan 2030**, and an update in December 2018. This is the Walloon contribution to the National Energy Climate Plan (PNEC in French). All sectors will need to make efforts to reduce energy consumption, reduce GHG emissions and use less carbon-intensive solutions. Under this draft Plan, Wallonia would reduce emissions from non-ETS sectors by around 37% compared to 2005. The sectors that contribute significantly to the plan's objectives are transport, residential and commercial buildings and renewable energy production. Energy-intensive consumer industry is not affected by the plan but responds directly to the European Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS). Smaller industries (non-ETS) represent only a small fraction of emissions and are affected by the plan.

Among the main objectives and measures of the Plan, the following 3 can be highlighted:

- **Mobility:** The FAST plan sets ambitious targets for reducing the energy consumption of goods and passenger transport by addressing mobility in a cross-cutting manner, including via modal shift, behavioural changes, greening of the vehicle fleet including public transport, which is already underway.
- **Renewable energy production:** increase in the share of total final consumption to 23.5% (including 37% renewable electricity and 25% renewable heat), from 12.1% in 2016. This energy will primarily come from wind and photovoltaic production for electricity and biomass for heat.
- **Renovation strategy:** In April 2017, the government approved an ambitious renovation strategy aimed at reducing the energy consumption of buildings by around 70% by 2050. This plan leading up to 2030 envisages a 29.1% reduction in energy consumption compared to 2005, on average, for commercial and residential buildings.

Other objectives have been set in non-ETS industry, in terms of reducing fluorinated gases, in the agricultural sector. It should also be added that 4% of the R&D budget will be allocated to projects relating directly to energy and climate (this is currently estimated at 2-3%) and 11% to projects integrating a climate or energy dimension.

In addition, on 5 December 2018, the Walloon government adopted a circular to encourage local authorities (Municipalities, CPASs and autonomous municipal authorities) to invest in **clean vehicles**. As such, a budget of €1.5 million has been set aside to subsidise up to 60% of the cost of the project (with a maximum of €250,000), the purchase of 100% electric, plug-in hybrid or CNG vehicles by these local authorities. Any associated equipment such as charging points and photovoltaic panels may also be subsidised.

In July 2018, the Walloon Parliament adopted the decree on **smart meters, flexibility and electric charging points**. This draft decree aims to regulate the installation, utilisation and deployment of smart meters, and provide a framework for flexible activity, including data management.

No later than 1 January 2023, the communicating function of a smart meter must systematically be installed and activated in the following cases, unless technically impossible or not economically viable: when the grid user is a residential customer officially in payment default, when a meter is replaced, when a new connection is made or when a user requests it.

At the same time, and no later than 31 December 2029, distribution system operators (DSOs) will need to achieve 80% of smart meters installed on their network for users with the following characteristics:

- Standardised annual consumption is equal to or greater than 6,000 kWh (the average in Wallonia being 3,500 kWh);
- The net developable electrical power of electricity production is greater than 5kWe;
- Recharging points accessible to the public.

On the basis of the precautionary principle, a new derogation has been introduced to cover cases of intolerance related to the use of smart meters.

## Renewable energies

In order to support and facilitate the development of renewable energies and achieve the objectives in this area, the Walloon government has pursued various reforms and launched new initiatives.

For example, in September 2018, the Walloon government adopted a comprehensive approach and long-term solutions for the future of **green certificates** (CV in French), the k Solwatt factor, the setting of quotas beyond 2024 and the financing of the CV debt. It is proposed constructing a financing mechanism whereby ELIA would receive the proceeds of one or more bond issues with a "green" label to ensure the necessary financial resources every year for the future acquisition of Walloon CVs, as well as for the eventual redemption of Walloon CVs previously put in reserve or timed.

The CV scheme will be maintained for old and new projects in order to continue developing renewable energies at a controlled cost to society. The grant rates will therefore be reviewed and the grant period will be based on the economic life (according to the CWaPE methodology). Depending on the sector, decreases of between 25% and 75% are expected by 2030, when the support will be phased out. The objectives for each sector in 2020 and 2030 have been reviewed, in particular on the basis of the objectives set out in the PNEC. The quotas will be adapted to the evolution of the market for green certificates and fixed until 2030 (and no longer 2024) in order to allow more clarity and predictability of the market for CVs. According to the different models studied, the market for CVs should return to equilibrium by 2025. Holders of CVs could therefore valorise their CVs above the guaranteed minimum price of €65 excluding VAT.

Regarding wind energy, in March 2018, the Walloon government adopted the "**Pax Eolienica**", which provides for 15 key measures to support the development of wind energy. It aims to simplify the administrative procedures for wind developers by allowing them to operate within a Walloon framework that provides greater legal predictability. It also reflects the government's desire to fully involve all the stakeholders concerned in the challenges related to the further development of renewable energy production through the installation of wind turbines within the Walloon territory.

Within the framework of the WIP and in order to support the implementation of the first projects in the **Power-to-X (P2X)** sectors, in 2018 Wallonia made available two grants of up to €75,000 each to help project managers finalise their feasibility study.

With regard to geothermal energy, at the end of January 2019, the Walloon government adopted a preliminary draft decree at the first reading establishing a **geothermal guarantee for exploration projects in the deep underground**. This new scheme aims to cover a natural risk that private actors cannot insure. In effect, given the high investment costs, the risk of not achieving the expected geothermal resource and the absence of an insurance policy covering this 'natural' risk, a regional guarantee system is considered necessary to create an investment climate favourable to the production of heat from deep geothermal energy. This type of guarantee already exists in Flanders and France.

The decree consists of two components: a regional geothermal guarantee scheme (the region covers the risk, based on the opinion of a technical committee, and compensates where appropriate) and the creation of a section called "geothermal guarantee" in the Kyoto Fund, with a specific budget (envisaged when the budget is programmed) used for the compensation. To qualify for the compensation, investors contribute to the fund by paying a premium proportional to the cost of a project.

In addition, on 6 December 2018, the Walloon Government approved a draft decree on the underground at the first reading, aimed at establishing a clear and precise framework for activities and installations designed to exploit underground resources, which was met with broad acceptance. This pertains to deep geothermal energy. A study was also launched at the end of 2018 to determine the geothermal potential of former abandoned mines in Wallonia.

Finally, the preliminary draft decree containing the establishment of a **decree framework promoting collective own consumption of electricity** was adopted in October 2018 at first reading. Currently, a legal framework already exists to allow own consumption for all consumers. The novelty of the project supported by the decree is the possibility of creating energy communities, called "collective own consumption operations", in order to go beyond the physical dimension of the network. As such, while mobilising the public network, various entities (natural or legal persons) within a perimeter may agree to pool their production and electricity consumption.

The development of short-circuit modes of energy consumption will ultimately lead to savings in the development and reinforcement of the distribution network, and will allow for a better integration of renewable energies, the so-called intermittent energies. Consuming renewable energy on a local scale reduces losses by mobilising a smaller portion of the grid, which ultimately facilitates its integration into the grid. Own consumption will also help make the grid smarter.

On the same theme, in March 2019, the MecaTech Cluster and the Tweed Cluster launched a call for projects aimed at Renewable Energy Communities via Collective and Local Own Consumption of Energy (CERACLE in French). The themes covered by the call are alternative energy networks (heat & electricity) and micro-grids, virtual grids which enable in particular better local development of local renewable electricity production at the zoning or a district, while using and remunerating the public electricity distribution network, collective own consumption, and local energy communities fairly. The call is aimed primarily at the marketing of technological innovations that can lead to new products/services from the different partners of the consortium, but it also aims to establish a normative framework which is conducive to the development of alternative networks and collective modes of consumption.

Various energy efficiency measures for companies explained below also focus on the development of renewable energies.

## **Resource efficiency**

Several new measures were adopted in 2018 to foster the transition to a low-carbon economy and energy efficiency, including in business, the public sector and housing.

Firstly, the Walloon government has adopted the modalities of the **'low carbon' measure (UDE2020) under the ERDF programme**. It aims to strengthen investment aids for companies directly involved in the transition to a low-carbon economy and the use of renewable energy. Aimed at SMEs with electricity connection power  $\geq 56\text{kVA}$ , it supplements an existing measure (UDE) with €32 million to support sustainable energy use. UDE2020 complements the Easy'Green tool developed by Novallia within SOWALFIN, which has been operational since November 2017, and which supports SMEs in their transition to a low-carbon economy through capital financing, loans or guarantees for low-carbon technologies or services.

This new ERDF measure UDE2020 is conditional on the prior completion of an AMURE energy audit of the company (auditors approved by the Region). This preliminary stage will make it possible to identify the relevant avenues for investment to increase energy efficiency and, if necessary, the unnecessary energy costs to be eliminated by smart management, or the potential for flexibility in electricity consumption to be valorised. In return for this audit obligation, the company will benefit from an intervention on its investments increased by several percentage points (heat and energy recovery, battery charging systems, smart management software, heat pumps or biomass boilers are all examples of eligible investments).

Secondly, the Walloon government has allocated €20 million to **Sogepa**, the Walloon public company for management and shareholdings, under the Kyoto Fund to carry out third-party investor projects in energy efficiency and renewable energy. In this context, in December 2018 it entered into a partnership

with EDF Luminus, creating Demainvest SA, to help the companies in turnaround it supports to reduce their ecological footprint and their energy bills. It will be active in the development, construction and operation of projects in the area of energy efficiency, power supply and energy and heat production. In the context of a framework contract for energy services by energy performance contract (EPC), it will enable the financing of projects focusing on energy savings, photovoltaic or wind power production for companies in Sogepa's portfolio.

Regarding renovation, the **RENOWATT project**, which had been launched on a pilot basis, has now been extended to the whole of Wallonia. This project aims to improve the energy efficiency of public buildings. It is a one-stop shop which is responsible for the conclusion of an energy performance contract (EPC), selects buildings that are suitable candidates for renovation, launches the public procurement procedure and assists municipalities with the implementation of the EPC. The objective is to offer free technical assistance to Wallonia's 262 municipalities with a view to carrying out at least €100 million of investments in EPCs in more than 500 buildings. A budget of €5.2 million for a maximum duration of 3.5 years is envisaged: €3.5 million funded by Europe (ELENA/EIB) and €1.7 million funded by the Walloon Government.

In July 2018, the Walloon government also adopted a draft decree at first reading **comprehensively reforming the Energy and Renovation bonus scheme** in order to make it more attractive and efficient. In the future, applicants will have to solicit an auditor to list all the work to be carried out in terms of energy and renovation, as well as the order in which it needs to be carried out. Once the audit has been carried out, it will be sufficient to submit a request for bonuses to the administration, and this request will apply to all the work. Applicants will remain free to carry out all or part of the work, and to phase it over time, according to their means.

Since 1 March 2018, the amounts of bonuses had already been increased, with basic bonuses up to 4.5 times higher. The first effects of this measure have already been felt since, if we compare the period March 2017 - June 2017 with the period March 2018 - June 2018, we notice that the prior warnings have doubled or even tripled.

In November 2018, it was also decided to merge the Ecopack and Rénopack schemes aimed at **supporting renovation work for more vulnerable target groups through a 0% loan**. The aim is to simplify the schemes. The new scheme also incorporates two improvements: an increase in the loan ceiling from €30,000 to €60,000 and an increase in the maximum duration of the loan from 15 to 30 years.

In the public sector, the Walloon government has validated the replacement of lights equipped with discharge lamps by **LED lights on the non-structural Walloon road network**. This concerns 6,200 kilometres of regional roads. As such, Wallonia will replace 18,000 old-generation lights with LED lights over the next four years. This decision supplements the 'Plan Lumière 4.0' led by SOFICO, which concerns Walloon and national roads. This structural network (2,300 km including 875 km of motorways) has more than 63,000 supports and nearly 73,000 lights. Since LED lighting consumes less energy, it will allow energy savings of 30%. Wallonia benefited from the support of the EFSI Advisory Hub for the financial set-up of the project.

In the context of the Walloon Investment Plan, we can also highlight **the funding of the 'Swimming Pool Plan'**, for which the aim is to renovate all Walloon swimming pools, reducing their energy consumption and promoting the use of renewable energies.

## 5 Supplementary reform measures: Industrial policy, circular economy and support for SMEs

The Walloon Government has continued the implementation of its integrated regional development strategy by activating different levers of competitiveness. This will involve in particular developing a favourable environment and measures to support investment, entrepreneurship and the development of economic activity. Some of the reforms and measures adopted in this regard have already been described in the preceding sections. Earlier in this section, we described the measures to create businesses and their growth, particularly those aimed at SMEs. These resources also include the growth of the circular economy and industry's efficient use of resources and are already an integral part of Wallonia's intelligent specialisation strategy.

The **Competitiveness Clusters** Policy remains at the heart of the Region's economic development and is the backbone of the regional smart specialisation strategy. Its implementation continues through regular calls for projects, and it also provides new directions relating to internationalisation and participation in European training, innovation, digitisation and inter-centre collaboration programmes. The investments in RDI provided for in the Walloon Investment Plan will also help to intensify smart specialisation in the fields covered by the Clusters, in collaboration with the universities and research centres (see section 4.2). A process to renew the jury of the clusters is also underway, as well as a reflection on the financing modalities of the operational units of the Clusters. At European level, Wallonia is involved in the pilot projects of the Vanguard Initiative as well as in several inter-regional collaboration partnerships selected by the European Commission. In particular, we can note specific projects managed by the Centres:

- The PEPIT innovation platform in the area of plastic recycling, supported by GREENWIN, MECATECH and the PLASTIWIN Cluster (see section 4.2).
- The conclusion of an interregional collaboration agreement, in partnership with the Flemish cluster CATALISTI and Walloon cluster GREENWIN, in the field of plastics and sustainable chemistry. A joint call for projects was launched in 2019.
- Creation of the NATEXTRA platform supported by WAGRALIM. It is active in the development of industrial processes and production in the area of plant extraction for food purposes.
- As part of its participation in the European INNOSUP IOT4Industry project, MECATECH has launched a first call for projects for SMEs. This will make it possible to fund SMEs up to €60,000 for collaborative projects (feasibility, prototypes or demonstrations) aimed at integrating digital technologies (IoT, Big Data, Artificial Intelligence, Cybersecurity) if they can be used in "Industry of the Future" cases.
- Other Walloon actors have recently been selected in INNOSUP projects (WAGRALIM and Infopôle ITC Cluster), or COSME for inter-cluster collaboration in S3 (BIOWIN).
- The creation of a €20 million investment fund dedicated to the space sector.
- The launch of a joint call between MECATECH and the TWEED cluster on the theme of collective own consumption of energy (see section 4.5).
- Regarding the spreading of digital technologies, the Infopôle ICT Cluster has been entrusted with three new missions by the government, including identifying and developing digital ecosystems based on sectoral supply, particularly in relation to competitiveness clusters, and

research. The Cluster intends to strengthen its collaboration with the 'Pôles' in order to develop cross-sectoral digital innovation in their projects.

A **new EquisFair cluster** was also given a label at the beginning of 2019, it aims to structure the equestrian sector in Wallonia.

As regards support for SMEs and entrepreneurship, in addition to the measures already covered in the previous sections, three other measures can be highlighted. Firstly, since January 2019, the tax measure of the **Prêt Coup de Pouce** (Helping Hand Loan) has been available to all companies, and no longer limited to companies younger than 5 years old.

Subsequently, in January 2019 the Walloon government launched the **Walloon Export Council**. The Council is made up of actors in the field and experts. Based on the observation that Walloon exports remain too dependent on large companies and a few key sectors, while being geographically concentrated in neighbouring countries, the Walloon Export Council is responsible for drawing up a strategy to boost the internationalisation of Walloon companies, by 1 October. It will also need to provide specific recommendations each year both in terms of the internationalisation of companies and Wallonia's attractiveness for foreign investors.

Thirdly, in order to stimulate **female entrepreneurship**, a new measure will be launched in 2019. This will allow female business leaders to be supported in their tasks by other entrepreneurs (a managerial facilitator) during maternity leave, so they can devote time to their babies while ensuring that their company's activity is maintained. This managerial support can be full-time or part-time, and female entrepreneurs can also choose to remain active if they wish. The annual budget envelope will be €450,000. The intervention will cover 75% of the managerial facilitator's salary (the balance being paid by the female entrepreneur), and will be available for a maximum period of six months.

In order to support the competitiveness of Walloon industry in the context of the transition to a low-carbon economy, the government has adopted a **carbon leakage** measure as part of the framework adopted and authorised in 2012 by the European Union. This type of measure has already been adopted in all our neighbouring countries/regions. It makes it possible to financially compensate a limited number of companies that have lost competitiveness compared to international companies that have not been subject to European emissions trading (mainly in the metallurgical, steel, chemical, pharmaceutical and paper sectors). The measure takes the exceptional form of State aid to compensate for the additional energy costs incurred by these sectors. The planned budget is €17.5 million over the period 2018-2020 (€7.5 million in 2018, €5 million in 2019 and €5 million in 2020).

Regarding the circular economy, in March 2018 the Walloon government approved the **Walloon Waste-Resources Plan (PWDR in French)**. Specifically, more than 700 actions are proposed through 157 measures to reduce, reuse, sort, recycle and valorise waste more effectively. These include:

- The development of an industrial symbiosis or circular economy: what is waste for one company will be resources for another;
- The launch of new recycling channels for plastic, wood, batteries, dismantling of end-of-life vehicles and mattresses;
- Increasing waste sorting, among other things by investing €50 million by 2020 for the construction of new recycling facilities and the renovation of existing sites. The construction of a new biomethanisation unit to recover organic waste is also planned;
- Promoting a framework agreement with the distribution sector to encourage more eco-design of packaging for better recycling;



- Enhancing the 'Repairs-café' network to ensure a longer life for products;
- Encouraging citizens to rent a service rather than buy a product, in a rationale of eco-functionality (electrical and electronic devices, vehicles, bicycles, textiles etc.).

The Walloon government has also decided to award a grant of €410,000 to the non-profit organisation ImmaTerra to finance 40% of a project aimed at continuing to raise awareness of the **economy of functionality and cooperation**. On the basis of a one-year pilot project, a rigorous working method adapted to the realities of Walloon companies has been developed. The objectives are to mobilise and raise awareness among at least 1,000 companies, provide specific support to 50 of these and train 200 stakeholders external to companies on the issues, challenges, opportunities and methods for deploying the added value of the economy of functionality and cooperation.

## Annex 2: Reform programme of the Brussels Capital Region

### 1 Introduction

This contribution of the Brussels-Capital Region (BCR) to the Belgian 2019 National Reform Programme (NRP) is intended to present the main regional measures and strategies which respond, on the one hand, to the country-specific recommendations (CSR) made to Belgium by the Council of the European Union as part of the European Semester, and to the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy on the other. It was submitted to the social partners of the Brussels Economic and Social Council prior to its adoption by the Brussels government.

The Brussels government laid out its regional vision for 2040 by approving the Regional Plan for Sustainable Development (Plan Régional de Développement Durable - PRDD) in July 2018. The PRDD aims to provide adequate responses to the challenges and issues facing Brussels as an urban territory. These include demographic growth, accessibility to housing, economic restructuring, access to employment, functional and social diversity, the various forms of mobility and environmental issues.

The urban regeneration strategy has three main objectives:

- Respond to population growth and therefore the corresponding need for new housing, schools, facilities and public spaces;
- Re-examine deindustrialisation and identify ways to revive an economic dynamic that generates jobs for Brussels' inhabitants while falling under an inclusive urban context;
- Ensure that the region is an instrument for linking neighbourhoods rather than a border, or reconfigure neighbourhoods to strengthen or create an ecosystem that involves the development of the territory, the urban economy and multimodal transport, by mobilising the territory to provide a pleasant, sustainable and attractive living environment.

Two strands of action underpin the regional development strategy: territorial concentration and the concentration of certain priority sectors that generate employment and economic growth: the media, the creative and tourism industries, resources and waste management, sustainable food, hotels and restaurants, sustainable construction, renewable energies, health and services for individuals.

As part of the Go4Brussels 2025 Strategy, the region has continued to develop, strengthen and/or combine public policies on economy, employment, research and development, training and education in Brussels that are adapted to the realities and diversity of its inhabitants whether they are employers, workers, job seekers or students. Mechanisms for far-reaching social dialogue also support this dynamic, both at the inter-professional and sectoral level.

It is through this partnership-based and transversal approach that the government of the Brussels-Capital Region intends to support and consolidate the encouraging upturn in economic activity and the steady fall in the unemployment rate. In order to achieve this, it has also decided to envisage extraordinary investments in security and mobility, in the context of a balanced budget, in order to ensure harmonious territorial development for the benefit of all inhabitants and users of the city – while continuing the policies initiated since the start of the legislature.

Finally, the implementation of structural reforms requires significant public investment. This investment, for which the economic and strategic added value has been proven, was still deemed to be insufficient in the “Country Report Belgium 2019” produced by the European Commission. However, it is limited by a European framework at the budget and accounting level, which acts as a straitjacket for activating a recovery stimulus which is likely to provide a solution to the demographic, economic, social and environmental challenges. The government of the Brussels-Capital Region therefore reiterates its desire to see a different budgetary handling of public investment compared to that used for current expenditure.

## **2 Macro-economic context and outlook**

### **2.1 Economic activity**

#### **The growth of economic activity will remain moderate until 2020, before slowing down**

According to the most recent regional economic outlook, the growth in economic activity in the Brussels Region is expected to remain stable at 1.3% between 2018 and 2020, before slowing significantly over the following three years. In 2023, growth in Brussels will therefore fall to 0.9%. This trend is part of cyclical downturn which is expected from 2018 at the European level, and from 2019 at the global level. Over the complete period 2018-2023, GDP growth in Brussels should amount to 1.2% per year on average. Growth in economic activity in the region will be based to a large extent on the contribution of two significant sectors: "loans and insurance" and "other market services".<sup>5</sup>

#### **Investment growth remains dynamic**

Between 2018 and 2023, investment (gross fixed capital formation in the private and public sectors, minus housing investment) is expected to increase by an average of 2.6% per year in the Brussels-Capital Region (+3.0% for Belgium). This increase confirms the catching-up trend on the back of a prolonged period of decline in the level of investment observed between 2009 and 2012, in the wake of the financial crisis. The investment rate is calculated as the amount of gross fixed capital formation as a percentage of gross value added. In the Brussels Region, the investment rate fell to 16.4% in 2012 following the crisis. Since then, it has picked up again and is expected to continue to increase over the forecast period to reach 20.4% by 2023.

#### **Domestic employment grew strongly in 2018 but job creation has subsequently fallen**

In 2018, the Brussels-Capital Region should have a total of nearly 709 000 jobs in its territory, accounting for 15% of domestic employment in Belgium.<sup>6</sup> Job growth appeared to be particularly dynamic in 2018, with just over 6 000 additional workers recorded in Brussels (+0.9%). For the coming years, as Brussels' GDP growth slackens, job growth is projected to slow sharply (to 0.4% in 2023). Over the whole period 2018-2023, employment in the Brussels-Capital Region is expected to increase by an average of 0.6% per year, bringing the number of workers to 727 000. This corresponds to the hiring of just over 24 000 additional workers in total over the period, or an average of 4 000 net jobs created each year. Most of the new jobs envisaged in the Brussels Region are likely to be in the "other market services" and "health and social action" sectors.

#### **Rebound in productivity gains in a context of moderate labour cost increases**

For all sectors of market activity, the Brussels Region should record a productivity growth of 0.6% per year over the period 2018-2023, a rate identical to the rate projected at the Belgian level. This growth is

---

<sup>5</sup> The sector "other market services" includes publishing, the audio-visual industry, advertising, IT services, advisory and consultancy services, administrative and support services, estate agency activities, accounting, legal, scientific and technical activities.

<sup>6</sup> There are various sources of data on domestic employment statistics. The figures for the regional economic outlook presented in this chapter are based on regional accounting data produced by the National Accounts Institute (NAI). These data are primarily based on administrative sources and have the major advantage of being consistent with other regional accounting variables, such as value added. However, it should be borne in mind that in this source, jobs linked to international organisations are NOT counted, and these are a particularly important element within the Brussels Region.

a significant improvement over the general negative trend observed from 2008 to 2017 (-0.5% per year on average). However, from a historical perspective, the growth of economic activity in Brussels tends to be job-intensive and, on the contrary, relatively weak in terms of productivity gains. This relative weakness in productivity gains needs to be seen in the context of the projected moderate increase in real labour costs (+0.6% per year on average between 2018 and 2023). Ultimately, for the sectors of market activity in the Brussels Region, the projected increase in labour costs between 2018 and 2023 would therefore be identical to the increase in productivity. This evolution means that the region's cost competitiveness should be maintained in the coming years.

### **Entrepreneurial dynamism is more important in the Brussels-Capital Region**

At the end of 2017, the Brussels-Capital Region was home to 104 705 active VAT-liable companies, accounting for 11% of Belgian companies. An additional 3 574 companies were recorded in the regional territory compared to 2016, which equates to an increase of 3.5%. Among the companies active in the Brussels Region, 83% belong to the tertiary sector and 80% do not employ any workers, while 16% employ between 1 and 9 wage earners. The proportion of large companies (50 people or more) is higher in the Brussels Region compared to the national level (1.1% and 0.7% of the total number of companies respectively).

In 2017, 12 273 new businesses were created in the Brussels Region, corresponding to a start-up rate of 11.9%. This rate is higher than the national average of 10.0%. The number of company cessations in Brussels reached 7 979 in 2017, a rise after two years of consecutive declines. The cessation rate recorded in the Brussels Region therefore increased to 7.8%, higher than the national average (6.2%). Compared to Belgium as a whole, entrepreneurship is more dynamic in the Brussels Region, with both more start-ups and company cessations in relative terms.

### **The impact of Brexit on the Brussels economy**

The announced exit of the United Kingdom from the European Union will cause a major economic shock for the European Union, Belgium and the Brussels-Capital Region. Measuring the impact of this shock in the Brussels Region is extremely difficult, and few studies exist on the subject. The difficulties stem not only from the uncertainty surrounding the outcome of the Brexit negotiations, but also from the methodological complexity of such an analysis and the lack of necessary statistical data. Currently, two studies present a quantified impact of Brexit on the economy of the Brussels region.<sup>7</sup> According to these studies, and depending on whether we end up with a "soft" or "hard" Brexit scenario, there could be somewhere in the range of between 1 000 and 5 000 job losses in the medium term, while losses of value added could reach between 300 million euros and 1 billion euros. The results of these studies are only based on exports of goods and do not take into account the other likely effects of Brexit, in particular exports of services, foreign direct investment, the possible relocation of specific companies and inhabitants, the feedback effects on private income and consumption, ... As a result, the results of the studies likely underestimate the impacts of the United Kingdom's exit from the European Union.

---

<sup>7</sup> SCOURNEAU V. (2018), Les répercussions économiques potentielles du Brexit à moyen terme sur la Wallonie, IWEP Working Paper n°26; VANDENBUSSCHE H, CONNELL W. et SIMONS Z. (2017), De Impact van Brexit op de Vlaamse Economie: Een analyse van het output-en jobverlies, KU Leuven Vives Beleidsrapport November 2017

## **2.2 Labour market**

### **The growth of the working-age population is slowing down and the participation rate is falling**

The number of working-age Brussels inhabitants (15-64 years old) is expected to increase by 0.6% over the period 2018-2023. Although declining, this rate remains significantly faster than in neighbouring regions, where growth is expected to be close to zero. In decline since 2006, the participation rate in the Brussels Region is likely to continue declining in the coming years. It is expected to increase from 69.4% in 2018 to 68.6% in 2023, reflecting in particular the growing importance of the youngest age groups in the working-age population.

### **The number of Brussels inhabitants in employment is growing twice as fast as domestic employment in Brussels**

The labour market in Brussels is characterised by a significant number of people living in Flanders and Wallonia who work in Brussels. According to forecasts, these commuter flows represented 209 000 and 119 000 people respectively in 2018. Conversely, in the same year, more than 64 000 Brussels inhabitants commuted to Flanders and Wallonia. Overall, slightly less than half of domestic employment in Brussels is accounted for by workers from another region. During the period 2018-2023, the number of outgoing commuters is expected to increase more than the number of incoming commuters. This trend should be seen in the context of the increasingly slow growth of the expected labour reserve in Flanders and Wallonia. It also occurs in a context of labour market recovery and more effective coordination between regional employment services.

In these circumstances, the share of domestic employment in Brussels occupied by Brussels inhabitants should continue to increase, rising from 53.5% in 2018 to 54.4% in 2023. The weighting of Brussels inhabitants in employment in the other two regions should also increase in the coming years. As for the employed working population of Brussels, this should continue to grow faster than domestic employment (+1.3% and +0.6% per year respectively between 2018 and 2023).

### **The employment rate continues to increase**

The employment rate is obtained by calculating the ratio of the working population to the working-age population (15-64). Between 2008 and 2013, the employment rate in the Brussels Region fell sharply, from 59.2% to 56.3%, while it remained practically constant in the other two regions. However, the growth in the working population in Brussels during this period was twice as fast as in Flanders and Wallonia, although it was insufficient to absorb the strong increase in the working-age population in Brussels. The employment rate in the Brussels Region started to rise again from 2016 and this trend is expected to continue in the coming years. During the period 2018-2023, it should increase from 58.1% to 60.1%. Contrary to what has been observed in the past, the increase in the number of employed Brussels inhabitants should therefore be sufficient to absorb the (still significant) arrival of working-age Brussels inhabitants.

### **The number of jobseekers declines for the fourth consecutive year**

In 2018, an average of 90 203 unemployed jobseekers (demandeurs d'emploi inoccupés – DEI) were registered with Actiris, the regional public employment service of the Brussels-Capital Region. This rate fell by 3.4% compared to 2017 (-3 189 people), marking the fourth consecutive year of decline in unemployment in Brussels. In relative terms, youth unemployment recorded the largest decrease in 2018 (-7.2%), followed by the 25 to 49 age group of jobseekers (-4.7%). However, the number of DEIs aged 50 and over increased slightly (+1.5%). This marked decline observed in recent years is in part linked to

the more favourable economic climate which supported dynamic job growth, the redesign of the follow-up procedure for (young) jobseekers by Actiris, and the reform of the eligibility conditions for unemployment and integration allowances.

### **Unemployment will continue to fall in the medium term**

According to regional projections, the unemployment rate in the Brussels Region was 16.3% in 2018, down 1.2 percentage points from the previous year. Over the entire period 2018-2023, the number of DEIs is expected to decrease by an average of 4 500 each year. By 2023, the number of unemployed people in Brussels is expected to fall to 70 500, corresponding to an unemployment rate of 12.4%. This figure is significantly lower than observations made in the past, particularly compared to the average of 20.8% observed between 2003 and 2014. However, it should be borne in mind that the definition of administrative unemployment that applies in the forecast no longer necessarily coincides with the previous prevailing situation.

## **2.3 Demographics**

### **The growth of the Brussels population continues, but is less significant than in the previous decade**

The Brussels-Capital Region has a population of 1.199 million as of 1 January 2018. During the course of 2017, the region gained 7 122 inhabitants, a relative growth of 0.6%. Although higher than in 2016, this growth is nevertheless low compared to that of the previous 10 years.

As has systematically been the case over the last ten years, this annual growth in 2017 can also be explained by a high balance between births and deaths (+8,678) and high net international migration (+12 580), which together more than offset the highly negative net internal migration (-14 301).

In the medium and long term, according to the latest demographic projections from the Federal Planning Bureau (2018-2070), the population of Brussels will increase to 1.245 million in 2030 and 1.389 million in 2070. With an increase of 16% over the entire period 2018-2070, the expected growth in the Brussels region is intermediate compared to that projected in the other two regions (+19% in Flanders and +12% in Wallonia).

### **The Brussels population is relatively young**

With an average age of 37.5 years as of 1 January 2018, the Brussels-Capital Region has a very young population on average compared to the other two regions (42.6 years in Flanders and 41.3 years in Wallonia). Since the 1990s, the regional population has become significantly younger. Nevertheless, the average age increased slightly during 2016 and 2017.

There are multiple and interdependent aspects to the changes in the structure per age group which have resulted in this rejuvenation. Among these, two unquestionable phenomena stand out: suburbanisation, resulting in long-term non-replacement, among seniors, by "lost" age groups, and international immigration. Both of these contribute to rejuvenation: the first by reducing the summit of the age distribution pyramid, and the second by broadening its base.

## 3 Brussels' response to the country-specific recommendations made to Belgium

### 3.1 Budgetary and tax objectives

*CSR 1: Ensure that the nominal growth rate of net primary government expenditure does not exceed 1.8 % in 2019, corresponding to an annual structural adjustment of 0.6 % of GDP. Use windfall gains to accelerate the reduction of the general government debt ratio. Pursue the envisaged pension reforms and contain the projected increase in long-term care expenditure. Pursue the full implementation of the 2013 Cooperation Agreement to coordinate fiscal policies of all government levels. Improve the efficiency and composition of public spending at all levels of government to create room for public investment, notably by carrying out spending reviews.*

#### 3.1.1 Reduction in the debt ratio

The Debt Agency is a financial service working for the regional entity and the regional government, created within Brussels Finance and Budget in 2014. It has a Front Office, Middle Office and Back Office, reflecting a strict separation of tasks comparable to the banking world.

The Debt Agency is responsible for various tasks:

- Optimising the financial management of direct debt in a new context of "exiting the financial crisis" and a sustainable return to balanced books;
- Setting up and then consolidating the new dynamic system for guarantee management, and strengthening monitoring by the region;
- Supporting para-regional entities in the search for financing, participating in promotion on financial markets and setting up new financing tools for them;
- Providing financial advice to the government of the BCR on investment projects (Project Finance);
- Ensuring, throughout all the departments of the Debt Agency, a transversal role at the service of the government, through advice in portfolio management and financial markets, and producing financial studies and analyses;
- Integrating regional bodies into the Financial Coordination Centre;
- Implementing consolidated financial risk management for the region;
- Managing the portfolio on behalf of third parties.

The Debt Agency of the Brussels-Capital Region ensures optimal management of the region's direct and indirect debt. This optimal management has been confirmed for several years by the annual rating given by Standard & Poor's.

For example, the budget surpluses generated by the Brussels-Capital Region have been used year after year to pay down debt. As such, between 2012 and 2016, direct debt fell from 3 146 million euros to 2 688 million euros.



The strategy pursued in 2016 and 2017 to reconstitute floating debt of 400 million euros achieved its objective: as of 31 December 2017, floating debt stood at 551 million euros. 2017 was marked by a return to a deficit trajectory (270 million euros increase in debt), mainly due to strategic investments (investments in specific infrastructure) including tunnels, the metro and civil engineering projects. These investments are neutralised (outside the budget) by the government, effective neutralisation in ESA, for a direct debt of 2 958 million euros (18.6%). This reconstitution of floating debt resulted in a significant reduction in the cost of regional debt in 2018, to 3% from 3.50% in 2017, while maintaining an increased term of 8.5 years. As such, in 2018, the region applied the conventional method of reconsolidating all debts maturing during the year (204 million euros).

### **3.1.2 Nominal growth rate of public expenditure**

If we exclude strategic investment expenditure in the field of mobility (metro, tunnels, viaducts, etc.), we see an overall increase of 1.69% in primary expenditure in government services in the Brussels-Capital Region, in line with European recommendations.

The Government of the Brussels-Capital Region, like the other entities, believes that certain large-scale strategic investments in the field of mobility (metro, tunnels, viaducts, etc.) which have a major economic impact deserve separate treatment and should therefore be excluded from the region's budgetary objective. The emphasis on increasing (strategic) investment is also in line with the other recommendations of the European Commission.

### **3.1.3 Improving the efficiency and composition of public expenditure: public procurement**

During its legislature, the Brussels government has paid special attention to the optimal use of available means, with the aim of reinforcing necessary investment expenditures. The share of investments in the global budget of the regional entity amounted to 9,9% in 2015; this share has risen in the initial budget of 2019 to 15,74%, i.e. almost twice as much in terms of nominal figures.

#### **Public procurement**

The performance of public procurement is an important factor in the efficiency of public spending. Within the Brussels Region, in addition to the sovereign role of administrative supervision of municipalities, actions are regularly undertaken to support local authorities, representing 13.2% of public expenditure in Belgium, in the context of the public contracts awarded by the latter.<sup>8</sup> In order to cope with the complexity of certain public contracts, many local authorities using central purchasing offices make purchases or place orders on the basis of public contracts awarded by other federal, regional and/or local contracting authorities.

Municipalities and public centres for social welfare (Centres Publics d'Action Sociale – CPAS) also often use framework agreements concluded by other local and/or regional contracting authorities in Brussels.

The recent publication of a “Guide to Good Practices in Public Procurement” by the Brussels authorities has contributed to this collective dynamic. This guide introduces criteria other than price or cost. Specifically, it emphasises criteria that need to include environmental aspects such as, in particular, the manufacture of products that do not involve the use of toxic chemicals, and the use of the circular economy, in order to valorise tenders with the lowest impact on the global ecosystem. More generally, the

---

<sup>8</sup> “Les finances des pouvoirs locaux à Bruxelles”, Belfius Bank, 2017

"Guide to Good Practices in Public Procurement" is a compilation of the recommendations of good practices formulated by the regional working group "Combating social dumping", in order to provide contracting authorities with tools to help them in awarding their public contracts, and in the fight against social dumping practices (examples of clauses to be included in the specifications, etc.).

In addition to the use of public contracts launched by central purchasing offices (discussed above), the joint procurement technique is used as soon as this is possible and primarily according to the purpose of the contract, its complexity or its financing. At the municipal level, the regional or federal contracting authority may, in this context, be prompted to award or even monitor the implementation of a municipal public procurement.

These actions, which are intended in particular to support the professionalisation of public procurement bodies, take various forms, including advice on request (from simple advice to individual guidance), regular information through various channels and training for officials. In 2017, the region gave several hundred officials from municipalities, public social welfare centres and police districts the chance to attend a five-day training course on changes in public procurement regulations.

### **3.1.4 Health and personal assistance**

The Brussels-Capital Region took over various federal powers following the 6<sup>th</sup> state reform. In 2018, the Common Community Commission (COCOM, responsible for community affairs not exclusively concerning one of the two linguistic communities of Brussels) created a new public entity called Iriscare.<sup>9</sup>

Since 1 January 2019, Iriscare has managed the Brussels Region's competences in health and personal assistance. Previously, these competences were divided between INAMI, different federal public services and COCOM itself.

The transfer of competences from the federal government to the communities and regions was only completed in January 2019. COCOM has adopted an explicit "as is" approach to the transition, keeping policies in place to ensure continuity in the provision of services to beneficiaries and funding for care providers.

Following this reform, regional mutual companies were created in order to continue in accordance with flows similar to those previously known via insurers. The main difference in granting benefits is the criterion of each individual's place of residence. Each individual determines their own rights, which should avoid any overlap in the advantages of different authorities.

The effective transfer of activities will be gradually implemented in 2019 and 2020. Iriscare will also implement the Brussels Health Plan. One of the objectives of this plan is to consult and coordinate the various health authorities.

A technical commission has been created within Iriscare to monitor the expenditure and income of all policies following the example of the federal INAMI; this commission will meet every 3 months and will notify the United College with proposals for possible measures.

---

<sup>9</sup> Ordonnance du 23 Mars 2017 portant création de l'Office bicommunautaire de la santé, de l'aide aux personnes et des prestations familiales

### **3.1.5 Developing the services offered by the Observatory of Reference Prices in Public Procurement**

As a reminder, the general mission of the Observatory of Reference Prices in Public Procurement is to assist contracting authorities in their decision making regarding public procurement, with a particular focus on abnormally low prices and the risks of social dumping. The work carried out in 2018 and the projects for 2019 can be summarised as follows:

- The Observatory's main task is to provide, on request, an individual assistance service for decision making by providing opinions and recommendations. In 2018, the Observatory responded to 12 requests for opinions and recommendations on specific public contracts. It will continue this work in 2019.
- The Observatory draws up and makes available various documents enabling public procurement bodies to benefit from tools which are designed to assist them in their public procurement procedures.

In 2018, on the dedicated web pages of the Economic and Social Council website, the Observatory made the following available:

- A standard specification for security guard/surveillance services.
- Specific recommendations and a summary document from the Joint Committee 302 for collective catering/restaurant services.

In 2019, the Observatory plans to make new documents available to contracting authorities (model specifications, sectoral summary notes, etc.) on the printing and passenger transport sectors. It will also continue its sectoral research work (events, maintenance of green spaces and construction) with the aim of producing new useful documents.

- Following the recommendations of the working group "Combating social dumping", the Observatory has drafted a "Guide to Good Practices in Public Procurement", which has been available online since July 2018. The aim of this guide is to provide contracting authorities with tools to help them in awarding their public contracts, and in combating social dumping practices.
- The Observatory has taken part in training courses, seminars and information days to share its experience, present its work and impart its knowledge and/or integrate various networks (Brussels network of regional public procurement bodies, "Social Clauses" working groups, etc.).
- Other projects, such as the creation of a tool to analyse the economic and financial capacity of companies bidding on a public contract and an online business directory, are being developed at the Observatory. Both services are planned to be available in 2019.

## **3.2 Labour market and training**

*CSR 2: Remove disincentives to work and strengthen the effectiveness of active labour market policies, notably for the low-skilled, people with a migrant background and older workers. Pursue the education and training reforms, including by fostering equity and increasing the proportion of graduates in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.*

As a reminder, the Brussels government adopted the Go4Brussels 2025 Strategy in June 2015, which is reflected in 19 objectives that cut across all areas of public policies on economy, research and development, employment, training, education and mobility. These objectives aim:

- to make Brussels the Belgian and European capital of entrepreneurship and innovation (global objective of priority 1 of the Go4Brussels 2025 Strategy);
- to reverse the paradox of the Brussels economy and improve the quality of life of Brussels inhabitants, primarily through greater participation in the labour market. To increase employment for Brussels inhabitants by promoting the socio-economic dynamism in the region and improve the living environment (housing, mobility and air quality, regional development, society and health, etc.); this also means making the city-region more attractive for both workers and businesses.

In consultation with the social partners of the Economic and Social Council of the Brussels-Capital Region, the operationalisation of the major projects of the Go4Brussels 2025 Strategy is subject to a permanent monitoring process (via steering committees, implementation and results indicators, etc.) and annual reporting within a Social Summit, which brings together the social partners and the government(s). This consultation makes it possible to highlight the progress made, and set out the annual priorities to be implemented.

The Social Summit of 25 September 2018 focused in particular on the challenges of mobility as well as on support for SMEs (preventing bankruptcies, credit mediators, etc.), the Youth Guarantee (measures in favour of NEETs not registered with Actiris, the promotion of sustainable and high-quality jobs (monitoring of employment schemes, new forms of work, etc.) and digital issues (smart city).

The last social summit of the current legislature has been the occasion for an initial assessment of the accomplishments and results of the first 4 years since the Strategy was implemented. It aimed to allow the social partners to share their priority projects for the next legislature and particularly in the field of employment and training (continued sectoral negotiations and the establishment of Employment and Training Poles (pôles formation emploi – PFE), fight against social dumping by adding social clauses in public procurement contracts, fight against discrimination in recruitment, etc.).

Finally, it should be noted that by involving the economic sectors which are active in Brussels, the Brussels government intends to support the implementation of measures to enhance the employment of Brussels inhabitants. By promoting skills development, by responding to sectoral trends, by adapting the training offers to the needs of sectors, by promoting employment and the professions in the sectors, and combating discrimination, we are ultimately safeguarding the preservation and creation of high-quality jobs in the Brussels Region. Similarly, by strengthening synergies between the economic sectors and the various public actors in the areas of the economy, innovation and research, the Government intends to encourage individuals to anticipate trends in the economic fabric, in order to encourage business development opportunities within its territory.

As envisaged in the Go4Brussels 2025 Strategy, sectors are also mobilised through sectoral framework agreements between the regional government, the two community colleges (where applicable) and the various sectors. An amendment may be concluded with the communities if specific actions are undertaken in terms of cross-policies, including vocational education. The Economic and Social Council of the Brussels-Capital Region, through the sectoral facilitation service, is instructed by the regional government to prepare these framework agreements and their operationalisation.

Four framework agreements have been signed to date (SJC 140.03 for road transport and logistics, JC 124 for construction workers, JC 111 for workers in the technology industry and JC 149.01 for the electrical engineering sector).

About ten sectoral support committees are in place, in particular for the following sectors: Horeca (JC 302), Automotive and related sectors (JC 112, 142.01, 149.02, 149.04), Removals (SJC 140.05), Fuel trade (JC 127), International trade, transport and logistics (JC 226), ICT and non-market.

These various projects help the labour market function in a way that is more aligned with the daily realities of its actors.

It should also be noted that the Region has transposed the directives on the employment of foreign workers. Since 24 December 2018, in order to work in the Brussels-Capital Region for more than three months, the application for a work permit and a residence permit is now made through a single procedure, at Brussels Economy and Employment. At the end of the procedure, the "single permit" certifies the holder's right to reside and work in Belgium. This should result in administrative simplification for applicants. This monitoring will allow a better understanding of the diversity within the Brussels labour market.

In a city-region as cosmopolitan as Brussels, where 72.7% of inhabitants are of foreign origin, the Brussels public targeted by the employment and training measures reflects this significant representation. In the near future (2<sup>nd</sup> half of 2019), Actiris, through the Observatory for Employment and Training, will be able to monitor the effects of the measures in a more targeted manner, in particular according to the origin of the jobseekers in question. This will make it possible to make the necessary adjustments if necessary, and based on better objectification of individual problems.

In addition, the Government has taken note of the 20 measures proposed by the Minister of Regional Employment, in order to extend and concretise all the measures taken in the context of the Strategy 2025 and, specifically, the Training Plan 2020 in the context of the issue of unfilled job vacancies. Twelve of these measures are addressed at the federal level. They are intended to draw up a genuine inter-federal Strategic Plan "Job Vacancies and Qualifications", which is aimed at ensuring the recruitment needs of companies and strengthening the development of qualification levels in the region.

On a daily basis, in addition to the essential work of providing information to, registering and monitoring the availability of jobseekers, Actiris has continued the essential work of guiding jobseekers registered with its services to and in their jobs. As such, in 2018, Actiris advisors assisted 45 192 jobseekers, including 11 762 people who had registered for the first time with Actiris. The methodology used to guide jobseekers is continuously evaluated so as to adapt it to the different profiles of jobseekers and/or the different realities of the labour market. The positive outcome rate (i.e. into a job, training, studies, internship or a specific support solution) is 52.3%.

### **3.2.1 Measures targeting low-skilled and/or migrant and/or older workers**

At the beginning of this chapter, it should be recalled that while unemployment has been falling steadily in Brussels since 2013, any analysis of the apparent match between the qualification levels of the labour supply and labour demand, in particular as regards the supply and demand for low-skilled labour, needs to be qualified in the light of the specific features of the labour market in Brussels. As explained in the section on the macroeconomic context, we need to highlight the insufficient character of domestic employment (i.e. labour demand) in relation to labour supply, including incoming commuters, as well as the significant growth in the active population residing in Brussels. On the other hand, the qualification levels of this active population do not correspond to the qualification levels that are required in the workplace. As such, it is not a question of simply allocating labour.

The match between the qualification levels of labour supply and demand is not established in Brussels. The supply of low and medium-skilled labour is indeed overabundant compared to the demand for this type of labour. As such, in 2017, nearly 60% of domestic employment in Brussels required a qualification in higher education.

Moreover, the following trends were observed during the period 2000-2017 in the Brussels region:

- demand for low-skilled labour fell from 151 000 to 100 000 jobs (-51,000 units, -34%), while labour supply remained almost unchanged at over 120 000 units;
- demand for medium-skilled labour stagnated at around 200 000 jobs, or even declined slightly (-4%), while the corresponding labour supply increased significantly (+35 000 units, +32%);
- it is only in the context of highly skilled work that labour supply and demand evolve in convergence (+116 000 units demanded, +102 000 units supplied). We can observe that the qualification category in which employment has grown the most in the Brussels Region is that of graduates of short-cycle higher education.

It is likely that the status of the Brussels-Capital Region as a destination for large-scale immigration, which is incomparable to other urban areas of the country, has contributed to lowering the average qualification levels of the labour supply. This specific aspect also has important statistical effects: many newcomers encounter difficulties in having their qualifications, obtained in their country of origin, recognised in their host country. The result is that these jobseekers and workers appear in the statistical categories as low-skilled workers, even though they have qualifications.

The Brussels Region is also confronted with specific features that are highly detrimental to jobseekers who are native to the region, in particular in the form of stringent language requirements due to a bilingual national environment and the increasing internationalisation of certain sectors of activity, as well as in the form of discriminatory practices, in particular against Brussels inhabitants of foreign descent. As a result, the appropriate qualification level does not guarantee a match between labour supply and demand.

### **3.2.1.1 Measures to address the specific difficulties of integrating low-skilled jobseekers into the labour market.**

**Activa.brussels:** unlike the federal Activa scheme (now regionalised following the 6<sup>th</sup> state reform), which coupled reductions in employer contributions to activation allowances (with around ten possible configurations), the new Activa.brussels scheme, which came into force on 1 October 2017, consists solely of an activation allowance granted for 30 months to jobseekers who have been unemployed for 12 months, registered with Actiris and domiciled in the Brussels-Capital Region. Certain jobseekers (JS) will fall under the category of jobseekers unemployed for 12 months, and are eligible for the scheme the day after registering with Actiris. This is particularly the case for people younger than 30 who do not have a certificate of higher secondary education, and jobseekers aged 57 or older. With the region aiming to support sustainable and quality jobs, in order to benefit from the advantage, employers need to recruit jobseekers with an employment contract of at least 6 months part-time. The working allowance is now 350 euros per month for 6 months, rising to 800 euros in the following 12 months and then falling to 350 euros for the final 12 months (rates proportional to working time). The Activa measure represents a monthly average of 3 000 cards issued for 263 activated cards.

The new Activa scheme, extended to jobseekers with reduced capacity for work, has also been reinforced since 1 October 2017. As is the case currently, the working allowance is paid out for 36 months: 750 euros per month the first year, reduced to 600 euros per month the following two years (instead of 500 euros per month paid previously).

The amount of expenditure for the schemes Activa.brussels and Activa Aptitude réduite (reduced capacity) over the first 11 months of 2018 amounted to 10 840 220 euros.

Up until 31 December 2018, the measure was run in parallel with the former Activa 'Federal' scheme. Bearing in mind that these schemes are not yet fully operational, an initial assessment can be made as follows:

- 23 625 Activa.brussels cards were issued between 1 October 2017 and 30 September 2018, including 5 374 for jobseekers under 30 who do not have a CESS (certificate of higher education) (or who have a diploma obtained abroad but without equivalence) and 1 858 certificates were issued to JS aged at least 57.
- As the initial results show, the new Activa.brussels scheme targets young people under 30 more than the former federal scheme. This is the result of changes in the criteria which allow access to the measure: firstly, the exemption of minimum **registration** periods for young people without a CESS, and secondly the scrapping of the condition of being a fully entitled unemployed person.
- It is also planned to analyse the paths taken by jobseekers who have benefited from the measure, to verify whether the target groups are integrated into the labour market on a long-term basis. This type of analysis requires a longer period of hindsight, as the measure began in October 2017, and the financial benefit to the employer can be spread over a period of 30 months.

### **Measures taken with regard to low-skilled youth, in particular as part of the Youth Guarantee Scheme:**

The **integration contract** was implemented in July 2016. This measure is designed to offer a 12-month employment contract, subsidised by the Brussels Region, for any person younger than 25 who is a jobseeker unemployed for at least 18 months, but unable to enter the labour market despite job-seeking efforts. This contract is concluded in the public or non-profit sector.

For the period from 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2018, the recorded rate of young JS invited to interviews to present the integration contract was 70.8% on average. From these interviews, it emerged that 983 young people, or 50.2%, were able to retain a full-time job in the short-term. 977 young people, or 49.8%, were unable to retain a job in the short-term, for a variety of reasons: returning to school, childcare issues, etc. Over the first two years of implementation of the measure, 483 young people entered the scheme. In 2018, 202 JS have been recruited with an integration contract.

A first evaluation of the measure is underway, the result of a collaboration between the BISA, the Brussels Observatory for Health and Social Matters and the Brussels Observatory for Employment and Training (View.brussels). This evaluation will be one of the elements taken into account to possibly extend this type of contract to the market sector.

The **Internship for first professional experience** (Stage First) is a new form of internship in a company that replaces the federal measure for job transition internships. The measure started in January 2017 and is intended to allow an unemployed jobseeker younger than 30, who has been registered for at least 3 months after their studies (diploma of advanced secondary education at the most) to acquire their first professional experience, and to integrate the young person in question, after the internship, immediately and permanently in the labour market by removing the barriers he or she faces in accessing it.

In 2018, 5 602 jobseekers younger than 25 concluded a personalised action plan (7 944 were supported in this context). Of these, 820 entered a 'Stage First'. 47 benefited from an internship abroad (European, among others).

The **first-job contracts** (conventions de premier emploi – CPE) managed by Actiris made it possible to give 362 jobseekers younger than 25 their first professional experience and first salary. A proportion of these CPEs are concluded in the public administration located within the Brussels territory (estimated at 250 in 2018). For the latter, as well as for young people on integration contracts, the ERAP has been organising, at the request of the Government, a programme to support young people within the regional public service, since 2017. This training has 3 components: component 1 for young people at the start of

a fixed-term contract, component 2 for mentors for young people on fixed-term contracts and component 3 for young people at the end of a fixed-term contract. For component 1, 53 young people were trained in 2017; 49 were trained in 2018 and around 50 are planned for 2019. For component 2, 29 mentors were trained in 2017; 2 were trained in 2018. For component 3, 48 young people were trained in 2017; 50 in 2018, around 50 are planned for 2019.

We can observe that there is a link between these measures and the recent trend in the unemployment rate of low-skilled workers in the Brussels Region, which has declined significantly since 2013 (-21.6% between 2013 and 2017), following a period of significant growth.

Finally, as part of the evaluation process of the Go4Brussels 2025 Strategy, the BISA was commissioned to carry out an evaluation of the impact of the measures for individuals' first professional experience in companies, in order to estimate the effect of given schemes which allow people to acquire their first professional experience. This evaluation made it possible to measure the impact of individual vocational training (formations professionnelles individuelles – FPI), first-job contracts (conventions premier emploi – CPE) and company transition internships (stages de transition en entreprise – STE) on the beneficiaries' future career paths, in terms of leaving unemployment to lasting employment.

Without going into detail, the conclusions state that:

- The company transition internships (STE – currently Stage First) are proving to be effective and particularly for the least qualified young people;
- The individual vocational training (FPI) accelerates the way to employment for all levels of education except for young people with a diploma of higher education. Even more than for internships, the results show that FPI slows down the way of highly skilled young people into employment (confinement effect). Even if these young people found employment after the training period, a majority of them would have found lasting employment in the absence of the FPI;
- The first-job contracts (CPE) have no significant overall effect on the way to employment of its beneficiaries, except for (low-skilled) long-term unemployed young people (18 months or more). This type of employment contract, which is linked to a training aspect, should currently be targeted even more at very specific youth audiences and linked to unemployment traps.

### **3.2.1.2 Measures targeting migrant workers**

The Brussels-Capital Region, as both the Belgian and international capital, but also due to the size of its employment area, is particularly attractive for migration from the European Union and from beyond EU borders. This is why the fight against all forms of discrimination and the promotion of diversity is a theme addressed through various prisms of the Go4Brussels 2025 Strategy, whether it relates to job quality, professional integration, training or support for businesses.

Various factors (see the 2017 contribution) negatively influence the socio-professional integration of migrants and persons of foreign origin, and these factors are reinforced by discriminatory practices in recruitment.

The figures below show the number of unemployed jobseekers (DEI) registered in 2018 (annual average) according to nationality and age. Although these figures provide information about the migration dynamics of jobseekers, they do not account for their diversity in terms of origin. It is estimated that the proportion of DEIs of foreign origin is over 80%.



Compared to 2017, the proportion of non-EU nationals (-0.4%) and non-Belgians (-0.1%) fell slightly among the group of unemployed jobseekers.

**Table 1 Jobseekers registered with Actiris according to age and nationality – Annual average 2018**

Nationality	Belgian	EU (excluding Belgium)	Non-EU and refugees	Total	% non-EU	% non-Belgian
younger than 25	6,476	1,151	1,349	9,671	15.0	27.9
25 - 29 years old	7,933	1,738	2,113	12,630	17.9	32.7
30 - 49 years old	27,512	7,334	11,257	48,096	24.4	40.3
50 - 54 years old	6,160	1,377	1,471	9,267	16.3	31.6
55 years old and above	10,486	2,278	1,568	13,729	10.9	26.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>58,567</b>	<b>13,878</b>	<b>17,758</b>	<b>93,392</b>	<b>19.7</b>	<b>35.1</b>

Source: Actiris, View.brussels calculations

The table below shows the evolution of the employment rate and the unemployment rate over the period 2012-2017 and between 2016 and 2017:

Employment rate					
	2012	2016	2017	var 12/17	var 16/17
Belgian nationals	54.8	54.3	54.7	-0.10%	0.90%
EU nationals	61.9	67.9	68.9	11.40%	1.50%
Non-EU nationals	37.2	38.3	38.9	4.40%	1.50%
Unemployment rate					
	2012	2016	2017	var 12/17	var 16/17
Belgian nationals	15.4	16.6	14.8	-4.30%	-11.10%
EU nationals	14.6	11.8	10.4	-28.70%	-11.50%
Non-EU nationals	34.4	30.9	29.2	-15.30%	-5.70%

Sources: FPS Economy - DGSEI (LFS), Steunpunt WSE calculations and Brussels Employment Observatory - All rates appear as a % of the population aged 15 to 64

As a reminder, in December 2016, the Regional Government approved an action plan to complete the existing actions to combat discrimination and promote diversity in employment. The actions described below are part of this action plan.

## Legislative framework

The Brussels-Capital Region has a legislative arsenal to promote diversity in employment for several years now. A more targeted and proactive ordinance to combat discrimination in access to employment was adopted in 2017 and enacted by Parliament (see the contribution of 2018).

Since its entry into force on 1 January 2018, this new regulatory framework has given inspectors of the Regional Employment Inspectorate the power to carry out discrimination checks via situational tests (sending similar CVs except for a discriminatory criterion) and/or mystery calls. These tests must be carried out without provocation and only after a complaint has been lodged and backed up by serious evidence. If an official report records any irregularities, it is forwarded to the Labour Inspectorate. In the event of a conviction by the courts, the offender must also reimburse any regional aid received. This work is carried out in close collaboration with the bodies promoting equal opportunities, Unia and the

Institute for Equality of Women and Men. A cooperation agreement with these bodies has been concluded in May 2018 as part of the implementation strategy of the ordinance of 16 November 2017.

As mentioned in previous contributions, this axis is part of the action plan that has been approved by the Government in December 2016. It is combined with a preventive approach based on information, awareness-raising, communication and support for innovative projects in the area of equal opportunities for access to the labour market, and retention within it.

Additionally, the ordinance aimed at ensuring a policy of diversity within the local public service has been revised in order to combat discrimination in terms of access to jobs and encourage the promotion of diversity through the use of tools which are applicable in the private sector. The new ordinance will be voted before the end of this legislature. This legislation will be extended to the CPASs by the adoption of a joint ordinance at the United College.

**Strengthening the Actiris anti-discrimination counter:** this counter provides information, reception, support and assistance to victims of discrimination in recruitment. 103 notifications were submitted to Unia in 2018, which remains stable compared to previous years.

**Diversity plans reform:** Actiris provides support to private companies based in Brussels who wish to draw up a diversity plan. The Diversity plan is created by the company itself, with the collaboration of a diversity consultant. It consists of, firstly, an assessment of diversity within the company and, secondly, of proposals for actions designed to improve the company's situation in terms of diversity. The plan, which lasts 2 years, is then submitted for approval to the Council for Non-Discrimination and Diversity (CNDD), which brings together representatives of the social partners, Actiris' Management Committee, the Minister of Employment and the Employment Administration. For 2018, the amount of subsidies awarded to the CNDD by the region was 750 000 euros.

A subsidy of a maximum amount of 10 000 euros, as co-financing, is granted to companies which sign a diversity plan with Actiris, to implement it. A diversity label may also be awarded to companies, organisations and institutions which incorporate a diversity policy. 151 companies have a diversity plan, of which 29 obtained theirs in 2018.

In 2018, a review of diversity instruments was carried out on the basis of an external evaluation, in order to bring them more in line with the needs and reality of companies. In 2019, the decree on the diversity plan and label will be reviewed to adapt it to the new guidelines. This reform, developed by a joint working group, is structured around 3 topics: redefining the objectives of these instruments, redefining these tools by moving towards 3 types of diversity plans instead of just one while introducing quantitative objectives into these diversity plans, and redefining the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders in the processes of preparing, implementing and evaluating diversity plans.

In addition, as part of the **reform of economic expansion**, reflected in the Ordinance of 3 May 2018 on aid for the economic development of companies and its implementing decrees, the Government introduced increases in aid for companies with more than 100 employees who have produced a diversity plan.

These various reforms are intended to increase the number of plans drawn up by Brussels companies and their impact on equality in access to employment.

As a reminder, a working group involving the social partners, Actiris, Brussels Economy and Employment and the office of the Minister of Employment is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the review of the instruments for combating discrimination and promoting diversity in the private sector.

**Integration of migrants in the labour market:** Actiris works in collaboration with the relevant front-line partners, including the Reception agency for newcomers (BAPA), associations for civic integration such as BON (The Brussels reception agency for civic integration) and CIRE (Coordination and Initiatives for Refugees and Foreigners), the Dutch Language House in Brussels, etc. A partnership has also been implemented by Actiris with these operators on the ground (CIRÉ and BON) in order to encourage migrants and newcomers to have the diplomas they acquired abroad accredited in one of the two Communities (French-speaking and Flemish). An agreement covering the period 2018-2022 has been concluded and provides for the processing of 1 150 applications for equivalence for 2018. The actual figures for 2018 are not yet known.

**Social interpretation:** since 1 May 2018, in order to speed up their access to Actiris services and the labour market, Actiris has provided jobseekers who do not have sufficient proficiency in French or Dutch with an interpreter during their first contacts in the local offices (reception, first registration, job info, diagnostic interview) so that they can have a good understanding of the basic information necessary for their situation and their professional plans. It is not envisaged offering this service throughout the individual's career path, as it is considered that they will sufficiently master one of the two regional languages in the long term. The 9 languages identified by Actiris as the most used by foreign-language speaking JSs are Arabic, Turkish, Spanish, Romanian, Polish, English, Bulgarian, Albanian and Russian. On an annual basis, the objective of this partnership is to achieve a volume of services provided of between 3 500 and 7 000 interviews with this social interpretation service. The actual number of hours and specific beneficiaries will be known after one year of operation.

Between 01 May 2018 and 31 October 2018, Actiris' local offices received 511 requests for social interpreting. An analysis is under way to determine the relevance and cost of a request to extend the service to other languages.

**Cooperation between Actiris and the Administration of the French Community on the simplification and acceleration of the recognition of diplomas acquired abroad:** since 2016, 20 C-level first-job contracts have been granted to the administration, including 8 in departments relating to the equivalence of diplomas. These new resources have enabled the administration to improve the quality of its services. Thus, availability has been improved by increasing phone support hours and physical reception has been opened in the morning (before that, it was only open in the afternoon). The number of visitors by appointment increased (+3,266 compared to 2016) and the response time has been reduced with one or two weeks depending on the time of year.

**Actions in the Brussels public sector:** as part of the projects for the Public Service Objective of the Go4Brussels 2025 Strategy, a "Diversity Day" was organised in 2018 for all Brussels public services, whether regional or local, with the aim of encouraging the sharing of best practices, presenting the content of the revised ordinance (local administrations) and promoting the employment of all Brussels inhabitants within the civil service through these exchanges.

It should be noted that Actiris' diversity department collaborates with the Brussels public services, to help them develop and implement an appropriate diversity plan.

In addition, the Ordinance of 4 September 2008 on promoting diversity and combating discrimination in the Brussels regional public service allows the awarding of grants to stimulate employment within the public bodies in the region among jobseekers from Brussels neighbourhoods with a high unemployment rate, and to meet the objective set in the government agreement to increase the number of Brussels inhabitants in the public service by at least 10%. Launched in 2015, this scheme has been very successful. It made it possible to support the recruitment of 417 jobseekers in 2015, 447 jobseekers in 2016 and 445 jobseekers in 2017. The scheme was enhanced in 2017: the amount of the grant allocated was increased for regional public institutions that hired at least 20% of jobseekers from neighbourhoods of the Brussels-Capital Region in which the unemployment rate of the population was equal to or higher than the

regional average in a calendar year. With the aim of administrative simplification, a new procedure was initiated in 2018. As such, the payment of grants is no longer based on estimates of amounts but on the actual recruitment of jobseekers who meet the conditions of the grant. The estimated number of recruited people for 2018 is 450.

Finally, it should be noted that since 1 January 2019, **an equal opportunities test** has been mandatory for all new laws and regulations. It has become a tool for self-assessment, of reflection on the implemented policies, and for awareness-raising in the fight against discrimination. This test is also mandatory for public contracts, grants, management contracts and strategic planning documents concluded or adopted by the Brussels-Capital Region since 1 March 2019. The implementation of this test has been supplemented by the creation of a regional committee for equal opportunities which ensures that the equal opportunities dimension is integrated into regional policy, and it monitors and evaluates the equal opportunities test (see point 4.5.1).

### **3.2.1.3 Professional integration of vulnerable groups thanks to the social economy reform**

#### **The social economy reform**

The Ordinance of 23 July 2018 on the approval and support of social enterprises came into force on 1 February 2019. This new regulatory framework aims to open up new horizons for entrepreneurs who opt for this promising economic model through a series of economic levers, while preserving the specific and historical mission of social and professional integration of the social economy. It responds to the widespread renewed interest in social entrepreneurship and social enterprises and supports this movement with economic policy elements that recognise the diversity of social enterprise types. It follows extensive consultation with institutional and social partners and stakeholders in the field with a view to finalising the implementing decrees relating to mandates, financing and integration jobs.

The social economy reform aims to unlock individual potential around 5 concrete strands:

- Levers for economic financing and entrepreneurial support, in particular through a subsidy rate increased by 10% in investment, training or consultancy aid (aid for economic expansion schemes), an annual call for innovative projects to support the most innovative entrepreneurial projects and breathe life into social enterprises, as well as access to financing products through Finance.brussels (loans, capital and guarantees)
- Easing of the accreditation procedure
- Employment aid targeting transition and integration: various social enterprises create both jobs to enable people in difficulty to make the transition to the mainstream labour market (transitional jobs) and long-term jobs for people who encounter great difficulties in finding employment in the mainstream labour market (integration jobs). For these two objectives, social enterprises can now count on jobs subsidised via schemes such as Activa, future jobs in the social economy (merger of the PTP (Professional Transition Programme) and SINE (Social Integration Economy) programmes) or jobs pursuant to Article 60. A decree pertaining to the employment integration scheme in social economy is in the process of being approved before the end of the legislature.
- Stabilisation over time of the financing of integration programmes: when the approved social enterprise develops a specific integration programme, it may, under certain conditions, qualify as a Work Integration Social Enterprise (WISE) and benefit from appropriate financing. A decree pertaining to the mandate and the compensation of accredited social enterprises is in the process of being approved before the end of the legislature.

- Provision of governance support structures.

In 2018, there were 118 approved enterprises and 1 600 supported jobs.

### **Alternative learning pathways and pilot projects for socially vulnerable groups according to their needs and labour market possibilities**

The Flemish Community Commission (VGC - Vlaamse Gemeenschapscommissie) has supported 9 training and work experience projects in 4 sectors: construction, healthcare, hospitality/food and multi-media. Through these projects, low-skilled long-term jobseekers can gain work experience. The duration of the pathways may vary, depending in particular on the type of contract. The programme prepares participants for the mainstream labour market, or restores the link in the education/training chain for the most vulnerable group. The projects have a department associated with the VGC network which responds to social needs in Brussels.

In addition, the VGC actively participates in the following training initiatives and projects:

- Front-end developer training (non-profit organisation INTEC BRUSSEL): this training is aimed at jobseekers in Brussels, by giving priority to disadvantaged groups, people with low levels of education and young people, who wish to find a job in the IT sector.
- The non-profit association STARTPROjecten is a joint initiative of the non-profit organisations INTEC BRUSSEL and InBrussels, and is aimed at supporting young people in Brussels through guidance, training and placement in an internship project in order to find an actual job on the mainstream labour market, whether they have dropped out of school, are long-term unemployed, NEETs or jobseekers from disadvantaged groups.
- The non-profit organisation ART2WORK organises “step-by-step modules towards vocational training”, which prepare jobseekers in the best possible way for training and the reality of the labour market, while strengthening general education and social and vocational training. An active target group policy is implemented according to the different types of Brussels jobseekers, with priority given to disadvantaged (low-skilled) groups and young people.

#### **3.2.1.4 Professional integration of vulnerable groups thanks to the reform of the Articles 60 system of the law on CPASs**

The reform of the "Articles 60" system was finalised at the end of 2018. The legislation has been amended to adapt it to the reform. It aims to achieve:

- a quantitative increase in the number of "Articles 60" positions overall, and per CPAS;
- a harmonisation of the practices of the CPASs;
- an extension of the training aspect during employment (see also point 4.1).

There were approximately 3 800 "Articles 60" positions in 2018 (objective for 2019: 4 000).

#### **3.2.2 Continue the reforms in the field of education and training, while ensuring fairness**

In Brussels, low-skilled jobseekers from a migrant background are the main target group for information, guidance, orientation, literacy, basic training, professionalising or even vocational initiatives carried out by training actors, primarily Bruxelles Formation and its partners. Through its 2017-2022

Management Contract, Bruxelles Formation aims to ensure an inclusive approach to vulnerable groups. A study conducted in 2017 on target groups in training at Bruxelles Formation or one of its partners shows that nearly 48% of the participants receive social assistance.

The target group of young people under 25 is subject to specific measures set out in the context of the Youth Guarantee Scheme, while the over-45 group is experiencing a slight increase in their participation in training.

### 3.2.2.1 First assessment of the Training Plan 2020

A first assessment, drawn up on the basis of the 19 priority strands, confirms significant achievements as well as quantitative and qualitative data. Since the Training Plan structures the actions carried out since 2014 as part of the legislative agreements and the Go4Brussels 2025 Strategy, this first assessment covers the years 2014 to 2017.

It shows that the **Training Plan 2020** is now on track for various strategic strands, either in the process of being developed or reinforced. Of the 44 measures in the plan, 31 have been finalised or will be by 2020. 13 measures still require significant work to achieve the objectives (realisations and results) on time.

The progress of the target groups in training and validation meets 80% of the objectives of the Training Plan 2020. For the French-speaking part of Brussels alone (comprehensive data including Dutch-speaking operators are being consolidated), the main results are as follows:

- The number of jobseekers in training (including internships and training within enterprises) with Bruxelles Formation and its partners has increased by 2 636 units (+19.72%) since 2014, totalling 16 001 jobseekers in training in 2017 (2018 figures not provided);
- The number of people in training under another status (workers, apprentices, etc.) rose from 7 161 in 2014 to 9 390 in 2017. This represents an increase of 2 229 individuals (+31%), only on the French-speaking side;
- The number of certificates issued, in terms of skills validation, went from 712 in 2014 to 2 170 in 2018.

Sectors and companies are also requested to make a training effort. The total number of people benefiting from internships and training in companies rose from 2 864 in 2014 to 4 595 in 2017, an increase of 1 731, excluding work-study training (see below).

While the **Training Plan 2020** makes it possible to establish a robust and concerted strategy for vocational training and employment in Brussels, it also promotes harmonisation and simplification of the monitoring of collaborative actions and networks.

Bruxelles Formation's commitments are reflected in its 2017-2022 Management Plan, which translates the Management Contract into operational objectives. Its 2019 Action Plan aims to continue deploying the training offered to jobseekers, and achieve a capacity of more than 21 000 places (almost 2 000 additional places compared to 2018), i.e. 12 234 places in the Bruxelles Formation 'Poles' and 9 100 places in the training centres of their partners. In the 2019 programme, vocational training was mainly offered in the digital field (16%) while in qualifying training was mainly offered in the field of management and administration (25%).

**Work-study training** is an important measure of the Training Plan 2020. Within this framework, 10 new SME training courses have been planned and opened with EFP (Training Centres for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises), on the basis of the priorities defined by the Bassin Enseignement Formation Emploi (Education, Training and Employment Pool). The number of apprentices has been on the rise since September 2017, the first positive trend in nearly 20 years. The number of apprentices in SME training, on the French-speaking side, was 742 in 2014 (and continued to fall to 641 in 2014) before rising to 804 in 2017, and to 812 in 2018. Similarly, on the Dutch-speaking side, the number of apprentices registered with Syntra Brussel increased from 28 in 2014 to 67 in 2017 (no data available for 2018).

It was also decided that jobseekers following SME training (work-study programme or otherwise) will benefit from free registration from January 2019, as is already the case for jobseekers in training at Bruxelles Formation and its partners. This measure aims to achieve fairness and encourage people to follow the training course that best corresponds to their professional plans set out with Actiris' employment advisors. This decision is part of the overall policy of developing work-study training programmes, which also includes a rationalisation of aid to companies that undertake to work with this formula, by providing a one-off incentive of 1 750 euros per company tutor; simplified exemptions for jobseekers in work-study training programmes and the creation of a unit of consultants within Actiris who are responsible for prospecting work-study training places with companies.

As a reminder, “**skills validation**” has been the subject of a strategic note approved in July 2016 by the regional government and college of the COCOF. Incorporated into the objectives of the Go4Brussels 2025 Strategy, and more specifically into the operational objectives of the Training Plan, the objective of issuing 2 000 skills certificates per year is envisaged for 2020. This strategy contributes to the reform and development of access routes to employment. The current privileged route is acquiring a certificate following a competence validation test, studies or professional training. This orientation, which valorises certification, suggests the gradual replacement of the central jury system towards a system of competence validation tests.

In terms of realisations, there has been an increase in the skills validation offering, the number of participants and the certificates awarded:

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
<b>Active validation centres</b>	9	9	12	13	12
<b>Professions proposed for validation</b>	13	13	14	17	20
<b>Tests performed</b>	324	337	371	383	1 194
<b>Certificates issued via tests</b>	202	260	261	279	804
<b>Certificates issued via dossiers (after training)</b>	510	813	1,371	1 163	1 366
<b>Total number of certificates issued</b>	<b>712</b>	<b>1 073</b>	<b>1 632</b>	<b>1 442</b>	<b>2 170</b>

- The skills validation offer has been extended to 4 new professions (bartender, waiter, head waiter and company tutor) and 5 skills units in existing professions (assistant accountant, brick-layer, forklift truck driver and hairdresser);
- the possibility of recruitment with the local public service has been opened to holders of skills certificates; It is planned to create a specific coordination for the professions of the Brussels public service within Talent.brussels;
- a new validation centre has been set up by the SFPME (SME Training Service) to conduct validation tests for the profession of company tutor;
- the pilot project for supporting candidates (116 candidates), particularly newcomer jobseekers, in the form of short modules for learning French as a foreign language, aims to give candidates language capabilities rapidly in order to take the tests organised in the validation centres. 97 people have signed up to these tests and 124 certificates have been issued.

The creation of **View.brussels (Brussels Employment and Training Observatory, Actiris)** contributes to achieving the fundamental objectives of the Training Plan 2020, i.e. improve the statistical monitoring of vocational training in relation to employment. The transformation of the Brussels Employment Observatory into the Brussels Employment and Training Observatory took place in December 2017. The structure officially took the name View.brussels on 25 January 2019. View.brussels is also developing a priority partnership with VDAB Brussel (Dutch-speaking training) and the actors involved in training with respect to distributive education and social promotion education in the Brussels-Capital Region. This service integrates the traditional missions of the Brussels Employment Observatory with newly combined employment-training missions:

- improving the coherence, cross-referencing and analysis of 'employment' and 'training' statistics;
- having a tool for evaluating, analysing and monitoring the transitions between training and employment on the basis of shared indicators;
- analysing employment needs and the impact in terms of training;
- making operational recommendations.



View.brussels is also required to play a key role in making recommendations to policy makers (steering the vocational training system for adults within) the Brussels-Capital Region.

As such, view.brussels addresses the issue of critical functions every year. Capitalising on this work, every year Bruxelles Formation analyses the data produced and aligns them to its training offering, applying a retrospective analysis and filtering recurring critical functions over the previous three years (these are considered significantly critical).<sup>10</sup>

The initial report identifying training needs was produced in June 2018 (for later publication). Conducted in collaboration with Bruxelles Formation, VDAB and Actiris, this study produced a new state of play for employment and vocational training in Brussels.

The report concludes with several recommendations focused on 3 priority areas of activity within the Go4Brussels 2025 Strategy and included in the Training Plan 2020: urban and soft mobility, the circular economy and the digital economy. Its conclusions are also an opportunity to extend the analysis of training product by training product, in particular through a study on the integration of jobseekers in training for professions affected by "labour shortages".

The first report published (January 2019) also addresses the employment of graduates of vocational training in relation to critical functions.<sup>11</sup> On average, these vocational training courses have exit rates towards employment which are comparable to the average for vocational training. However, this rate was significantly higher when the training was directly related to "significantly critical" training. The combining of the methodologies of Actiris and Bruxelles Formation will now make it possible to guide the development of the common planning framework for the training offers currently being prepared within the new Bruxelles Formation Management service.

In addition, View.brussels has launched its interactive statistical portal (ViewStat), which provides better access to data from the Public Employment Service on job demand and job offers in the Brussels-Capital Region.

The opening of the '**Cité des métiers**' (Professions City) in March 2018 is another important measure of the Training Plan 2020. The project includes a development plan which was validated in April 2017 by the partners (Actiris, Bruxelles Formation, VDAB Brussel, etc.).

A bilingual (French/Dutch) setting bringing together actors in the fields of guidance, training, employment and education, the Cité des métiers aims to offer personalised guidance advice to jobseekers and, more generally, to all Brussels citizens.

This counter provides better visibility of the offers and possibilities, while greatly facilitating access to a whole range of resources related to training and employment. In addition, the initiative makes it possible to combat and intervene as soon as possible against unemployment.

Lastly, with respect to **support for improving language proficiency**, it needs to be reminded that the specific Brussels context means that around 50% of job offers require proficiency in Dutch. More generally, requirements in the area of language proficiency are often a major obstacle to integration into the labour market, especially for low-skilled persons and jobseekers who have completed studies abroad. The development of language training is also one of the priorities of the Training Plan 2020.

---

<sup>10</sup> Link to the study: [http://www.bruxellesformation.be/Actualites/2018/02\\_janvier/AA.180126.05%20annexe%20FSC%20Rapport%202016%20Final.pdf](http://www.bruxellesformation.be/Actualites/2018/02_janvier/AA.180126.05%20annexe%20FSC%20Rapport%202016%20Final.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> Link to the study: <http://www.actiris.be/Portals/36/L'insertion%20professionnelle%20des%20sortants%20des%20formations%20en%20lien%20avec%20des%20fonctions%20critiques%202018.pdf>

In 2018, the Brussels-Capital Region continued its objective of ensuring that Brussels residents have linguistic qualifications. During 2018, 6 556 jobseekers received language training through the "language vouchers" scheme. 8 784 new users were recorded on the online Brulingua platform, which is now accessible to all Brussels residents of 18 years old and over.

As regards language support initiatives aimed at increasing employment opportunities for non-Dutch speakers and socially vulnerable target groups, the "Huis van het Nederlands Brussel" supports and optimises the "NT2" offering (Dutch as a second language for adults) at the Centre for Basic Education (Brussels Studies) and in Adult Training Centres (CVO). To this end, the VGC supports the CVOs in the development of functional learning pathways geared towards specific professional needs, as well as for parents in the Dutch-speaking schools in Brussels. In addition, involving parents in their child's educational path has a positive effect on learning outcomes and student well-being. With its school project, "Brusselleer" aims to support parents with a low level of education so that they can better supervise and stimulate their children at school. During the 2017-2018 academic year, 23 schools participated in the project with a total of 305 students.

### **3.2.3 Increase the number of graduates in science, technology, engineering and mathematics**

#### **Improving digital literacy for jobseekers**

Actiris offers ICT vouchers to jobseekers in Brussels. The Actiris ICT Voucher allows jobseekers to upgrade their skills quickly, efficiently and on a personalised level to better match the profiles sought by their future employers. Various packages are available: social promotion courses on the tools of the Office suite, "à la carte" courses in self-training with the advice of a trainer and specific or job-oriented training.

PC-Skills.brussels is a tool that has been created to allow jobseekers to train online. PC-Skills is an online learning platform for the software of the Office suite, which is accessible free of charge to all jobseekers in Brussels.

Actiris has various partnerships with socio-professional integration organisations, in collaboration with Bruxelles Formation and VDAB Brussel.

Examples include the Centre for continuous training and the Organisation for Socio-professional Integration, Interface3, which is a Belgian authority in terms of vocational training facilitating the access of women to IT professions. Every year, nearly 400 female jobseekers undergo training, either short or long-term, and either initiation or specialisation-based. The integration rate at the end of qualifying training is 70%.

MolenGeek, which is designed to be a tech ecosystem, is located in the municipality of Molenbeek. It is a start-up incubator that provides co-working spaces for all young people wishing to develop an IT project. The aim is to make new technologies and entrepreneurship more accessible to young people. Specifically, MolenGeek offers both short and long-term courses to young people aged between 18 and 25, with or without an IT background, in collaboration with the Université Libre de Bruxelles, Samsung and Google. MolenGeek also cooperates with various employers in Brussels to develop personalised services for these companies. Nearly 79% of the 48 young people in the 3 sessions organised in 2018 have found work, started their own business, returned to training or started an internship.

Furthermore, the vocational training offer for French-speaking jobseekers in the digital field totalled 2 294 training places, or 19% of the offer proposed by Bruxelles Formation (BF). Training offers are primarily proposed by the partners ISP, the Evoliris Reference Centre and two BF centres.

The Digital Public Training Centre (Espace Public Numérique de Formation – EPNF), which opened at the end of 2015, offers jobseekers in Brussels the possibility of training in specific skills on-site, or remotely via various methods:

- a catalogue of 180 e-learning courses combined with online coaching,
- an open access digital workspace equipped with computers,
- preparations for public service competitions and recruitment tests,
- workshops to introduce people to office automation and multimedia.

Finally, it should be noted that the EPN allows certifications in the digital field (digital skills, office automation, computer graphics), making it possible to enhance the digital literacy of Brussels residents in relation to the European DigComp reference framework.

## Measures favouring students

**Pilot actions regarding coding:** as citizens, it is important that young people are not passive users/consumers of digital technology. It is therefore essential to enhance the skills of students by allowing them to immerse themselves in computer thinking and algorithmic logic without apprehension, in particular by learning coding. Mastering digital technologies is also a valuable asset on the labour market.

In general, computer-related studies, regardless of the specialisation, are currently seen as a route to a profession in which there is a significant shortage of labour.<sup>12</sup>

The intention of the Brussels government is to support pilot actions in 2019-2020 in the area of learning coding for pupils attending primary and secondary education in the Brussels-Capital Region, and for their teachers. Priority will be given to projects in schools with a vulnerable student population. Priority will also be given to projects that develop specific tools/techniques to ensure gender diversity (F/M) and to foster girls' interest in scientific thinking in general, and computer science in particular. Priority will also be given to projects located in the Urban Regeneration Zone 2016 (Zone de Revitalisation Urbaine – ZRU). The Urban Regeneration Zone 2016 includes neighbourhoods that meet the following three socio-economic criteria: the unemployment rate is higher than the average unemployment rate in the BCR; income is below the median income level in the BCR; and population density is higher than the average density in the BCR.

**Call for projects 'Les Maths Autrement':** in the context of promoting science and technology, a STEM project call (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) named "Les Maths Autrement" ('Maths, but different') was launched in 2019 by Innoviris, the Brussels Institute for Research and Innovation.

The aim of "Les Maths Autrement", which is linked to the "Science With and For society" component of Horizon 2020, is to stimulate creativity by presenting different facets of mathematics to young people, in innovative or unexpected ways. The call for projects aims to financially support micro-projects that

---

<sup>12</sup> <http://blog.siep.be/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Liste-métiers-en-pénurie-2018-2019.pdf>

raise awareness among young people in Brussels about science, technology and innovation, and study programmes that lead to job prospects in these fields.

### **3.3 Innovation and competitiveness**

*CSR 3: Reduce the regulatory and administrative burden to incentivise entrepreneurship and increase competition in services, particularly retail, construction and professional services. Tackle the growing mobility challenges, in particular through investment in new or existing transport infrastructure and reinforcing incentives to use collective and low emission transport.*

#### **3.3.1 Reducing the administrative and regulatory burdens**

##### **Urban planning procedures**

The reform of the Brussels Town Planning Code (CoBAT), aimed at simplifying and rationalising urban planning procedures, is not primarily intended to shorten the lead times for appraisal, which often stem from European directives.<sup>13</sup> However, it will replace the current time limits with strict, i.e. mandatory, deadlines.

From September 2019 onwards, when the reform comes into force, the administration must obligatorily adopt a position within the time limit provided for in the CoBAT. This time limit will thenceforth be known by the applicant as soon as they submit their application for a permit. This represents a major step forward since both the private sector and Brussels' residents were calling for greater clarity and predictability in this area.

The Government of the Brussels-Capital Region will need to adopt decrees in order to lay down the terms for making CoBAT documents available to the public on the internet, in particular those subject to public enquiry. The implementing decrees are currently being drafted.

Finally, in 2019, the administration in charge of urban planning (urban.brussels) will launch a project to digitise permits, with the aim of having applications submitted electronically.

##### **The retail trade**

The obligation to submit a town planning declaration is abolished for any new construction project which envisages the establishment of a business, as well as any project to modify or extend the commercial activity within a building which is already assigned to commercial purposes, or to establish a new business within a building assigned to a function other than commercial purposes.

##### **"Once Only"**

The administrative burdens of regional and local administrations are currently very heavy for the citizens and companies of the Brussels-Capital Region. One of the causes of this is the less than perfect application of the so-called "once only" principle (TOOP) in administrative procedures: for a given procedure, citizens and companies often have to provide the same information to different administrations, or even to different departments within the same administration. The lack of implementation of TOOP has significant repercussions: administrative inefficiencies, operational risks for new economic projects, poor image of the administration, etc.

---

<sup>13</sup> Ordinance of 30/11/2017 reforming the CoBAT, published in the Belgian Official Gazette on 20/04/2018

To address this issue, the regional government created Easybrussels, the Agency for Administrative Simplification in the Brussels-Capital Region, in 2015. Since then, the Agency has undertaken to simplify and improve administrative procedures in Brussels by providing a coordinated vision, assistance, expertise and monitoring, which had all been lacking until then, and by acting as a facilitator towards simplification. Easybrussels submitted a request to the Structural Reform Support Service at the end of 2018 with the aim of improving the application of The Only Once Principle (TOOP) regarding administrative procedures in the Brussels-Capital Region. The project was selected at the beginning of 2019.

A proposal for an ordinance guaranteeing the principle of the once only collection of information in the operations of administrations in the Brussels-Capital Region was also presented in a first reading to the Government in February 2019.

### **3.3.2 Investment in transport infrastructure**

BENEFIC (Brussels Netherlands Flanders Implementation of Clean Power for Transport) is a cross-border innovation project co-financed by the European Union's Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) for the development of alternative fuel infrastructure. With BENEFIC, the project partners (Flanders, the Netherlands and the Brussels-Capital Region) aim to achieve around 740 points for alternative fuels by mid-2020. This includes infrastructure for charging electric vehicles, electric taxis and electric buses, CNG and LNG ("compressed natural gas" and "liquefied natural gas") infrastructures, hydrogen infrastructures and the shore-based electricity grid.

In July 2018, the selected projects were announced on the basis of the first call for projects. For the Brussels-Capital Region, the co-financing concerns 350 public charging points, 2 fast chargers, 1 high-speed charger and 3 CNG stations.

Co-financing is also planned for the installation of a rapid charger for STIB electric buses (91 000 euros).

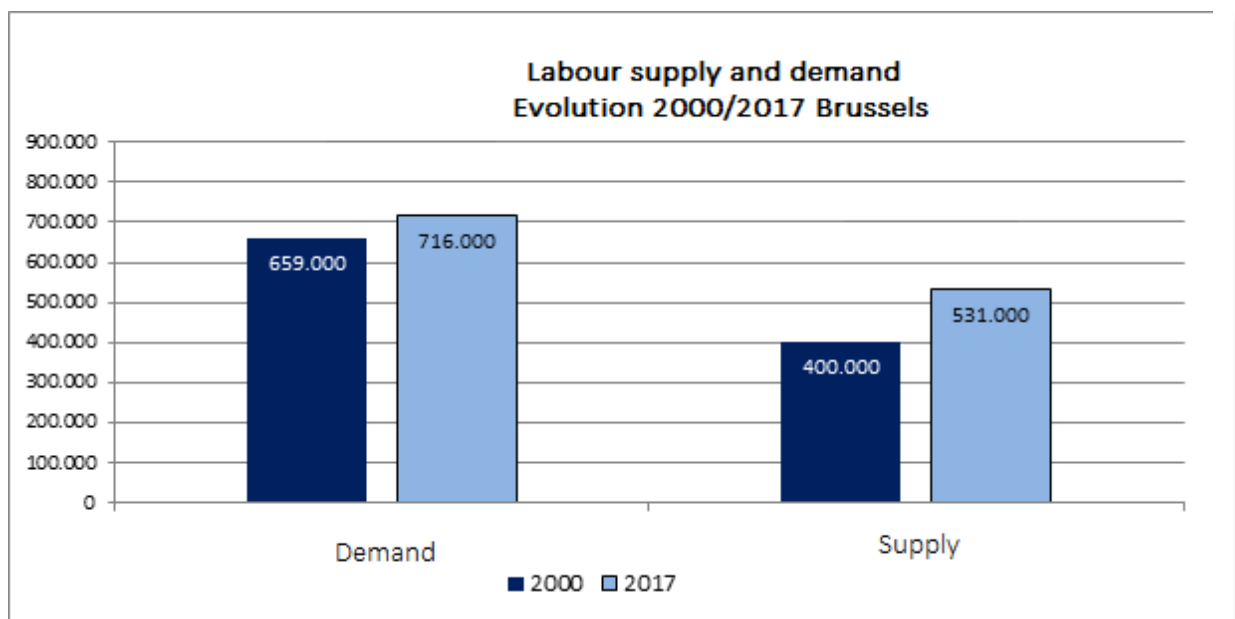
With the completion of these projects by mid-2020, the objectives that the Brussels Region had set for itself under Belgium's "Clean Power for Transport" Action Plan will be achieved and surpassed.

## 4 Measures supporting the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy

### 4.1 Employment and training

#### Trends in the overall intervention context

The demand for labour in the Brussels Region (= domestic employment) is higher than the labour supply from residents (= active population). However, as a result of strong growth in the population (+24.3%, compared with +13% for the rest of the country) and the working-age population (+26.6% compared with 6.4% for the rest of the country), the volume of labour supply expressed in terms of number of jobs increased in the Brussels Region more than twice as much as the labour demand from 2000 to 2017:



Source: LFS- Observatory calculations (smoothed values over three years)

In the absence of a proportional increase in domestic employment, the significant growth of the active population automatically has an effect on the employment rate.

A significant proportion of domestic employment in Brussels is also accounted for by residents of other regions (the "incoming commuters"). These incoming commuters occupy almost half of the available jobs in Brussels (350 000 out of 720 000 jobs). The outgoing commuters represent 77 000 Brussels inhabitants working in the country's other regions, accounting for nearly 17% of the employed Brussels working population. Excluding outgoing commuters, the active population in Brussels therefore amounts to 454 000 individuals (including unemployed people) for 370 000 available jobs.

The labour supply is greater than the labour demand (668 000 positions requested on top of demand, i.e. a 15% oversupply). The Brussels Region absorbs more than half of this oversupply, offering a job to 350 000 commuters. The increase in supply only moderately exceeds that of demand (490 000 jobs demanded compared to 430 000 jobs created, a difference of 13%).

In order to meet the challenges of employment and qualification in the Brussels-Capital Region, the Go4Brussels 2025 Strategy dedicates a specific objective to the implementation of the 6<sup>th</sup> state reform.

As a reminder, the evaluation of the existing activation schemes has led the regional government, in consultation with the Economic and Social Council, to reform the target group policy in order to:

- decrease and simplify the number of inherited schemes in order to reinforce the created schemes;
- improve the comprehensibility of the schemes and facilitate their access;
- guide the means towards the Brussels citizens who are in need of support in accessing employment, but also keeping employment;
- enforce budgetary control;
- guarantee a rapid transition between qualifying schemes (work-study programmes, FPI, ...) and employment schemes (Stage First, integration contracts, articles 60, ...)

**The reform regarding employment aid has categorised the measures into 4 strands:**

- integration, i.e. gaining professional experience through a work contract of limited duration allowing a transition towards durable and qualitative employment (integration contract, article 60, ...);
- the activation allows jobseekers to access employment through financial support (primarily Activa.brussels);
- keeping workers employed who are “vulnerable in their line of work” (such as NSSO (National Social Security Office) allowance reductions for older workers);
- specific premiums or aid (premium targeting work-study programmes, for example).

Jobseekers and older workers (55-64) as well as jobseekers under 30 years of age, long-term jobseekers (18 months) and very long-term jobseekers (24 months), and overarching to these three groups, low-skilled and very low-skilled persons as well as persons with disabilities.

A set of key measures has been implemented at the end of 2017/beginning of 2018, including:

- The **Activa** scheme has been simplified and refocused on unemployed jobseekers residing in the Brussels Region and having registered with Actiris for 12 months. This 12-month period has been abolished for jobseekers leaving other integration schemes, for people under 30 and over 57 years of age, as well as people affected by restructurings and bankruptcies. The scheme also includes a training bonus for young low-skilled jobseekers (max. CESI) in order to increase their qualifications (see point 3.2).
- The "**Articles 60**" scheme of the CPASs has been reinforced financially, to the benefit of the CPASs and their beneficiaries. Almost 9 000 000 euros in additional funds are now distributed among the 19 CPASs in Brussels. The aim is to conclude article 60 contracts for at least 10% of the RIS/ERIS (minimum integration revenue) public in each CPAS. This increase in resources goes hand in hand with a high-quality harmonisation of the services offered (supervision, on-the-job training and access to skills validation, harmonisation of wage scales).
- The scheme of subsidised contractual officials (agents contractuels subventionnés – ACS) within local authorities and public interest organisations (Organismes d’Intérêt public –

OIP)/administrations in the Brussels-Capital Region has been reformed.<sup>14</sup> This is a simplification of the ACS system, in order to better meet the specific needs of Brussels jobseekers and the needs of the Brussels labour market. The main objective is to ensure the sustainability of employment within local authorities and public interest organisations/administrations in the Brussels-Capital Region, which enables workers with ACS status either to develop professionally within their structure or receive a status when posts become open, and after they pass an exam.<sup>15</sup> The existing budget managed by Actiris (premiums paid by Actiris and reductions in employers' social security contributions) will be transferred to either the Brussels regional public service "Pouvoirs Locaux" or as grants for the personnel costs to the public organisations concerned, from 1 January 2020 onwards. Keeping former ACS agents employed does not entail having to deal with additional costs for these employers.

Other measures or schemes are also worth mentioning:

- All the measures in the Brussels Youth Guarantee Scheme have contributed to a 30.8% drop in unemployment since 2014. In 2017, for example, 7 046 young jobseekers participated in at least one integration initiative. Coordinated by the Minister-President and the Minister responsible for Employment, the scheme will continue at least until 2020 with the support of the European Social Fund.
- Based on the lessons and results drawn from the Youth Guarantee Scheme, a "solution for all" guarantee (jobseekers registered for the first time with Actiris) will, from March 2019 onwards, gradually extend the systematic support towards employment via direct integration, training or an internship, to jobseekers over 30 years of age who are registered for the first time.
- In addition to the above-mentioned measures of the Training Plan 2020 a new sectoral policy and a new public-private alliance with the private sector has been implemented as part of the Go4Brussels 2025 strategy (see point 3.2: sectoral framework agreement and facilitation mission of the Economic and Social Council of the BCR). The Employment and Training Poles (pôles formation emploi – PFE), a central tool for implementing the employment and training objectives set out in the sectoral framework agreements, are the result of a partnership between one or more sectoral funds and the Public Employment and Training Services. They will be places of excellence, and of coordination of employment and training actions in a given sector. This public-private partnership will provide jobseekers (but also students and workers) in training or in skills validation with a more direct link to companies and therefore to employment. 3 poles will be inaugurated in 2019: PFE ICT, PFE Transport and Logistics and PFE Technicity (Technological Industry).

## **4.2 Research, Development & Innovation (RDI)**

In the Brussels-Capital Region, public budget allocations for R&D increased by 15.8% between 2017 and 2018, with an amount of more than 52 million euros for 2018.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, it should be stressed that while R&D expenditure has increased in recent years in the Brussels Region, the overall objective for 2020 is more difficult to achieve due to the specificity of the Brussels Region, which is predominated by the tertiary economy, with industrial technology being mainly at the periphery. As a result, private investment is lower in this type of territory. Moreover, if we consider R&D investments in the region, it

---

<sup>14</sup> Decision of the Government of the Brussels-Capital Region of 12 July 2018

<sup>15</sup> "Local authorities" refers to municipalities, the CPASs and the non-profit organisation Cuisines bruxelloises. These are ACS positions excluding 'Plan Cigogne' agreements and integration contracts.

<sup>16</sup> Projected data for 2018



is also useful to focus on investments made by Brussels-based actors for beneficiaries located outside the region. These expenditures are not reflected in R&D investment statistics.

The Brussels Region is also fully investing in the development of the digital economy. The digital economy is one of the areas of smart specialisation of the Regional Plan for Innovation. In this context, the region selected 7 new projects in 2018 for a budget of more than 6 million euros as part of its “Team Up” action, for which the objective is to encourage effective collaboration between the academic world and industry in the field of decentralised systems (Blockchain).

Finally, in 2018, the Brussels Institute for Research and Innovation, Innoviris, launched a new programme called Start, which is a new financing tool for business development. Start focuses on the technical (Proof of concept) and commercial (Proof of business) validation of future projects and services. Start also provides an opportunity to present working hypotheses to established professional experts and business leaders. Regardless of the sector in which the beneficiaries operate, Start offers funding which covers 50 to 70% of the budget for a work programme lasting between 3 and 9 months.

### **4.3 Education - Training**

The mobilisation of regional tools to support education policies is one of the government's priorities. The Brussels programme for education is one of the flagship measures of strand 2 of the Strategy 2025: joint commitments by the region and the communities. A school service (Service Écoles) has been created within perspective.brussels to ensure the implementation of the various projects and ensure the follow-up of priorities, namely :

#### **Responding to the demographic challenge: creating new schools**

Since 2014: 23 123 new places have been created in Brussels with the support of the communities, 17 010 places in primary schools and 6 113 places in secondary schools. By 2025, 24 068 places are still planned. A total of 47 191 places will have been created by 2025, 26 647 in primary schools and 20 544 in secondary schools.

#### **Renovating obsolete school infrastructure in vulnerable neighbourhoods and opening them up to the local environment: the School Contract**

Based on the model of Neighbourhood Contracts, the School Contract is a new tool for urban regeneration. The aim is to invest in infrastructure and community facilities to enhance the attractiveness of schools with a poor image, with available but currently vacant places. Three initial School Contracts were launched in a pilot phase for 5 schools in 2016-2017. A draft ordinance is in the process of being finalised which will give structure to the scheme and make it possible to launch two School Contracts per year, with a maximum budget of 2.5 million euros per School Contract, or 5 million euros per year.

#### **Supporting the school enrolment of young people in difficulty**

45% of young people in Brussels who are required to attend school are at risk of dropping out. In addition, between 15 and 20% of young people drop out of school early, without a secondary school diploma. The region supports the school enrolment of young people through three main schemes, for which implementation is now coordinated by the School Service as part of a three-year programme:

- The School Attendance Scheme (Dispositif d'accrochage scolaire – DAS): support for schools in the fight against school failure and absenteeism: 384 projects supported for a total amount of 5.855 million euros (2018-2021).

- The Support scheme for activities to support schooling and citizenship of children and young people (DASC): 58 projects supported for a total amount of 1.5 million euros (2019-2021). The projects supported involve all parents, schools, young people and local partners from the educational, cultural, social and youth sectors.
- The 19 local prevention and proximity plans - (plans locaux de prévention et de proximité – PLPP) financed by the region include a "school attendance" component: 4.7 million euros has been allocated for 2016-2019 and more than 100 staff members are assigned to these roles (municipal prevention school services, street educators, social workers, neighbourhood representatives, peacekeepers).
- Since September 2017, the VGC has supported the non-profit organisation "Triptiek" with the aim of developing the "KANS Centraal Meldpunt Brussel (CMB)". Triptiek is a partnership made up of the three student support centres (CLB: Centrum voor Leerlingenbegeleiding) of the three Dutch-speaking education networks. This non-profit organisation tackles school drop-out and leaving without qualifications in Dutch-speaking education in Brussels. During the school year 2017-2018, KANS registered 38 notifications for primary education and 176 for secondary education.

## **4.4 Environment - Climate - Energy**

The climate-energy 2020 objectives have been ratified in the cooperation agreement on the sharing of Belgian climate and energy objectives for 2020 between the federal state and the three regions.

### **4.4.1 Energy and Climate Plan 2030**

EU Regulation 2018/1999 on the governance of the Energy Union entered into force on 24 December 2018. Among other things, it requires all EU Member States to notify the European Commission by 31 December 2018 of a first draft of an integrated National Energy and Climate Plan 2021-2030 (NECP 2030). This national plan includes a Brussels component.

The Brussels plan, adopted in July 2018, contains 52 measures which are specific to the region, including 20 measures concerning buildings, 17 concerning transport and 14 concerning renewable energy. Of these measures, at least 9 are directly related to the public authorities setting a good example. These measures will primarily be implemented from 2021 to 2030, but some measures are an extension of measures already implemented in 2018 or will be launched in 2019.

As regards to the building sector, the NECP is primarily made up of the strategy to reduce the environmental impacts of existing buildings. The aim is to bring the building stock to a high level of energy performance by 2050:

- For residential buildings, the objective is to achieve an average of 100kWh per m<sup>2</sup> per year in primary energy.
- For the tertiary sector, the objective is to move towards energy-neutral buildings.

Lowering the carbon intensity of heating and domestic hot water solutions is also covered: the next decade will mark the end of the installation of new coal-fired (2021) and oil-fired (2025) heating systems. The Brussels plan also envisages looking at the future of natural gas installations after 2030.

In terms of renewable energies, the emphasis is on strengthening support for renewable energies which are suitable in the urban context. By continuing and expanding efforts to stimulate photovoltaic solar

and thermal energy, and heat pumps, the government hopes to achieve 470 GWh of renewable energy generation by 2030.

Unit: GWh	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
<b>RES-E</b>	<b>234,66</b>	<b>239,32</b>	<b>244,36</b>	<b>249,77</b>	<b>255,58</b>	<b>270,51</b>	<b>271,17</b>	<b>281,33</b>	<b>292,06</b>	<b>303,48</b>
Photovoltaic solar energy	99,76	105,38	111,31	117,58	124,20	139,90	150,30	161,17	172,59	184,68
Municipal waste	112,79	111,84	110,94	110,09	109,27	108,50	107,75	107,04	106,35	105,68
Biogas	13,12	13,12	13,12	13,12	13,12	13,12	13,12	13,12	13,12	13,12
Liquid fuels	8,99	8,99	8,99	8,99	8,99	8,99	-	-	-	-
<b>C&amp;F RES</b>	<b>136,11</b>	<b>138,00</b>	<b>139,92</b>	<b>144,19</b>	<b>148,56</b>	<b>153,00</b>	<b>152,19</b>	<b>157,03</b>	<b>162,08</b>	<b>167,44</b>
Heat pumps	27,32	27,97	28,64	30,62	32,61	34,61	36,68	38,80	40,98	43,27
Solar thermal energy	16,72	17,84	19,04	21,29	23,63	26,04	28,60	31,28	34,11	37,12
Municipal waste	1,08	1,08	1,08	1,08	1,08	1,08	1,08	1,08	1,08	1,08
Biogas	28,32	28,32	28,32	28,32	28,32	28,32	28,32	28,32	28,32	28,32
Solid fuels	57,21	57,32	57,38	57,42	57,46	57,48	57,51	57,55	57,59	57,65
Liquid fuels	5,47	5,47	5,47	5,47	5,47	5,47	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>370,77</b>	<b>377,32</b>	<b>384,28</b>	<b>393,97</b>	<b>404,15</b>	<b>423,50</b>	<b>423,37</b>	<b>438,36</b>	<b>454,14</b>	<b>470,92</b>

This Brussels effort is significant given that the potential in urban areas is limited.

Furthermore, the development of an 'extra muros' investment strategy is also on the agenda. For this, the region plans to invest in renewable electricity generation units outside its territory in order to have 600 GWh of additional renewable generation (in addition to the 470 GWh mentioned above) by the end of the decade 2021-2030.

In the area of transport, the NECP refers to the regional mobility plan "Good Move" which could contribute to a 21% reduction in vehicle-kilometres by 2030. Within the NECP, the government has agreed to call time on combustion engines, phasing out diesel engines for light vehicles in the region from 2030 on (see below on mobility).

Finally, it should be noted that the Brussels government has agreed on the need to make progress on indirect emissions and on measures that also contribute to improving air quality, thereby improving the health of the population.

By combining the effects of the various actions planned in the Brussels NECP 2030, the Region should be able to achieve the following by 2030:

- A 25% reduction in final energy consumption (compared to 2005);
- 1000 GWh of energy produced from renewable sources, of which 600 GWh will be produced in cooperation with the other two regions;
- A 35% reduction in the region's direct greenhouse gas emissions (compared to 2005) to get on track for 2050.

Financing will primarily come from the regional climate fund set up in the Brussels Air, Climate and Energy Management Code (COBRACE), which is designed to finance measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and produce renewable energy.

## 4.4.2 Mobility measures contributing to the Climate objectives Environment – Energy<sup>17</sup>

### Investment in public transport

The region is continuing its planned investments in public transport for a total amount of 5.2 billion euros under the multiannual investment plan 2015-2025, which includes the extension of the North metro line, the construction of new tram lines (two additional new lines confirmed in 2018), the introduction of a new "bus" plan, which includes the commissioning of 200 electric or hybrid buses. The first 100% electric buses have been operating on the STIB network since 2018.

### "Good Move" Plan

The regional mobility plan of the Brussels-Capital Region (Good Move) has been approved by the Brussels government on 4 April 2019 and will be subject to a public consultation until 15 October 2019. This plan contains the regional mobility policy stemming from the Project of the Region (Projet de Région), which is included in the Regional Plan for Sustainable Development (PRDD) – an overarching strategic document explaining the global policy project of the Brussels government.

In support of sustainable mobility, the plan provides direction and sets precise and concrete objectives in order to improve mobility in the next 10 years, taking into account the living environment and improving security. The aim is to reduce 24% of car use and to quadruple the use of bicycles, as well as providing a stronger offer in public transport.

### Low Emission Zone

Since 1 January 2018, the entire territory of the Brussels-Capital Region has become a Low Emission Zone (LEZ). The most polluting vehicles will be gradually phased out until 2025, to improve air quality, starting with diesel-powered vehicles without a EURO standard, and those with a EURO 1 standard. Introducing a LEZ in Brussels is intended to reduce emissions of the pollutants which are most harmful to health, namely fine particulate matter and nitrogen oxides, in order to comply with European air quality standards. Communication concerning the LEZ (1001 façons de circuler à Bruxelles - 1001 ways of driving in Brussels) encourages alternatives to the car, and can therefore have an influence on CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

The region has deployed a network of cameras (184 in total) which are needed for the operationalisation of the LEZ, as checks are made based on the vehicle registration plate. By 1 January 2019, after three months of effective operation, 391 fines had been sent by Bruxelles Fiscalité, of which 119 for vehicles registered in Brussels. Since 1 January 2019, EURO 2 standard diesel vehicles, and petrol vehicles without EURO standard, or with EURO 1 standard, have also been banned (with a transition period of 3 months). Brussels Environment will publish a first assessment of the operation of the LEZ in May 2019.

### Phasing out of diesel and petrol vehicles

With the aim of improving air quality in the Brussels Region and respecting the climate objectives of the Paris Agreement and **the European "Energy-Climate" Package**, the Brussels government decided, in May 2018, to launch a consultation with stakeholders and the sectors con-

---

<sup>17</sup> All documents relating to the draft National Energy-Climate Plan 2030 and its Brussels contribution can be consulted on the following link: <https://economie.fgov.be/fr/publications/projet-de-plan-national>

cerned by the ban on diesel vehicles by 2030 at the latest, the ban on petrol vehicles in a subsequent stage, and the short- and medium-term development of alternative technologies (in particular technologies already available, such as electric, hybrid and CNG vehicles). **The results of these consultations are expected to be presented in the first semester of 2019.**

### **Charging points for electric cars**

To encourage the use of electric vehicles, in July 2018 the Brussels government took the decision to award the concession for the provision, installation and operation of publicly accessible charging infrastructures for electric vehicles in the region. In concrete terms, the awarded concession is intended to set up a uniform network of around 100 charging points for users throughout the region. The concession-holder will cover all the costs of installing and maintaining the infrastructure for the entire duration of the concession. The complete network of charging points will be installed during the course of 2019 and 2020 (according to the granting of the necessary urban planning permits) and will operate until the end of 2028.

### **Park-and-ride (P+R) facilities**

The Region aims to create 8 000 parking spaces in P+R car parks within its territory. The CERIA-COOVI car park (investment of 14 million euros) will be operational in 2019, with 1 350 spaces for cars and motorbikes and a large covered area reserved for bicycles. It will be managed by the parking agency parking.brussels and public transport users can benefit from a preferential rate. The procedures are at various stages of completion for the other projects in Stalle, Kraainem and Esplanade.

### **Smart traffic infrastructure**

The installation of an ambitious plan for traffic lights started in 2016 in the region. Traffic lights on the main roads are now synchronised depending on the time and traffic demand. This means that cars have to stop less, improving traffic flow. Travelling time on these main traffic routes is significantly reduced, which also has a positive effect on air quality. Currently, 8 out of the 18 main traffic routes are synchronised.

The results of the evaluations that have been carried out are promising in terms of reducing traffic jams, but also in terms of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions (average reduction of 5% on Boulevard Charles Quint and Boulevard Leopold II).

### **School streets**

A call for projects launched in 2018 allows Brussels municipalities to submit one or more project proposals to the regional administration, to create "school streets". These projects need to ensure that car traffic on these streets is prohibited, at the start and end of the school day as a minimum.

### **Using bicycles**

The region is continuing to build bicycle paths which are separated from the road network (an additional 80 km is planned for the 2018-2020 period) but also bike storage spaces (particularly near public transport, to encourage multimodality).

An ordinance for self-service bike sharing was adopted in November 2018. This regulates new sharing systems for bikes, scooters, etc., which makes it possible to park your bike anywhere.

According to the surveys carried out in 26 strategic hubs in Brussels, the number of cyclists increased significantly in 2018 (+15.6%). Over the past 5 years, the number of cyclists has doubled, marking a significant increase in the number of cyclists in a few years.

## **4.5 Social cohesion and poverty reduction**

### **4.5.1 Implementation of social cohesion**

Social cohesion in Brussels is implemented by various cross-policies which pertain as much to urban planning as to direct aid to individuals and support to voluntary actors. The Brussels-Capital Region supports “sustainable neighbourhood contracts” as well as “urban renewal contracts”, for which certain actions can be carried out to strengthen social cohesion at the neighbourhood level. Above all, this policy makes it possible to invest in equipment and infrastructure. The region also supports social cohesion plans within social housing buildings.

The COCOM plays an essential role in the Brussels Region, in the fields of individual assistance and health. It is responsible at the individual level (Brussels residents, but also people who benefit from the services of health and social welfare institutions) and is also responsible for more than 300 bilingual institutions and services (hospitals, CPASs, care services, reception centres, etc.) in these areas.

The French Community Commission (Commission communautaire française – COCOF) provides a whole policy of support to voluntary operators, for which the objective is to strengthen social cohesion through four priorities: support for schooling, literacy and learning French, the development of intercultural citizenship, and projects to live and work together. The municipalities are responsible for coordinating this policy, in partnership with a regional support centre, the CBAI. The COCOF's systems will soon be revised, to move towards a more stable system for project carriers from 2021 onwards.

Finally, the VGC supports social cohesion in the broad sense in Brussels. As such, all Dutch-speaking schools are comprehensively supported in terms of diversity, disadvantaged social backgrounds, parental involvement and neighbourhood involvement. The VGC also invests various resources in family benefits, social and educational events for groups of young people from vulnerable social backgrounds, the well-being of young people and neighbourhood-based sports initiatives. Through its network of 22 social centres, the VGC invests in social cohesion and "living together in diversity" in Brussels. The VGC recognises and supports more than 650 socio-cultural associations and organisations.

### **Compulsory reception programme for newcomers**

The aim is to require from newcomers to the bilingual territory of the Brussels-Capital Region to follow a reception programme. The reception programme for newcomers includes at least a reception programme in which the needs of the newcomer are assessed and the newcomer receives information; a basic course module in French or Dutch as a second language; and citizenship training. The ultimate goal of this programme is to support beneficiaries through an adapted and customised training programme, to enable them to lead their lives independently and enhance their social, economic and cultural participation.

As regards the reception programmes, newcomers can choose between the pathways offered by the Flemish Community (the Brussels reception office for civic integration or "BON") or those of the French Community Commission (the French-speaking reception office for newcomers or "BAPA"). The municipalities check whether newcomers meet the obligation for integration. Administrative fines may be imposed by the Common Community Commission if this condition has not been met.

After the Ordinance of 11 May 2017, an implementing decree was promulgated on 19 July 2018. In addition, a cooperation agreement has been drawn up between the Common Community Commission,

the French Community Commission and the Flemish Community.<sup>18</sup> This cooperation agreement has been submitted to the Council of State for an opinion and will be examined by the various parliaments after that. The ordinance and the implementing decree will only be applicable from the entry into force of the cooperation agreement. The entry into force of all the regulations is anticipated for 1 January 2020.

### **Inclusion of Roma populations in health and care policies**

The 2 "social-health" centres opened by Médecins du Monde, known as "ERDF Centres", which are valorised in the "Brussels Action Programme to Combat Poverty 2014-2019", focused on access to aid and care for the most disadvantaged groups, including Roma populations. In addition, Roma families benefit from the "Familles en errance" (Families on the move) scheme, which provides accommodation, social support, schooling for children and the search for sustainable integration solutions. By aiming to improve both health and social determinants, all these measures help lift this target group out of poverty.

Since 2016, the COCOM has funded an organisation which specialises in assisting the Roma population, the non-profit organisation "Le Foyers". The organisation works with cultural mediators and implements programmes for social inclusion and stimulating rights for Roma populations.

### **Brussels Action Programme to Combat Poverty**

The Brussels Action Programme to Combat Poverty 2014-2019 is structured around the following five areas: combating poverty and uncertainty, caring for people in precarious situations, reducing social inequalities, socio-professional integration and, finally, coordinating social action and strengthening the participation of people living in poverty.

The programme aims to integrate the poverty-related issues, with their multidimensional causes, into different areas of competence that go beyond a policy of individual assistance: health, employment, training, education, etc. It has a twofold objective: firstly, raising awareness among the various administrations and regional and community ministers of the importance of a coordinated policy to combat poverty and, secondly, informing actors on the ground of the measures taken in this area.

The Action Programme to Combat Poverty includes a specific component for the fight against **child poverty**. Among other things, it aims to use the offer of early childhood facilities as a tool in the fight against poverty: by improving the offer of early childhood care in Brussels in an equitable way.

The coverage rate of early childhood reception in Brussels (number of care places per 100 children under 3 years of age) was 33% as of 31 December 2014.<sup>19</sup> This rate corresponds to the so-called "Barcelona" objective, laid down at a European Council summit in Barcelona on 15 and 16 March 2002.

Nonetheless, the number of places available is not evenly distributed among the Brussels municipalities and as a result, certain municipalities have a much lower coverage rate (from 15.4% in Koekelberg to 67.3% in Etterbeek in 2014). The problem also lies in the financial accessibility of childcare facilities. Socio-economically vulnerable populations are the first to be affected by these disparities.<sup>20</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup> Ordinance of the Common Community Commission of 11 May 2017 on the reception programme for newcomers

<sup>19</sup> "Day care places for a third of children in Brussels". BISA 2015.

<sup>20</sup> See BISA. Neighbourhood monitoring (<https://monitoringdesquartiers.irisnet.be/maps/statistiques-enseignement-petite-enfance-bruxelles/petite-enfance-region-bruxelloise/nombre-de-places-en-milieu-daccueil-par-enfant/1/2014/> and <https://monitoringdesquartiers.irisnet.be/maps/statistiques-enseignement-petite-enfance-bruxelles/petite-enfance-region-bruxelloise/>, consulted on 03/03/2016).

By funding additional places in terms of infrastructure, the provision of early childhood care facilities will be extended in Brussels. By focusing these investments on the Brussels municipalities with very low coverage rates, the resulting inequalities in inter-municipal coverage and access inequalities based on socio-economic factors will be partially mitigated. The decree of 18 July 2013 on supporting childcare provides for this modality, by granting infrastructure subsidies via calls for projects, and outside calls for projects. Following the ONE-COCOF joint call for projects in 2014, a budget of 16 million euros has been set aside, of which 12 million euros has already been allocated to 50 projects. The COCOF will launch a call for projects at minimum for every new ONE programming period. The 2016-2020 investment plan of the VGC envisages nearly 20 million euros (19,55 million euros) for investments in family-oriented initiatives. This concept includes the construction/renovation of nurseries, after-school care initiatives and “embellishment” subsidies (toys, kitchens, roof repairs, etc.) for nurseries, after-school care initiatives and preventive support for families.

Another tool to combat child poverty is the new model of specific family allowances for children living in the Brussels-Capital Region. The Brussels model of family allowances with a view to supporting families and combating child poverty is based on solidarity and fairness, in terms of redistribution: everyone contributes through taxes and contributions according to their means, but benefits from redistribution in a fair way. This does not prevent certain specific situations (such as children with a disease, vulnerable families, etc.) from being taken into account, as an expression of solidarity between beneficiary families with children. The model opted for by the United College includes, among other things, the granting of social supplements calculated on the basis of income. As such, the model takes into account the socio-economic profile of the Brussels population; this model increases selectivity according to the financial needs of families (in the first instance based on family income).

Médecins du Monde organises its activities thanks to the ERDF project for young people. From 2016 to 2018, Médecins du Monde welcomed 792 minors within its Brussels projects, of which 530 in its *outreach* projects (meeting patients in their living environments), including 81 unaccompanied minor refugees. The average age is 9 years old. Most of the minors in the outreach project were met in the context of the winter plan activities (47.65%) and were present in Belgium with their families. 75.09% of the minors met did not have a general practitioner, despite the availability of free child health facilities. More than 93% of the minors met in the outreach project were foreign nationals (Romanian in 21.10% of cases).

### **Autonomy insurance**

The autonomy insurance provides support for elderly people in Brussels who choose to continue to live independently. The insurance works through an intervention in the benefits/provision of an intervention according to the needs and dependency of the beneficiaries.

Three studies have been commissioned and launched to develop the future model of autonomy insurance in Brussels. The first part explores the needs and profiles of the beneficiaries, in order to estimate the different scenarios and service packages with their respective budgets. The second study analyses the means of financing for the different scenarios resulting from the first study. The third part concerns legal and legislative assistance and will support the COCOM in drafting the ordinance that will introduce autonomous insurance.

### **Equal Opportunities test**

The fight against discrimination and the promotion of equal opportunities is a constant concern for the majority of public actors in Europe. However, this concern takes on a whole new dimension in a city-region like Brussels, which is characterised by major cultural diversity and significant social inequalities.



For several years, the Brussels-Capital Region has been developing a pioneering policy aimed not only at correcting the negative effects of certain policies in this area, but also at preventing them as early as possible, i.e. starting from the design of public policies. This led to the introduction of the gender test in 2015: for each legislative text, the aim was to ensure that it did not undermine gender equality. This *gender mainstreaming* policy was extended to other criteria and led to the equal opportunities test at the end of 2018. The impact of any measure now needs to be verified by assessing its potential impact on the following five criteria: gender, disability, ethnic and cultural origin, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and social origin and situation.

Since 1 January 2019, this test has been mandatory for all new laws and regulations. It has therefore become a tool for self-assessment, reflection on the implemented policies, and awareness-raising in the fight against discrimination. This test is also mandatory for public contracts, grants, management contracts and strategic planning documents concluded or adopted by the Brussels-Capital Region since 1 March 2019.

## **4.5.2 Access to housing and the fight against homelessness**

### **Access to housing**

In its Government Declaration 2014-2019, the Brussels government reiterated the need for decent and affordable housing for all, which affects all segments of the population. Article 191 of the Housing Code enshrines the right to decent housing for itinerant housing. To this end, an ordinance has been adopted to enable the government to define specific standards for itinerant housing to be respected for the land intended to accommodate them. Existing standards in terms of safety, salubrity, facilities and hygiene have been drafted with the traditional rental stock in mind.

Following the publication of alarming figures of discrimination regarding access to housing in the context of the current crisis, the region has commissioned tests to demonstrate discrimination, primarily based on the source of income and ethnic origin. Since 2017, a major awareness-raising campaign has been launched among estate agents operating in the Brussels-Capital Region. The Housing Code establishes the principle of equal treatment, which implies non-discrimination. The remaining issue was the burden of proof. In response to this issue, a new ordinance provides for two types of tests, making it possible to detect that discrimination has occurred, and enabling the housing administration to investigate, record and punish discriminatory practices.

The ambition was to generalise the existing allocation, to extend it to a wider audience while simplifying the allocation process and providing a simulation tool for citizens. A new ordinance has been adopted in December 2018. An implementing decree for the order is currently being drafted.

Housing access has also been promoted thanks to the Social Real Estate Agencies (*Agences Immobilières Sociales – AIS*). The AIS mechanism has known unprecedented success, particularly since the bar of 5000 housing units managed by AIS was reached. In September 2018, there were more than 5500 AIS housing units in Brussels. Within the same framework, a Social Real Estate Agency for Students has been created to respond to the specific needs of a part of the student population. In early 2019, the organisation was managing 118 housing units (rooms or studios) for a total of 122 students, including 4 couples and 3 students with a child.

Finally, the government has finalised identifying the potential of 6500 housing units of the Alliance-Habitat, which will allow a further increase of the supply of public housing in Brussels.

### **The fight against homelessness**

The aim of the Services of the United College of the Common Community Commission of the Brussels-Capital Region is to reform the sector of the fight against homelessness, in order to reduce the number of homeless people and the duration of homelessness. The Ordinance of 14 June 2018 on emergency assistance and integration of homeless people establishes existing measures and allows for the implementation of innovative projects.

Two types of services are targeted: emergency assistance services that meet the most pressing needs of homeless people (emergency accommodation centres, day centres, street work and doing the rounds among the homeless) as well as integration services that focus more on long-term reintegration and exit (reception centres, home guidance, Housing First, street work and doing the rounds among the homeless).

In order to supervise the missions of these schemes as effectively as possible, the ordinance envisages the creation of two public-law non-profit organisations by the United College. The non-profit association 'New Samusocial' acts as an emergency shelter provider, while the non-profit association 'Bruss'Help' acts as a coordinator of emergency assistance and integration measures. These two non-profit organisations are planned to be established during the first half of 2019.

The reform of the homeless sector implies an increase in the financial resources currently envisaged, for two reasons:

- on the one hand, centres currently approved and subsidised on a regulatory basis will see their organic subsidy increase due to the tightening of the standards imposed on them under the new regulations;
- on the other hand, centres currently subsidised on an inorganic basis will see their subsidy amount increase as soon as it is linked to their accreditation.

The current budget, based on existing legislation, consists of 18 492 656 euros. The financing of all services on the basis of the new regulations should represent a budget of 32 011 395 euros in 2020, or a delta of 13.518.739 euros.

It should be noted that for the Maisons d'accueil (Homeless shelters) the largest budget is allocated by COCOF (21 million euros per year). In addition, two new Maisons d'accueil have been created within the COCOF (for single-parent households and victims of domestic violence) and a new one will be created within the COCOM (young homeless mothers).

## **5 Other structural measures**

### **5.1 Structural and Investment Funds**

The **ERDF and ESF structural and investment funds** active in the Brussels Region act as an important lever for establishing an effective link between the Europe 2020 Strategy, the National Reform Programme, and the policies linked to the demographic, environmental and socio-economic issues faced by the Region. The funds complement the region's public policies to give structural, sustainable, inclusive and innovative strength to the Brussels economy and support social integration by organising training, professional reintegration, active inclusion and even the promotion of equal opportunities.

#### **5.1.1 Brussels ERDF Programme**

The planning is in its operational phase, with more than 96% of the operational resources of the programme having already been the subject of a decision. This amount includes the financing of 46 projects

(often financed over several strands of the programme, meaning that within the same investment, several themes of the EU are supported) as well as funding for three financial instruments whose implementation began in 2018: a new financing tool for early-stage start-ups; a tool for granting advantageous loans to integration, cooperative or social economy enterprises; and a tool for granting micro-credits.

Keen to strengthen the performance of the programme (key performance indicators), the government launched a call for projects in June 2018 to support energy renovation projects in public buildings, which should make it possible to increase the programme's results in terms of reducing energy consumption in public buildings.

Besides choosing to impose territorial concentration, the strategy implemented also included the choice to concentrate the economic strands on certain priority issues, but also on strategic sectors that generate jobs and economic dynamism (media, creative sectors and tourism, resource and waste management, sustainable food and horeca, sustainable construction and renewable energies, health and services for individuals).

In practice, and with a total budget of nearly 190 million euros, including ERDF funding of almost 95 million euros, the Brussels-Capital Region has chosen to structure its ERDF Operational Programme around five priority areas, in which the 46 dossiers selected at the end of the call for projects fall:

- Strengthening research and improving the transfer and promotion of innovation - 10 projects;
- Strengthening entrepreneurship and improving the development of SMEs in promising industries - 12 projects;
- Supporting the development of circular economy through the rational use of resources in promising industries (low carbon) - 11 projects;
- 3bis. Supporting the development of circular economy and the rational use of resources in promising sectors (environment/rational use of resources) - 3 projects (including two projects also included under strand 4);
- Improving the quality of life in the neighbourhoods and for vulnerable populations - 12 projects.

Beyond a strictly economic approach, the Brussels-Capital Region has also chosen, in its ERDF operational programme, to support the social economy and the collaborative economy. It aims for the following type of growth:

- *Intelligent*, in particular by supporting projects aimed at supporting businesses via innovative solutions (including technological solutions), offering SMEs in the construction sector test equipment to test the durability of construction solutions and materials, or carrying out technological transfers from research centres to companies in Brussels in the field of eco-construction. By 2023, the programme aims to support (as part of the emergence of innovation) 150 SMEs, and develop at least 16 research jobs in research entities;
- *Sustainable*, in particular through support for ambitious energy renovation projects (the Ixelles barracks and other projects), geothermal energy in urban areas, support for soft mobility, the transition of SMEs to sustainability, reusing waste and the creation of open spaces in urban areas. By 2023, the programme aims to support (as part of the support for the low-carbon economy) 250 SMEs, reduce the energy consumption of public buildings by 8.38 million kWh/year, create 15 new kilometres of cycle paths and increase the volume of waste recycled by 5 000 tonnes per year;

- *Inclusive*, in particular through the creation of six childcare centres in urban renewal areas, four ambitious cultural infrastructures in these neighbourhoods, and the creation of new mechanisms to support the care of vulnerable groups in Brussels (by actively targeting migrant populations in particular). By 2023, the programme aims to develop 10 700 m<sup>2</sup> of infrastructure to improve the living conditions of neighbourhoods and vulnerable populations.

## 5.1.2 The European Social Fund in Brussels

The resources of the ESF are primarily devoted to developing/strengthening the skills of jobseekers, strengthening social cohesion and including more vulnerable groups, starting with young people under 25 (30) years of age, people with a migrant background or newcomers, and people with low or no qualifications. The overall objective of the various programmes in the Brussels territory is to help support public policies aimed at access and integration into sustainable and high-quality jobs for Brussels residents who are part of groups which are more prone to exclusion from the world of work, due to their individual characteristics.

It should be recalled that, following the 2013 European Council, a specific envelope called the "Youth Employment Initiative" (YEI) has been allocated to regions with an unemployment rate of more than 25% among young people under 25 years of age (ind. Eurostat).<sup>21</sup> Unfortunately, our region is eligible for this envelope, which is part of the ESF planning.

*The ESF operational programme (OP) "Employment" 2014 - 2020*, managed by Actiris, is intended to help increase employment rates and social inclusion rates within the Brussels territory. Its total budget consists of 98 million euros, 52 million euros of which is from the EU budget, including 6 million euros from the Youth Employment initiative. The main aim of this programme is to facilitate access to employment for all, combat discrimination and allow better integration of the most vulnerable groups, targeting young people in particular. The strategy and investment priorities chosen are in line with the region's significant socio-economic challenges. These investments cover three main areas: the sustainable integration of young people into the labour market, access to employment for all and the active inclusion of the most vulnerable groups. 99% of the ESF resources regarding total costs have now been decided on, and 40% has been spent. These percentages are 67% and 53% respectively for the YEI.

The additional resources for the two OPs of the YEI have made it possible to develop (or to reinforce) additional actions and partnerships to the existing actions. These actions aim to guide young people in various activities in order to give/restore their confidence in their capacities and/or in public employment institutions and/or in training and/or in education. This first step requires the elaboration of a professional life project, to which a registration as YEI at Actiris is done beforehand.

*The ESF operational programme "Wallonia-Brussels 2020.eu"*, in its Brussels section (COCOF and FWB in Brussels) has an ESF envelope of 199,5 million euros for the period, of which 14 million euros is for the YEI. The programme is based on a four-part strategy based on an assessment of the weaknesses of the Brussels economy (low entrepreneurial culture, low level of qualifications of the working population and social exclusion). The four strands of the ESF OP meet coherent objectives that complement ERDF operations and the Brussels political strategies. These four strands are: support for business starters, the development of lifelong training, social inclusion and the sustainable integration of young people into work. The OP strategy is based on the dynamic of innovative professional training and is targeted primarily at jobseekers, particularly those with low qualifications, and young people.

---

<sup>21</sup> Unemployment rate for under-25s in 2013 (Eurostat): 39.9%; in 2017: 33.2%.

### **5.1.3 Upcoming programming period**

With the aim of preparing for the *upcoming programming period 2021-2027*, in October 2017 the Brussels government approved the guidelines it would like to see implemented for cohesion policy after 2020. As an essential instrument to boost solidarity and cooperation between actors within the EU's regions, and to create the conditions for the emergence of innovation in growth, sustainable development and infrastructure, this policy must continue its action to support job creation, business competitiveness, economic growth, sustainable development and the improvement of the quality of life of citizens residing in the EU.

Its contribution to reducing the paradox of large cities (creators of both wealth and exclusion on a large scale) will need to be continued while taking more effective action to reduce the factors which facilitate the emergence of socio-economic exclusion of a growing part of the Brussels population: urban poverty, unequal access to services in certain neighbourhoods, basic education and schooling, qualifications (recognition of foreign diplomas, in particular), prevention and security (radicalism/life in neighbourhoods), professional integration of all Brussels residents according to a cooperative approach (job finding and/or job retention), with a view to a sustainable professional career.

To achieve this, it will still have to deploy innovative actions in terms of balanced territorial development which combines economics (industrial planning, circular economy, sectoral framework agreements, local services, etc.) and "good living" in the city (mobility, housing, climate change, etc.).

As the region is an open city, newcomer populations (and more generally the various migratory flows and their urgent challenges) are one of the important vectors for the implementation of Brussels programmes, because they require the permanent finetuning of all policies to achieve the fastest possible social integration, which is the first favourable factor for positive socio-economic integration.

Finally, the question of cooperation between the various programmes active in Brussels is becoming more and more pressing. Establishing strong coordination of the Structural Funds will be a major focus of attention for the Brussels Public Authorities, to ensure better coherence and continuity of the actions supported, and strengthen the leverage effect of the joint action of the European Structural Funds on Brussels public policies.

## **5.2 Industrial and entrepreneurial policy**

### **5.2.1 Brussels industrial vision and strategy**

The launch of the project to expand Brussels' industrial strategy, an important component of the Go4Brussels 2025 Strategy, was the organization of an Economic and Social Council symposium on this topic in June 2017. Afterwards, the social partners were involved in the continuation of the work, notably through an own-initiative opinion concerning the Brussels industrial plan transmitted to the Government at the end of December 2018.

The "Brussels Industrial Vision and Strategy" plan was approved by the Brussels Regional Government on 17 January 2019. Its aim is to maintain and redevelop productive activity in Brussels by relying on the strict collaboration of the various public and private actors concerned.

It reflects the direction to be taken to develop productive activities in the Brussels-Capital Region, and sets out a promising trajectory over a 20-year horizon. The drivers of this urban industrial renewal rely on the pool of Brussels skills, the search for urban value chains, an intensified application of the circular economy, an industry anchored in the city of the future, and the optimisation of urban logistics for the benefit of productive activities.

The plan will be governed by a Steering Committee made up of representatives of the regional political authorities concerned in Brussels, as well as the administrations and public interest bodies responsible for the implementation of the plan. These administrations and organisations will form a task force to manage the transversal components of the plan, based on a dashboard incorporating steering indicators.

An Industry Commission will also be set up with the sectoral and inter-professional social partners concerned, who will be consulted on the implementation of the plan.

## 5.2.2 Stimulating innovation in circular economy

The Regional Programme for Circular Economy (RPCE) was adopted on 18 March 2016. It was the subject of an interim mid-term progress report in November 2018, after 18 months of implementation. The average rate of completion of RPCE measures is 45%. 222 entrepreneurs have been supported through the various measures put in place, 139 businesses have received financial support, 1 700 people have been trained and made aware of circular economy and more than 200 jobs have directly been created based on the “be.circular” call for projects alone. Based on this assessment, an update of the RPCE has been carried out in 2019.

The Brussels cluster (circlemade.brussels), one of the innovative pioneers in circular economy, was inaugurated on 24 May 2018. Following extensive preparatory work with respect to governance and prospecting by the 30 founding members, targeted activities were organised in June for members: skills acquisition seminars, working groups to come up with a pooled commercial offering, the election of representative member-companies on the strategic committee, a mission to Paris, support for clusters.

The aim is to participate in the transition from the linear economy (extract - manufacture - consume - dispose) to circular economy, which aims to increase the efficiency of the use of resources and reduce the environmental impact, while developing the well-being of individuals. It constitutes a real response to the economic, social and environmental challenges.

It is also about strengthening and facilitating the dynamics of innovation in order to support the actors involved in this new development model. A cluster makes it possible for economic actors from different sectors of activity, academics and the public to work together. As such, companies, the world of research and public institutions come together in circlemade.brussels with the aim of stimulating innovation in circular economy in the Brussels-Capital Region by setting up innovative projects. Governance is ensured by 13 representatives, including 7 companies.

The be.circular calls for projects, a key measure of the RPCE, contribute **to speeding up the implementation of different circular economy models in the Brussels-Capital Region**, such as reusing waste (reuse, repair, remanufacture and recycle), new economic models (short-chain economy, collaborative economy), ecodesign and strong initiatives leading to the transition to a circular economy.

For the third edition of this call in 2018, no less than **83 new dossiers** have been introduced and **26 projects were selected by the jury**. Finally, **an amount of 1 764 016 euros has been granted by the region in order to support the selected businesses**.

The be.circular call for projects builds on 4 primary themes in order to boost and mobilise the economic fabric of Brussels when it comes to the potential of circular economy: the 3Rs (repair, reuse, recycle), the food sector, the construction sector and functional economy. In 2018, a new transversal category was created: Impact +, which focuses on projects of a larger scale requiring greater support.

### 5.2.3 Support for entrepreneurship

**Mybusinesspass**, a selection of public and private initiatives in Brussels, was launched in July 2018 with an information website to meet the needs of entrepreneurs at each stage of their entrepreneurial project.<sup>22</sup> Mybusinesspass makes it possible to offer a comprehensive and understandable offer in terms of support for entrepreneurs and future entrepreneurs, in partnership with private actors, each focusing on its own specialities. Based on a strong public-private partnership, the initiative serves entrepreneurs by pursuing the following objectives:

- Simplify and increase the legibility of the existing offer of support for the target groups;
- Link the offer around the company's life cycle more effectively;
- Fill the gaps in the existing offer of support for the target groups.

Three months after the operational launch of mybusinesspass.brussels, more than 300 entrepreneurs, 50% of whom are women, have already submitted an application on the website [www.mybusinesspass.brussels](http://www.mybusinesspass.brussels). Of these, 65% are at the entrepreneurial project stage and 35% have an existing business.

The Brussels **Small Business Act (SBA)** adopted by the Brussels government in June 2016 brings together in one single document the main strands of the regional economic policy for SMEs in Brussels. An assessment after two years of implementation was made in December 2018. Overall, 74% of the SBA has been implemented.

Finally, it should be noted that a **bonus for self-employed persons** entered into force on 1 March 2018. This is a financial incentive, with a decreasing amount of 4 000 euros granted by Actiris for a maximum period of 6 months to unemployed jobseekers who set up as self-employed as their main occupation, in order to develop their own business. The bonus amounts to 1 250 euros in the 1<sup>st</sup> month, 1000 euros the 2<sup>nd</sup> month, 750 euros the 3<sup>rd</sup> month, 500 euros the 4<sup>th</sup> month and 250 euros the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> months.

### 5.2.4 Supporting digital entrepreneurship

Brussels has 3.4 technological start-ups for every 10 000 inhabitants (compared to 1.2 in Wallonia and 1.5 in Flanders). In total, more than 400 start-ups have created 3 000 jobs since 2010.<sup>23</sup> Conscious of the potential that this ecosystem represents in terms of added value and employment, the region has launched a series of initiatives to support the sector, in addition to measures to support training in the digital professions (see above).

The **NextTech** plan was adopted by the Brussels government in January 2017, which consequently expressed its ambition to transform the Brussels-Capital Region into a true European reference centre in the digital sector. This action plan, integrated into a common brand - bedigital.brussels - aims to support and promote the creation and growth of companies active in information and communication technologies - ICT - in the Brussels Region, by formulating 20 concrete measures.

A new call for projects for NextTech.brussels (500 000 euros) was organised in mid-2018 to support measures not yet implemented in the first year (2017), such as raising awareness among women of IT jobs, integrating priority technologies into public/private hosting organisations, and promoting Brussels as a European hub and testing ground.<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>22</sup> mybusinesspass.brussels

<sup>23</sup> According to a study by startups.be (2018).

<sup>24</sup> The projects selected following the NextTech call for projects in 2017 were implemented from 2018 on, and the projects supported in 2018 will be implemented from 2019 on.

Visibility of the umbrella brand *bedigital.brussels* has been ensured. This brand was adopted in May 2018 by the government through the launch of a joint call for projects to support projects related to the regional digital strategy. *Bedigital.brussels* is coordinated by *hub.brussels*, the Brussels Regional Informatics Centre (BRIC) and Innoviris.

Of the 20 concrete measures in the *NextTech.brussels* plan, 17 have been implemented or are currently being implemented.

Four international technology fairs are planned, including two already successful missions that will be duplicated in 2019. The Women In Tech coding festival was a great success in 2018 and was designated as a "Good Practice" by the European Commission during the "More Women in Digital" event organised in Brussels on 27 September by the COMPET Council.

In the context of calls for projects for the implementation of the Small Business Act (SBA) and the support of high-quality collaborative platforms in Brussels, the government has decided to support the emergence of **collaborative platforms**. Among the initiatives supported (for a total amount of 394 000 euros) is the Platform Coop Brussels, which aims to consolidate and equip the ecosystem emerging from cooperative platforms in Brussels. This approach is part of the international 'Platform Cooperativism' movement that brings together various actors (academics, politicians, trade unions and entrepreneurs) working for an inclusive and redistributive digital economy.

Finally, in collaboration with various federal public services (federal police at decentralised level and local police areas, Belgian Cybersecurity Centre), the Region is currently developing a project aimed at creating an ecosystem in the field of cybersecurity, in particular by developing industrial, technological and human resources (inter alia by creating employment, training, education and industry branches) in this sector.<sup>25</sup>

Sirris, the Collective Centre for the technology industry in Brussels, launched the Brussels Initiative on Cybersecurity Innovation (BICI) in December 2018 to ensure that new knowledge on cybersecurity is more quickly transferred to companies. BICI brings together the know-how of the research centres of the UCL, ULB and VUB, the EhB university, Sirris and other key players in the Brussels-Capital Region in this field. It is managed within *icity.brussels*, an initiative aiming to strengthen innovation and research in ICT in the Brussels Region. The *icity.brussels* programme is a ULB/VUB/Sirris initiative funded by the ERDF and Innoviris amounting to 13 million euros.

---

<sup>25</sup> "Vers un plan régional de cybersécurité" (Towards a Regional Cybersecurity Plan), *cirb.brussels* and Bruxelles Prévention & Sécurité (BPS), September 2018 ([http://www.bps-bpv.brussels/docs/CIRB\\_BPS\\_VersUnPlanR%C3%A9gionalDeCybers%C3%A9curit%C3%A9.pdf](http://www.bps-bpv.brussels/docs/CIRB_BPS_VersUnPlanR%C3%A9gionalDeCybers%C3%A9curit%C3%A9.pdf)).



## Annex 3: Reform programme of the Flemish Region and the Flemish Community

### Preface

The present *Flemish Reform Programme (Vlaams Hervormingsprogramma/VHP) 2019* is the ninth in a row to be drawn up by Flanders and the last to be presented by the current Government of Flanders. In the present Flemish Reform Programme (FRP) Flanders offers a bespoke response to the country-specific recommendations 2018-2019 and the challenging Europe 2020 targets. The FRP is to ensure that the European Commission (EC) receives a sufficiently detailed picture of the measures Flanders is taking within the framework of the European Semester (ES).

In recent years, the current Government of Flanders has focused increasingly on the follow-up of the ES, with good results. At the *Flemish level*, it was tried during this term of office to increase support for the FRP in Flanders. This is perfectly illustrated by the stronger structural involvement of the social partners, the members of the Liaison Agency Flanders-Europe (Vlaams-Europees Verbindingsagentschap/VLEVA) and the Flemish Parliament, as well as the weight which the Board of Chairmen (Voorzitterscollege) attaches to the ES. In addition, the FRP always responds to new European Semester developments, such as the inclusion of a Flemish Social Scoreboard and the actions taken in response to the Structural Reform Support Programme (SRSP). At the *federal level*, particular reference can be made to the integral inclusion of the FRP in the National Reform Programme upon Flanders' request. At the *European level*, the EC invariably appreciates the proactive and quality contribution of the Flemish authorities to fact finding missions, bilateral meetings and so on. As a result, a lot of Flemish policy measures and data are fed into the European Semester documents. It is therefore no coincidence that the Country Report Belgium 2019 contains a historically high number of references to Flemish measures and statistics. Flanders also tried to act in quick response to new instruments, such as the Structural Reform Support Programme: both in the 2018 and 2019 cycles, Flanders received support for three projects which are explained in the present FRP. In recent years, the European Semester Officer (ESO) has played an important role in ensuring interaction between the Flemish authorities and the EC services. In this respect, reference can be made, inter alia, to the annual meeting between the ESO and the Board of Chairmen of the Flemish public administration. The Flemish authorities also repeatedly made their ES expertise available to the Committee of the Regions (CoR).

The Government of Flanders keeps urging the EC to request more *region-specific recommendations and analyses*. Since the 2019 Country-Specific Recommendations (CSRs) will be of decisive importance for the programming of the Structural Funds 2021-2027, it is vital that these CSRs are sufficiently attuned to the needs of the regions so that Flanders can act decisively. Both within the future MFF and in the EC's recent reflection paper 'Towards a sustainable Europe in 2030', the ES is extremely important and it is already clear that the investment dimension will continue to be a top priority at the European level in the coming years. It is therefore no coincidence that the present FRP additionally highlights the significance of the investment dimension. As is abundantly clear from the present FRP, the current Government of Flanders has been an investing government, which has borne fruit. The employment rate in Flanders has never been higher and our investments in R&D, as well as in care, education, mobility and public works have reached record levels. However, resting on our laurels is not an option: the new Government of Flanders will have to keep acting in response to investment challenges.

Geert Bourgeois

Minister-President of the Government of Flanders

## Executive summary

The Flemish Reform Programme (FRP) is the Government of Flanders' response to the challenges arising within the scope of the European Semester (ES). With its own reform programme, Flanders assumes the required ownership. The FRP constitutes the basis for Flanders' contribution to the National Reform Programme (NRP) and is also delivered to the European institutions. The FRP 2019 is composed of 5 parts.

**PART 1** describes the main macro-economic developments in the Flemish Region. A lot of indicators are green. With an investment ratio of 24.7 in 2018, Flanders is at the forefront in Europe. Total employment grew by 1.3% in 2018 and a 3.45% increase was recorded in the Flemish goods exports in 2018 compared to 2017.

**PART 2** describes the measures taken by Flanders within the framework of the major economic challenges (the three CSRs and investment challenges) and again constitutes the main focus of the FRP.

With regard to **CSR 1 (public finances)** Flanders achieves a structurally balanced budget for the third time in a row. To that end, it continues to focus on a growth-friendly fiscal consolidation, while paying the necessary attention to public investments in economic and social infrastructure. To further improve the quality of the public finances, Flanders is working towards the introduction of performance-informed budgeting and spending reviews in the budgetary process. Furthermore, the Government of Flanders is aiming to introduce an investment norm and is making considerable efforts to keep debt under control by developing a debt norm, among other things. The transferred competences for long-term care and mobility aids have been included in the Flemish Social Protection (Vlaamse Sociale Bescherming/VSB), with the intention of adapting the financing models so as to evolve towards care-related financing based on an internationally validated care-related instrument (BelRAI).

As far as **CSR 2 (labour market and education/training)** is concerned, the various activation measures (target group policy, expansion of the VDAB guidance offer for older jobseekers, etc.) have reached cruising speed. Focus is also placed on the transition from unemployment to work for vulnerable groups. In addition, several measures are being taken for people with a migrant background (project 'Integration through Work', etc.) and people with a work-limiting disability or medical, mental, psychological, psychiatric or social problems (customisation in social economy, etc.). Furthermore, the reconciliation of work and family life (additional investments in childcare, etc.) and worker mobility (attraction and retention of foreign talent, etc.) are concentrated on. Efforts are also made to guarantee equal opportunities in terms of access to quality education, vocational training and the labour market for the most disadvantaged groups. 2018 was a key year for education and training reforms. For almost all levels of education, important decrees were adopted in the Flemish Parliament and ratified by the Government of Flanders. Equal opportunities are promoted horizontally, among other things, through the reforms laid down in decrees relating to the pupil guidance system, the modernisation of secondary education, the new attainment targets, the new dual learning scheme, the financing system for adult education, part-time education in the arts, short cycle graduate programmes and the adjustment of the M-Decree. These educational reforms are aimed at achieving a qualification and a better match between education and labour market. The percentage of STEM graduates is boosted by the further roll-out of the STEM Action Plan, the modernisation of secondary education, the new attainment targets and dual learning. Furthermore, the important reforms regarding Inspection 2.0, quality assurance in higher education and teacher training were finalised in decrees.

With regard to **CSR 3 (entrepreneurship, competition in services, mobility challenges)**, reference can be made to the simplification of access to entrepreneurship by abolishing the business management certificate and the professional competences. To ensure quality entrepreneurship, a competence policy

is put in place to acquire and maintain entrepreneurial skills. In terms of addressing mobility challenges, it can be stated that in 2019 all investments were combined into one Integrated Investment Plan (Geïntegreerd Investeringsplan) and a total of €1.68 billion will be made available for transport infrastructure this year. Additional funds were appropriated for all modes of transport (road infrastructure, public transport, inland navigation, ports).

In the present FRP, Flanders has included an **investment chapter** in response to the Country Report Belgium 2019. The Government of Flanders is an investing government and remains fully committed to growth-friendly fiscal consolidation by focusing on structural measures (such as more efficient government structures, including a downsizing of the public administration by 1,950 FTEs by the end of 2019) and at the same time on strengthening public investments in economic, ecological and social infrastructure. During the current term of office, the Government of Flanders has thus ensured that an additional €654 million per year (gross investments in fixed assets, as well as capital transfers and availability allowances) is available for extra investments in infrastructure in five key areas: mobility and public works (with a specific focus on multi-modal investments via 'NV De Werkvennootschap'), school construction, social housing, welfare infrastructure and economy and R&D. During the current term of office the Government of Flanders will also earmark additional funds for investments in care (+€500 million) and the development of long-term growth potential based on R&D (+€500 million) and water treatment infrastructure (€230 million). In addition to responding well to the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), the present FRP clearly outlines the investments in R&D&I (digitisation, cluster policy, etc.), the energy transition (solar projects, green heat, etc.), a low-carbon society (draft Flemish Energy and Climate Plan 2021-2030), circular economy, affordable and energy-efficient dwelling construction (draft Flemish Energy and Climate Plan 2021-2030, Renovation Pact, reform of energy premiums, etc.), mobility and public works (record investments for all modes of transport), school infrastructure (school construction master plan, etc.) and welfare infrastructure, because they directly address the investment dimension which takes centre stage in the ES 2019.

**PART 3** looks at the state of play of Flanders' Europe 2020 targets.

**Research and development (R&D).** Flanders continues to invest additional funds in R&D, which translates into a continuous increase in R&D intensity to 2.70% in 2016, which was the highest figure ever. In 2018, the Flemish authorities spent an additional (one-off) budget of €115 million, €72 million of which was spent on R&D&I. In 2019, another one-off investment of €120 million is earmarked and €280 million (recurrent funds) is appropriated for new policy in the area of economy, science and innovation (Economie, Wetenschap en Innovatie/EWI).

**Climate and energy.** As regards non-ETS greenhouse gas emissions in Flanders, it can be stated that, cumulated over the 2013-2017 period, 221 Mt of the emission allocation was used, which corresponds to the target of 352 Mt in the 2013-2020 period. In 2017 (1632 PJ), primary energy consumption in Flanders remained virtually unchanged compared to 2016 (1618 PJ), bringing it back to the level of 2013 (1609 PJ). Flanders is making progress towards its 2020 renewable energy target (Energy Plan 2020). An increase is recorded in the share of renewable energy in gross final energy consumption to 1.63 Mtoe (or 6.7%) in 2017. In order to tackle the energy and climate challenges in the longer term, the Government of Flanders adopted both the draft Flemish Energy Plan 2021-2030 (Vlaams Energieplan 2021-2030) and the draft Flemish Climate Policy Plan 2021-2030 (Vlaams Klimaatbeleidsplan 2021-2030) in July 2018. Also in 2018, the Government of Flanders continued to invest in the energy transition and in steps towards a low-carbon and circular economy. The Government of Flanders also keeps working to improve energy efficiency in buildings and businesses, for example by upgrading the EPC to EPC+, launching the Dwelling Passport (Woningpas), introducing numerous new measures for residential buildings and renewing energy policy agreements for energy-intensive businesses and SMEs. With regard to renewable energy, several measures from the draft concept papers 'Solar Plan 2020' (Zonneplan 2020) and 'Wind Power 2020' (Windkracht 2020) were implemented, funds were earmarked for large-

scale solar energy pilot projects, and small-scale wind projects were supported. In implementation of the 'Heat Plan' (Warmteplan), new heat networks were rolled out in Antwerp and West Flanders and a guarantee scheme for deep geothermal energy was developed. In the context of the fight against climate change, the Government of Flanders adopted its Climate Action Plan (Actieplan Klimaat) on 29 March 2019. In order to accelerate investments in greenhouse gas emission reduction measures via the Climate Fund (Klimaatfonds), the Government of Flanders is already deciding now on the use of €75 million that will enter the Climate Fund as from May 2019.

**Employment rate.** After a period of stagnation of the employment rate (20-64 age group) around 72%, Flanders reached an employment rate of 73% in 2017. Employment continued to rise significantly faster and in 2018 the employment rate went up to 74.6%, which is the highest figure ever. However, Flanders continues to take measures to increase the overall employment rate and to bring it towards Flanders' target of 76% by 2020, while paying particular attention to the employment rate of disadvantaged groups.

**Education.** The share of early school leavers in Flanders ended at 7.3% in 2018. Flanders' Europe 2020 target of 5.2% has not yet been reached, but Flanders is well below the European target of 10%. As for the share of 30 to 34-year-olds with a higher education (HE) diploma, Flanders scored 48.2% in 2018. This means that both the European target of 40% and Flanders' target of 47.8% have been achieved. With regard to early school leaving, Flanders continues to roll out its Action Plan 'Together against Early School Leaving' (Samen tegen schooluitval). As far as tertiary education is concerned, reference can be made, among other things, to the conversion of higher vocational education programmes into short cycle graduate programmes, which will lead to a higher influx of pupils in higher education.

In the fields of **poverty and social exclusion** Flanders is in second place in the EU, which is an excellent performance. However, meeting Flanders' Europe 2020 target remains a great challenge. This year, specific mention can be made of the fact that since 1 January 2019 Flanders has taken over the payment of child benefit. This was transformed into the Growth Package (Groeipakket), the set of financial allowances which the Flemish authorities provide for each child. The Growth Package will also have a positive effect on the poverty figures. The Flemish Energy Programme (Vlaamse Energieprogramma), which addresses energy poverty at source with 34 concrete actions, is in its final stage of implementation. Flanders' excellent performance in the social field in EU context also shows from the good results on the relevant indicators in the **Flemish Social Scoreboard**.

**PART 4** discusses the use of the structural funds ERDF and ESF. In implementation of the ERDF, 83.03% (€145.8 million) of the funds has been committed between 190 projects. The remaining ERDF funds (€29.8 million) will be put to use via calls. These will include calls to promote innovation in Flanders and projects to support Flanders' efforts to internationalise local entrepreneurship. The ESF strengthens and re-invigorates Flanders' labour policy. In 2018, ESF projects reached approximately 53,000 jobseekers and 21,000 inactive people. In 2019, the ESF continues to fully focus on activation, social inclusion, lifelong learning, workable work and the relationship between education and the labour market. An important new emphasis will be the roll-out of workability vouchers, with which the ESF offers an easily accessible instrument to work on workable work.

**PART 5** describes the measures for strengthening public support for the ES in Flanders. A lot of good practices were supplied by the (supra) local authorities and stakeholders in response to the CSRs. The FRP was further enriched with contributions from the Flemish Parliament and the Flemish social partners (via VESOC). All this illustrates that the successful realisation of the ES is a responsibility of all the levels of government and stakeholders.

# 1 Macro-economic developments in the Flemish Region

The Flemish Region represents 57.6% of the Belgian **population** and 59.0% of the Belgian **gross domestic product** (GDP) in 2018, which makes it the most important Region in Belgium. The GDP per capita can be estimated at €36,700 purchasing power standard (PPS) in 2018 (source: Flanders Statistics, HERMREG 2018). This is 18% higher than the EU-28 average and 10% higher than that of the 15 EU countries prior to the 2004 enlargement.

The Brussels-Capital Region (BCR) is a geographically small area. There is quite a lot of commuting between the Flemish and Walloon Regions and the Brussels-Capital Region. In 2017, 8.2% of the working Flemish people were working in the BCR. In other countries, living and working in the capital area is much more common within the same geographical territory. If we make corrections for commuting movements, Flanders' GDP per capita can be estimated at €39,100 PPS in 2018. This is 26% and 18% higher than the EU-28 and EU-15 averages. The GDP per capita is only higher in Luxembourg, Ireland, the Netherlands and Austria.

Three factors determine the GDP per capita (source: Flanders Statistics on the basis of HERMREG and Eurostat). **Labour productivity** is the most important factor for Flanders. At €86,100 PPS in 2018, Flanders' labour productivity is 29% and 21% higher than the EU-28 and EU-15 averages. In comparison with the year 2000, Flanders' labour productivity has decreased compared to the EU-28 (in 2000: +35%), and has hardly changed compared to the EU-15 (in 2000: +19%). In both comparisons, however, there is a slight erosion of Flanders' lead from 2015 onwards.

With a share of 63.6% of the **working age population** in 2018, the Flemish Region scores below the EU-18 (64.6%) and EU-15 (64.3%) averages. The new EU Member States (post-2004) generally score the highest in this respect.

In 2017, **economic growth** was higher in each of the Regions than in 2016, reaching 2.0% in Flanders (+0.3% pp), 1.6% in Wallonia (+0.5% pp) and 0.9% in the Brussels-Capital Region (+0.9% pp). At the national level, it was 1.7% (+0.5 pp). In July 2018, the medium-term model HERMREG forecast a real-terms growth of Flanders' economy by 1.8% in 2018 and 1.7% in 2019. In July 2018, the Federal Planning Bureau (FPB) estimated Belgium's real-terms growth at 1.6% for each of these years. In September 2018 and spring 2019, the FPB reduced these estimates to 1.4% in 2018 and 1.3% in 2019<sup>26</sup>. Growth in Belgium is slightly slower than in the euro area (2018: +1.8%, 2019: 1.5%). This is due to the weakened export growth for Belgium (international trade tensions and the absence of a Brexit agreement) and a slight increase in imports, with net exports making a slightly negative contribution to Belgian GDP in 2019. From the NBB's Report 2017<sup>27</sup> on Economic and Financial Developments it appears that "the job intensity of growth was particularly high in Belgium. In the past two years, it has been more than 50% greater than it was before the crisis. The job intensity was also higher than elsewhere in the euro area and in each of the three neighbouring countries. And in contrast to what happened previously, the jobs were created mainly in the business sector, and to a lesser degree in the public sector or in branches of activity receiving substantial government subsidies." In 2017, **employment grew strongly**. According to the Institute of National Accounts (Instituut voor de Nationale Rekeningen/INR), total employment (in persons) increased by 64,500 units (+1.4%) in 2017. By Region this is broken down as follows: Flemish Region: +44,000 units (+1.6%), Walloon Region: +17,200 units (+1.4%), and Brussels-Capital Region: +3,300 units (+0.5%). The EU-28 (+1.6%) recorded a similar growth as in the Flemish Region (source: Eurostat, analogous definition as INR). In the private sector, total employment in Belgium rose by 62,700 units or

---

<sup>26</sup> [https://www.plan.be/admin/uploaded/201902141623020.PC\\_moyen\\_terme\\_20190214\\_NL.pdf](https://www.plan.be/admin/uploaded/201902141623020.PC_moyen_terme_20190214_NL.pdf)

<sup>27</sup> [https://www.nbb.be/doc/ts/publications/nbbreport/2017/en/t1/report2017\\_complete.pdf](https://www.nbb.be/doc/ts/publications/nbbreport/2017/en/t1/report2017_complete.pdf)

+1.6% in 2017. For the Flemish Region this comes down to +43,700 units or +1.9% (compared to just under 400 units in the public sector). Private sector employment grew more weakly in the Walloon (+1.6%) and Brussels-Capital Regions (+0.6%). The last time employment grew so strongly was in 2008. Job creation was fostered by wage restraint and the reduction in employers' social security contributions. Moreover, jobs could be created because the labour supply is increasingly supported by the career extension, the activation and the guidance of jobseekers and the part of the tax shift that supports purchasing power. The reforms are thus bearing fruit.

In addition to the GDP which is a measure of wealth produced, the **disposable income** is a measure of wealth earned. The real disposable income in the Flemish Region decreased by an average of 0.7% in 2010-2013. From 2014 onwards, positive growth figures were recorded again. Real disposable income is expected to grow by 1.5% in 2017 and 1.8% in 2018. This improvement is due to wage growth and increasing net income from assets, and the reduced tax burden (source: HERMREG 2018).

The **investment ratio** (investments including residential buildings in % of GDP) in the Flemish Region was 24.7% in 2018 (HERMREG 2018) compared to 25.7% in 2008. The economic uncertainty led to lower figures in 2009 and 2010. Since then, this indicator has remained more or less stable (just below the 25% threshold). The Flemish Region is one of the top EU countries. In 2018, only the Czech Republic and Sweden performed (slightly) better (25.3% each).

Total **employment** in the Flemish Region grew by 1.3% in 2018 (HERMREG 2018). This is in line with the growth figures of 2016 and 2017 (+1.4% each time) and links up again with the growth figures recorded before the outbreak of the financial and economic crisis. The recent increase in employment is mainly situated in the private sector. Regional data are only available up to and including 2016. Over the 2015-2016 period, private sector employment in the Flemish Region rose on average by 1.4%, compared to 0.5% for public sector employment. The increase in employment is mainly attributable to tradable services. This branch of activity accounts for 88% and 85% of additional employment in 2017 and 2018.

The **employment rate** (proportion of people in work in relation to the population aged 20 to 64) in the Flemish Region was 74.6% in 2018 (source: Statbel - LFS). In the years following the outbreak of the financial and economic crisis, the employment rate remained largely stable until 2016 (72%). In 2017, employment rose again for the first time to 73%, and in 2018 the growth accelerated and the **employment rate (20 to 64 age group)** went up to 74.6%<sup>28</sup>. The employment rate in the 55-64 age group showed a remarkable rise from 34.3% in 2008 to 52.5% in 2018. The EU-28 recorded a slightly lower employment rate in 2017 (72.7%). But of our neighbouring countries, Germany and the Netherlands score higher with 79.2% and 78.0%. The Walloon Region (63.7%) and the Brussels-Capital Region (61.4%) are performing less well. The employment rate of people born outside of the EU, as well as people with disabilities and low-skilled people, is going up as well, albeit at a slower pace.

The **unemployment rate** (15-64 age group) in Flanders reached 3.5% in 2018 (source: Statbel - LFS), which is the lowest level ever recorded. The unemployment rate is higher in the EU-28 (7.8%). Of our neighbouring countries, only Germany scores lower (3.8%). In 2018, the unemployment rate is significantly higher in the Walloon Region (8.5%) and in the Brussels-Capital Region (13.4%).

Flanders is an **innovation-driven economy**. This requires a well-trained working population. A positive element is that 48.2% of the population (30-34 age group) in Flanders had a higher education diploma in 2018. Innovative applications must be produced as a next step. In 2017, 8.7% of the working population in the Flemish Region was employed in high-tech sectors (source: processing by Flanders Statistics

---

<sup>28</sup> As a result of a change in the measurement method from 2017 onwards, caution is required when benchmarking with previous years.

on the basis of Eurostat). The figures in Belgium and the EU-28 are 7.7% and 8.8% respectively. Within the Flemish Region, the industrial component (4.9%) is higher than the services component (3.8%). The declining importance of the industrial component explains the decline of this indicator (9.7% in 2008). R&D expenditure in the Flemish Region accounted for 2.7% of GDP in 2016, which means it has been going up in recent years (source: Eurostat). Belgium performs less well (2.5%). The EU-28 average is clearly lower (1.9%). Patents constitute the final element in the innovation process. In 2013, 233 patents per million inhabitants were applied for in the Flemish Region. This is better than the averages of Belgium and France. However, in Germany (325) and the Netherlands (283) patent intensity is higher.

**Flemish goods exports**<sup>29</sup> reached a **new record** in 2018 and amounted to €328 billion. Compared to €317 billion in 2017, this is an increase of 3.45%. During the current term of office, Flanders' exports increased by 11.5% (€33.8 billion). It is already the 9th consecutive export increase, making Flanders the 15th largest exporter worldwide. Flanders accounts for 83% of Belgium's total exports, Wallonia for 14% and the BCR for 2%.

If **Flemish exports** are considered **geographically**, it can be concluded that the lion's share (71.1%) of Flanders' exports in 2018 were destined for countries within the EU-28, with the neighbouring countries Germany, the Netherlands, France, the United Kingdom and Luxembourg at the forefront. This clearly illustrates the importance of the single market. In 2018, Flanders' exports to the United Kingdom fell by 2.80% and the consequences of Brexit have a major impact on Flanders. Outside Europe, there has been a marked increase in exports from Flanders to Africa (9.7%), the United States (5.5%) and Canada (17.3%).

When considering **Flanders' exports by sector**, it can be concluded that in 2018 the chemical and pharmaceutical industries again headed the export leaders in Flanders: with €75.3 billion in international sales, they together represent 22.9% of total exports. The chemical and pharmaceutical industries are closely followed by the transport equipment sector which accounts for 12.6% of Flanders' total annual exports. The fastest growing industry is that of mineral products, with an increase in annual exports of €5.2 billion or 18.1%.

The **import** of foreign goods in **Flanders** reached a record increase of 5.56% this year compared to 2017, rising to almost €317.3 billion. Imports from the Netherlands scored highest with an increase of 9.64%. Consequently, **Flanders' new trade balance** is **positive** at around **€11 billion**.

---

<sup>29</sup> Analysis of 2018 export figures based on an analysis by Flanders Investment & Trade (FIT) of the import and export figures for 2018 of the National Bank of Belgium (NBB).

## 2 Measures within the framework of major economic challenges

### 2.1 The Country Report Belgium 2019

On 13 July 2018, the Council made three country-specific recommendations (CSRs)<sup>30</sup> to Belgium. These pertain to (1) budgetary objectives, (2) labour market and education and (3) incentivising entrepreneurship, increasing competition in services and tackling the growing mobility challenges.

Flanders once again participated actively in the fact finding mission (FFM) of 26 October 2018 between the EC services and Belgium, and provided the necessary input. Just like in previous years, the Member States were given the opportunity to formulate remarks on the draft Country Report of 29 January 2019, which Flanders did. In the final Country Report 2019 of 27 February 2019 many of the amendments submitted by Flanders have been taken into account. The Government of Flanders is pleased to find that the **Country Report Belgium 2019**<sup>31</sup> refers to a historically high number of measures taken by Flanders and that regional differences are also highlighted more clearly. However, the Government of Flanders regrets that the EC services still did not carry out a systematic breakdown of the (Europe 2020) indicators at the level of the Communities and Regions.

The Government of Flanders is convinced that the measures included in the present FRP implement the CSRs 2018-2019 (see 2.1. through 2.3.), investment challenges (see 2.4.) and Europe 2020 targets (see part 3), which means that important elements from the Country Report 2019 which require attention are actually addressed as well.

### 2.2 Country-specific recommendation 1

*Ensure that the nominal growth rate of net primary government expenditure does not exceed 1.8% in 2019, corresponding to an annual structural adjustment of 0.6% of GDP. Use windfall gains to accelerate the reduction of the general government debt ratio. Pursue the envisaged pension reforms and contain the projected increase in long-term care expenditure. Pursue the full implementation of the 2013 Cooperation Agreement to coordinate fiscal policies of all government levels. Improve the efficiency and composition of public spending at all levels of government to create room for public investment, notably by carrying out spending reviews.*

#### 2.2.1 Budgetary elements and investments

Taking into account the substantial budgetary effort required of the Communities and Regions in the context of the Sixth State Reform, the High Council of Finance (Hoge Raad van Financiën) recommends the Communities and Regions to pursue a structurally balanced budget. In recent years, the Government of Flanders has taken measures worth €2 billion in order to be able, for the third time in a row, to present a **structurally balanced** budget in 2019. The Government of Flanders remains fully committed to **growth-friendly fiscal consolidation**, by focusing on structural measures (such as more efficient government structures, including a downsizing of the public administration by 1,950 FTEs by the end of 2019) and at the same time **strengthening public investments in economic and social infrastructure**. During the current term of office, the Government of Flanders has earmarked €654 million (gross investments in fixed assets, as well as capital transfers and availability payments) for extra investments in infrastructure in five key areas: mobility and public works (with specific focus on multi-modal investments via 'NV De Werkvennootschap'), school construction, social housing, welfare infrastructure

---

<sup>30</sup> [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32018H0910\(01\)&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32018H0910(01)&from=EN)

<sup>31</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/file\\_import/2019-european-semester-country-report-belgium\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/file_import/2019-european-semester-country-report-belgium_en.pdf)



and economy and R&D. During the current term of office the Government of Flanders will also appropriate additional funds for investments in care (+€500 million), the development of long-term growth potential based on R&D (+€500 million) and water treatment infrastructure (€260 million).

To further improve the quality and efficiency of public finances, Flanders is working on the introduction of performance-informed budgeting and spending reviews in the budgetary process.

- The Government of Flanders has implemented a **new budget structure** within the framework of the **evolution towards performance-informed budgeting**. The budget for 2019 is the first budget drawn up under the new structure. As a next step, the Government of Flanders will introduce the new structure in policy documents (2020 budget). The aim is to reinforce the link between policy and budget so that information on performance can be taken into consideration in budgetary discussions.

**Structural Reform Support Programme (SRSP) (2018 cycle).** With support from the EC's Structural Reform Support Service (SRSS), Flanders is preparing the structural anchoring of spending reviews in its budgetary processes. As a first step, Flanders is carrying out a pilot project on the system of service vouchers (dienstcheques). The pilot project will be completed before the summer of 2019 and will contribute to capacity building within the Flemish public administration. In parallel, the budgetary processes will be reviewed in spring 2019. This review should result in recommendations on how to best organise a structural anchoring of the tool in an annual and multiannual perspective, taking into account best practices and the additional complexity of a highly decentralised Member State with a division of mixed competences. These recommendations can provide the necessary input for the next government to take a well-considered decision on the further roll-out of this extremely valuable tool for structural and in-depth policy review, which can contribute to a more growth-friendly composition of the budget and to the release of budgetary room for manoeuvre that can be used for new policy impulses, additional growth-enhancing investments or a reduction in taxes.

Furthermore, the Government of Flanders is also working towards the **introduction of an investment norm** within the budget trajectory of the joint government and within the budget trajectory of the Flemish authorities for growth-enhancing investments in infrastructure. This investment norm should ensure that subsequent governments continue to dedicate sufficient funds to investment in order to be able to guarantee prosperity in the long term. In addition to the common definition of investment, viz. gross fixed capital formation, such a norm may also take into account capital transfers.

Finally, the Government of Flanders is also making considerable efforts to keep debt under control, among other things by **developing a debt norm**. One of the measures of this debt norm is the obligation for entities belonging to the consolidation circle and over which the Flemish Community has sufficient control to invest their surplus of freely available funds in the Flemish authorities. The Decree on optimising the management of the financial assets of the Flemish public services, which regulates this matter, entered into force in October 2018. Thanks to this measure the consolidated debt is reduced as the INR deducts these investments from Flanders' total debt. At the end of 2018, €1.1 billion was raised in this way, about half of which has already been invested until the end of 2019 and beyond.

## 2.2.2 Controlling the projected increase in expenditure for long-term care

The transferred competences for long-term care and mobility aids have been incorporated into the **Flemish Social Protection (VSB)**, with the intention of adapting the financing models so as to evolve towards care-related financing based on an internationally validated care-related instrument: **BeIRAI** (see below). A five-year study was contracted out to the Welfare, Public Health and Family Centre of Expertise (Steunpunt Welzijn, Volksgezondheid en Gezin) in order to make prognoses for the health care sector and to draw up a multiannual programme and multiannual budget on the basis of these forecasts. The VSB Decree indicates that at the start of each term of office, the Government of Flanders, based on an analysis of the evolution of the care needs and taking into account budgetary margins, draws up an indicative multiannual estimate with regard to the pillars of the VSB for which the available provision is programmed<sup>32</sup>. The Government of Flanders submits this indicative multiannual estimate to the Flemish Parliament for discussion. As of 2019, the Government of Flanders will submit an annual progress report to the Flemish Parliament for discussion. This progress report explains how the Government of Flanders implements the indicative multiannual estimate within the available budgets and on the basis of an objective needs analysis.

Flanders places emphasis on **efficient and high-quality long-term care** and stresses the need to invest in disease prevention and health promotion. The new Strategic Plan '**Flemish citizens live healthier in 2025**' (**De Vlaming leeft gezonder in 2025**) establishes links with other health objectives and with policy developments in primary and mental health care. The current reform of primary care aims to establish a connection between prevention, care, rehabilitation, support, social support, etc. in primary care zones (at micro-level). Together with the legislation which is currently being drafted to create a framework for the various support structures for primary care, Flanders is working on a digital care and support plan (digitaal zorg- en ondersteuningsplan/DZOP) for people with care needs. The DZOP is a digital tool that can be used by any citizen, patient or caregiver to support their care. In addition to this support, the DZOP offers a working method for professionals when the care situation becomes complex and a lot of care professionals are involved in the care for a person. The tool is not limited to one particular type of care and can therefore be used for different types of support.

**SRSP (2018 cycle).** The SRSS offers technical support for the project related to the implementation of the **reform of Integrated Primary Care** (Geïntegreerde Eerste Lijn) 2017-2025 in Flanders in order to facilitate the implementation of some reform issues in primary care. In 2019, an assessment will be carried out of: (i) governance and financing models for primary care zones; (ii) for national and central primary care institutions and similar organisations; (iii) on change management and primary care integration - and (iv) the hospital sector.

A **BelRAI instrument**<sup>33</sup> is developed as a unique instrument to assess the care needs of persons requiring care in a standardised and structured way. The development of the instrument was ratified by a protocol of the Interministerial Conference of 26 March 2018. Advantages of the instrument are the improved quality of care, a more efficient care organisation, the multidisciplinary use of information and the possibility to link the result to an automatic granting of certain advantages via the VSB.

This VSB wants to realise a **more demand-driven care system** by putting the person with care needs central in the financing and organisation of care. The care needs assessment is the starting point for the

---

<sup>32</sup> VSB Decree: see <https://www.zorg-en-gezondheid.be/decreet-over-de-vlaamse-sociale-bescherming>

<sup>33</sup> BelRAI is based on the internationally validated scales of InterRAI - International Residential Assessment Instrument.

provision of care and for the granting of the corresponding funds. A good, standardised and objective assessment of the care needs is essential. In the longer term, the idea is to move on to a personalised budget by using the BelRAI in the various VSB sectors, such as elderly care (home care and living), mental health care and rehabilitation, and for the various financial allowances in the VSB context. Flanders has already invested a lot in research into new modules and the adaptation of existing modules to the Flemish situation. The next step is to test them in **pilot projects** before they can be rolled out on a larger scale and implemented in the various sectors. A pilot project was running from 2016 to 2018 for the implementation of the BelRAI screener in the urban area of Dendermonde. During this period, the BelRAI screener was tested as a rating scale for the care insurance scheme, home care, and residential elderly care. The allowance for the care insurance and home care is granted on the basis of the BelRAI screener. An extension is planned with another test region. A second pilot project will start in 2019 to test the use of BelRAI LTCF (Long Term Care Facilities) in residential elderly care centres. Data from this project will be used in a research project to evaluate the possibility of using the BelRAI for funding.

## **2.3 Country-specific recommendation 2**

*Remove disincentives to work and strengthen the effectiveness of active labour market policies, notably for the low-skilled, people with a migrant background and older workers. Pursue the education and training reforms, including by fostering equity and increasing the proportion of graduates in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.*

### **2.3.1 Activation measures in full force**

Some of Flanders' most important policy measures in the policy area 'Work' were thoroughly reformed over the past years, in particular following the 6<sup>th</sup> state reform (2014) and the end-of-career measures of the successive federal governments. These reforms are now running at cruising speed.

Flanders' **target group policy**, which entered into force on 1 July 2016, became fully operational in 2018, and was further strengthened from 1 January 2019 onwards. With this policy the recruitment of low- and medium-skilled young people, over-55s and people with a work-limiting disability is stimulated through wage cost reductions. The target group discount for low- and medium-skilled young people is targeted on young people with a low wage and is mainly intended to facilitate the entry in the labour market of these more vulnerable young people. Since 1 January 2019, low-skilled young people are even fully exempt from employers' social security contributions for the first two years after their recruitment. The reason is that a difficult entry in the labour market may also negatively impact the rest of their career. The target group discount for over-55s encourages employers to keep older employees at work longer and/or recruit them. The increased incentive for the recruitment of jobseekers aged over 55, who often find it difficult to find a new job once they become unemployed, has also been converted to a full exemption from employers' contributions since 1 January 2019. For long-term jobseekers, a recruitment incentive for employers promotes a smoother transition from unemployment to work as well.

The **activation** and guidance of older jobseekers has already been reinforced over the past years. The minimum age for exemption from labour market availability is gradually lifted by the federal government. The Flemish Service for Employment and Vocational Training (Vlaamse Dienst voor Arbeidsbemiddeling en Beroepsopleiding/VDAB) is extending its guidance provision at the same pace to include increasingly older jobseekers. In 2019, the age limit is at 64. Jobseekers over 50 years of age no longer receive customised guidance as they used to, but are given the same guidance as other jobseekers, resulting in rising re-employment and satisfaction rates. Only jobseekers in the system of adapted availability receive bespoke guidance.

The **service voucher scheme** (see 2.2.5.) continues to grow and ensures that the reconciliation of work and family life and the performance of care tasks is supported. In 2018, the scheme employed over 88,000 people in Flanders. Just under half of them are people with a migrant background.

In 2018, the Government of Flanders launched the **transition premium** (transitiepremie), i.e. financial support for jobseekers who want to become entrepreneurs. This premium alleviates the financial insecurity during the first months when a new company is formed.

The many reforms in the activation policy are not without effect. Unemployment in Flanders has been falling for more than three consecutive years now, and the employment rate is rising sharply, including among population groups that traditionally encounter more difficulties on the labour market (see table).

Employment rate (%)	2016	2017	2018
Total (20-64 age group)	72.0	73.0	74.6
55-64 age group	46.7	49.5	52.5
Born outside of the EU (20-64 age group)	53.0	56.0	61.2
Low-skilled people (25-64 age group)	50.7	51.5	52.4

### 2.3.2 Transition from unemployment to work for vulnerable groups

Following the reform of the target group policy (see also 2.2.1.) which is oriented to all working people, several measures that were targeted on vulnerable jobseekers were reformed as well. Again, it mostly concerned measures which were regionalised during the 6<sup>th</sup> state reform and which had not always been well suited to Flanders' activation policy in their previous form.

The **temporary work experience** (tijdelijke werkervaring) scheme provides for a pathway of maximum 24 months for jobseekers and people on social assistance who are very distant from the labour market due to a lack of generic competences or work experience. Since its inception in 2017, more than 11,000 pathways for people on social assistance have already been initiated. In 2018, the scheme was extended to include jobseekers, for whom more than 3,700 pathways had already been started that year. During the pathway the participants retain their status as jobseekers, unless they are persons on social assistance who enter the scheme on the basis of Article 60 and who receive an employment contract.

Apart from temporary work experience, the **neighbourhood work** (wijk-werken) scheme was introduced as well on 1 January 2018. This is a reform of the former scheme of local employment agencies (plaatselijk werkgelegenheidsagentschap/PWA), in which jobseekers can receive a small allowance on top of their unemployment benefit by doing a limited number of hours of work experience in an easily accessible working environment. This measure is primarily intended for jobseekers who are not ready yet for a (more intensive) temporary work experience. Just like the temporary work experience, neighbourhood work aims to activate people to mainstream economic sectors.

### 2.3.3 People with a migrant background

The **project 'Integration through Work'** (Integratie door Werk), a partnership between VDAB and the Agency for Integration and Civic Integration (Agentschap Integratie en Inburgering/AII) and Fedasil, in which refugees are assisted in finding a job as quickly as possible via a short, integrated pathway,

was so successful<sup>34</sup> that it was included as a good practice by Europe. This approach was further fine-tuned and embedded in the regular activities of VDAB. Language barriers for following training are eliminated to the maximum possible extent. Training courses are provided as integrated as possible and language and technical competencies are combined into one package. Through partnerships with education, the social economy and local authorities, focus is placed on language coaching in the workplace for participants in workplace learning, including in individual vocational training programmes (individuele beroepsopleiding/IBO). The services and mentoring offered to highly educated newcomers were also strengthened, among other things on the basis of experiences from the @level2work project.

The **Action Plan for Combating Work-Related Discrimination** (Actieplan ter Bestrijding van Arbeidsgerelateerde Discriminatie/ABAD) was extended with actions in the field of monitoring and penalisation. An agreement on **mystery calls** was concluded with the service voucher sector. These calls will mainly be intended to raise awareness. However, if repeated violations are established, the Flemish inspectorates will intervene. In the new generation of sectoral covenants 2018-2019, financial government support was made dependent on the adoption of a sectoral code of conduct for non-discrimination.

Within the framework of an inclusive and horizontal integration policy, measures are being taken in all Flemish policy areas for the integration of people of foreign origin. To this end, the **Flemish Horizontal Integration Policy Plan 2015-2019** (Vlaams Horizontaal Integratiebeleidsplan 2015-2019) was updated in 2018 and includes, inter alia, measures relating to education and work, which will be continued in 2019.

### **2.3.4 People with a work-limiting disability or medical, mental, psychological, psychiatric or social problems**

In 2018, a series of reforms were implemented to strengthen the labour market integration of people with a work-limiting disability. The **Flemish Support Premium** (Vlaamse Ondersteuningspremie/VOP) was extended to include people who are self-employed as secondary activity. This premium compensates for any extra costs or lower productivity for employers who employ someone with a work-limiting disability. A temporary VOP was also introduced to support people still undergoing treatment or in rehabilitation.

Within workplace learning, the **K-IBO** was launched, replacing the C-IBO and GIBO. This form of individual vocational training is specifically targeted on vulnerable groups and extends the maximum duration of the training to 52 weeks for them. Moreover, the employer is not obliged to pay a productivity allowance for this group; this is paid by the Flemish authorities.

The existing allowances for tools and equipment, clothing, travel and interpreting costs were extended to workplace learning and workplace guidance for pupils in alternance training so that this target group can also be helped to find work through such measures.

In the **social economy**, the **Collective Customised Work** (Collectief Maatwerk) regulation was launched on 1 January 2019, which removes the former distinction between social and sheltered workshops. The reform simplifies the subsidy conditions and support measures for social economy enterprises and improves their coordination. The new regulation not only makes customised work companies (at least 65%

---

<sup>34</sup> With a 45% outflow to work after 2 years, Flanders is at the top of Europe. For example, Germany achieves 27%, Sweden 19% and Denmark 32%.

of the workforce is very distant from the labour market) possible, but also customised work departments (at least 5 FTEs) within companies from mainstream economic sectors.

For jobseekers with medical, mental, psychological, psychiatric or social problems, the **work-care pathways** (Werk-Zorg-trajecten) were launched in 2018. These preliminary pathways prepare for regular activation pathways, specified by the jobseeker in consultation with a case manager Work and a case manager Care. These pathways can last from 3 to a maximum of 18 months. In 2019, 1,100 people will be able to enter such a pathway.

### 2.3.5 Focus on the reconciliation of work and family life

The Government of Flanders continues to focus on the reconciliation of work and family life, with the two key measures being the provision of sufficient childcare and service vouchers.

The Government of Flanders has planned an **extensive investment plan of €20.4 million** for 2018 and 2019 to create **additional childcare places for babies and toddlers**, including additional income-based places, which will also increase the affordability of childcare. A larger number of income-based places also implies greater accessibility (including for vulnerable households), since organisers with an income tariff subsidy must respect a number of priority rules, notably giving absolute priority to children from households where childcare is required in the context of the employment situation (retaining or looking for work or following vocational training to that end), as well as to children from single-parent households and low-income households, and to foster children. Part of this total budget was also used to realise a number of actions to specifically strengthen the accessibility of childcare for vulnerable households:

- €288,000 was earmarked to divide 423 eligible places with a plus subsidy<sup>35</sup> among existing places with an income tariff subsidy. By increasing the amount of the income tariff subsidy to a plus subsidy amount, more existing places with a plus subsidy are created.
- €1.136 million was appropriated for the realisation of 100 new emergency childcare places. With these subsidies, childcare organisers can keep childcare places available for the care of a child from a household that needs childcare within a month.<sup>36</sup>

In addition, in 2018, thanks to co-financing between the Government of Flanders and the Bernard, Gonda and Emily Vergnes Fund, **18 KOALA** (Kind- en OuderActiviteiten voor Lokale Armoedebestrijding) **projects** were launched. These Child and Parent Activities for Local Poverty Reduction realise a household support offer in combination with additional places with a plus subsidy in childcare. The cooperation between the Government of Flanders and the Fund will run over the next 10 years. The total investment cost amounts to **€30 million**. In time, this will create 500 additional childcare places for children from vulnerable households.

---

<sup>35</sup> Childcare with a plus subsidy is childcare that supports vulnerable households and, if necessary, prioritises these children.

<sup>36</sup> For one of the following reasons: 1° a member of the household does not work and suddenly finds work, and has no childcare options within the household or informal network; 2° a member of the household does not work and suddenly starts a training course, and has no childcare options within the household or informal network; 3° there is an acute crisis in the household, which makes it necessary for the child to go to childcare; 4° the household members can no longer, through no fault of their own, make use of previous childcare options.

At the end of 2018, a **subsidy regulation** was approved for **local childcare centres** (lokale loketten kinderopvang). Local centres serve as neutral information and support points for parents looking for childcare and act as an important lever in strengthening the accessibility of childcare. Their remit is to pay specific attention to vulnerable households.

With the **service vouchers** (see also 2.2.1.) the Flemish authorities offer households a simple and affordable instrument to purchase domestic help, which allows them to continue to work full-time, whereas household chores would otherwise make this impossible.

### 2.3.6 Worker mobility

To address the large number of bottleneck vacancies, workers from outside Flanders are attracted as well, primarily from the Brussels-Capital and Walloon Regions, but also from across the national borders. In February 2018, VDAB concluded a **new partnership agreement with Le Forem** with the aim of annually guiding at least 2,500 Walloon jobseekers to jobs in Flanders, including in the West Flanders border region. Within this partnership, Walloon jobseekers also receive guidance and training from VDAB, including language training, in order to remedy any skills mismatches. A similar partnership agreement will be concluded with the Brussels Government in 2019. In Brussels, VDAB and Actiris have been housed in the same building since 2017, where they are also establishing a careers resource centre (beroepenpunt) together. They are also jointly working on a large-scale campaign to promote employment opportunities in the periphery around Brussels among Brussels jobseekers.

A new policy on **attracting and retaining foreign talent** was launched in January 2019. On the one hand, the policy is adjusted to meet the European requirements regarding seasonal work, ICT, research and interns. On the other hand, the possibilities for Flanders to attract foreign talent were strengthened. High- and medium-skilled people who wish to exercise a profession that features on a dynamic list of shortage occupations are given access to the Flemish labour market without a labour market survey being required. The maximum duration of the admissions to employment is extended to 3 years for highly skilled workers, managers, and researchers, instead of the former restriction to 12 months.

### 2.3.7 Dual learning

The Flemish Parliament adopted the **Decree on dual learning** on 21 March 2018. This decree outlines the regulatory framework for the organic roll-out of dual learning in mainstream secondary education (SE) from 1 September 2019. The new decree provides, among other things, for the organisation of a customised start-up phase and exploratory internships in the school year prior to dual learning. Dual learning means that young people aged 15 and over combine workplace learning with learning at school, thus obtaining a vocational or educational qualification and being better prepared for the labour market. It is a fully-fledged learning pathway in addition to full-time SE. Currently, dual learning is successfully piloted in 42 courses of study in the project 'school desk in the workplace' (schoolbank op de werkplek). More than 1,150 pupils in over 180 schools participate in this project. In view of the start of dual learning on 1 September 2019, a large-scale communication campaign has been set up to inform schools, businesses, pupils and their parents about this new learning pathway. At that time it will be possible to introduce 87 dual programmes in cooperation with the sectoral partnerships and the Flemish partnership. To ensure quality training, not only the teacher, but a mentor as well will be responsible for guiding and training the young people and for evaluating them at a later stage.

<p><b>SRSP (2019 cycle).</b> The SRSS will provide technical support for the development of a professionalisation offer for teachers who will be working under the dual learning scheme.</p>
--

On 21 November 2018, the Flemish Parliament also adopted the Decree that makes **dual learning within special secondary education (Buitengewoon Secundair Onderwijs/BuSO)** possible. During the current school year 2018-2019, almost 60 pupils in 29 schools were already participating in the dual learning scheme in BuSO. They can do so in the programmes 'green areas and garden management dual' (32 pupils) and 'fast food assistant dual' (27 pupils). Starting next school year, the offer in BuSO will be extended to 30 dual courses of study. Currently, the possibilities for dual learning within higher and adult education are also being looked into. Together with the stakeholders, it is examined which pathways can be set up which focus more strongly on workplace learning. A call for pilot projects around dual learning in higher and adult education was launched through the ESF in 2018.

### 2.3.8 Reform of the training incentives and recognition of prior learning

On 11 July 2017, the Government of Flanders and the social partners concluded an agreement 'Education and Training' on the reform of the Flemish training incentives for workers within the Flemish Economic and Social Consultative Committee (Vlaams Economisch en Sociaal Overlegcomité/VESOC). In 2019, the 5 building blocks of this agreement will be made operational: a labour market-oriented and forward-looking training focus, a generic quality framework, a training database, a uniform monitoring and evaluation system, and the promotion of transparency and digitisation. Everything must be operational by 1 September 2019, and 3 coordinated training incentives will be put in place: the Flemish training leave (compensation for the employer for the days the worker is absent to follow training or take examinations), the Flemish training credit (premium for anyone who temporarily works part-time or stops working to follow training) and the Flemish training vouchers (compensation for the cost of training for workers).

On 8 February 2019, the Government of Flanders adopted the draft Decree on an integrated policy for the recognition of prior learning (erkenning van verworven competenties/EVC). The Decree ensures that individuals can have their competences assessed in EVC test centres, established within educational institutions or other public or private organisations. The new regulations define the conditions for being allowed to act as a test centre and outlines the framework for the organisation and financing of the EVC test centres in various policy areas. The recognition of prior learning allows people with experience to obtain qualifications faster. The draft Decree on quality control for vocational qualification pathways based on a common quality framework was adopted at the same time. The quality system assures the employer that the evidence provided is reliable, regardless of the learning pathway or body through which the competencies were acquired. In 2018, EVC pilot projects were rolled out within adult education. These initiatives fit in with the Flemish Action Plan 2018-2020 in implementation of the European Recommendation 'Upskilling Pathways: New Opportunities for Adults.'

### 2.3.9 STEM

Flanders continues to implement the **STEM Action Plan 2012-2020** (2012-2020 STEM-actieplan) and, following cooperation between Work, Education and Economy, a **new STEM Action Plan 2020-2030 is being developed**. These plans aim to encourage more students to choose a career in exact science or technology. The most recent STEM monitor (June 2018) shows that never before have so many young people in Flanders opted for a STEM programme in the second and third stages of secondary education. Investments were made in STEM Learning Networks of teachers in primary and secondary education to ensure a sustainable STEM policy. The STEM courses within dual learning, the new matrix for SE (with STEM options) and the new attainment targets which, for the first time, focus on STEM will make STEM education in Flanders structurally more attractive. At the same time, there is a multitude of projects, such as 92 STEM climate projects in primary, secondary and adult education, financed by the Flemish Climate Fund. A market survey on innovation in vocational secondary education (beroepssecundair onderwijs/bso) and technical secondary education (technisch secundair onderwijs/tso), viz.



the InnoVET survey, was completed and the first results are being implemented. Based on this survey, the regional technology centres (RTCs) organise intensive STEM in-service training workshops for tso and bso schools. This intervention will contribute to a specific STEM teaching methodology for technical and vocational education. Flanders continues to build on a **strong STEM direction**, which will improve the STEM coordination between government departments even more. For example, the number of STEM academies in leisure time is expanded to more than 100 entities, with the ambition to have one STEM academy in each Flemish municipality. The ICT Impulse Plan (ICT-Impulsplan) supports coding clubs to teach more young people to programme, develop apps and games and build websites, also during lunch breaks at school or immediately after school hours. Communication campaigns aimed at raising public support for science and technology will devote additional attention to girls and disadvantaged young people. The **Action Plan on Entrepreneurial Education** (actieplan Ondernemend Onderwijs) strengthens entrepreneurship competencies in higher and secondary education.

### 2.3.10 Promoting equal opportunities in education

Equal opportunities are promoted horizontally, among other things, through the completed reforms laid down in Decrees relating to pupil guidance, the modernisation of SE, the new attainment targets, the new dual learning scheme (see also 2.2.7.), the financing system for adult education, short cycle graduate programmes and the adjustment of the M-Decree.

The reform of the **pupil guidance** system in Flanders was adopted by decree by the Flemish Parliament on 27 April 2018. Pupil guidance in Flanders has been reformed with the aim of (more) clearly demarcating the roles and responsibilities of the various actors concerned. Since 1 September 2018, the implementation of a pupil guidance policy is an additional accreditation condition for schools. Pupils, parents and school teams are involved in the pupil guidance policy and each school designates a contact person for pupil guidance. This can be a care coordinator or pupil counsellor. The Pupil Guidance Centres (centrum voor leerlingenbegeleiding/CLB) remain partners with which schools are obliged to cooperate. The support which CLBs receive takes into account, among other things, CLBs that guide many pupils on the basis of socio-economic indicators and those that guide pupils with special educational needs. The closed envelope of the CLBs was extended once, with a growth and decrease mechanism to distribute the additional funds over the coming years. A CLB can never receive less support than it received prior to the reform.

The regulatory framework for the **modernisation** of the structure and organisation of SE was developed and adopted by the Flemish Parliament. It outlines the new admission criteria, the certification and the study programmes offered in the first stage. The concordance table and the set of new programming rules will enable school boards to prepare for the modernisation of SE and define the position of their schools within this new framework. The implementation of the modernisation of SE will start on 1 September 2019, giving schools sufficient time to prepare.

It coincides with the introduction of the new attainment targets for the first stage of SE, for which the **Flemish Parliament** worked out and adopted a framework in 2018. From 1 September 2019, **new, concrete and clear attainment targets** will apply to the **first stage of compulsory education**. An intensive interaction process between development committees and the validation committee resulted in a strong set of attainment targets: clearly formulated and always with a specification of the required knowledge. Basic literacy is also introduced to ensure that everyone has the essential competencies to be able to function in society. For the first phase of implementation 382 attainment targets have been put in place instead of the 688 targets existing today: fewer targets, but more ambitious and clearer. The learning goals have been fine-tuned to such a degree in order to shape strong personalities within our education system who have the required knowledge and skills.

The Decree on **short cycle graduate programmes** and the strengthening of teacher training (Decreet lerarenopleiding en uitbouw graduaatsopleidingen) was adopted by the Flemish Parliament on 25 April 2018 (see also 3.2.2.). This reform will increase the opportunities for young people to obtain a higher education diploma. In December 2018, the Government of Flanders already gave its approval to 15 reformed graduate programmes.

On 16 March 2018, the Government of Flanders ratified the **Decree modifying the financing for adult education**. This new financing decree enters into effect on 1 September 2019. Adult education centres will from then on receive proportionately more funds if they have more participants for Dutch as a Second Language courses. The adult basic education centres will also be able to count on more funds per additional course participant. Centres with many vulnerable course participants such as jobseekers and low-skilled people are allocated proportionally more teachers and support staff. By introducing a limited output in the financing of the institutions, both the institutions and the course participants will be given a greater incentive to obtain a sustainable qualification or diploma.

Following close monitoring of the implementation of the **M-Decree**, an **amendment decree** was prepared and adopted by the Flemish Parliament. This decree lays the foundations for a new mechanism to support pupils with intellectual, visual, motor or hearing disabilities as well as pupils with speech and language development disorders in mainstream education from the school year 2019-2020 onwards. For the current school year 2018-2019, a transitional measure has already been taken whereby an extra €16.7 million was earmarked to provide support to these pupils.

In the context of the Flemish **Horizontal Integration Policy Plan 2015-2019** (Horizontaal Integratiebeleidsplan 2015-2019) and the Flemish **Horizontal Equal Opportunities Policy Plan 2015-2019** (Horizontaal Gelijkekansenbeleidsplan 2015-2019), a number of initiatives were also taken and continued by the Education and Training policy area in 2018 which respond to barriers related to one or more factors such as gender, social origin, ethnic origin, sexual orientation and disability. This includes, among other things, a focus on guiding more girls and young people from socially vulnerable groups to STEM courses and innovative programmes or professions, on maximising participation in high-quality pre-primary education among vulnerable groups that are still underrepresented, on the recognition of prior learning, on the new strategic Literacy Plan 2019-2024 (Plan Geletterdheid 2019-2024) (see also 3.2.2.), and so on.

### **2.3.11 Focusing on teachers and strengthening teacher training**

The **Decree on short cycle graduate programmes and the strengthening of teacher training also broadens the path to the teaching profession**, strengthens the profile of prospective teachers, streamlines programmes and improves the quality of teacher training. From the 2019-2020 academic year six teacher training programmes will be offered in Flanders: an educational graduate programme in SE, an educational bachelor's programme in pre-primary education, an educational bachelor's programme in primary education, an educational bachelor's programme in SE, an educational master's programme in arts subjects and an educational master's programme for SE. In this way, students can follow a teacher training programme at any level of higher education and, contrary to today, university students too can immediately opt for the teaching profession. All these teacher training programmes will in addition have a pathway for generation students and lateral entrants. Experts in the field who have at least three years' professional experience and who wish to teach in this field will be able to follow the educational graduate programme at university colleges. Those who have already obtained a higher education diploma and/or completed a professional career will have access to shortened educational bachelor's and master's programmes.

The **reforms of the teacher's career** were continued in 2018. The results of the scientific research into how teachers spend their time were released. The Government of Flanders also concluded three collective bargaining agreements (collectieve arbeidsovereenkomst/cao) with the social partners for teaching staff in compulsory education, adult basic education and higher education. In addition to improved purchasing power, a number of content-related measures have been taken for beginning teachers in compulsory education, which should lead to more stable careers and greater job security. Funds have been released to launch teacher platforms for substitute teachers appointed from October to June. From 1 September 2019, beginning teachers will more quickly be given a temporary appointment for a continuous period of time. The possibilities of permanent appointment have been extended to positions where the holder is absent due to certain leave schemes. As a result, up to 6,000 additional posts are eligible for permanent appointment. Schools are given additional funds to develop and offer initial guidance.

### 2.3.12 Other educational measures

The new **Decree on part-time education in the arts (deeltijds kunstonderwijs/DKO)**, adopted by the Flemish Parliament on 28 February 2018, provides for a future-oriented DKO that meshes with contemporary trends in the arts. With the new attainment targets and updated training structure, the DKO is more firmly anchored in education and is up to date in terms of content.

On 14 March 2018, the Flemish Parliament adopted the Decree on **Education Inspectorate 2.0**. From the school year 2018-2019 onwards, the Education Inspectorate will carry out inspections in institutions which will have legal consequences based on the new Inspection 2.0 framework. The reference framework for education quality was developed in consultation with all parties involved and on the basis of a literature review. Said framework contains expectations about quality education. The Education Inspectorate is grafting its inspection instruments onto this reference framework. In future, schools will be visited by the Education Inspectorate at least once every six years. In addition to the screening of individual subjects, the focus will be more strongly on quality policy. Also, inspections will be more transparent. Parents and pupils will be involved in the process as well and the inspectorate will increasingly enter into dialogue with schools. Procedures and accreditations will be simplified, reducing the planning burden on schools. It will also be possible for the Education Inspectorate to work together with the inspectorate for philosophical subjects.

## 2.4 Country-specific recommendation 3

*Reduce the regulatory and administrative burden to incentivise entrepreneurship and increase competition in services, particularly retail, construction and professional services. Tackle the growing mobility challenges, in particular through investment in new or existing transport infrastructure and reinforcing incentives to use collective and low emission transport.*

### 2.4.1 Incentivising entrepreneurship and increasing competition in services

Since the 6<sup>th</sup> state reform, Flanders has been competent for the general condition of business management basic knowledge and access to 27 regulated 'craft' professions. In 2018, the professional qualification requirements for all regulated professions were lifted. On 9 March 2018, the Government of Flanders decided that the requirement to hold the **business management basic knowledge certificate** to perform self-employed activities, as main or secondary activity, would **no longer apply** as of 1 September 2018. In addition, an **action plan to strengthen entrepreneurship competencies** was adopted, which is to increasingly focus on the continuous development of skills.

As regards the **policy on commercial establishments** in retail trade, the **new licensing scheme** integrating the licence for **retail commercial establishments** into the single integrated environmental permit entered into force on 1 August 2018. The legal basis for the new licensing scheme is a decree which was adopted by the Flemish Parliament in July 2016. A control system is also built in to assess the impact of the new legislation. The new approach has a simplification effect, as only 4 large retail categories remain, compared to more than 20 previously. As far as procedures are concerned, the integration of the establishment permit into the integrated environment permit also amounts to simplification (one-stop-shop, integrated application). A guide on the new licensing scheme was published for the benefit of cities and municipalities. This guide can also be used by entrepreneurs and project developers.

In addition, **access to Flanders Innovation & Entrepreneurship (Agentschap Innoveren en Ondernemen/VLAIO)** was greatly **simplified and made more entrepreneur-friendly**. Since the beginning of 2018, entrepreneurs can present their business cases to the business consultants of the 'vzw Team Bedrijfstrajecten' (npo Team Business Tracks), where they can test their ideas and discuss their plans. After that, they can count on bespoke advice. In the field of digitisation (see also 2.4.1.), VLAIO developed the digital desk for entrepreneurs in collaboration with the Flanders Radical Digital (Vlaanderen Radicaal Digitaal) programme. The first version of this e-desk was launched in September 2018. This version allows entrepreneurs to consult the status update of their current dossiers for a number of measures taken by the Flemish authorities. Work is currently continuing along this path with the opening up of additional measures and the addition of new functionalities. The support instruments aimed at supporting companies in innovating, investing, providing training or buying in consultancy were also further simplified and digitised.

## 2.4.2 Tackling the growing mobility challenges

During the current term of office, Flanders has invested 33% more in smoother and safer traffic. In the last year of the term of office (2019), the **Integrated Investment Plan** (Geïntegreerd Investeringsplan/GIP) earmarks over €2 billion for the entities of the Mobility and Public Works policy area - an absolute record amount. The total for this term of office thus ends at €9.7 billion, compared to €7.3 billion in the previous term of office (2009-2014). The large expenditure for Oosterweel (€3.5 billion) and the works on the Brussels Ring Road (€3 billion) is yet to be expected as well.

The present Government of Flanders has substantially raised the investment budgets for all modes of transport. Maintenance budgets have grown by +19%, but the overall increase in the budget is mainly owing to investment budgets, which are no less than +40% higher than in the previous term of office. Record investments are made to alleviate the record traffic jams.

Flanders invests the most in its biggest mobility bottlenecks. **Werkvennootschap NV** has been allocated €312 million during this term of office. In addition to optimising the Brussels Ring Road (R0), the programme 'Ring Road Works' (Werken aan de Ring) also includes the construction of 60 km of high-quality public transport routes (Brabantnet) and 60 km of bicycle highways (fietsGEN). During the present term of office, the budgets of the Antwerp Mobile Management Company (Beheersmaatschappij Antwerpen Mobile/BAM) also increased by no less than +386%. The largest investments around Antwerp and Brussels are yet to be made in the coming years.

The investment budget for **public transport** will grow to over €300 million in 2019: an unprecedented amount for new buses and trams, new tram tracks, refurbished station environments, etc. In addition to increasing efficiency, the greening of the fleet is another important priority. By 2025, public transport will be zero-emission in all Flemish city centres.

The share of **inland navigation** in relation to the total freight transport within Flanders is growing each year. The transport of goods on the Flemish waterways broke all records in 2018. Overall growth was

+1.7% compared to the previous record year of 2017. The number of containers shipped increased by +3.6% and pallet transport by inland waterway even grew by +42%. Important projects supported by the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) such as the Terneuzen Lock, the Seine-Scheldt project and the raising of the bridges over the Albert Canal will be continued.

In addition, Flanders also wants to make crucial investments to allow **Flanders' ports** to grow further, with the least impact on the environment. At the end of 2018, the Government of Flanders announced a draft preferential Order for a 2<sup>nd</sup> sea lock in the Port of Zeebrugge. For the extra container capacity project in the Port of Antwerp, a preliminary draft preferential Order was adopted. The draft preferential Order is expected in April 2019. Both projects each have an order of magnitude of approximately €1 billion.

**SRSP (2018 cycle).** The SRSS supports the Antwerp Port Authority in an inland navigation project that contains two parts: a part on nautical inland navigation coordination and a part on the design of a concept of transferia to/from the port.

**SRSP (2019 cycle).** The SRSS will support the Antwerp Port Authority in a railway project aimed at increasing the use of railways (7 to 15%) in the port.

The Flemish authorities continue their efforts to **make mobility and transport greener and more sustainable**. In addition to the existing kilometre charge for heavy goods vehicles, a **smart kilometre charge scheme for all light vehicles will be introduced in a budget-neutral manner** in implementation of the Flemish Climate Policy Plan 2021-2030.

In 2018, the Government of Flanders continued the implementation of the Flemish Action Plan '**Clean Power for Transport**' (CPT). The premiums for the purchase of zero-emission vehicles (€5 million/year) were extended to new target groups (non-profit organisations and car-sharing companies), but also to new vehicles (mopeds B and motorcycles) and the support was brought back to the level of the previous year. The roll-out of basic charging infrastructure (5,000 extra points by 2020) went as planned and a third lot (2019) was awarded.

With **BENEFIC**, Flanders is heading a European-funded CEF project. In a first project call, 22 investment projects were selected for a grant totalling more than €5 million. Flanders also joined 2 new European projects: **e-MOPOLI and PSA**. In addition, it launched its own CPT call for projects again (€1 million/year) with as main theme '**charging infrastructure within companies**'. 13 projects were selected for this call.

A **draft CPT Vision 2030** was prepared in consultation with the relevant stakeholders. It contains objectives and measures for 2025 and 2030.

In 2019, the Government of Flanders is planning to continue along this path: the premium will still be valid in 2019 and another CPT call and a second **BENEFIC** call will be launched. The **BENEFIC** projects are starting and about 30 CPT projects are up and running. A **communication campaign** is launched in 2019, focusing on all types of electric vehicles, including heavy goods vehicles, vessels, buses and two-wheelers. In addition, important emphasis is placed on the further roll-out and on making the charging infrastructure accessible to electric vehicles. Finally, the award of the last lot for charge points is also on the agenda.

In 2019, a **preparatory study to tackle diesel fraud** is being **carried out**. This involves the development of policy strategies to detect fraud by manufacturers and vehicle owners or technical defects in vehicles, to efficiently act upon them and to avoid new vehicles entering the market that exceed the emission

limits in practice. It takes into account the legal possibilities for each level of government in Belgium to detect and act against emission fraud on the basis of the relevant legislation.

In March 2019, the Government of Flanders adopted amendments to the **Decree on low emission zones (LEZ)**. These amendments are based on the experiences in Antwerp (LEZ since 1 February 2017) and the needs in Ghent (LEZ from 1 January 2020). In the context of the LEZs, support is given to local authorities and citizens, and a database with foreign vehicle data is being developed.

## **2.5 Responding to investment challenges**

### **2.5.1 Introduction**

In the **Country Report Belgium 2019** the investment dimension takes centre stage. It is indicated where the major investment challenges lie and a link is also made to the Structural Funds 2021-2027. As mentioned under 2.1.1., the Government of Flanders has, as **investing government**, appropriated €654 million during the present term of office for additional investments in infrastructure in five key areas: mobility and public works, school construction, social housing, welfare infrastructure and economy and R&D. Additional funds were also earmarked for investments in care (+€500 million), the development of long-term growth potential based on R&D (+€500 million) and water treatment infrastructure (€260 million).

In the Flemish Parliament, a **Decree containing a framework for large-scale projects and programmes** was adopted on 13 March 2019. On 22 March 2019, the Government of Flanders decided to ratify and proclaim said decree. With this decree it is tried to link up with the good practices and recommendations of international organisations regarding infrastructure and investment policy, alternative financing, large-scale projects and public private partnerships (PPPs). The decree aims to provide a framework for a well thought-out and transparent investment policy and a systematic professional approach to large-scale, complex projects and programmes.

Flanders made good use of the **European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI)**. In summary, the total of EFSI funds flowing to Flanders (June 2015 - end 2018):

- Appropriations totalling approximately €80 million via the EIB within the framework of R&D activities for companies established in Flanders.
- The total of EFSI appropriations to Belgian offshore wind farms is estimated at €1 billion. The share that will be spent on Flanders' economy is estimated at approximately €340 million.
- It is expected that around €50 million of the multi-country EFSI investments will flow to Flanders via the EIB.
- Flanders can also benefit from the guarantee agreements of the EIF with Belgian banks and via the Flanders Holding Company (ParticipatieMaatschappij Vlaanderen/PMV), for which the EIF is building up €150 million in reserves with EFSI funds.
- Through its fund-of-fund activity, the EIF is estimated to invest €60 million in 2 investment structures in Flanders.

	Total amount of EFSI funds (in euros)	(Estimated) return to Flanders (In euros)
<b>EFSI via the European Investment Bank (EIB)</b>		
A loan to the European R&D programme of ArcelorMittal, which offers indirect support to this company's establishment in Ghent.	350 million	80 million
A loan to the European R&D programme of Technicolor, which offers indirect support to this company's establishment in Edegem.	90 million	
A loan to the R&D programme of Materialis (3D printing company in Leuven)		
Nobelwind offshore wind farm (2015)*	100 million	340 million
Rentel offshore wind farm (2016)*	250 million	
Norther offshore wind farm (2016)*	219 million	
Multi-country projects (infrastructure, renewable energy, and brownfield (re)development funds, loan to rental company Boels)	642 million	50 million
<b>EFSI via the European Investment Fund (EIF)</b>		
Agreement with KBC, for a portfolio of loans totalling €200 million to innovative SMEs and mid-cap companies		For these guarantee agreements, the EIF has set aside funds totalling €150 million. These funds make it possible for loans to be granted to SMEs in Flanders via banks or financial institutions in our country for a total amount of €451 million.
Agreement with Belfius, for a portfolio of SME loans totalling €85 million, as well as for a portfolio of loans totalling €20 million to innovative SMEs and mid-cap companies		
Agreement with PMV for a portfolio of SME loans totalling €81 million, as well as a portfolio totalling €25 million to innovative SMEs and mid-cap companies		
Agreement with ING for a portfolio of loans totalling €25 million to innovative SMEs and mid-cap companies		
Agreement with PMV for a portfolio of loans totalling €15 million to SMEs active in the cultural and creative sector		
Fund investment in the V-BIO Ventures fund (2015) (invested in innovative companies such as Confo Therapeutics NV (Geel), active in the field of cancer control, as well as Aphae.Bio (Ghent), which focuses on new generation biopesticides)		The EIF's joint investment in these structures is estimated at €60 million.
Investment in the CD3 Centre for Drug Design and Discovery (2016)		

\* The total of EFSI funds for Belgian offshore wind farms is estimated at €1 billion, including the already approved but not yet published appropriations by the EIB for Belgian offshore wind farms.

## 2.5.2 Investments in research, development and innovation

Flanders keeps investing additional funds in R&D, which translates into a continuous increase in R&D intensity to 2.70% in 2016. In 2018, the Flemish authorities spent an additional (one-off) budget of €115 million, €72 million of which was spent on R&D&I. In 2019, another one-off investment of €120 million will be earmarked and €280 million (recurrent funds) will be appropriated for new policies (see also 3.3.1.).

Flanders is currently broadly committed to the **digitisation of society**. On 22 March 2019, the Government of Flanders adopted both the **Artificial Intelligence (AI) Action Plan** and the **Cybersecurity Action Plan**. Both action plans aim to give an additional impulse to the digitisation of the business community in Flanders and to the adoption of artificial intelligence and cybersecurity technology respectively. The AI Action Plan encompasses an annual investment of €32 million and the Cybersecurity Action Plan an annual investment of €20 million.

Today, VLAIO already plays an important role in the digitisation of the business community and innovation diffusion through its entire set of instruments (reformed innovation support, spearhead clusters, innovative business networks), and certainly also through its role as driving force behind the transition 'Industry 4.0'. In addition, Imec, in collaboration with various government partners, will formulate a number of projects before the end of the term of office to promote digitisation and the passion for data of government bodies (Mobilidata, Smart Highway, Internet of Water, Smart Retail, etc.). In 2018, the Government of Flanders also concluded Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with the two major telecom operators, in which the operators undertake to offer 1 Gigabit per second by 2020. The **digitisation**

**of government** is supported with the Programme for Innovation Procurement (Programma Innovatieve Overheidsopdrachten/PIO) and the activities of the Flanders Information Agency (Agentschap Informatie Vlaanderen/AIV). In order to maintain the current positive dynamics of the PIO and to ensure continuity of the calls for projects, the Government of Flanders decided on 22 March 2019 to extend the PIO by four years, until 2023. The **digitisation of the municipalities** is supported by the Smart Flanders activities, the Smart Cities call by VLAIO and the room for experimentation which Imec is given in Antwerp. However, the objective is very clearly to strengthen all of this through additional impulses (both towards companies and research and government bodies) in four important areas: artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, virtual reality and autonomous driving.

**SRSP (2019 cycle).** The SRSS will support Flanders Investment and Trade (FIT) in the project *Artificial Intelligence (AI) in trade and investment promotion agencies*. AI promises to become a disruptive technology in the daily operations of both private companies and the public sector. While some researchers claim that AI can lead to a massive productivity increase in the year 2035, the *European Political Strategy Centre* highlights the urgency of implementing AI-based technologies in public authorities. With the project, FIT wants to develop a general strategy for such an implementation, taking into account its specific context, viz. promoting Flanders' international trade and attracting foreign investments. It will result in a concrete strategic framework for the entire organisation, deliver best practices and define guidelines that should allow FIT to develop AI-based applications with a high chance of success during a next stage. The goal is to purposefully and efficiently improve its operation.

The **cluster policy**<sup>37</sup> has hit cruising speed with **6 spearhead clusters** and **20 innovative business networks (IBNs)**. In 2018, a 5<sup>th</sup> **spearhead cluster** in the agri-food domain, **Flanders Food**, and a 6<sup>th</sup> **spearhead cluster** in the domain of marine and maritime economy (blue economy), the **Blue Cluster**<sup>38</sup>, started. On 15 February 2019, the Government of Flanders signed the Blue Cluster with companies from various sectors. The idea is for the government, together with companies and researchers, to start using the sustainable and innovative possibilities in and around the North Sea. The Flemish authorities will annually invest up to €500,000 in the operating budget of the cluster for a period of 10 years. In addition, a budget is reserved for project funding (approx. €60 million in 2018, approx. €80 million in 2019 - for all clusters combined). **Six new IBNs** were selected among the **IBNs** in 2018. Continued efforts are being made to collaborate in the innovation landscape and the clusters are further encouraged to look for new challenges, projects and partnerships beyond Flanders' borders.

In 2017, the Flemish authorities already reserved €3.5 million for a first series of living labs within the framework of **Industry 4.0**. One year later, these labs provide targeted services to a wide range of companies. At the beginning of 2019, 10 new living labs were selected, starting in April, with a budget of €4 million and with the objective of covering more industrial sectors and themes.

Through **subsidies to the strategic research centres** (strategische onderzoekscentra/SOCs)<sup>38</sup> Flanders invests approximately €250 million each year in building up a strategic research portfolio with these SOC. One of the spearheads in the strategy of the SOC, and Flanders' focus in the covenants, is the

---

<sup>37</sup> The Flemish cluster policy distinguishes two types of clusters: the spearhead clusters and the innovative business networks (IBNs). The **spearhead clusters** fit in with important strategic domains for Flanders and are large-scale initiatives that receive funding for ten years to expand their operation. Currently, Flanders has 6 spearhead clusters. Catalisti, SIM, Flux50, VIL, Flanders FOOD and the Blue Cluster. The **IBNs** are typically smaller initiatives that often arise from the bottom up in companies that want to focus on a specific domain that offers them opportunities to increase their competitiveness. IBNs are initiatives that lend themselves to exploring new emerging domains. They receive support from the Flemish authorities for three years. Flanders has 20 innovative business networks. **Information:** <https://www.vlaio.be/nl/andere-doelgroepen/clusterorganisaties/innovation-clusters-flanders/innovation-clusters-flanders>.

<sup>38</sup> Imec, Flemish Institute for Biotechnology (Vlaamse Instelling voor Biotechnologie/(VIB), Flanders Make, Flemish Institute for Technological Research (Vlaamse Instelling voor Technologisch Onderzoek/VITO)



maximum regional impact of this technology via the creation of large-scale Flemish spin-offs or critical technology collaboration with Flemish companies. The continued development of a technology platform into a mature prototype that can be used for various applications is extremely capital-intensive. It is therefore very difficult to attract external investors for this technology development, as there is no proven prototype yet and the development costs are significant. That is why Flanders wants to invest €75 million in an evergreen fund, the Flanders Future Techfund, which is yet to be established. The purpose of the new fund is to bring the technology expertise available in the Flemish SOCs and spearhead clusters to the market via start-ups with a broad product portfolio and strong growth potential or by means of licensing agreements with existing companies. On 29 March 2019, the Government of Flanders approved the establishment of the Flanders Future Techfund.

### 2.5.3 Investments in the energy transition

A number of processes are ongoing with the aim of accelerating the energy transition and the energy investments needed for this purpose (see also 3.4.3.). The Government of Flanders has been investing for years in improving energy efficiency, heat networks and stimulating the production of renewable energy.

At the end of 2018, the Government of Flanders decided to support **large-scale solar projects** for a maximum amount of €6.88 million. This concerns the installation of noise barriers with integrated solar cells (€680,000) and projects with floating solar panels (€6.2 million). The beneficiary projects account for 11 megawatts of renewable energy in total. Each of the solar projects has an innovative character and tests a number of new technologies (including double-sided solar panels with active cooling, lightweight solar panels, etc.).

A **new support mechanism for small and medium-sized wind turbines** (up to 300 kW) was also introduced. From now on, they will be able to tender several times a year for investment aid for the most efficient projects. In 2018, €4.3 million from the Energy Fund was reserved for this purpose. The first call was launched in December 2018 for a budget of €1.5 million.

In implementation of the Heat Plan, the **annual calls for green heat** (€10.5 million/year on average) were extended to support geothermal projects, biomass and biomethane projects (including smaller ones) and a significant number of heat networks. A **Flemish Guarantee Regulation** was introduced for the exploration and extraction of geothermal heat in the deep subsurface.

The **innovative production of solar heat** was also supported in 2018. €819,000 of investment aid was paid for solar mirrors or parabolas, a new green heat technology never before applied in Belgium. This technology releases high-grade heat with temperatures that are much higher than, for example, in a solar boiler and that are often required in industrial processes.

In order to facilitate the energy transition, a **smart energy system** is required as well. The smart meter for electricity and gas is the next big step in this transition. At the end of June 2018, the Government of Flanders gave its definite approval to the **draft Decree on smart meters** that initiates the large-scale introduction of smart meters from mid-2019. This decree was subsequently submitted to the Flemish Parliament. The smart meter marks the beginning of the ever-increasing digitisation of the energy system.

With regard to the further flexibilisation of the energy grid, 10 **large battery pilot projects** were initiated at the end of 2018 (supported with €1.2 million). These projects focus on different sub-themes such as reuse of EV batteries, grid relief, use of batteries within ESCO services and short and long term storage. In addition, **different levels of scale** are addressed such as residential and district levels, companies

and SMEs, and cooperatives. The same amount of funds was also appropriated in 2019 to support storage systems to back, modernise and decarbonise our energy systems.

Finally, innovation in the energy system is also stimulated within the framework of the **Flemish energy cluster** (Flux50) (see also 2.4.1. and 2.4.3.). Furthermore, on 22 February 2019, the Government of Flanders gave its approval in principle to the draft Order on low-regulation zones for energy. A low-regulation zone can be requested for specific living labs. These low-regulation zones are intended to facilitate the application of innovative techniques and practices in the energy sector.

As laid down in the draft Flemish Energy Plan, energy investments will continue in the period 2021-2030.

## 2.5.4 Investments in a low carbon circular economy

In 2018, the Government of Flanders reached an agreement on a **draft Flemish Climate Plan 2021-2030** (see also 3.4.2.). The climate policy plan describes in detail which investments the Flemish authorities intend to make in the coming years in the field of **innovation**, inter alia. This includes structural funding of the strategic research centres (VITO - sustainable development and cleantech innovations; IMEC - PV technology, battery research and ICT with specific applications for the energy transition and smart cities; Flanders Make - more energy-efficient products and process technologies).

In addition, the cluster policy (see also 2.4.1.) concentrates on various **spearhead clusters and innovative business networks (IBNs)** that are aimed at realising innovative solutions and technological breakthroughs that are necessary to realise the energy transition and will contribute to a climate-resilient society in Flanders, in particular the **spearhead cluster Flux50** and the **IBNs 'Power to Gas' and 'Green Light'**. **Flux50** facilitates cross-sectoral cooperation between the energy, ICT and buildings sectors with a view to developing innovative, multidisciplinary energy products and services in five innovator zones (energy ports, microgrids, multi-energy solutions at district level, energy cloud platforms, smart renovation). Over the next twenty years, Flanders will invest €20 million each year in innovation and research that can contribute to CO<sub>2</sub> neutrality by 2050. It is a moonshot, i.e. an ambitious investment to make a major technological leap forward. The investment plan implies that innovation projects that can demonstrate that they can produce significantly less CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and/or more CO<sub>2</sub> capture or re-use will receive further support. The **Catalisti** spearhead cluster will act as director throughout this process.

The **IBN Power to Gas** focuses on knowledge building, knowledge exchange, the development of business models and the realisation of demonstration projects in the domain of power to gas. The **IBN Green Light** focuses on knowledge building and development with a view to the creation of innovative products and services in the lighting sector.

Investment in innovation, the energy transition and the carbon-free economy is also encouraged through the **regular channels supporting R&D and the European Structural Funds** (see also 4). For example, Flanders supports R&D in the field of energy and climate via ERDF/Interreg (2014-2020), in particular under Priority Axis 1 (Strengthening research, technological development and innovation), Priority Axis 3 (Promoting the transition to a low carbon economy) and Priority Axis 4 (Promoting sustainable metropolitan development). Within this framework the initiative EnergyVille and the Interreg project 'Hydrogen Region 2.0' are supported, amongst others.

The **draft climate plan** pays attention to the potential of the circular economy for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. This (draft) plan includes, among other things:

- the establishment of an investment plan for companies that switch to product/service combinations;

- the examination of a circular tax shift (lower burden on labour and greater burden on non-circular products);
- the inclusion of circular priority rules in the criteria for public procurement.

**Circular Flanders** (Vlaanderen Circulair) continued to work on the following areas in 2018: **i) circular purchasing, ii) circular city and iii) circular business strategies**. A second call was launched to subsidise innovative projects within the framework of the circular economy. An amount of €5.3 million was reserved for new circular economy projects in 2018. Also in 2018, **VLAIO launched a continuous open call for 'transition priorities within the spearhead clusters'**.

The **Green Deal 'Circular Purchasing'** (Circulair Aankopen) had 165 participants at the beginning of 2019, with each purchasing party being committed to carrying out at least two circular economy pilot projects by June 2019. In early 2019, a **Green Deal 'Construction'** will also be launched with additional funds for a living lab 'Construction' to experiment with new methods of building and dismantling with greater material consciousness.

Via the **Flemish Environment Holding** (Vlaamse Milieuholding) the Government of Flanders has reserved extra risk capital totalling €30 million **for participation in companies investing in new technologies or business models that can contribute to the circular economy**.

In order to scale up projects that demonstrated social and economic added value in new policies and economic models, we **work together with the various public and private investors**. In 2019, the ambition is to realise a number of concrete investment dossiers. Finally, the Flemish authorities are also investing in the development of a symbiosis platform and will continue to release funds for this purpose in 2019. By means of an **online platform and guidance, companies are mutually connected that can use each other's waste flows to replace primary raw materials**.

## 2.5.5 Investments in affordable and energy efficient dwelling construction

The Government of Flanders is investing in the **energy refurbishment of the residential building stock** (see also 3.4.3.). The **Renovation Pact** (Renovatiepact) is being further developed with the aim of developing a framework and an optimal mix of instruments that will lead to more, better and more thorough refurbishments.

At the beginning of 2018, the Flemish authorities received extra funds from the EU for the **BE-REEL!** (Belgium Renovates for Energy Efficient Living) project which will give an additional boost to the further implementation of the Renovation Pact in the period 2018-2024. Through a broad partnership, this project aims to develop a knowledge and learning platform, realise visible demonstration projects for the thorough energy refurbishment of more than 8,500 dwellings, as well as pilot projects in which optimal business cases of various types are sought from a practice-based perspective and structural partnerships with cities and municipalities, the construction sector and the other Regions.

The necessary initiatives were also taken in the **social rental sector**: an energy surcharge in the social rent calculation, the charging of the investment cost of solar panels to social tenants (where, however, the fee charged must not exceed the energy cost saved by the tenant, in order to create a win-win situation), an increase in investment volumes for refurbishments in the social rental market and, annually, €20 million from the Flemish Climate Fund in the period 2016-2019 (see also overview table in 3.4.2.) to make additional investments in the energy refurbishment of social rental housing.

To support the financing of regular renovations and comprehensive energy refurbishments, **the energy premiums** were **reformed** and various **new support measures** were developed, including the total renovation bonus, the neighbours premium and the premium for heat pump boilers. For building applications for renovations, a reduction in gift and registration duties was introduced, in addition to a reduction in property tax.

The Government of Flanders has introduced a flat-rate **demolition and reconstruction premium** for anyone who demolishes and rebuilds a dwelling outside of 13 specified cities in Flanders.

From 1 January 2019, the **Flemish energy loan** (up to €55 million per year) will focus on the social target group. The energy centres (energiehuizen) have been given new tasks in terms of providing information and assistance with regard to energy so as to **facilitate and promote energy refurbishments** among all citizens.

At the end of 2018, the Government of Flanders gave its approval in principle to the start-up of a **rolling fund for the energy refurbishment** of emergency owner-occupied dwellings. People with a low income who were forced to buy a cheap but inferior dwelling are in this way given support to refurbish their home in terms of energy. Public social welfare centres (Openbare Centra voor Maatschappelijk Welzijn/OCMWs) will, in cooperation with the Energy Centres, set up projects in which such 'emergency buyers' can receive an interest-free loan of up to €25,000. In total, €12.5 million from the Flemish Climate Fund will be earmarked for this purpose.

In 2018, the Government of Flanders also adopted the **draft Flemish Energy Plan 2021-2030**, which includes various measures aimed at stimulating **investment in dwelling construction**. Flanders has high ambitions to use energy much more efficiently and it is important that all dwellings in Flanders become energy efficient.

In addition to the aforementioned demolition and reconstruction premium, it is stated that, in the event of a notarised transfer of the full ownership of a residential property, 3 of 6 energy efficiency measures (roof insulation, wall insulation, window insulation, floor insulation, condensing boiler / heat pump and renewable energy boiler) must be present within 5 years. This measure also applies to non-residential buildings. In the further elaboration of this measure, two building envelope measures will be implemented as a matter of priority.

Ten years after the introduction of the EPC, an adapted EPC was launched in January 2019. The renewed EPC or **EPC+** (see also 3.4.3.) will instil even greater awareness, provide better information and ultimately encourage even more people to carry out a thorough **energy refurbishment** of their dwelling. Each dwelling is also labelled from A+ to F (A: excellent, F: substandard), which increases the recognisability, comparability and clarity of the new EPC. The new EPC also still includes a key indicator (expressed in kWh/m<sup>2</sup>). The recommendations for improving the label are thoroughly expanded, made more concrete and presented in a transparent way. It is also indicated to what extent the dwelling already meets the long-term energy objectives. In accordance with the long-term objective for renovation, by 2050 each dwelling must be as energy efficient as recent new buildings. The new EPC offers potential buyers and tenants in a quick and simple way insight into what still needs to be done to make the dwelling energy efficient. For single household dwellings, the new EPC includes an automatic cost estimate to make the dwelling more energy efficient. The costs are generated by the software based on the data entered by the energy expert. At the back of the EPC, the costs charged and those not charged are shown.

On 1 January 2019, the new Flemish **Housing Rental Decree** (Woninghuurdecreet) came into force, which encompasses a specific provision on energy-saving investments.

As early as 2011, the Government of Flanders decided on the phased introduction of a minimum **roof insulation standard** for all self-contained dwellings from 2015 onwards. Penalty points will therefore be given in the absence of roof insulation. From 2020 onwards, penalty points will also be assigned in different stages, if one or more rooms of the dwelling have single glazing. The absence of double glazing may therefore, from 1 January 2023, in itself give rise to the dwelling being declared unfit. In principle, the **double glazing standard** is applicable to all dwellings, just like the roof insulation standard and all other minimum quality standards for dwellings.

At the end of 2018, the Government of Flanders gave its approval in principle to the preliminary draft Order on housing quality control. This preliminary draft introduces, among other things, an **overall maximum energy score** in the technical reports with which the quality of the dwelling will be monitored in the future.

## 2.5.6 Investing in mobility and public works

This year marks the end of the current Government's term of office (2014-2019). Flanders faces major challenges in terms of traffic flow, particularly around the metropolitan areas in the Flemish Diamond (Vlaamse Ruit). The Flemish authorities want to make maximum efforts within their competences to reduce this congestion, but realise that traffic jams will not disappear overnight. That is why the Government of Flanders wanted to offer prospects by making **record investments**: throughout its term of office €9.7 billion will have been invested for smoother and safer traffic. This is an increase of 33% compared to the €7.3 billion invested in the period 2009-2014. Maintenance budgets grew by 19%, but it is mainly investment budgets that have been raised substantially (+40%) for all modes of transport and in all provinces. However, there is a clear focus on sustainable transport: the budgets for waterways (+21%) and public transport (+40%) rise faster than the budgets of the Flemish road manager (+11%). In 2019, cycling investments totalling €138 million are also planned, which is an increase of 55% compared to 2014. ERDF Flanders (see also 4) invested €19.4 million in 25 projects for the construction of cycling bridges and cycling underpasses to make bicycle highways smoother and safer. In addition, investments grew notably more in the Flemish Diamond, which means the largest investments are made in Flanders' biggest mobility bottlenecks.

## 2.5.7 Investing in school infrastructure

The need for investment in school infrastructure remains high in Flanders. However, estimating the current objective investment needs is a very difficult and time-consuming exercise, among other things because Flanders has a very large number of school boards as well as a dynamic environment in which needs are constantly updated and often fluctuate. Naturally, the increased investments that take place on a continuous basis in various dossiers also have an impact on the estimated investment needs in school construction. Overall, with a conservative estimate, it can be assumed that the total estimated investment needs in school construction amount to **over €5 billion** across all educational networks.

Nevertheless, it can generally be stated that the major catch-up effort to renovate, modernise and expand school buildings within the framework of the **School Construction Master Plan** (Masterplan Scholenbouw) will continue uninterrupted. As regards grants in 2018, regular budget appropriations of around **€401 million** were earmarked in 2018.

On the basis of a multiannual planning, **capacity resources** totalling €150 million (€50 million per year) were allocated for the 2016-2018 period. These resources were divided between school capacity projects which were highlighted as priorities by local task forces. Based on the results of the second capacity monitor on school infrastructure in compulsory education in autumn 2018, a **new budget of €150 million for the 2019-2021** period is divided between the cities and municipalities with the largest estimated capacity needs, with a strong focus on future capacity needs in SE. The administration closely monitors

the progress of the approved capacity projects. In the 2018-2021 period, we expect to create 20,245 additional places of which 8,240 in 2018, 5,464 in 2019 and 3,123 in 2020. In total, almost 40,000 extra places will be available in schools.

Flanders also embarked on a large-scale catch-up operation for school infrastructure via alternative financing, better known as **DBFM (Design, Build, Finance and Maintain)**. DBFM is a public private partnership in which a DBFM company is responsible for the design, construction, 30-year owner maintenance and financing of the DBFM projects. As part of the DBFM operation 'Schools of Tomorrow' (Scholen van Morgen), 158 DBFM schools were completed by the end of November 2018. Seven schools are in the construction phase, 15 schools are in the licensing or tendering phase and 2 schools are in the design phase. Typical of the DBFM projects is that they involve large, new school buildings. The whole programme encompasses 182 school construction projects which account for 200 school buildings with a total gross building surface area of around 710,000m<sup>2</sup> for more than 133,000 pupils, across all the educational networks. On 5 March 2017, a **new DBFM call** was launched among school boards for an initial investment value of €300 million. This amount was raised to **€550 million** by the Government of Flanders in 2017. In 2018, two tendering procedures, for each DBFM cluster, could already be started within the new project-specific school construction programme.

Apart from the regular subsidies and DBFM projects there is also the option of **rental subsidies**. A total of 94 applications were submitted under the second call in 2018. For 59 schools rental subsidies were approved for the modernisation of existing school infrastructure or the creation of 3,556 new places at school. All schools combined will receive an annual rental subsidy of €7.5 million, for a total **investment volume** of over **€211 million**. Due to its great success, the Government of Flanders decided at the end of 2018 to allocate rental subsidies to another 18 schools, bringing the total of approved rental subsidy dossiers to 77 in 2018. In addition, a third call was launched among schools in November 2018 for the application of rental subsidies.

Finally, several projects have recently been started that lead to improved **access to school (sports) infrastructure**. In 2018, a third call was launched for the sharing of school sports infrastructure for an amount of €3 million. This call is aimed at smaller sports halls and an accessible sports offer in vulnerable neighbourhoods.

Good secondary technical education requires modern teaching material. Nearly 68,000 pupils in 373 schools follow lessons in courses such as automotive industry, construction, chemistry, graphic communication and media, wood, cooling and heat, agriculture and horticulture, mechanics/electricity, textiles and nutrition. In order to support the technical schools offering these courses, an additional operating budget of €5 million was earmarked for the second time in the autumn of 2018 (first time in 2017). In concrete terms, this allows schools to purchase new work equipment such as sawing machines, lathes, welding infrastructure or heat pump installations and laboratory infrastructure.

Meanwhile, the Government of Flanders has already invested €52 million in many energy-saving projects in school buildings in primary, secondary and higher education. In 2019, nearly **€21 million** will be **added to make schools** in compulsory and higher education **more energy efficient**. Between 2016 and 2019, education will invest more than €75 million in total in climate initiatives to reduce carbon emissions.

## 2.5.8 Investing in welfare infrastructure

During this term of office, an additional €500 million was invested in **welfare infrastructure**. On top of these traditional investments, investments totalling €1.8 billion (€90 million per year x 20 years) were made through alternative financing during this term of office for the construction of hospitals, residential care centres and short-stay centres. The Flemish Infrastructure Fund for Person-related Matters

(Vlaams Infrastructuurfonds voor Persoonsgebonden Aangelegenheden/VIPA) allocates annual investment grants to various facilities in the welfare and healthcare sectors. The list of projects approved annually is available at <https://www.departementwvg.be/goedgekeurde-projecten>.

### **2.5.9 Investing in social housing**

During this term of office, a historically high amount of €4 billion was invested in **social housing**: €2.8 billion for new, additional social housing and €1.2 billion for refurbishments. Energy refurbishments of social rental housing (see also 2.4.4.) were concentrated on as well. Rental subsidies have more than doubled from €36 million in 2014 to €74 million in 2019.

## 3 IMPLEMENTATION OF FLANDERS' EUROPE 2020 TARGETS

### 3.1 Introduction

Below (3.1. through 3.5.), the state of play is given of the progress in Flanders' Europe 2020 targets and of the relevant measures Flanders is implementing. A lot of the measures that are taken in response to the Europe 2020 education targets (mainly relating to employment rate and education) were already discussed in Part 2. Paragraph 3.6. also includes the Flemish Social Scoreboard.

### 3.2 Employment rate

#### 3.2.1 State of play

In the aftermath of the 2008 economic crisis, employment in Flanders grew at the same rate as the population, which caused the employment rate (20 to 64 age group) to stagnate at 72% for years on end. In 2017, employment rose substantially faster again for the first time and in 2018 (see table below) the **employment rate (20 to 64 age group)** went up to 74.6%. The economic outlook for 2019 suggests that although economic growth is likely to slow down, employment will continue to grow. In 2018, the employment rate in Flanders remains only 1.4 pp short of the 76% target by 2020.

Key indicator	2008	2012	2015	2016	2017*	2018	2020 target	Distance (+ position EU-28)
Employment rate (Age group 20-64) (%)	72.3	71.5	71.9	72.0	73.0	74.6	76.0	1.4 pp / 15 on 28 (in 2018)

\*Break in time series

In recent years, the **employment rate of over-50s and over-55s** in particular has grown strongly, with Flanders reaching its target of achieving an employment rate of 50% for over-55s by the year 2020 in the course of 2018 already. Research carried out by the Centre of Expertise for Labour Market Monitoring (Steunpunt Werk) estimates that demographic effects and changing exit behaviour among over-55s account for one quarter of this progress and employment growth and end-of-career policies account for three quarters. However, Flanders is still lagging behind the European average, which means the rising trend will have to be continued post-2020 as well. In addition, the **employment rate of women** rose as well, which means Flanders for the first time exceeds 70% in 2018, well above the European average. Significant progress was also recorded among people born outside of the EU in 2017 and 2018, narrowing the gap with the European average. The employment rate of **people with a work-limiting disability** recovered to its former level in 2017 and rose further to record levels in 2018. Finally, the downward trend in the employment rate of **15 to 24-year-olds** was reversed in 2017 and 2018. The youth employment rate remains low compared to the rest of Europe, mainly because of the ever-increasing level of schooling. When not including students, the employment rate among young people in Flanders amply surpasses the EU average.



Sub-indicators Employment rate Disadvantaged groups	2008	2012	2015	2016	2017*	2018	2020 target	Distance (+ position EU-28)
Age group 15-24 (%)	31.7	28.1	27.9	27.0	27.5	30.2	/	16 on 28 (in 2018)
Age group 50-64 (%)	49.1	54.6	58.1	59.1	60.8	63.5	60	Target achieved / 18 on 28 (in 2018)
Age group 55-64 (%)	34.3	40.5	45.6	46.7	49.5	52.5	50	Target achieved / 19 on 28 (in 2018)
Women (age group 20-64) (%)	66.1	66.2	68.2	67.7	68.2	70.7	75	4.3 pp / 14 on 28 (in 2018)
taxMen (age group 20-64) <sup>39</sup> (%)	78.3	76.7	75.6	76.3	77.7	78.5	/	20 on 28 (in 2018)
Non-EU nationality (age group 20-64) (%)	47.2	42.7	48.7	46.0	44.1	50.4	58	7.6 pp / 28 on 28 (in 2018)
Born outside of the EU (%) (age group 20-64) (%)	56.3	51.8	53.7	53.0	56.0	61.2	64	2.8 pp / 25 on 27 (in 2017)
With work-limiting disability (age group 20-64) (%)	-	38.7	43.1	41.0	43.3	45.8	43	Target achieved (no comparative data available)

\*: Break in time series

The Social and Economic Council of Flanders (Sociaal-Economische Raad van Vlaanderen/**SERV**) measures the **workability rate** in Flanders every three years. This workability rate is the result of a combination of four indicators<sup>40</sup>. The results measured in 2016 show that the workability rate in Flanders has fallen. In concrete terms, the workability rate amounted to 51%, which means that approximately half of the workers and self-employed entrepreneurs in Flanders has a workable job or did not experience any of the measured workability risks as problematic in their job. Reversely, this means that one in two workers is faced with one or more workability issues. 'Work stress' is in most urgent need of attention in this respect. A systematic improvement is only recorded for the indicator 'learning possibilities'. At the end of 2018, the Government of Flanders and the Flemish social partners concluded an agreement on an **Action Plan for Workable Work** (actieplan werkbaar werk) in which 34 actions are set forth which intervene at the organisation level or which support and strengthen individuals.

In 2018, participation in **lifelong learning** in Flanders - as measured in the 4 weeks prior to the survey - was 8.7%. This is a stabilisation compared to the year before, but just below the European average. Flanders' target of achieving 15% in 2020 seems out of reach. For this reason, the Government of Flanders concluded an agreement with the Flemish social partners on a reform of the Flemish training incentives and the policy on the recognition of prior learning (see also 2.2.8.), included lifelong learning as one of the seven crucial transitions to be realised by Flanders in its long-term strategy 'Vision 2050'<sup>41</sup>, and launched the **Skills Strategy project** together with the **OECD**.

<sup>39</sup> Is not a disadvantaged group. The employment rate among men was included in the table because it offers an additional understanding of the general employment rate (age group 20-64).

<sup>40</sup> Psychological fatigue (work stress), well-being at work (motivation), learning possibilities (opportunities to keep pace and develop competencies) and work-personal life balance (the combination of work and family and social life).

<sup>41</sup> <https://www.vlaanderen.be/nl/vlaamse-regering/visie-2050>

## 3.2.2 Measures

The measures taken to increase the employment rate were explained earlier (see also 2.2.1. through 2.2.6.).

## 3.3 Education

### 3.3.1 State of play

Key indicator	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2020 target	Distance (+ position EU28)
Early school leavers (%)	8.6	9.6	9.6	8.7	7.5	7.0	7.2	6.8	7.2	7.3	5.2	2.1 pp 9 on 28 (in 2017)
30 to 34-year-olds with HE diploma (%)	43.1	45	42.3	45.3	44.1	44.8	43.2	47.3	46.4	48.2	47.8	Target achieved 10 on 28 (in 2017)

The share of early school leavers in Flanders ended at 7.3% in 2018. Flanders' Europe 2020 target of 5.2% has not yet been reached, but Flanders is well below the European target of 10%. As for the share of 30 to 34-year-olds with a higher education (HE) diploma, Flanders scored 48.2% in 2018. This means that both the European target of 40% and Flanders' target of 47.8% are met.

### 3.3.2 Measures

#### Early school leaving

The reform of the **pupil guidance** system (see 2.2.10.) has been implemented with the aim of promoting the overall development of all pupils, increasing well-being, preventing early school leaving, and creating more equal opportunities in education. This includes tackling various phenomena that are at the root of early school leaving. Pupil guidance will play a key role in preventing unqualified outflow. The Action Plan '**Together against Early School Leaving**' (Samen tegen Schooluitval) is being further rolled out as well. The plan contains more than 50 actions regarding learning entitlement, truancy and early school leaving. 32 actions were already completed, the rest is still ongoing.

The adoption of the **modernisation of SE** (see 2.2.10.) will enable schools to prepare for its implementation, which will start in the 2019-2020 school year. Elements such as the introduction of basic literacy, differentiation and more transitional opportunities from the B flow to the A flow reinforce the orientation function of the first stage. The new, more transparent and simplified subdivision of the study programmes offered in the second and third stages and the possibility to establish subject-based and campus schools are beneficial for the process of study choice and study orientation.

Following the adoption of the Decree on **dual learning** (see 2.2.7.) a fully-fledged qualifying learning pathway is created in Flanders in addition to full-time SE. The new system is to encourage pupils to make a positive and deliberate choice for technical and vocational secondary education. This will help address phenomena like truancy, lack of motivation and wrong study choice.

The reformed **adult education** sector has a financing system that focuses more than today on vulnerable groups (see 2.2.10.) and on obtaining an SE diploma or a training certificate. In this way adult education can be further rolled out as an alternative learning pathway towards a diploma, in order to still guide early school leavers towards a qualification. The reform of the recognition of prior learning (EVC) (see 2.2.8.) will also help people who have experience but no diploma to obtain a qualification faster.

The Action Plan for Participation in Pre-Primary Education (Actieplan Kleuterparticipatie) will be rolled out further and will strengthen **pre-primary education** in Flanders. Since insufficient participation in

pre-primary education may result in early school leaving, these measures help reduce the share of pupils leaving secondary education without qualifications.

One of the strategic goals of the **Strategic Literacy Plan 2017-2024** (Strategisch Plan Geletterdheid 2017-2024) is to significantly boost the number of young people leaving SE with sufficient literacy competencies, so as to enable them to function independently and participate in society, develop on a personal level and continue to learn. In this context, the **financing of the Adult Basic Education Centres** (Centra voor Basiseducatie) has also **been reformed** (see also 2.2.10.). From 1 September 2019, the funds for adult basic education will be open-end and will match the number of course participants. This will allow the centres to respond to the demand for a greater provision of literacy training courses.

### **Tertiary education attainment**

Both the access to and the quality of higher education remain priorities for the Government of Flanders.

The higher vocational education (hoger beroepsonderwijs/HBO) programmes already belonged to higher education, but by **converting them to short cycle graduate programmes**, they will attract students who do currently not opt for higher education, and will thus contribute to the further democratisation of higher education in Flanders. The HBO programmes, which for the moment are still organised in adult education, will be offered at university colleges as graduate programmes from the next academic year onwards. The future graduate programmes will be financed during the first start-up years on the basis of an open-end mechanism. In this way, the budget will be adjusted to the number of students. The graduate programmes will attract more students and course participants to the university colleges. This increased influx and the need for specific rooms or equipment to set up the new programmes will create additional costs. From 2019 onwards, the Government of Flanders will appropriate an additional annual investment budget of €10 million for university colleges to allow them to adapt their infrastructure or provide additional classrooms and practice rooms.

Also in 2018, great focus was placed on **orientation and guidance**. The orientation test Columbus for all pupils in the final year of secondary education is being further developed. An annual subsidy of €200,000 will be granted for this purpose until 2019. In early 2018, the Flemish Ministry for Education launched the website 'Programme Statistics' (opleiding in cijfers). The purpose of the website is to further support students in their study choice and to offer more information about the chosen programme and institution. The Government of Flanders decided to make non-binding generic institution-neutral entry tests mandatory for the university programmes 'civil engineer' and 'civil engineer/architect'.

On 18 May 2018, the Government of Flanders ratified the Decree that permanently establishes the **new quality management system in higher education**. The institutional review will serve as basis throughout the process of accountability for the quality of programmes in higher education in Flanders. The context of the institution and the institution's own direction take centre stage. On the one hand, a review is carried out of the implementation, monitoring and adjustment of educational policy. On the other hand, institutions themselves must be able to guarantee the quality of their programmes. From now on, programmes of universities and university colleges in Flanders that successfully obtain or have obtained an accreditation will no longer have to be periodically reviewed by an external evaluation body. The accreditation of these programmes will be automatically extended if a positive final assessment is obtained in the institutional review.

## 3.4 Research and development (R&D)

### 3.4.1 State of play

According to the latest figures, the R&D intensity of Flanders (Flemish Region) is 2.7% (2016, Eurostat), which is the highest rate ever. Upon the launch of the Europe 2020 Strategy in 2010 Flanders scored 2.21%. Gross domestic expenditure on R&D (the sum of R&D expenditure of companies + governments + higher education institutions + non-profitmaking organisations) in Flanders amounted to €6.723 billion in 2016.

Key indicator	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2020 target	Distance (+ position EU-28)
Gross domestic expenditure on R&D	2.06	2.21	2.33	2.53	2.55	2.59	2.68	2.70	3	0.30 pp 6 on 28 (in 2016)
In million euros	4,149	4,641	5,088	5,676	5,827	6,073	6,469	<b>6,723</b>		

### 3.4.2 Measures

The science and innovation budget in 2018 amounts to €2.512 billion, of which €1.608 billion is earmarked for R&D. In 2018, the Flemish authorities spent an additional (one-off) budget of €72 million on R&D&I. The largest amounts of the (one-off) investments in 2018 were granted to Imec Mobildata (€28.933 million), Flanders Make (€15 million), R&D innovation support (€15 million) and the Research Foundation - Flanders (Fonds voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek - Vlaanderen/FWO) (€7.5 million).

In 2019, a **recurring increase of €280 million** and a **one-off investment of €120 million** are earmarked for new policy in the field of Economy, Science and Innovation (Economie, Wetenschap en Innovatie/EWI). The largest amounts of the (recurrent) subsidy for R&D in 2019 will be allocated to FWO (€40 million), the Special Research Fund (Bijzonder Onderzoeksfonds/BOF) (€35 million), the Industrial Research Fund (Industrieel Onderzoeksfonds/IOF) (€20 million), the Artificial Intelligence policy agenda (€32 million), the Cybersecurity policy agenda (€20 million) and the Personalised Medicine policy agenda (€20 million).

Other main points of focus include the reinforcement of **marine science research** and the **Blue Growth** (Blauwe Groei) strategy. From 2019, the Flanders Marine Institute (Vlaams Instituut voor de Zee/VLIZ) will also be able to deploy additional research funds totalling €2 million to tackle research questions that respond to the needs of the Blue Cluster (Blauwe Cluster).

In late 2017, a call totalling €1 million was launched for project proposals for **Citizen Science** (Burgerwetenschap). The call was so successful that it was decided in November 2018 to support even more strong projects, and an additional amount of €900,000 was appropriated. At the beginning of 2019, Scivil was established. This is the Flemish knowledge centre for Citizen Science, which aims to pool and strengthen expertise in citizen science in Flanders as a network organisation.

## 3.5 Climate and energy

### 3.5.1 State of play

As far as the Europe 2020 targets for climate and energy are concerned, Flanders continues to be faced with great challenges. The EU has set **greenhouse gas emission reduction targets** for the period 2013-2020 for the European Union as a whole, divided between ETS and non-ETS, as well as for the non-ETS sectors in each separate Member State. Within Belgium, the national greenhouse gas emission reduction target is divided between the federal government and the three Regions. The Flemish Region must save 15.7% by 2020 compared to 2005 and thus receives an emission allocation of 352 Mt (in CO<sub>2</sub>-eq.) for the

period 2013-2020. The assessment of whether or not the greenhouse gas emission reduction target will be met is made cumulatively over the entire period (up to 2020), because annual greenhouse gas emissions can fluctuate significantly due to weather conditions. Cumulated over the period 2013-2017, 221 Mt of the emission allocation was used, which corresponds to the target of 352 Mt in the period 2013-2020. **Primary energy consumption** in Flanders remained virtually unchanged (1632 PJ) in 2017 compared to 2016 (1618 PJ) and is thus back to the level of 2013 (1609 PJ). Flanders is making progress towards its 2020 **renewable energy** target (Energy Plan 2020). We also record a rise in the share of renewable energy in gross final energy consumption to 1.63 Mtoe (or 6.7%) in 2017.

Key indicators	2005	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2020 target	Distance (+ position EU-28)
<b>Greenhouse gas emissions</b> <b>Non-ETS greenhouse gas emissions scope 13-20<sup>42</sup></b> (Mton)	46.1	46.7	-	-	-	-	45.4	43.0	44.3	44.6	43.5	-15.7% greenhouse gas emissions compared to 2005	Cumulated over the period 2013-2017, 221 Mt of the emission allocation was used, which corresponds to the target of 352 Mt in the period 2013-2020.
<b>Primary energy consumption, excl. non-energy</b> (Mtoe)	1756	1811	1670	1769	1647	1583	1609	1469	1499	1618	1632	Annual energy savings of 1.5% in the period 2014-2020 <sup>43</sup>	
<b>Renewable energy (RE)</b> - Quantity RE (Mtoe)	0.48	0.66	0.85	1.14	1.09	1.31	1.40	1.35	1.43	1.57	1.63	2.156 Mtoe	0.526 Mtoe
- Share of RE in gross final energy consumption (%)	1.9	2.6	3.6	4.5	4.6	5.5	5.7	5.8	6.0	6.5	6.7		

The Government of Flanders has taken important steps<sup>44</sup> in recent years, resulting in the approval on 20 July 2018 of a **draft Flemish Energy Plan 2021-2030** (see also 2.4.4.) as well as a **draft Flemish Climate Policy Plan 2021-2030**. The result and breakthrough during this term of office is that several **long-term**

<sup>42</sup> When determining the Belgian non-ETS target, account was taken of the inclusion of additional emissions under ETS from the period 2013-2020 (scope 13-20). Non-ETS greenhouse gas emissions are therefore expressed taking into account this ETS scope expansion and are based on the CRF reports of 15 January 2019.

<sup>43</sup> Corresponds to total savings of 172 PJ over the period 2014-2020

<sup>44</sup> 1.5% of the average annual energy sales to end users between 2010 and 2012. For Flanders this corresponds to a total saving of 172 PJ over the period 2014-2020.

- 16 December 2014: Declaration of commitment from stakeholders and start of the 'Renovation Pact' project.
- 16 June 2016: Declaration of commitment from stakeholders and start of the coordinating energy transition project 'Stroomversnelling' (literally translated as Rapids).
- 19 May 2017: Adoption by the Government of Flanders of the Flemish Energy Vision 2030-2050 following consultations with more than 40 stakeholders from industry, the academic world, social partners, various sector federations and the citizens via the 'Stroomversnelling' project. The vision text includes 53 concrete action points.
- 30 June 2017: Adoption by the Government of Flanders of the initiation memorandum 'Energy Transition' as part of Vision 2050.
- 30 March 2018: The Government of Flanders welcomes the Interfederal Energy Pact (Interfederaal Energiepact) as an important ambition paper for the further implementation of the necessary energy transition.
- 20 July 2018: Adoption by the Government of Flanders of the draft Energy Plan 2021-2030 containing both a framework for long-term energy policy and numerous concrete actions and initiatives to reduce energy consumption, increase the share of renewable energy and make our energy infrastructure smarter and more flexible. Within the Flemish competences, work is being done on, among other things, a cost-efficient energy refurbishment of buildings, social housing, residential and tertiary buildings in Flanders and on an ambitious increase in sustainability of the vehicle fleet.
- 20 July 2018: Adoption by the Government of Flanders of the draft Climate Policy Plan 2021-2030.  
<https://www.lne.be/vlaams-klimaatbeleidsplan>
- 31 December 2018: Submission of the draft compiled national Energy and Climate Plan to the EC. It sets out a concrete path for energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy sources until 2030.

**milestones** for the Flemish energy policy have been laid down in principle by the Government of Flanders:

- By 2050, all (existing) residential buildings must on average be as energy efficient as today's energy efficient new buildings. The long-term objective will be differentiated by building type.
- Non-residential buildings should be climate-neutral by 2050 at the latest.
- The share of green electricity should increase to 40% of electricity production by 2030 and to 100% by 2050 (at Belgian level).
- Relative energy efficiency in industry should increase by 10% by 2030 (compared to baseline 2020).

The draft **Flemish Energy Plan 2021-2030** also contains numerous concrete actions and initiatives to reduce energy consumption, increase the share of renewable energy and make the energy infrastructure smarter and more flexible. Within the Flemish competences, work is being done on, among other things, a cost-efficient energy refurbishment of public buildings, social housing, residential and tertiary buildings in Flanders and on an ambitious increase in sustainability of the vehicle fleet.

### **3.5.2 Measures for reducing greenhouse gas emissions from non-ETS activities**

By implementing the Flemish Climate Policy Plan, Flanders aims to achieve a 35% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions in non-ETS sectors by 2030 compared to 2005. A **long-term climate vision for 2050 is being prepared by the end of 2019**. Concrete greenhouse gas reduction measures implemented and/or planned in 2018/2019:

- the measures and investments listed in the sections on **energy efficiency and renewable heat** detailed below;
- measures in various policy areas financed by the Flemish Climate Fund. The **table below gives an overview of the amounts transferred by the Climate Fund to the entities responsible for implementing the mitigation measures and which have already been implemented.**

<b>Climate and energy actions</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>
<b>Education</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>24,000,000</b>	<b>18,000,000</b>
Tuning of boilers and RUE investments in educational buildings (AGION)	0	14,000,000	8,178,000
Tuning of boilers, boiler room renovation and RUE investments in educational buildings (AGION)	0	4,000,000	2,247,000
Tuning of boilers and RUE investments in educational buildings (Higher Education Fund)	0	5,125,000	6,875,000
STEM call and the call for the Climate Project (Education Department Fund)	0	875,000	700,000
<b>Mobility</b>	<b>180,888</b>	<b>12,640,032</b>	<b>7,500,000</b>
Greening of De Lijn fleet	0	12,500,000	7,500,000
Flanders Logistics consultant green/sustainable logistics	155,888	69,832	0
Development of shore power facilities	0	70,200	0
Charging infrastructure for 5 Park and Ride sites	25,000	0	0
<b>Buildings</b>	<b>20,109,125</b>	<b>42,198,000</b>	<b>54,345,000</b>
Expenditure on thorough energy refurbishments and replacement construction of social housing	20,000,000	20,000,000	23,000,000
Set-up of structural activities of specialised energy consultants for immovable heritage	109,125	0	0
Energy Efficiency Action Plan via Flemish Energy Company	0	0	2,025,000
Improving the energy efficiency of buildings in the WVG sector	0	7,000,000	10,000,000
Cultural infrastructure of supra-local importance	0	3,000,000	5,000,000
HFB action plan on internal measures for the climate impact on Flemish government buildings	0	12,198,000	13,320,000
Energy-saving investments in buildings of vzw de Rand	0	0	1,000,000
<b>Agriculture</b>	<b>97,500</b>	<b>3,767,979</b>	<b>3,234,775</b>
Enerpedia, project for energy consultancy to farmers	97,500	48,243	0
Enerpedia, follow-up project for energy consultancy to farmers	0	119,736	0
Additional greenhouse gas emission reduction measures by the Flemish Agricultural Investment Fund	0	3,600,000	3,000,000
Co-financing ERDF project GLITCH: innovation in low carbon greenhouse cultivation	0	0	234,775
<b>Energy</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6,516,000</b>
Support of local energy projects in the context of citizen challenges of Stroomversnelling	0	0	6,516,000

In addition, the Government of Flanders is preparing the **Flemish Adaptation Plan (Vlaams Adaptatieplan) for the period 2021-2030**. In the context of the fight against climate change, the Government of Flanders approved its **Climate Action Plan** on 29 March 2019. In order to accelerate investments in greenhouse gas emission reduction measures via the Climate Fund, the Government of Flanders has already decided on the use of €75 million that will enter the Climate Fund as from May 2019. The various functional ministers will be authorised to inform the relevant agencies and organisations about this, so that they can take the necessary preparatory steps with a view to making the investments on the ground as soon as possible.

### 3.5.3 Measures for improving energy efficiency

The challenges of achieving a housing stock with a much better energy performance are great. Through collaboration with over 30 stakeholders, the aim is to develop a framework and optimal mix of instruments through a **Renovation Pact** that will lead to more and more thorough renovations. The further elaboration of the Renovation Pact will be fully embedded in the implementation of the draft Flemish Energy Plan 2021-2030.

In order to visualise the path towards the realisation of the long-term objective for each dwelling, the **dwelling passport (woningpas)** was developed. This is a digital passport of each dwelling which can be consulted by the owner of the dwelling and their authorised representatives. The dwelling passport

was launched for the first time at the end of 2018. In 2019, the dwelling passport will be gradually supplemented with additional themes, including housing quality, permits and renovation advice from the renewed EPC.

In early January 2019, the **EPC+** was launched, which includes the **dwelling label** (from A+ to F) and concrete **renovation recommendations** towards the 2050 energy target (see also 2.4.2.). For single-household dwellings, an estimate of the investment costs for these renovation works is also given. In order to increase citizens' awareness of the label and the energy performance of dwellings, a web application 'Benchmark Tool EPC' will therefore be developed in 2019 in which citizens can indicatively calculate and benchmark their label with the housing stock in Flanders.

The following **additional measures** are planned for **residential buildings**: the introduction from 2019 of a temporary premium for heat pump boilers, the development of an approach for accelerating the pace of renewal of heating installations, the introduction of a ban on oil boilers (in the case of new construction and major energy refurbishment) from 2021, the discontinuation of the connection to natural gas of dwellings in new subdivisions from 2021, the gradual tightening of the 'E-level' (E-peil) requirement in the case of major energy refurbishments and the introduction of the rule that three out of six energy efficiency measures must be in place within five years in the case of a notarised transfer in full ownership of a residential dwelling. The six measures are extensive roof insulation, wall insulation, window insulation, floor insulation, condensing boiler or heat pump and renewable energy boiler. Three of the six measures also apply to **non-residential buildings**. In the further elaboration of this measure, two building envelope measures will be implemented as a matter of priority.

The Government of Flanders decided to extend the validity period of the existing Energy Policy Agreements (energiebeleidsovereenkomsten/EBOs) by two years to 2022. Via the EBO policy instrument, **energy-intensive companies** commit to implementing energy saving measures during the period of validity of the agreement. 341 sites have joined the EBOs. As a result of the extension, acceding companies will submit a new energy plan in 2019. The extension ensures that the energy plans submitted in the second round of the EBOs will include more effective measures as they are based on a more recent audit. **SMEs** are also making efforts. Five pilot projects for mini-EBOs are currently running with Horeca Vlaanderen, Fevia, Agoria, Comeos and the Belgian Farmers' Union (Boerenbond).

### 3.5.4 Measures for increasing the share of renewable energy

As far as green electricity is concerned, Flanders is on track to achieve Flanders' sub-targets for 2020. Numerous actions were started within the framework of the concept paper **Solar Plan 2020** (Zonneplan 2020) of the Government of Flanders. In implementation of this plan, the **solar map** (zonnekaart) was developed and the minimum share of renewable energy in newly constructed buildings was increased. A minimum share of renewable energy was also introduced for major energy refurbishments requiring a permit.

In early 2018, the **solar guide** (zonnegids) was launched as a practical guide for initiators of large solar panel projects, including model specifications that public authorities can use to make their roofs available to third parties for PV and a guideline for companies that want to realise a solar project on the roof of their company building with participation from their employees.

The actions in the concept paper **Wind Power 2020** (Windkracht 2020) of the Government of Flanders will be further rolled out in 2019. Local authorities are crucial partners in this. The **Wind Guide** (Windgids) provides the local authorities and other partners involved with practical information on the development of wind projects. Maximum efforts are made to build a **broad support base through participation** with local residents.



The implementation of the additional measures for green heat from the **Heat Plan** (Warmteplan) will be accelerated with the green heat calls (10 large projects in 2018) and the roll-out of several **new heat networks** in Antwerp, West Flanders, etc. In 2018, the Flemish Guarantee Regulation became operational for detecting and extracting geothermal heat in the deep subsurface.

A **heat map** (warmtekaart) was used to indicate the zones in Flanders where it is less or more profitable to build a heat network and/or (micro-)CHP installations.

In order to stimulate and assist citizens, partners and policy makers in the transition to a sustainable energy supply, as much information as possible about energy consumption, energy savings and the production of green energy in Flanders is centralised at [www.energiesparen.be](http://www.energiesparen.be). In 2018, the website [www.stroomvoorspeller.be](http://www.stroomvoorspeller.be) was developed so that everyone can see in real time how much energy all solar panels and onshore wind turbines produce and what their share in the energy consumption is at any time of day.

The Flemish Energy Agency developed the **Energy Map** (Energiekaart) which combines the most recent validated figures on green energy in Flanders as well as municipal reports. Anyone who wants to co-invest in a local wind or solar project can easily find out which energy cooperative they can turn to. In the future, the Energy Map will be expanded to include figures on the energy efficiency of the building stock in Flanders, an overview of the local Energy Centres, information on premiums, etc. In short: all the energy information in one central location: [www.energiesparen.be/energiekaart](http://www.energiesparen.be/energiekaart)

Finally, the Government of Flanders is working on the **roll-out of a smart and flexible power grid** (see also 2.4.2.).

## 3.6 Poverty and social exclusion

### 3.6.1 State of play

Key indicator	2009 2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017										2020 target	Distance (+ position EU-28)
	%	14.5	14.7	15	16	15.4	15.3	15.0	14.5	13.5		
Combined indicator (people in poverty or social exclusion)	Number x 1,000	900	910	940	1,000	970	970	960	940	880	650 by 2020 (= decrease by 30% or - 280,000 persons compared to 2008)	230

Key indicator	2009 2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017										2020 target	Distance (+ position EU-28)
	%	9.8	11	10.4	11.2	12.1	13.6	11.7	11.7	10.3		
% children with a standardised available household income under the poverty risk threshold after social transfers	Number x 1,000	120	140	130	140	150	170	150	150	130	60 by 2020 (= decrease by 50% or 60,000 children compared to 2008)	70

Poverty reduction remains a social necessity in Flanders. For 2017, it can be concluded that the figure for both the Europe 2020 indicator (people living in poverty or social exclusion) and child poverty is the best since 2009 and Flanders holds 2<sup>nd</sup> position within the EU-28. For the 3 sub-indicators (poverty risk, severe material deprivation and very low work intensity) of the composite indicator (EU-SILC 2017) the following observations can be made. 9.8% of the Flemish people live in a household with an income below the at-risk-of-poverty threshold. Flanders performs much better than Wallonia (21.2%), the BCR

(33.3%) and Belgium (15.9). Within the EU-28 (16.9%) Flanders scores 2<sup>nd</sup> best. In terms of severe material deprivation, Flanders scores 2% and ranks 3<sup>rd</sup> in the EU-28 (6.6%). Here too, Flanders performs much better than Wallonia (8.3%), the BCR (12.5%) and Belgium (6.6%). As far as the sub-indicator 'very low work intensity' (0-59 age group) is concerned, Flanders (8.5%) again performs better than Wallonia (18.5%), the BCR (23.9%), Belgium (13.5%) and the EU-28 (9.5%), but this time Flanders is in 14<sup>th</sup> position in the EU-28, which is a lower ranking.

### 3.6.2 Measures

The Flemish authorities continue to make sustained efforts at all levels of government and in all policy areas to combat poverty. The **Flemish Poverty Reduction Action Plan** (Vlaams actieplan armoedebestrijding) outlines a poverty reduction policy on the basis of concrete goals that are formulated for each of the fundamental social rights (participation, social service provision, income, household, education, leisure time, work, housing and health). Each member of the Government of Flanders is responsible for achieving these objectives within the framework of their policy areas. This concerns both actions within a policy area and cross-policy area actions that are necessary to realise the transition in the approach to poverty in general and in households with young children in particular.

The focus of the Flemish poverty reduction policy is on **households with young children**. The first years of a child's life are crucial for its development. In this context, for the period 2017-2019, we will again be subsidising projects that take innovative and extended, easily accessible initiatives regarding household support for future households and households with young children with a view to combating child poverty. It is important to mention that support is now provided even earlier (from the moment of pregnancy), that households can receive more integral support and that initiatives should work more result-oriented. The projects are also supported via a learning network.

The current Government of Flanders is the first to have drawn up a specific **Energy Poverty Programme** (Energiearmoedeprogramma). It includes 34 concrete actions, which tackle the source of energy poverty and on which the Flemish authorities report annually. The progress of these annual evaluations clearly shows that this plan has almost been fully implemented.

Even though people in Flanders have an extensive social safety net at their disposal and can turn to various authorities for a whole range of allowances and measures, not everyone succeeds in effectively taking up these rights. With the objective of adopting a preventive approach, the Flemish authorities continue to focus on the automatic granting of rights where possible, in addition to administrative simplification and proactive service provision. Since the conditions and criteria for determining the target groups of **social corrections** often differ between regulations, the Flemish authorities took the initiative to map and evaluate the conditions and criteria for qualifying for social corrections. The analysis of this inventory revealed that there is no uniform definition of income components or a household concept in Flemish legislation. In 2019, a scientific study will be initiated to take steps forward in this respect within Flanders.

The new EU-SILC figures also show the importance of supporting households with a very low work intensity. Households with a very low work intensity are the group with the highest poverty risk in Flanders. The initiated projects around **outreach<sup>45</sup> and insistent work towards households with a (very) low work intensity** will therefore continue to be closely monitored, for example via the learning networks.

---

<sup>45</sup> In Flanders, the ESF and VDAB are running several outreach projects to activate people with a large distance to the labour market, including households in poverty, ex-prisoners and low-skilled women with a migrant background.

In terms of poverty reduction, very strong efforts are also made at the level of the **local authorities**. This level indeed allows the spatial concentration of problems to be tackled in a more targeted way, thus increasing the chance of quickly visible and tangible results. For this reason, local authorities are ideal partners to take on a directing role at the local level. To better support local authorities in their directing role, this role was scrutinised by a scientific study. Based on the results of this study and a broader evaluation of the current support, the current support offer has been adjusted and optimised.

On 9 February 2018, the new **Decree on local social policy** came into force which addresses four aspects, namely local social policy as part of the multiannual planning of local government, the direction of local social support and services, the promotion of accessible support and services, and tackling underprotection (including the realisation of the functions and operating principles of a partnership 'integrated broad reception' and the socialisation of local social support and services). The Government of Flanders also defined a number of Flemish policy priorities within the framework of local social policy: local authorities take a directing role in the field of local social policy; local authorities implement the functions and operating principles of a partnership 'integrated broad reception', and local authorities take measures to stimulate the socialisation of local social support and services. For the Flemish authorities **socialisation of care** is to be understood to mean the aim of allowing vulnerable target groups to have their own meaningful place in society, to support them wherever necessary and to integrate care as much as possible in society. In addition to their own responsibilities the Flemish authorities want to raise people's awareness of participating in and creating, organising or using initiatives of **informal and voluntary care**.

Research shows that people in poverty have fewer opportunities to establish and maintain sustainable relationships. A strengthened social network may improve the quality of life of people living in poverty. A scientific study was conducted on how to strengthen informal networks among people in poverty. On this basis, a call for projects was launched that focuses on the model whereby a voluntary key figure is called in to support a person in poverty, the so-called **buddy system**. The focus is on this model as the study shows that it is a relatively young model, with room for reinforcement. Moreover, the Flemish authorities already provide regular funding throughout Flanders for organisations working on the basis of other working models (e.g. the associations where the poor speak as a network of fellow sufferers, Welzijnsschakels as voluntary activities, Lus vzw as a personal network, Domo vzw as a context-oriented project through organisation, etc.).

Finally, from the outset, the Flemish authorities have been working to combat food waste in combination with the distribution of food surpluses to the most vulnerable in our society. This remit included the development of the web application **the Donations Fair** (de Schenkingsbeurs). It serves to combat food surpluses by facilitating donations to social organisations, with absolute attention to quality and food safety. Between June 2017 and July 2018, a total of 104 tonnes of qualitative food surpluses were donated via the app in Flanders. In addition, investments are made in the start-up of five regional social distribution platforms to logistically support the distribution of food surpluses.

Since 1 January 2019, Flanders has taken over the payment of child benefit. This was converted to the **Growth Package** (Groeipakket) which contains the whole set of financial allowances which the Flemish authorities allocate for each child in each household on the basis of the following principles:

- The Growth Package is a **right of the child** and therefore no longer linked to the employment situation of the parents. All children are equal, receiving the same basic amount from the start, with a focus on young starting households.
- **Wide use of the social allowance:** for all households with a modest income (below a specified income threshold), and therefore also disconnected from the professional status of the parents. Working poor households are also entitled to a social allowance. Extension of the allocation of

the social allowance (income limit €30,984): from 10% to 19.5% children with a social allowance, or 152,000 new children who were not entitled to it before (+9.5 percentage points). Almost 1 in 5 children therefore receive a social allowance (315,000 children), or 178,631 households compared to 91,839 under the old system. In addition, there will be an extension of the social allowance, because households with at least 3 children, of which at least 1 child was born after 2018, can be entitled to social allowance if the family income is lower than €61,200.

- **Automatic granting of rights** so that no households are left out (those who do not submit an application are picked up, automatic granting of social allowances, school allowance, childcare allowance, pre-primary education allowance).
- In order to stimulate the participation of young children in non-income-based childcare and pre-primary education, the Growth Package has introduced 2 new allowances from 2019, i.e. the **childcare allowance and the pre-primary education allowance**.
- With the **selective participation allowance**, i.e. the current school allowance, continued focus is placed on supporting children and households in terms of education from the 2019-2020 school year onwards. For purposes of communication this is called the school bonus. More than €30 million extra is invested, mainly for higher amounts in SE. The income thresholds will also be raised. This will mean that at least the current target group will be retained, but also that more people will be able to benefit from this support.

It is certainly an explicit choice to use the Growth Package to focus more on children from low-income households. The budget for social allowances has been increased to 9% (€345 million) of the total budget (€3.8 billion), compared to 3.4% previously (excluding budget for school allowances). The Growth Package has a real and significant impact on the poverty risk and the poverty gap, both for existing and new households (see table).

Households	Decrease in poverty risk	Decrease in numbers	Decrease in poverty gap
New households*	From 8.6 to 7.3%	-16% of households in poverty	Average of €68,2 per month across all household types
New children	From 9.9 to 8.4 %	-15% of children in poverty	
Existing households**	From 8.6 to 8.1 %	-6% of households in poverty	Average of €55.3 per month across all household types
Existing children	From 9.9 to 9.6 %	-3% of children in poverty	

\*: 'new households': start from 2019 \*\*: Existing households: already received child benefit before 2019

Also with regard to **education** and **work** (see also 2.2.) and **living** (see also 2.4.4. and 2.4.8.) considerable efforts have been made to reduce poverty.

### 3.7 Flemish Social Scoreboard

Because of the importance it attaches to the social dimension of the ES, the Government of Flanders considered it desirable to include its own **Flemish Social Scoreboard** again in the present FRP. Within the 3 dimensions figures could be produced for Flanders for 11 of the 14 indicators<sup>46</sup>. For 2 indicators

<sup>46</sup> Remark by Flanders Statistics: To monitor the European social indicators, the EC has developed a performance benchmark

(indicated in italic in the table below)<sup>47</sup> a Flemish indicator was used which is closely in line with the European indicator, in order to make a comparative approach possible. For one indicator (self-reported unmet need for medical care (2017)), no figure was available for 2017 at the Flemish level. The table below compares Flanders' score on these indicators in a Belgian and EU-28 perspective. The general conclusion is that Flanders is doing very well in terms of the social dimension within the EU-28 and usually also scores better than the Belgian average. Flanders has also taken a step forward in comparison with last year (FRP 2018): there are no more indicators to watch and the number of indicators for which Flanders belongs to the best performers has increased.

FLEMISH SOCIAL SCOREBOARD (in Belgian and EU-28 perspective)	FLR	BE	EU-28	BE	FLR <sup>48</sup>
<b>Dimension: Equal opportunities and access to the labour market</b>					
Share of early school leavers in % population aged 18-24 (2017)	7.2	8.9	10.6	Average	Better than average
Gender employment gap (2017)	9.5	9.8	11.5	Average	Average
Income quintiles ratio (2017)	3.5	3.8	5.1	Better than average	Best performers
People at-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion (2017)	13.5	20.3	22.4	Average	Best performers
Young people neither in employment nor in education and training (NEET) (2017)	7.2	9.3	10.9	Average	Better than average
<b>Dimension: Dynamic labour markets and fair working conditions</b>					
Employment rate (20-64 age group) (2017)	73.0	68.5	72.2	To watch	Average <sup>49</sup>
Unemployment rate (15-64 age group) (2017)	4.4	7.1	7.6	Average	Better than average
Long-term unemployment rate (2017)	1.5	3.5	3.4	Average	Better than average
Gross disposable household income (index, 2008 = 100) Alternative: Gross disposable income per inhabitant (euro) (2015)	- 21,913	- 20,444	- -	- -	- -
Compensation of employees per hour worked (euro) Alternative: Compensation per employee (euro PPP) (2016)	- 48,508	- 49,369	- 35,867	- -	- -
<b>Dimension: Social protection and inclusion</b>					
Impact of social transfers on poverty reduction (2017)	49.5	39.5	34.0	Average	Best performers
Children aged less than 3 years in formal childcare (2017)	52.6	53.0	34.0	Best performers	Best performers
Self-reported unmet need for medical care (2017) <sup>50</sup>	-	2.1	1.7	Average	-
Share of individuals with basic digital skills (2017)	65	61	57	Average	Better than average

in 2018. This is done by considering the performance for the last year for each indicator as well as the evolution from the penultimate year to the last available year. Flanders Statistics has repeated this method for this year. In concrete terms, standardised values or z-scores are calculated as well as the difference with the country average. On the basis of the scale of the deviation, the Member State is then assigned to one of the following categories: 'Best performers', 'Better than average', 'Good but to monitor', 'On average', 'Weak but improving', 'To watch' or 'Critical situations'.

<sup>47</sup> Remarks on the Social Scoreboard (Source: Flanders Statistics).

(1) Since no data are available with regard to the real-terms growth of the gross disposable income of households per capita at the regional level, Flanders used the indicator 'gross disposable income per inhabitant'.

(2) Instead of the indicator 'compensation of employees per hour worked', Flanders used the indicator 'compensation per employee'.

<sup>48</sup> Source: Calculations of Flanders Statistics

<sup>49</sup> It should be noted that the evaluation of the evolution only pertains to the last year. As a result, the Flemish Region is only assigned the label 'Average' for 'Employment rate'. The level of the Flemish employment rate is relatively high, but hardly any improvement was recorded between 2016 (72%) and 2017 (73%), contrary to many EU Member States which made more progress, but where a lower level was often started from.

<sup>50</sup> No figures are available yet for Flanders for 2017. For 2016 we see that in Flanders 1% of the population reports an unmet need for medical care. This is lower than in Belgium (2.4%) and the EU-28 (2.5%).

## 4 Use of structural funds

Four themes were identified for the **ERDF Flanders programme 2014-2020**, all of which address different aspects of the CSRs: research and innovation, entrepreneurship, low-carbon economy and sustainable urban development. In implementation of the programme, 83.03% (€145.8 million) of Flanders' available ERDF budget has been committed between 190 projects. This ERDF support constitutes the lever for an additional investment of €250 million. As far as support for innovation and research, the low-carbon economy and sustainable urban development is concerned, the emphasis is very much on investment in infrastructure, inter alia, whereas support for entrepreneurship is concentrated more on content.

Examples of projects carried out with ERDF Flanders can be found in the brochure 'Europese impulsen voor een sterker Vlaanderen' (European incentives for a stronger Flanders)<sup>51</sup>. The remaining ERDF funds (€29.8 million) will be put to use via calls. These will include calls to promote innovation in Flanders and projects to support Flanders' internationalisation of local entrepreneurship. In 2018, an external mid-term review of the programme was implemented as well. This was published on the ERDF website ([www.efro.be](http://www.efro.be)). In addition to its involvement in ERDF Flanders and the ESF, Flanders also continues to make strenuous efforts for **interregional cooperation**. It is very active in projects of the different programmes in which it participates in the cross-border EU Regional Policy, viz. ERDF Interreg V (2014-2020). Flemish provinces and provincial development companies (provinciale ontwikkelingsmaatschappij/POM) are involved in this, next to various public and private/knowledge partners.

The operational programme **European Social Fund (ESF) 2014-2020** reinforces and re-energises Flanders' labour policy with a budget of approximately €1 billion, €398 million of which is funded by the EU. The ESF programme wants to help around 250,000 people find a job or acquire new competencies. In 2018, ESF projects reached approximately 53,000 jobseekers and 21,000 inactive persons. These persons participate in projects for the guidance and training of jobseekers in cooperation with the VDAB, in work experience pathways for young people (Werkinlevingsproject voor jongeren/WIJ) or in one of the 48 projects for the guidance of vulnerable groups. About one quarter of the participants reached are people with a migrant background. In 2018, the ESF continued to support efforts by the education sector to reduce early school leaving and to further develop the dual learning scheme. In 2018, ESF training projects also enabled more than 28,000 workers to strengthen their skills, focusing on digital, transversal and basic skills. The ESF programme is also one of the important drivers of workable work in Flanders. In 2018, 181 new projects were approved within this priority. In 2019, the ESF will continue to focus on activation, social inclusion, lifelong learning and workable work. An important new emphasis will be the roll-out of workability vouchers, with which the ESF offers an easily accessible instrument to work on workable work. In 2019, the ESF will also support projects to guide inactive people to the labour market or to set them on the path to employment. In this way, it responds to the very current challenge of addressing the shortage on the labour market in Flanders.

---

<sup>51</sup> <https://www.vlaio.be/nl/media/1003>

## 5 Institutional issues and stakeholder participation

### 5.1 Enhancing public support

The Government of Flanders attaches much importance to enhancing public support for the ES. Within the Flemish public administration the official ES working group acts as the focal point for following the progress of activities at the Flemish, federal and European levels and assumes an important role within the **Board of Chairmen (Voorzitterscollege)**. Partly as a result of the publication of the CSRs 2019-2020, an exchange of views between the Board of Chairmen and the European Semester Officer will take place on 29 May 2019.

### 5.2 Involvement of the Flemish Parliament

To safeguard the structural involvement of the **Flemish Parliament** in the ES, the draft FRP 2019 was discussed in the Flemish Parliament Committee<sup>52</sup> for General Policy, Finance and Budget on 26 March 2019. Overall, it can be stated that the draft FRP 2019 was positively received by the members of the Committee concerned in terms of both the Semester governance outlined by the Government of Flanders and of the measures taken with regard to the three CSRs, the investments and the Europe 2020 targets. The importance of the Flemish Social Scoreboard was also emphasised. The inclusion of this Scoreboard testifies to the importance the Government of Flanders attaches to the socio-economic dimension of the ES. In the Flemish Parliament mention was also made of the possible slowdown in growth caused by Brexit (see also part 1, pages 8 and 10), the importance of gross national happiness and workable work (see also 3.1.1., page 35, workable work action plan) and the importance of monitoring the effects of dual learning on early school leavers (see also 3.2.1., page 36, figures on early school leavers).

### 5.3 Involvement of social partners

During an exchange of views which took place on 27 March 2019 within the framework of the Flemish Economic and Social Consultative Committee (Vlaams economisch en sociaal overlegcomité/VESOC) the **social partners** were involved in the formulation of the FRP 2019. One point of focus put forward by the social partners was the importance of continued efforts for lifelong learning. In this respect, particular reference can be made to the OECD Flemish Skills Strategy project (see also 3.1.1., page 35).

### 5.4 Involvement of (supra) local authorities and stakeholders

As was the case with previous FRPs, members of the Liaison Agency Flanders-Europe (Vlaams-Europees verbindingsagentschap/Vleva) delivered a number of good practices that respond to the CSRs and Europe 2020 targets.

In 2018, the **Flanders Knowledge Centre Water** (Vlaams Kenniscentrum Water/Vlakwa)<sup>53</sup> updated its study on the socio-economic importance of water in Flanders. This analysis shows that direct employment in water-intensive sectors (the 15 sectors consuming the most water in Flanders) amounts to 22.3%. In the analysis of 2013, this percentage was 16.7%, which is an increase of 34%! This means that 1 in 5 Flemish people is employed in a water-intensive sector. The recent water scarcity and drought periods have shown that freshwater reserves in Flanders are scarce<sup>54</sup>. In 2018, the initiative was therefore taken

---

<sup>52</sup> <https://www.vlaamsparlement.be/commissies/commissievergaderingen/1310942#volledige-agenda>

<sup>53</sup> <https://www.vlakwa.be/publicaties/nieuws/nieuwsbericht/news/nieuwe-studie-naar-het-socio-economisch-belang-van-water-stelt-droogte-maar-34-meer-jobs-in-wate/>

<sup>54</sup> This was also confirmed in 2018 in the United Nations report that determined the level of water stress for the various

with various actors to carry out a system analysis to clarify the interactions of the water system with the mobility system (including how the problem of congestion affects the water system and vice versa), the energy system, etc., and which serves as a basis for defining systemic solutions that tackle the various challenges in conjunction.

**VITO** is one of the 10 partners<sup>55</sup> in the European Circular Economy Research Alliance (ECERA). This is a voluntary cooperation network between European Research and Technology Organisations (RTOs) with the aim of strengthening and integrating scientific knowledge and expertise in the field of circular economy from an interdisciplinary perspective. This cooperation helps VITO to strengthen its role in this area in Europe, to gain a better understanding of our colleagues' strategies and to build complementarity.

Just like the other education providers, Community Education (Gemeenschapsonderwijs/**GO!**) is fully engaged in the implementation of the reform of SE which starts in the first stage of SE (school year 2019-2020). Promoting equal opportunities is a crucial concern and a permanent point of focus for **GO!**

**KU Leuven** mentions its involvement in the DART (Developmental and Reproductive Toxicity) Paths project, which is a collaboration between Hogeschool Utrecht, Vivaltes NV, OpenAnalytics NV and KU Leuven. The DART Paths project that fits within the objective 'To Replace, Reduce and Refine Animal testing' of Horizon 2020 aims to develop a computational platform that integrates information on the relationship between specific genes and reaction pathways with data on the effects of specific chemicals. This platform will have a significant impact on the use of experimental animals by predicting the toxicity in the computer and thereby preventing animal testing and by demonstrating in which cases testing on non-vertebrate animals are reliable alternatives.

The Association of Flemish Provinces (Vereniging Vlaamse Provincies/**VVP**) indicates that the **Flemish provinces** are pooling forces and resources to shape EU policy throughout Flanders. As the supra-local level of government, they form the bridge between local reality and European policy. Below, a number of good practice examples are given with which the provincial authorities in Flanders are contributing to the realisation of CSRs 2 and 3:

#### CSR 2:

- **Right Skills for the Right Future (RIGHT - Interreg North Sea)**

With the project Right Skills for the Right Future (RIGHT - Interreg North Sea), the Province of Antwerp wants to respond to the changing labour market and develop innovative education and training opportunities. The key objective is to ensure a competitive region by making the workforce future-proof, building knowledge about the future needs of industry and building the relevant capacity of our SMEs, regional authorities and educational institutions.

- **AB Réfugiés Social (Interreg France-Wallonia-Flanders)**

This project is aimed at strengthening and perpetuating the networking and cross-border provision of health and social services to asylum seekers and refugees in order to strengthen the care and guidance of these vulnerable groups and their sustainable integration in the sub-areas of their programme, wherever they may be.

---

member states in the context of progress in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Member States start to suffer from water stress when this indicator exceeds 25%. For Belgium, this indicator is 56%.

<sup>55</sup> The partners are CEA, ENEA, IETU, IVL, SINTEF, Tecnalia, TNO, VITO, VTT and Wuppertal.



### CSR 3:

- **Project Construction 4.0 (Bouw 4.0) in Sint-Stevens-Woluwe helps to further digitise the construction sector (ERDF Flanders)**

This centre will be a demonstration centre that brings together all information on new building technologies. With support from the EU, BIM models, scanning techniques or 3D visualisations will be shown and experiments with augmented and virtual reality will be carried out here. Anyone who is active in the construction industry, will soon be able to come here for demonstrations, guidance and advice on innovative tools, infrastructure and new technologies.

- **Skills Navigator (Interreg Flanders-the Netherlands)**

Owing to the digitisation, computerisation and robotisation of the port sector, there is a fast growing demand for higher skilled technical profiles. With the input from 14 partners, 'Skills Navigator' ensures an optimal match between labour demand and supply. The focus is on building the necessary digital skills in school-age young people as well as (re)entrants on the labour market aged between 16 and 26.

- **GreenVille: Centre of Cleantech (ERDF Flanders)**

GreenVille accommodates green entrepreneurs in the former main building of the Kempische Steenkoolmijnen and acts as a unique incubator for SMEs in Limburg working on new materials, mobility, water, new business models, etc. GreenVille also brings together interested parties from companies, knowledge institutes and governments to exchange knowledge and experience about the green economy. Cleantech Community Limburg is the name under which GreenVille and the Province of Limburg organise cleantech events.

The Flemish provinces also made considerable investments in cycling infrastructure last year, both for the further connection via bicycle highways (Fiets-O-Strades) and in the supra-local functional cycling path network. In this case as well, some components were co-financed with ERDF funds.

## **5.5 FRP in a federal and European perspective**

Within the framework of the ES 2019, Flanders again provided substantial input for the **fact finding mission** which took place between the EC services and Belgium on 26 October 2018 with regard to the formulation of the draft Country Report Belgium 2019. In addition, Flanders actively participated during the ES 2019 in the **bilateral meetings with the EC services** (7 December 2018 and 18 March 2019) at the political level, which are, inter alia, dedicated to the implementation of the CSRs. Moreover, numerous bilateral meetings are held between the EC services and the policy areas of the Flemish public administration during the ES.

The FRP 2019 will again be appended to the **NRP**. The link with the **European institutions** is guaranteed as well, since the Government of Flanders will deliver the FRP directly to the Presidents of the EC, the European Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and the Committee of the Regions (CoR).

The FRP will also be published on the European Semester website<sup>56</sup> of the General Representation of the Government of Flanders to the EU (Algemene Afvaardiging van de Vlaamse Regering bij de EU/AAVR EU). Through its initiatives within the framework of the ES, Flanders also makes an important contribution to the operation of the **Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform of the Committee of the Regions**.

---

<sup>56</sup> <https://www.flandersineu.be/en/european-semester-0>

## 6 Glossary

3D	Three-dimensional	CEF	Community Europe Facility
AAVR EU	Algemene Vertegenwoordiging van Vlaanderen bij de EU (General Representation of Flanders to the EU)	CHP	Combined heat and power
ABAD	Actieplan ter Bestrijding van Arbeidsgerelateerde Discriminatie (Action Plan for Combating Work-Related Discrimination)	C-IBO	Allows employers to train jobseekers in the workplace together with VDAB The training lasts min. 4 weeks and max. 26 weeks
Actiris	Brussels Regional Employment Service	CIS	Community Innovation Survey
AGION	Agentschap voor Infrastructuur in het Onderwijs (Agency for Infrastructure in Education)	CLB	Centrum voor Leerlingenbegeleiding (pupil guidance centre)
Agoria	Federation for the Belgian technology industry	CO <sub>2</sub>	Carbon dioxide
AI	Artificial Intelligence	CO <sub>2</sub> -eq	CO <sub>2</sub> equivalent
All	Agentschap Integratie en Inburgering (Agency for Integration and Civic Integration)	Comeos	Represents, unites and strengthens trade and services
AIV	Agentschap Informatie Vlaanderen (Flanders Information Agency)	CoR	Committee of the Regions
Aphea.Bio	Spin-off that researches microorganisms that interact closely with plants, and their effect on agricultural crops	CPT	Clean Power for Transport
BAM	Beheersmaatschappij Antwerpen Mobiel (Antwerp Mobile Management Company)	CSR	Country-specific recommendation
BCR	Brussels-Capital Region	DART	Developmental And Reproductive Toxicity
BE	Belgium	DBFM	Design, Build, Finance and Maintenance
BelRAI	Belgian Resident Assessment Instrument	DKO	Deeltijds Kunstonderwijs (part-time education in the arts)
BENEFIC	Charging and fuelling infrastructure for alternative transport fuels	DZOP	Digitaal Zorg- en OnderwijsPlan (Digital Care and Education Plan)
BE-REEL	BElgium RENovates for Energy-Efficient Living	EBO	Energiebeleidsovereenkomst (energy policy agreement)
BIM	Building Information Modelling	EC	European Commission
BOF	Bijzonder Onderzoeksfonds (Special Research Fund)	ECERA	European Circular Economy Research Alliance
BSO	Beroepssecundair onderwijs (vocational secondary education)	EESC	European Economic and Social Committee
BuSO	Buitengewoon Secundair Onderwijs (special secondary education)	EFSI	European Fund for Strategic Investments
CAO	Collectieve arbeidsovereenkomst (collective labour agreement)	EIB	European Investment Bank
Catalisti	Spearhead cluster 'sustainable chemistry'	EIF	European Investment Fund
CD3	Centre for Drug Design and Discovery	E-level	Energy performance level
		e-MOPOLI	Electro MObility as driver to support POLicy Instruments for sustainable mobility
		Enerpedia	Agricultural energy encyclopaedia
		EPB	EnergiePrestatie en Binnenklimaat (energy performance and indoor climate)
		EPC	Energy performance certificate

Eq.	Equivalent	FWO	Fonds voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek-Vlaanderen (Research Foundation - Flanders)
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund		
ES	European Semester	GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ESF	European Social Fund	GIBO	Gespecialiseerde Individuele Beroepsopleiding (specialised individual vocational training)
ESCO	Energy Service Company	GIP	Geïntegreerd Investeringsplan (Integrated Investment Plan)
ESO	European Semester Officer		
ETS	EU Emissions Trading System	GLITCH	GLastuinbouw Innoveert door Co-creatie met koolstofarme Hightech (Glass horticulture innovates through co-creation with low-carbon high-tech)
EU	European Union	GO!	GemeenschapsOnderwijs (Community Education)
EU-15	The 15 EU Member States as at 1 January 1995	GreenVille	the name under which GreenVille and the Province
EU-28	The 28 EU Member States since 2014	Cleantech	of Limburg organise cleantech events
EUR-Lex	EU law	Community	
Eurostat	Directorate-General of the European Union, in charge of providing statistics for Europe	Limburg	
EU-SILC	EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions	HBO	Hoger Beroepsonderwijs (higher vocational education)
EV	Electric vehicle	HE	Higher Education
EVC	Erkennen van Verworven Competenties (recognition of prior learning)	HERMREG	Belgian econometric model for drawing up regional medium-term forecasts
EWI	Economie, Wetenschap en Innovatie (Economy, Science and Innovation)	HFB	Het Facilitair Bedrijf (Agency for Facility Operations)
Fedasil	Federaal Agentschap voor de Opvang van Asielzoekers (Federal Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers)	IBN	Innovative Business Network (Innovatief Bedrijfsnetwerk)
Fevia	Belgian Food Industry Federation	IBO	Individuele Beroepsopleiding (individual vocational training)
FFM	Fact finding mission	ICT	Information and communications technology
Fiets-GEN	Cycling network Brussels-Vlaamse Rand	Imec	Interuniversity Micro-Electronics Centre
FIT	Flanders Investment and Trade	ING	Internationale Nederlanden Groep (Bank)
Flanders	Contributes to a more competitive, innovative and sustainable agri-food industry	InnoVET	Professionalisation and innovation in vocational education
FOOD	Strategic research centre for the manufacturing industry	INR	Instituut voor de Nationale Rekeningen (Institute of National Accounts)
Flanders		InterRAI	International Residential Assessment Instrument
Make		Interreg	Interreg Community Initiative
FLR	Flemish Region		
Flux50	Flemish smart energy networks		
FPB	Federaal Planbureau (Federal Planning Bureau)		
FTE	Full-time equivalent		

IOF	Industrieel Onderzoeksfonds [Industrial Research Fund]	OCMW	Openbaar Centrum voor Maatschappelijk Welzijn (public social welfare centre)
KBC	Kredietbank / Cerabank	OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
K-IBO	Individual vocational training programme for vulnerable jobseekers such as the long-term unemployed	PIO	Programma Innovatieve Overheidsopdrachten (Programme for Innovation Procurement)
KOALA	Kind- en OuderActiviteiten voor Lokale Armoedebestrijding (Child and parent activities for local poverty reduction)	PJ	Petajoule
Kton	Kiloton	PMV	ParticipatieMaatschappij Vlaanderen (Flanders Holding Company)
KU Leuven	Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (Catholic University of Leuven)	POM	Provinciale Ontwikkelingsmaatschappij (Provincial Development Company)
kV	Kilovolt	Pp	Percentage point
kW	Kilowatt	PPP	Public private partnership
Le Forem	Service public de l'emploi et de la formation professionnelle en Wallonie (Walloon Service for Employment and Vocational Training)	PPP	Purchasing power parities
@Level2	Guiding highly educated non-Dutch speakers to work	PPS	Purchasing power standard
work		PSA	Programme Support Activity
LEZ	Low emission zone	PV	Solar technology
LFS	Labour Force Survey	technology	
LTCF	Long Term Care Facilities	PWA	Plaatselijk WerkgelegenheidsAgentschap (local employment agency)
M-Decree	Decree containing measures for pupils with special educational needs	R&D	Research and development
MFF	Multiannual Financial Framework	R&D&I	Research, development and innovation
Mid-cap	Mid-capitalisation stock	RE	Renewable energy
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding	RIGHT	Project Interreg North Sea Region
MTOE	Million tonnes of oil equivalent	RO	Brussels Ring Road
Mton	Megaton	RTC	Regional Technology Centre
NBB	Nationale Bank van België (National Bank of Belgium)	RTO	Research and Technology Organisation
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training	RUE	Rational use of energy
NRP	National Reform Programme	Scivil	Flemish knowledge centre for Citizen Science
NV	Naamloze Vennootschap (public limited company)	SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
		SE	Secondary Education
		SERV	Sociaal-Economische Raad van Vlaanderen (Social and Economic Council of Flanders)
		SILC	Statistics on Income and Living Conditions
		SIM	Strategic Initiative Materials in Flanders
		Skills	Match between labour demand and supply

Navigator		VIL	Vlaams Instituut voor de Logistiek (Flanders Institute for Logistics)
SME	Small and medium-sized enterprise	VIPA	Vlaams Infrastructuurfonds voor Persoonsgebonden Aangelegenheden (Flemish Infrastructure Fund for Person-Related Matters)
SOC	Strategisch OnderzoeksCentrum (Strategic Research Centre)	VITO	Vlaamse Instelling voor Technologisch Onderzoek (Flemish Institute for Technological Research)
SRSP	Structural Reform Support Programme	Vivaltes	Identifies health effects of substances
SRSS	Structural Reform Support Service	NV	without animal testing
STATBEL	Belgian Statistical Office	VLAIO	Agentschap Innoveren en Ondernemen (Flanders Innovation & Entrepreneurship)
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics	Vlakwa	Vlaams Kenniscentrum Water (Flanders Knowledge Centre Water)
tso	Technisch secundair onderwijs (technical secondary education))	VLEVA	Vlaams-Europees VerbindingsAgentschap (Liaison Agency Flanders-Europe)
V-BIO		VLIZ	Vlaams Instituut voor de Zee (Flanders Marine Institute)
Ventures	Finances young, innovative companies with ambitions in the field of life sciences	VOP	Vlaamse OndersteuningsPremie (Flemish support premium)
VDAB	Vlaamse Dienst voor Arbeidsbemiddeling en Beroepsopleiding (Flemish Service for Employment and Vocational Training)	VVP	Vereniging Vlaamse Provincies (Association of Flemish Provinces)
VESOC	Vlaams Economisch en Sociaal Overlegcomité (Flemish Economic and Social Consultative Committee)	WIJ	Werkinleving voor Jongeren (work experience pathway for young people)
VHP	Vlaams Hervormingsprogramma (Flemish Reform Programme/FRP)	WVG	Welzijn, Volksgezondheid en Gezin (Welfare, Public Health and Family)
VIB	Vlaamse Instelling voor Biotechnologie (Flanders Institute for Biotechnology)		

## **Annex 4: Reform programme of German speaking Community**

### **Mesures de la Communauté germanophone en faveur des objectifs UE2020 qui font partie intégrale de ses compétences.**

#### **1 Emploi – Marché du travail**

##### **1.1 Marche du Travail : Situation actuelle**

En Communauté germanophone, une moyenne de 2 360 demandeurs d'emploi (= chômeurs complets) ont été enregistrés en 2018. Le taux de chômage en Communauté germanophone s'élevait à 7,0 % et a donc baissé de 0,6 points de pourcentage par rapport à l'année passée (7,6 %). Le nombre annuel moyen de chômeurs a diminué de 207 personnes, ce qui en fait la troisième année consécutive de baisse.

Le nombre de femmes au chômage en Communauté germanophone a sans cesse baissé les 20 dernières années (en 1995 : 62% et en 2005 : 57% et 2018 : 50%). Néanmoins le taux de chômage des femmes (7,5%) reste plus élevé que celui des hommes (6,5%).

La répartition des chômeurs par tranche d'âge montre que 37% des chômeurs ont plus de 50 ans. Le nombre de chômeurs de 50 ans et plus a même été multiplié par 5 depuis 2001. Ceci est dû aussi bien à des changements réglementaires (relèvement de la limite d'âge pour être dispensé de la recherche active) qu'au vieillissement de la population. La part des chômeurs de 50 ans et plus est passée de 12% à 37% entre 2001 et 2018. En ce qui concerne les jeunes, leur part dans le chômage a diminué légèrement ces dernières années (pour atteindre 17%). Le taux de chômage des jeunes (10,6%) est plus élevé que le taux de chômage des 25-49 ans (5,8%) et des plus âgés (7,7%).

En ce qui concerne la durée au chômage, 34% des personnes au chômage le sont depuis moins de 6 mois. Le nombre de chômeurs de longue durée (chômeurs depuis plus d'un an) a diminué de 5% en 2018 par rapport à l'année précédente. Cependant, le nombre de personnes au chômage depuis plus de 5 ans n'a cessé d'augmenter, atteignant 453, le nombre le plus élevé jamais enregistré. La part des chômeurs de longue durée (> 1 ans) est de 52%. Par comparaison, en 2001, la répartition était inversée : 46 % de chômeurs de courte durée et 37 % de chômeurs de longue durée.

En ce qui concerne le niveau de qualification, ce sont les personnes sous-qualifiées qui ont le plus de difficultés à trouver leur place sur le marché du travail. En Communauté germanophone, leur part correspond à 43,6%.

##### **1.2 Mesures dans le cadre du Concept de Développement Régional (CDR)**

La Communauté germanophone prend soin des générations futures. C'est pourquoi en 2008, elle a commandé l'élaboration d'un Concept de Développement Régional (CDR) (*Regionales Entwicklungskonzept - REK*) qui décrit la vision d'avenir pour la Communauté germanophone dans une perspective jusqu'en 2025. En s'appuyant sur une analyse approfondie de la région, le CDR a pour objectif de mettre en exergue les mesures avec lesquelles la Communauté Germanophone peut relever les défis actuels et futurs.

## **Projet d'avenir – Augmenter les perspectives d'emploi et garantir la disponibilité de personnel qualifié**

Quelque 2 360 citoyens de la Communauté germanophone étaient à la recherche d'un emploi en 2018. Parallèlement, des dizaines d'employeurs cherchent tous les mois des travailleurs ou de la main-d'œuvre qualifiée adaptés à leurs besoins, parfois sans succès. L'offre et la demande sur le marché du travail ne se rencontrent pas toujours. D'une part, les profils et parcours professionnels des demandeurs d'emploi sont très variés. En même temps, les exigences du monde du travail sont en constante évolution. Si un profil professionnel était encore demandé il y a quelques années, il est possible qu'il n'offre aujourd'hui pratiquement plus de chance d'emploi. Par contre, d'autres profils professionnels se retrouvent parmi les métiers en pénurie, car la demande a fortement augmenté ces dernières années.

### **Sous-projets : Assurer le transfert de compétences et soutenir l'emploi efficacement**

Aujourd'hui, les personnes qui perdent leur emploi à un âge avancé doivent continuer à prouver très longtemps qu'elles sont toujours disponibles sur le marché du travail. Les jeunes, tout comme les demandeurs d'emploi à la santé précaire, sont contrôlés de beaucoup plus près. Il est nécessaire d'offrir à ces personnes un accompagnement adapté.

La proximité de l'Allemagne et du Luxembourg, la petite taille de notre région et le pourcentage relativement élevé de personnes actives plus âgées constituent d'autres caractéristiques de notre marché du travail. Avec des mesures d'activation adaptées, nous pouvons profiter des opportunités que ces particularités nous offrent.

Dans le cadre de la **6ème réforme de l'Etat**, un ensemble de compétences relatives au marché de l'emploi a été transféré aux entités fédérées. A partir du 1er juillet 2014, les Régions ont reçu ainsi la pleine compétence de décision et d'exécution de ces matières. Le 1er janvier 2016, une série de compétences a été transférée de la Région Wallonne à la Communauté germanophone.

Les nouvelles compétences sont graduellement adaptées aux spécificités de la Communauté germanophone :

#### a) Contrôle de la disponibilité et de la dispense

Le 1er janvier 2016, l'*Arbeitsamt* (Service Office de l'emploi de la Communauté germanophone) de la Communauté germanophone a repris les compétences du contrôle de la disponibilité et de la dispense de la disponibilité.

#### b) Agences locales pour l'Emploi (ALE)

Le 1er janvier 2018, l'*Arbeitsamt* a repris les tâches des ALE. L'ALE est un type particulier d'emploi dans lequel les chômeurs de longue durée ou les bénéficiaires du revenu d'intégration sociale ou de l'aide sociale financière sont autorisés à effectuer des travaux occasionnels et sont payés par chèque ("chèques LBA").

#### c) Groupes cibles

Depuis le 1er janvier 2019, les employeurs qui embauchent des personnes défavorisées sur le marché du travail de la Communauté germanophone seront soutenus financièrement par les subventions AktiF ou AktiF Plus.



Les employeurs commerciaux et non commerciaux ainsi que les pouvoirs publics peuvent bénéficier de cette mesure. Si un employeur embauche un demandeur d'emploi qui répond aux critères suivants, il reçoit une subvention salariale.

Une subvention AktiF peut être octroyée pour l'occupation de demandeurs d'emploi inoccupés qui :

- sont âgés de 25 ans au plus, sont inscrits d'au moins six mois auprès de l'Arbeitsamt et sont porteurs au plus d'un diplôme de l'enseignement secondaire supérieur ou d'un certificat d'aptitudes professionnelles de l'apprentissage ;
- sont âgés de 25 ans au plus et ne sont porteurs ni d'un diplôme de l'enseignement secondaire supérieur ni d'un certificat d'aptitudes professionnelles de l'apprentissage ;
- sont âgés de 50 ans au moins et ont perdu leur dernier emploi involontairement ;
- sont inscrits d'au moins douze mois auprès de l'Arbeitsamt ;
- sont des victimes de restructurations.

Une subvention AktiF Plus peut être octroyer pour l'occupation de demandeurs d'emploi inoccupés qui apportent la preuve de l'existence d'au moins deux obstacles rencontrés. Sont considérés comme " obstacles rencontrés " :

- la preuve d'une réduction de la capacité de travail;
- la preuve d'une durée d'inscription d'au moins vingt-quatre mois auprès de l'Arbeitsamt;
- l'absence d'un diplôme de l'enseignement secondaire supérieur ou, selon le cas, d'un certificat d'aptitudes professionnelles de l'apprentissage;
- le fait de ne pas avoir atteint le niveau B1 conformément au Cadre européen commun de références pour les langues tant en allemand qu'en français.

De plus, il y a toujours la réduction de l'ONSS pour les travailleurs plus âgés. Cela est particulièrement avantageux pour les employeurs du secteur commercial et de certains secteurs non commerciaux.

#### d) Dispense de la disponibilité

Comme déjà évoqué plus haut, 44% des chômeurs en Communauté germanophone sont sous-qualifiés. Un bon instrument pour réduire ce chiffre est la dispense de la disponibilité transférée dans le cadre de la 6<sup>ème</sup> Réforme de l'Etat.

L'arrêté relative aux formations professionnelles destinées aux demandeurs d'emploi réorganisent le système de formations. Depuis janvier 2019, l'accompagnement individuel du demandeur d'emploi devrait être intensifié. Des solutions sur mesure doivent être proposées au demandeur d'emploi. Le demandeur d'emploi choisit la formation qui lui offre les meilleures opportunités sur le marché du travail.

Afin de motiver le demandeur d'emploi à suivre une formation, la dispense de la recherche active de l'emploi et la prime pour suivre une formation ont été révisées.

Le chômeur complet indemnisé peut être dispensé. Cela signifie qu'il est exempté de la recherche active d'emploi pendant sa formation et qu'il continue à percevoir des allocations de chômage. Le but de cette

réforme est d'adapter les dispenses aux spécificités de la Communauté germanophone pour plus d'efficacité et de transparence.

Concernant la prime de formation, la Communauté germanophone remplacera la prime horaire de 1€ par une prime mensuelle de 150€ par mois. Cette prime est calculée au prorata de la durée de la formation. La prime s'adresse aux groupes cibles suivants : les jeunes demandeurs d'emploi de moins de 25 ans, les demandeurs d'emploi âgés de 55 et plus, les demandeurs d'emploi de longue durée et les demandeurs d'emploi sous-qualifiés.

### **Sous-projet : Placement centralisé**

Un autre sous-projet est « *Vermittlung wie aus einer Hand* » (placement centralisé). Les mesures de « placement centralisé » ont pour objectif d'éviter l'effet carrousel qui consiste à renvoyer sans cesse le demandeur d'emploi d'un établissement à l'autre. Ce processus est très contraignant, tant pour le personnel d'encadrement et que pour le demandeur d'emploi qui souhaiteraient utiliser leur énergie à meilleur escient. Les mesures décrites ici s'axent principalement sur les questions organisationnelles liées au problème de l'effet carrousel. En étroite collaboration avec l'ensemble des acteurs de terrain, nous vérifierons comment nous pourrions, sur la base des nouvelles possibilités que nous offre la sixième réforme de l'État, réduire les pertes d'information et les frictions, par exemple au travers de solutions techniques. Nous souhaitons ainsi atteindre notre objectif, qui est de garantir une prestation de service adaptée au citoyen, tant au niveau de l'accompagnement que du placement.

### **Elaboration du CDR III**

La deuxième phase de mise en œuvre du CDR est presque terminée. C'est pourquoi le CDR III est en cours de préparation. Il s'agit du troisième et dernier programme de mise en œuvre du projet « *Ostbelgien leben 2025* ».

Quatre idées de projets concernent la politique de l'emploi en Communauté germanophone.

En voici un aperçu :

#### *Fachkräftebündnis Ostbelgien* (alliance pour l'emploi)

Un thème central de la politique de la Communauté germanophone est de sauvegarder la main d'œuvre qualifiée.

En 2017, le Gouvernement de la Communauté germanophone a décidé de créer le « *Fachkräftebündnis Ostbelgien* ». De nombreux employeurs en Communauté germanophone sont désespérément à la recherche de travailleurs qualifiés. La liste des professions dites en pénurie est longue. La pénurie de travailleurs qualifiés constitue un obstacle au développement économique. Si les services, qu'ils soient privés ou publics, ne sont plus disponibles dans la mesure requise la pénurie de travailleurs qualifiés a un effet négatif sur la qualité de vie de la population.

En 2018, une analyse sur la demande de main-d'œuvre qualifiée et du potentiel a été réalisée. Sur cette base, les partenaires au sein de l'alliance vont élaborer en 2019 des secteurs d'activité et un premier plan d'action.

## Promotion et développement de l'économie sociale

Le Gouvernement souhaite renforcer l'économie solidaire en tant que secteur économique au potentiel d'emploi important. De nouvelles niches pourraient être exploitées si la gamme de produits offerts est élargie ou adaptée. Il est surtout important de mieux cerner les besoins de la société pour lesquels aucune offre (suffisante) n'était disponible jusqu'à présent. Dans ce contexte, des synergies nouvelles ou plus intenses entre les entreprises sociales et les autres partenaires peuvent s'avérer bénéfiques. L'essor de l'économie solidaire doit notamment permettre la création d'emplois sur le long terme, en particulier pour le public cible que représentent les demandeurs d'emploi éloignés du marché du travail.

L'objectif du projet est la rédaction et l'adoption d'un décret de base pour l'économie sociale en Communauté germanophone, qui structure et s'adapte aux conditions et aux besoins locaux.

## Réforme des mesures de formation liées à l'emploi et des systèmes d'incitation à la formation pour les demandeurs d'emploi

Les objectifs sont :

- une politique de formation professionnelle cohérente et adaptée au marché du travail de la Communauté germanophone (soutien aux demandeurs d'emploi en formation continue et qualification pour augmenter leurs chances sur le marché du travail),
- faciliter l'accès à la formation (continue) pour les personnes qui souhaitent se réintégrer sur le marché du travail et pour celles qui doivent / veulent se réorienter.

## Placement centralisé II

Voir description du projet « placement centralisé I », page 5

Le projet de suivi a les objectifs suivants :

- l'amélioration de l'offre des services aux demandeurs d'emploi,
- le développement et la mise en œuvre d'une offre de services communs.

### **1.3 Réforme du placement des demandeurs d'emploi**

Depuis 2014, l'*Arbeitsamt* connaît un processus continu de développement. Tant les réformes susmentionnées que la réforme des services de placement visent à actualiser les offres de l'*Arbeitsamt* et à les adapter aux besoins des demandeurs d'emploi et des employeurs de la Communauté germanophone.

L'*Arbeitsamt* est en train de réformer son travail en matière de placement. Dans un premier temps, un inventaire détaillé des approches existantes en Communauté germanophone a été dressé. Les systèmes de placement des régions et pays voisins ont été analysés de manière à identifier d'éventuels synergies et points d'ancrage.

Un nouveau concept de médiation a été développé. Afin de renforcer la relation entre le service de l'emploi et les entreprises situées en Communauté germanophone, la stratégie de communication sera améliorée dans un premier temps. Les mesures prises doivent tenir compte des besoins du marché de l'emploi. Le but ultime sera l'intégration durable du demandeur d'emploi sur le marché de l'emploi.

A partir de mi-2019, l'*Arbeitsamt* va proposer de nouveaux services en ligne dont un portail des employeurs et un portail de candidats. Le futur portail des employeurs ne fournira pas seulement des

informations sur les offres d'emploi, mais donnera également aux entreprises la possibilité de se présenter. D'autre part, le nouveau portail de candidats offre également de nombreuses perspectives, par exemple, les demandeurs d'emploi peuvent créer un CV, rechercher des offres d'emploi, s'inscrire comme demandeurs d'emploi et même demander des documents ou certificats.

## **1.4 Garantie pour la jeunesse**

En ce qui concerne la **garantie pour la jeunesse**, les États membres sont invités à proposer une offre de formation ou de travail dans un délai de quatre mois à tout jeune de moins de 25 ans qui n'est ni en situation de travail, ni de formation. La Communauté germanophone travaille elle aussi activement à la mise en œuvre de cette garantie. Le but est d'améliorer la compréhension des besoins particuliers des jeunes vivant des situations de vie variées et d'intégrer ces besoins dans nos mesures.

En 2015, l'*Arbeitsamt* de la Communauté germanophone a établi une **évaluation de la garantie pour la jeunesse**.

Les besoins des jeunes demandeurs d'emploi demandent une attention particulière dans chaque processus de réforme.

L'*Arbeitsamt* soutient les jeunes de manière proactive. Il s'agit d'un soutien à la recherche d'emploi articulé autour d'un plan d'action. Celui-ci est élaboré par le demandeur d'emploi et son conseiller d'emploi. Afin de mieux intégrer les jeunes demandeurs d'emploi, l'*Arbeitsamt* offre différentes formations professionnelles. En plus l'*Arbeitsamt* collabore avec d'autres opérateurs de formation et/ou reconnaît leurs formations. L'offre est très diversifiée : qualifications professionnelles, formations individuelles en entreprise, stages, projets d'insertions socio-professionnelles.

En plus, la réforme des groupes cibles privilège les jeunes demandeurs d'emploi. Un employeur qui embauche un demandeur d'emploi de moins 25 ans qui est sous-qualifié (ni CESS, ni d'apprentissage) ou un demandeur d'emploi de moins 25 ans qui est moyennement qualifié (CESS, apprentissage) et sans emploi depuis au moins 6 mois, pourrait recevoir une aide à l'emploi.

## **2 Education et formation professionnelle, formation tout au long de la vie**

### **2.1 Réformes secteur de l'enseignement**

En juin 2018, un nouvel accord a été conclu avec les autorités scolaires quant au projet « *ostbelgische Schulen online* » qui vise à optimiser davantage les conditions préalables en vue de transmettre l'information et l'éducation aux médias dans toutes les écoles primaires. Ainsi, les enseignants sont invités à utiliser dans la préparation de leur cours un référentiel de l'information et de l'éducation aux médias.

Compte tenu des demandes et des tâches croissantes imputées aux enseignants professant en maternelle, la fonction d'assistant a été instaurée.

Les assistants sont présents ainsi tout au long de l'année pour soutenir les enseignants dans leur travail. Diverses tâches leur incombent et on retient entre autres le soutien lors d'activités pédagogiques, des repas de midi, etc. Dans la même optique, le poste de secrétaire en chef dans les écoles primaires a été créé afin d'apporter un soutien principalement administratif aux directeurs d'école primaire dans leurs diverses tâches.

A partir de 2021/2022, les enfants pourront intégrer l'école maternelle dès deux ans et demi en Communauté germanophone ce qui n'est pas encore le cas puisque l'entrée se fait à partir de trois ans. L'introduction du poste d'assistant en maternelle facilitera définitivement la mise en œuvre de cette nouvelle réforme et va donc de pair avec elle.

Ensuite, suite au décret de 2019, une réforme du capital horaire sera entérinée dans les écoles d'enseignement secondaire.

### **Référentiels de compétences**

Depuis 2008, la Communauté germanophone assure la qualité de son enseignement sur la base de référentiels axés sur les compétences.

Dans le cadre du Concept de Développement Régional (CDR) et, en particulier son projet «améliorer le multilinguisme», de nouveaux référentiels sont élaborés. Ainsi, pour le néerlandais, la rédaction du référentiel à l'intention des classes de l'enseignement secondaire général et technique de transition, technique de qualification, de l'enseignement professionnel a été réalisée. Il fixe les compétences requises et terminales que les élèves devraient atteindre.

De même, le référentiel d'allemand destiné à l'enseignement technique de qualification et l'enseignement professionnel devrait être soumis au vote au Parlement.

Depuis juin 2018, une généralisation des tests DELF pour tous les élèves de la sixième année du primaire, de la sixième année du secondaire et de la troisième année d'apprentissage des Centres de formation des classes moyennes (ZAWM) a lieu pour le français, première langue étrangère. Ces actions visent à améliorer les compétences linguistiques des élèves en optimisant les pratiques de l'enseignement des langues modernes.

L'élaboration de référentiels de compétences pour les cours de mathématiques, de géographie pour l'enseignement technique de qualification et professionnel est soumis au vote du Parlement et celui d'histoire pour les 2ème et 3ème degrés de l'enseignement secondaire professionnel et technique de qualification a été rédigé et a pour objectif d'élever le niveau de compétences des élèves de cette filière à moyen et à long terme.

### **Réformes au niveau des infrastructures**

La Communauté germanophone a également entrepris certains projets de type structurel. L'école primaire de Bütgenbach, le centre Kaleido à Saint Vith et à Büllingen sont concernés. Elle prend part aussi à des partenariats publics-privés en vue de rénover et de construire de nouvelles écoles. Depuis 2015, un deuxième partenariat public-privé est en préparation. Enfin, en étroite collaboration avec la ville d'Eupen, les élèves de l'académie de musique vont pouvoir intégrer leur nouveau bâtiment en avril 2019.

## **2.2 Egalité des chances en matière d'éducation et d'intégration**

L'égalité des chances en matière d'éducation et l'amélioration qualitative de l'enseignement sont les missions phares de la politique éducative en Communauté germanophone. Elle a pour objectif d'accroître les chances de réussite de tous les élèves. Dans le cadre du Concept de Développement Régional (CDR), le projet « soutenir les élèves individuellement » vise entre autres cette égalité des chances en matière d'éducation et intégration.

Afin que les élèves acquièrent les compétences essentielles, il est nécessaire de proposer des offres d'apprentissage spécifiques qui tiennent compte à la fois des forces et des capacités, mais aussi des faiblesses de chaque enfant et adolescents. Dans ce contexte, des projets visant à sensibiliser les filles spécifiquement aux métiers techniques et scientifiques continuent à être réalisés.

De manière générale, différentes mesures ont été prises dans l'enseignement pour augmenter le taux de réussite scolaire et pour diminuer les taux d'échec et de décrochage scolaire, tenant compte de la Convention de l'ONU relative aux droits des personnes handicapées. Par ailleurs la Communauté germanophone poursuit ses efforts vers une école inclusive.

Par un décret voté le 20 juin 2016, un système de « compensation des désavantages » (mesures de facilitation spécifique en cas de handicap) et de « protection de notes » pour certaines compétences (non-évaluation de certaines compétences en raison d'un handicap) à la demande motivée des parents a été mis en place pour compenser temporairement certains déficits des élèves. Le système de compensation des désavantages est en vigueur depuis le 1er septembre 2017. La protection des notes est en cours depuis le 1er septembre 2018.

Ces systèmes s'appliquent également aux élèves primo-arrivants, présentant des lacunes temporaires dans l'apprentissage de la langue de l'enseignement, et ce en vertu du décret du 26 juin 2017 relatif à la scolarisation d'élèves primo-arrivants.

En effet, le nombre d'enfants dont la langue maternelle n'est pas l'allemand n'a cessé d'augmenter ces dernières années, et en particulier depuis 2015. Toutes les écoles ont à présent pour mission au quotidien d'intégrer entre autres des élèves issus de l'immigration (y compris de deuxième ou troisième génération) ou des élèves primo-arrivants par exemple. Il est indispensable d'impliquer ces élèves et leurs parents dans le processus de développement scolaire.

A cet effet, le décret du 26 juin 2017 vise à accroître les moyens humains et financiers pour la scolarisation et l'intégration des élèves primo-arrivants en renforçant leur apprentissage de la langue.

De même, un ancrage législatif du projet « Time-Out », visant à offrir un espace à des élèves de 12 à 18 ans qui se trouvent en difficulté de scolarisation voire en décrochage, a été réalisée. Durant l'année scolaire 2017-2018, 18 élèves ont été accueillis temporairement dans ce dispositif qui est organisé au sein du centre pour un enseignement adapté et qui vise à offrir aux élèves une structure d'accueil en dehors du milieu scolaire.

En matière d'interculturalité, des mesures diverses ont été développées afin de sensibiliser les acteurs des communautés éducatives aux différences culturelles et de développer des compétences interculturelles à partir de l'année scolaire 2016-2017, dédiée au dialogue interculturel et interreligieux. Depuis, un centre de référence pour l'intégration et la migration a été mis en place, des formations continues spécifiques sont organisées à l'intention du personnel de l'enseignement, du matériel interreligieux est mis à la disposition des écoles et des programmes scolaires interculturels sont développés, y compris durant l'année 2017-2018.

### **2.3 Une approche pratique de la formation en alternance**

Il est indéniable que la main d'œuvre technique qualifiée se fait de plus en plus rare sur le marché du travail. Dans le cadre du Concept de Développement Régional (CDR), le projet d'avenir «Valoriser la formation technique et professionnelle» vise à contribuer à une modification de la donne. La Communauté germanophone met notamment l'accent sur l'attractivité des différents types de formation technique et professionnelle, l'objectif étant de susciter une acceptation générale au sein de la société et de donner une valeur égale aux différentes formes d'enseignement.

De même, le projet du « Valider les compétences » (mis en place dans le cadre de l'apprentissage tout au long de la vie et soutient par le Fonds Sociale Européen FSE), vise à reconnaître formellement des compétences acquises également de manière non-formelle et extrascolaire. Il vise à promouvoir le développement professionnel de la population active. Il est destiné aux personnes qui cherchent un changement de carrière ; veulent sécuriser leurs emplois, trouver un emploi ou encore faire reconnaître et développer leurs compétences informelles et non-formelles.

La valorisation de la formation technique et professionnelle ne sera possible que si elle devient une préoccupation prioritaire de toutes les écoles. Ce ne sont pas uniquement les écoles secondaires techniques et professionnelles qui sont concernées, mais également les écoles primaires et les écoles secondaires d'enseignement général. Des activités de sensibilisation aux métiers techniques et à la formation y conduisant sont organisées.

La création d'un campus pour le centre de formation des classes moyennes (ZAWM) et l'institut technique (TI) à St. Vith, à l'instar du campus déjà existant à Eupen, ouvre des perspectives de coopération entre les écoles secondaires d'orientation essentiellement générale, les écoles d'orientation qualifiante et les centres de formation des Classes moyennes (ZAWM).

De plus, l'offre de « formation professionnelle élémentaire » perdure et permet aux élèves qui en ont le besoin, de se préparer pendant une année scolaire à la formation en alternance. Afin de faciliter l'accès à une formation en alternance, notamment pour des filles ou des jeunes femmes, des adolescents issus de l'immigration ou des jeunes avec des difficultés d'apprentissage, la Communauté germanophone s'efforce de développer de nouvelles professions dans le cadre de la formation en alternance.

Qui plus est, pour contrer le décrochage scolaire et indirectement rendre l'offre de formation professionnelle plus inclusive des mesures d'encadrement, de consolidation de parcours et de prévention, d'empêchement d'abandons sont mises en place.

L'assistance prévoit

- le recoupement entre l'école et la carrière personnelle;
- l'analyse des forces, des intérêts et des motivations de l'apprenti;
- l'aide à trouver un nouveau parcours professionnel ou académique;
- la création d'un plan d'accompagnement individuel;
- des modules de formation adaptés aux besoins du jeune (test d'anxiété, de communication, de confiance en soi, de compétences sociales, ...);
- l'assistance en cas de conflits dans l'entreprise et / ou à l'école;
- l'accompagnement des organisations partenaires.

La participation des jeunes à ce projet est volontaire et la durée du coaching peut varier en fonction des besoins. La méthode de travail du projet se caractérise par un degré élevé de coopération entre les diverses parties prenantes.

A côté de cela, une autre nouveauté mérite d'être mentionnée. Il s'agit de l'ouverture de l'apprentissage à des personnes de plus de 29 ans qui perçoivent un revenu de remplacement. Celles-ci ont maintenant la possibilité de signer un contrat d'apprentissage. Cette offre s'adresse d'une part aux demandeurs

d'emploi percevant soit une allocation de chômage, soit un revenu d'intégration et d'autre part, aux personnes qui décident de se tourner vers un emploi en pénurie, en demande de travailleurs qualifiés.

Le CDR comporte des sous-projets relatifs à l'enseignement et la formation afin de favoriser le processus d'acquisition des compétences des élèves. Au travers de projets bien spécifiques, la maîtrise de compétences telles que les compétences en Technologie de l'Information et de la Communication (TIC), les compétences linguistiques ainsi que les compétences personnelles et sociales seront renforcées.

De nouvelles coopérations avec des hautes écoles/universités sont mises en place afin de développer de nouvelles possibilités de formations d'enseignement supérieur en alternance.

Au-delà de cela, la Communauté germanophone favorise la collaboration entre les responsables de la formation et de l'enseignement, les institutions publiques et les entreprises afin de promouvoir la coopération entre les écoles et les entreprises. La réalisation de projets communs et à la mise en pratique des référentiels de compétences comme le référentiel concernant la préparation des élèves au choix professionnel et à l'orientation professionnelle sont d'actualité. Les entreprises participent activement à la formation des élèves et des apprentis en leur permettant d'effectuer les stages prévus dans le programme de formation au sein des entreprises.

### **3 La jeunesse comme question transversale dans les domaines emploi & éducation et formation professionnelle, éducation permanente**

#### **3.1 La situation actuelle de vie des jeunes de l'Est de la Belgique**

En 2015, le Parlement de la Communauté germanophone a décidé de faire réaliser tous les cinq ans une étude scientifique sur la situation des jeunes dans l'Est de la Belgique. Le premier rapport sur la jeunesse a été rédigé par les deux instituts de recherche "Onderzoeksinstituut voor Arbeid en Samenleving" (HIVA) et "Centre for Sociological Research" (CeSo) de l'Université catholique de Louvain. Il offre un premier bilan exhaustif sur la situation de vie des jeunes de l'Est de la Belgique et décrit leur état d'esprit par rapport à celle-ci. Les conclusions suivantes ont été tirées pour le domaine "transition de l'éducation à la vie active" :

La transition au départ de l'école vers la formation professionnelle diffère du passage qui mène de l'université à la vie active. Les apprentis choisissent souvent la formation professionnelle comme deuxième meilleure option en raison de problèmes scolaires. En conséquence, beaucoup d'entre eux apprennent une profession dont ils ne sont pas totalement convaincus. Bien qu'ils visent habituellement un « Gesellenbrief » (certificat d'aptitude professionnelle ou « diplôme de compagnon »), une forte proportion d'apprentis ne veulent pas rester dans la profession choisie. Ceux qui passent de l'enseignement supérieur au monde du travail sont confrontés à la décision de devoir choisir à la fois leur premier emploi et leur lieu de résidence. De nombreux diplômés de l'Est de la Belgique souhaitent retourner chez eux pour travailler - certains directement après leurs études, d'autres après une première expérience professionnelle autre part. Les participants aux groupes de discussion ont toutefois attiré l'attention sur leur sentiment que, en fonction de leur diplôme, les possibilités d'emploi sont limitées dans l'Est de la Belgique. Néanmoins, les statistiques semblent démontrer le contraire, c'est-à-dire une position plutôt favorable des jeunes adultes sur le marché du travail dans l'Est de la Belgique (qui se manifeste par un faible taux de chômage, des périodes de placement et d'intégration sur le marché du travail relativement courtes). Trois aspects semblent particulièrement importants pour les jeunes travailleurs de l'Est de la Belgique: la stabilité et la sécurité, les possibilités d'apprentissage tout au long de la vie et la conciliation de la vie professionnelle et privée (famille).



Le lien entre le système éducatif et le marché du travail fera l'objet d'une étude approfondie basée sur une collecte de données ciblée dans les années à venir. Afin de promouvoir les formations professionnelles et les professions MINT, les chercheurs de l'Université catholique de Louvain conseillent de développer de nouvelles initiatives.

Cela aurait également pour effet de promouvoir l'Est de la Belgique en tant que région vivante et de travail, afin de maintenir son attractivité et atténuer d'éventuels défis à long terme tels que le changement démographique et une éventuelle pénurie de travailleurs qualifiés.

En promouvant spécifiquement l'Est de la Belgique en tant que région de vie et de travail attrayante, les jeunes pourraient être encouragés à revenir dans leur région d'origine après leurs études ou leur première expérience professionnelle. De plus, d'autres jeunes adultes vivant actuellement dans les régions environnantes pourraient également être encouragés à déménager ou à travailler dans l'Est de la Belgique.

### **3.2 Mesures dans le cadre du Concept de Développement Régional (CDR)**

Le Concept de Développement Régional (CDR) contient les visions futures du gouvernement pour la Communauté germanophone de la Belgique. Un projet CDR en particulier concerne le développement de la formation des professionnels travaillant avec les jeunes. Ce projet est le résultat d'une constatation par le secteur, qu'il devient de plus en plus difficile d'attirer les gens vers ce travail varié et passionnant auprès des jeunes, dû notamment au fait que les qualifications scolaires actuelles ne préparent pas suffisamment au travail de jeunesse.

Le gouvernement a décidé d'offrir une formation spécialisée qui, s'oriente sur une formation en travail de jeunesse existante en Autriche. Un projet Erasmus+ a été initié pour s'assurer de son développement.

Etant donné qu'il n'y a pas de formation pour les animateurs socio-éducatifs dans l'Est de la Belgique (ou en Belgique tout court), il a d'abord fallu établir un profil de compétences distinct le rôle du travailleur de jeunesse. Ensuite, le développement d'une formation continue en tant que travailleur de jeunesse en Communauté germanophone a été entamé et s'est orienté sur les cours de base et les cours avancés sur le travail de jeunesse existants en Autriche. Au cours du processus, le niveau de cette formation a été adaptée à celui du baccalauréat (niveau 5 du Cadre national des qualifications). Le résultat de ce projet Erasmus+ est un manuel modulaire destiné à la formation continue des travailleurs de jeunesse.

L'élaboration de ce projet et les consultations nécessaires ont abouti à une décision commune des trois ministres chargés de la jeunesse, des affaires sociales et de l'éducation de préparer un baccalauréat en travail social dans la Communauté germanophone. La décision prend aussi en compte la proposition des modules individuels du manuel élaboré dans le cadre du projet Erasmus+ comme formation continue pour les travailleurs de jeunesse.

#### **Elaboration du CDR III**

La deuxième phase de mise en œuvre du CDR est presque terminée. C'est pourquoi le CDR III est en cours de préparation. Il s'agit du troisième et dernier programme de mise en œuvre du projet « *Ostbelgien leben 2025* ». En voici un aperçu :

La jeunesse est une phase indépendante de la vie. Pour atteindre les objectifs de la politique de la jeunesse, il faut une alliance forte pour les jeunes avec une nouvelle politique de la jeunesse intersectorielle

qui prenne en compte les intérêts de tous les jeunes. Pour le CDR III, l'approche transversale doit être développée et mieux ancrée.

Le gouvernement de la Communauté germanophone met en œuvre le *Jugendstrategieplan* depuis 2013 (« Plan Stratégique pour la Jeunesse »). L'objectif est d'améliorer la situation des jeunes dans la Communauté germanophone. L'ensemble du gouvernement soutient le Plan Stratégique pour la Jeunesse parce qu'il y a des possibilités dans tous les secteurs de politique.

Les priorités du Plan Stratégique pour la Jeunesse actuel (2016-2020) sont les suivantes : fort contre la dépendance, promotion de la diversité, éducation politique, émotions et image de soi.

Tant la Stratégie européenne pour la Jeunesse (EY Youth Strategy 2019-2027) que les résultats du *Jugendbericht* 2018 et les *Sozialraumanalysen* (Analyses de l'espace social) 2019 détermineront de manière significative les thèmes prioritaires du prochain Plan stratégique pour la Jeunesse (2021-2025) de la Communauté germanophone. Parmi les priorités possibles figurent la numérisation et la participation effective des jeunes.

### **3.3 Le travail de jeunesse**

Le décret du 6 décembre 2011 relatif à la promotion du travail de jeunesse en Communauté germanophone est entré en vigueur en 2012. Entre autres, le décret a fortement réformé le travail de jeunesse ouvert. Dans le cadre de sa fonction de suivi et de contrôle, le ministère de la Communauté germanophone a constaté ces dernières années que le travail de jeunesse ouvert, tel qu'il fonctionne actuellement, rencontre de nombreuses difficultés et ne répond pas pleinement aux besoins des institutions et des jeunes en général. De ce fait, le décret fait l'objet d'une évaluation depuis fin 2016. L'objectif de la révision est d'examiner si la base juridique répond toujours aux exigences et quels ajustements peuvent être nécessaires afin d'améliorer encore la qualité du travail des institutions de jeunesse<sup>57</sup> et de mieux répondre aux besoins des jeunes de l'Est de la Belgique.

Après un sondage en ligne en octobre 2017 et une « open-space conference » avec le secteur en mai 2018, un groupe de pilotage composé de représentants du secteur, des institutions de jeunesse, du gouvernement et du ministère s'est penché sur cette question depuis janvier 2019. De mai à septembre 2019, des discussions approfondies auront lieu avec les institutions de jeunesse afin de formuler les adaptations correspondantes du décret au cours de l'année 2020 et de poursuivre le travail conceptuel. En 2021, le nouveau décret sur la promotion du travail de jeunesse en Communauté germanophone entrera en vigueur.

## **4 Cohésion sociale et lutte contre la pauvreté**

### **4.1 Intégration de personnes issues de l'immigration**

La communauté germanophone a adopté en décembre 2017 un décret concernant l'intégration de toute personne issue de la migration. Le décret est entré en vigueur le 1<sup>er</sup> janvier 2018. L'arrêté du gouvernement portant exécution du décret du 11 décembre 2017 relatif à l'intégration et au vivre ensemble dans la diversité est entré en vigueur le 1<sup>er</sup> décembre 2018.

Une partie du décret et de l'arrêté est consacrée au parcours d'intégration, instituant la nature obligatoire de celui-ci pour quelques groupes de personnes. Pourtant le décret prévoit aussi que le parcours d'intégration est ouvert pour tous les migrants.

---

<sup>57</sup> Organisations de jeunesse, Centre d'information jeunesse, Bureau jeunesse, Travail de jeunesse ouvert

Il se compose de quatre étapes, qui sont respectivement réglés dans le décret:

- 1) L'accueil
- 2) Cours de langue « allemand comme langue étrangère »
- 3) Cours d'intégration
- 4) Entretien de conseil concernant l'intégration socio-professionnelle

De plus, une organisation a été reconnue comme centre de référence d'intégration qui est en charge d'accompagner les migrants qui suivent le parcours d'intégration. Cette reconnaissance est réglée dans l'arrêté du gouvernement. Le centre organise également une consultation juridique pour les migrants ayant des questions sur leur titre de séjour, soutient des organisations, qui travaillent avec les migrants et est en charge de la sensibilisation de la population.

Ces mesures font également partie du projet du Concept du Développement Régional (CDR) du gouvernement. La partie « *Miteinander stark* » est dédiée à l'intégration.

En outre, à côté du parcours d'intégration, beaucoup d'autres mesures ont été prises et prévues dans le décret relatif à l'intégration et au vivre ensemble dans la diversité, comme un appel à projets du gouvernement afin de soutenir des petits projets d'intégration ou de lutte contre la pauvreté. Grâce à cet appel à projets 15 projets ont été réalisés. Ces projets consistent en des offres innovatrices qui visent à promouvoir l'intégration, à améliorer le vivre ensemble dans la diversité ou à lutter contre la pauvreté. Ils ont un ancrage local, répondent aux besoins du public cible et représentent une plus-value par rapport aux projets déjà en cours.

## **4.2 Intégration et lutte contre la pauvreté**

En mai 2016 le Centre de Recherche en Inclusion Sociale de l'Université de Mons a présenté le deuxième rapport sur l'analyse de la pauvreté, la précarité et la vulnérabilité sociale en Communauté germanophone. Ce rapport est l'aboutissement d'un travail de recherche-action de deux années et vise à mettre en place des outils et des instruments numériques susceptibles de renforcer la cohérence de l'action sociale en Communauté germanophone. Sur base des résultats des deux rapports du Centre de Recherche en Inclusion Sociale de l'Université de Mons sur l'analyse de la pauvreté, la précarité et la vulnérabilité sociale en Communauté germanophone (2014, 2015) et des données récoltées par l'observatoire de la pauvreté, le gouvernement dédie dans le cadre du Concept de Développement Régional (CDR) un projet d'avenir à la lutte contre la pauvreté.

Les cinq grands axes de la politique de lutte contre la pauvreté future sont :

- Promouvoir l'intégration socio-professionnelle

L'intégration socio-professionnelle ciblée doit être promue de manière durable. L'objectif est de créer l'autonomie et des perspectives pour les personnes, d'assurer les moyens de subsistance et de la sécurité.

Un exemple peut être le projet de coopération des CPAS de Raeren, Eupen et Lontzen « les jeunes bénéficiaires d'un revenu d'intégration ayant besoin d'un soutien particulier : sur le chemin d'une intégration professionnelle », qui offre des mesures spécifiques et un accompagnement pour les jeunes de moins de trente ans afin de faciliter leur intégration professionnelle.

- Investir dans la formation

Le risque de pauvreté est particulièrement élevé chez les personnes qui n'ont pas terminé une formation ou l'école. Dans le domaine de l'éducation, la Communauté germanophone s'appuie sur un ensemble de mesures destinées à aider les jeunes en particulier à retrouver leur insertion professionnelle et donc leur indépendance financière.

– Ancrer structurellement les formes de coopération

La réduction de la pauvreté ne peut réussir que si un certain nombre de mesures complémentaires sont prises et si tous les acteurs concernés travaillent ensemble. La base d'une mise en réseau a été posée dans le cadre du CDR I.

Le CDR I a été le premier pas vers la création d'un réseau pour la promotion de la réduction de la pauvreté. Maintenant, il s'agit d'ancrer ces expériences, méthodes et instruments de coopération dans une structure de réseau contraignante.

Afin d'élaborer le plan stratégique de lutte contre la pauvreté dans le cadre du CDR III et de faire lumière sur ce thème complexe et multiforme de la pauvreté sous tous ses aspects, un groupe de travail composé de représentants d'organisations doit être constitué. Ces représentants sont, en raison de leur profession, en contact direct avec des personnes touchées ou menacées par la pauvreté. L'objectif est de mettre en place un réseau qui, au-delà de l'élaboration du plan stratégique de lutte contre la pauvreté, se consacre également à ce thème et dont les membres se réunissent à intervalles réguliers.

– Créer une base légale pour guider la politique de lutte contre la pauvreté et ancrer les différentes responsabilités

Dans la lutte contre la pauvreté, tous les acteurs et niveaux des institutions gouvernementales et publiques sont appelés. La création d'une base décrétée pour la réduction de la pauvreté ancre la responsabilité politique et la responsabilité des acteurs.

– Mesurer de manière continue la pauvreté et l'efficacité des mesures d'aide

La lutte contre la pauvreté ne peut être efficace que si les mesures sont mises en œuvre et si elles sont évaluées. Une stratégie de réduction de la pauvreté exige un screening et un suivi continu des situations de pauvreté et des mesures pour combattre et prévenir.

Le but du plan stratégique est d'identifier les causes de la pauvreté et les mesures de prévention appropriées, ainsi que les conséquences et l'amélioration des conditions de vie. À ce but, les statistiques sont également utilisées, mais le plan met aussi l'accent sur la pauvreté "perçue", c'est-à-dire les endroits où les gens sont confrontés à la pauvreté, par exemple dans les quartiers défavorisés, les écoles, etc.

Outre le plan stratégique de lutte contre la pauvreté, un rapport sur la pauvreté sera publié en 2020. Ce rapport sera établi en coopération avec le Conseil économique et social de la Communauté germanophone et contiendra des statistiques sur base de certains indicateurs de pauvreté, qui seront analysées et interprétées.

L'objectif est d'établir un rapport récurrent qui suit l'évolution des indicateurs de pauvreté et une deuxième partie, qui se concentre sur un thème spécifique de la pauvreté. Il peut s'agir d'un groupe à risque ou d'un indicateur de pauvreté. Pour 2020, le groupe des personnes âgées à partir de 65 ans sera étudié.

## 4.3 Prestations familiales

Le Parlement de la Communauté germanophone de Belgique a adopté en avril 2018 le décret relatif aux prestations familiales, approuvant ainsi l'administration et le paiement des allocations familiales à partir de janvier 2019. Lors de la rédaction du décret, on a veillé à élaborer des règles simples et compréhensibles pour le citoyen. En ce qui concerne la simplification générale des procédures et l'exigence d'une administration centrée-client, il a été décidé qu'il n'y aura qu'un seul point de contact pour les citoyens en Communauté germanophone : Le Ministère de la Communauté germanophone assumera cette tâche. Selon la devise "Un enfant est un enfant", un montant de base égal a été déterminé pour chaque enfant, soit 157 EUR par mois. La prime de naissance et la prime d'adoption s'élèvent à 1144 EUR pour tous les enfants éligibles. Le supplément annuel a également été uniformément fixé à 52 EUR pour tous les enfants. À partir du 3<sup>ème</sup> enfant, un supplément de 135 EUR par mois sera accordé pour les familles nombreuses, en plus du montant de base.

Les allocations familiales continuent d'être accordées sans condition jusqu'à ce que l'enfant atteigne l'âge de 18 ans et se terminent ainsi dans le mois au cours duquel il célèbre son 18<sup>ème</sup> anniversaire. Par la suite, les allocations peuvent continuer à être versées si l'enfant accomplit des études, suit un apprentissage ou une autre formation reconnue. Dans chaque cas, le Ministère vérifie si les conditions d'octroi aux allocations familiales sont bien remplies. Après la formation, l'enfant peut toujours être pris en considération pour l'octroi des allocations familiales pour une période de 12 mois s'il ne travaille pas. A l'âge de 25 ans, le droit expire définitivement. Un supplément social unique de 75 EUR par enfant est versé mensuellement si l'enfant a droit à l'intervention majorée de l'assurance maladie et qu'il n'existe pour cet enfant pas de droit au supplément pour orphelins.

Le nouveau supplément social est particulièrement favorable aux familles économiquement plus faibles et peut également être appliqué aux personnes faiblement rémunérées, soit comme travailleur soit comme indépendant, ceci après un contrôle des revenus et l'attribution du statut BIM (bénéficiaire d'intervention majorée) par la mutualité compétente. Une fois encore, les plafonds de revenus relatifs à l'octroi du supplément social tiennent compte en particulier du risque accru de pauvreté des familles nombreuses, de sorte que les seuils de revenus pour ces cas sont beaucoup plus élevés que les seuils ayant donné lieu à un supplément social avant le 01/01/2019. En outre, le montant uniforme et assez élevé du supplément social de 75 EUR par mois, accordé à tous les enfants remplissant les conditions pour bénéficier de ce supplément, soutiendra les parents dans l'éducation de leurs enfants, y compris en ce qui concerne la participation sociale. De plus, les suppléments pour enfants handicapés restent inchangés. En fin de compte, pour pouvoir fournir un soutien approprié dans des situations particulièrement précaires : Les orphelins perçoivent un supplément de 239 EUR par mois en plus de l'allocation de base et les demi-orphelins un supplément mensuel de 120 EUR, si le parent survivant n'est pas remarié et qu'il ne se trouve non plus en cohabitation légale.

Il convient également de noter que des simulations faites avec un module de simulation de la KU Leuven ont montré que les dispositions du nouveau décret contribuent à réduire le risque de pauvreté.

## 5 Santé et Emploi

### 5.1 Situation actuelle

Dans le cadre de la **6<sup>ème</sup> réforme de l'Etat**, un ensemble de compétences relatives aux soins de santé a été transféré aux entités fédérées: Il s'agit par exemple du financement des maison de repos et de soins (MRS-MR), la revalidation long-trem care, des normes d'agrément ainsi que le financement des maisons de soins psychiatriques et des initiatives habitations protégées.

Afin d'optimiser le design de soins de santé en Communauté germanophone à la reprise des compétences la Communauté germanophone a réalisé diverses études dans le domaine de santé.

- Les derniers résultats de l'enquête santé datent de 2014
- L'étude sur la planification sanitaire pour la Communauté germanophone a été finalisée en 2017.

Les acteurs de santé ont défini ensuite un plan d'action avec 12 mesures prioritaires :

#### A. Renforcer les capacités du personnel de santé et médico-social

A1: Renforcement de la capacité du personnel de santé et médico-social

A2: Etablissement d'incitations pour attirer des professionnels en pénurie  
→ réforme IMPULSEO, élaboration de la politique de santé première ligne.

#### B. Ouvrir le portefeuille à des nouveaux usagers, notamment avec une optique de prévention

B1: Développement d'une politique « vieillissement actif » pour les personnes âgées autonomes

B3: Mise en place d'une offre résidentielle alternative pour personnes âgées autonomes et des personnes atteintes d'une maladie psychiatrique.

#### C. Favoriser le développement des prestations plus innovantes et moins médicalisées

C2: Diversification de l'offre de jour / structures intermédiaires

→ Création d'une offre journalière pour des personnes atteintes d'une maladie psychiatrique avec l'objectif de réinsertion professionnelle. Dans le cadre de l'élaboration d'une vision santé mentale (psychiatrie) et de l'économie solidaire ce thème va être traité.

#### D. Structurer les mécanismes de concertation entre les différents acteurs

D1 Structuration des mécanismes de concertation entre les différents acteurs

→ projet « *Gesundes Ostbelgien* » et projet BelRAI et projet ehealth

D2 Analyse des synergies entre les différents acteurs, avec un objectif d'augmenter la taille et la professionnalisation

#### E. Soutenir et accompagner les proches aidants

E1 Définition d'une politique, et des prestations spécifiques, pour le support des proches aidants

→ Consentement de patient éclairé

#### F. Intensifier l'orientation aux besoins des usagers, renforcer leur autodétermination et leur qualité de vie

→ Concept de promotion de la santé et focus sur le vieillissement autonome, voir CDR.

#### G. Favoriser les synergies entre les prestataires, tout en développant l'efficacité des prestations

G2 Faciliter la participation des hôpitaux de la CG dans la Médecine Générale

H. Favoriser la structuration d'un Réseau de Santé Ostbelgien

I. Développer l'utilisation des TIC

I2 . Mise en place d'un plan pour le développement de la téléassistance

→ Mise en place des initiative de la „Demenzstrategie“

J. Consolider et renforcer le rôle d'orientation, évaluation et suivi

→ Création de la "Dienststelle für selbstbestimmtes Leben" en 2017

(Antares 2017)

L'étude par rapport à la nécessité ou l'utilité de créer une assurance autonomie pour les citoyens en Communauté germanophone est terminée en 2019.

La simulation faite au cours de l'étude montre qu'une assurance autonomie n'est pas nécessaire, si le monitoring des finances (couts des service et participation propre) et le nombre de personnes avec dépendance reste stable.

« Environ 13% des personnes âgées (1.850) ont une dépendance fonctionnelle pour la réalisation des activités basiques de la vie quotidienne; 1.505 personnes âgées reçoivent actuellement un accompagnement en MRPA/MRS ou soins à Domicile. » (BDO 2018)

## **5.2 Mesures dans le cadre du Concept de Développement Régional (CDR)**

### **Elaboration du CDR III**

La deuxième phase de mise en œuvre du Concept de Développement Régional (CDR) est presque terminée. C'est pourquoi le CDR III est en cours de préparation. Il s'agit du troisième et dernier programme de mise en œuvre du projet « *Ostbelgien leben 2025* ».

Les thématiques retenues sous le titre « Développement du paysage de santé en Communiqué germanophone » dans le programme CDR III sont les suivantes :

1. développement de la digitalisation dans le domaine de la santé
2. soutenir les professionnels de santé (recruter et soutenir les professionnels de santé aussi que les inclure dans le développement es politiques de santé )
3. structuration de l'offre et du suivi des personnes avec une maladie psychiatrique
4. concrétisation de la planification sanitaire

## **6 Utilisation des fonds structurels**

Dans de nombreux cas, les projets de réforme peuvent être soutenus par des programmes européens. En vue du prochain cadre financier pluriannuel 2021-2027, la Communauté germanophone a commencé la programmation du nouveau programme opérationnel du Fonds Social Européen Plus (FSE+).

Le FSE+ va servir comme instrument de financement pour les projets qui promeuvent des réformes dans les domaines de l'emploi, de l'inclusion sociale, de l'éducation, de la formation et de la santé publique décrites dans le PNR.

En outre la Communauté germanophone envisage de continuer à s'impliquer dans les programmes Interreg en Euregio Meuse-Rhin et en Grande Région au cours de la période 2021-2027. Ces deux programmes contribuent au développement de l'ensemble de ces régions frontalières et donc aussi au développement de la Communauté germanophone.



## Annex 5: Reform programme of the French Community

### Introduction

Les orientations stratégiques du Gouvernement de la Communauté française pour la période 2014-2019 sont détaillées dans la Déclaration de Politique Communautaire (DPC). Les priorités pour cette période s'articulent pour l'enseignement obligatoire autour de l'adoption d'un Pacte pour un Enseignement d'Excellence présentant les mesures suivantes :

- Renforcer les savoirs de base et d'assurer un niveau de connaissances plus élevé pour tous les élèves notamment par le renforcement de l'investissement dans l'enseignement maternel et par la mise en place d'un « tronc commun » pluridisciplinaire et polytechnique pour tous les élèves jusqu'à 15 ans ;
- Améliorer la gouvernance (notamment par le pilotage des établissements scolaires) et mieux accompagner les acteurs de l'enseignement ;
- faire du parcours qualifiant une filière d'excellence, valorisante pour chaque élève et permettant une intégration socio-professionnelle réussie tout en renforçant son pilotage et en simplifiant son organisation ;
- Améliorer le rôle de l'enseignement comme source d'émancipation sociale tout en misant sur l'excellence pour tous, favoriser la mixité et l'école inclusive dans l'ensemble du système éducatif tout en développant des stratégies de lutte contre l'échec scolaire, le décrochage et le redoublement ;
- Assurer à chaque enfant une place dans une école de qualité, et faire évoluer l'organisation scolaire afin de rendre l'école plus accessible, plus ouverte sur son environnement et mieux adaptée aux conditions du bien-être de l'enfant.

Une politique d'investissement dans les bâtiments scolaires est également mise en place afin d'augmenter le nombre de places.

Pour d'autres secteurs, il s'agit notamment :

- De renforcer des outils d'orientation et d'évaluation afin de réduire l'échec dans l'enseignement supérieur et augmenter le nombre de diplômés ;
- D'investir dans la recherche fondamentale.

Ces différentes priorités seront en outre soutenues via les programmes 2014-2020 des Fonds structurels et d'investissement, qui ont été approuvés par la Commission européenne en décembre 2014.

Comme prévu par le cadre réglementaire relatif à la Politique de Cohésion, les Fonds structurels et d'investissement pour la période 2014-2020 permettront de soutenir prioritairement les politiques développées en réponse aux recommandations spécifiques par pays, et contribueront aux objectifs de la Stratégie Europe 2020.

# 1 Réponse aux recommandations spécifiques par pays

**Recommandation 2 : poursuivre les réformes dans le domaine de l'éducation et de la formation, notamment en favorisant l'équité et en augmentant le nombre de diplômés en sciences, en technologie, en ingénierie et en mathématiques ;**

Plusieurs mesures ont été adoptées depuis avril 2018 :

## 1. Les réformes visant à favoriser l'équité du système scolaire

**Les réformes principales adoptées au cours des douze derniers mois :**

*Pilotage des établissements scolaires pour améliorer l'efficacité et l'équité du système scolaire (y compris la réduction des phénomènes de relégation et les inégalités entre écoles)*

Le décret adopté par le Parlement le 12 septembre 2018 (Décret « *Pilotage* ») instaure la mise en place d'une **gouvernance par objectifs** pour le système et pour les établissements scolaires à partir de sept. 2018. Dans le cadre de cette nouvelle gouvernance, sept objectifs d'amélioration du système scolaire sont définis par décret :

Améliorer significativement les savoirs et les compétences des élèves ;
Augmenter la part des jeunes diplômés de l'enseignement secondaire supérieur ;
Réduire les différences entre les résultats des élèves les plus favorisés et les moins favorisés d'un point de vue socio-économique.
Réduire progressivement le redoublement et le décrochage ;
Réduire les changements d'école (au sein du tronc commun).
Augmenter progressivement l'inclusion des élèves à besoins spécifiques dans l'enseignement ordinaire ;
Accroître les indices de bien-être et de l'amélioration du climat scolaire.

La gouvernance repose sur un « contrat d'objectifs » entre chaque école et le Pouvoir régulateur, dans le cadre duquel sont actés les **objectifs spécifiques de l'école qui contribuent à l'atteinte des objectifs du système**. Le contrat d'objectifs de l'école est auto-évalué annuellement par l'établissement, et tous les trois ans par le pouvoir régulateur. Le nouveau dispositif de pilotage des établissements est obligatoire pour l'ensemble des établissements scolaires. La législation prévoit qu'un processus de suivi adapté pourra être mis en place si un établissement refusait de contribuer au processus ou si ses indicateurs révélaient de trop grands écarts par rapport à la moyenne. En offrant un nouveau cadre de régulation, le dispositif de pilotage permettra d'agir plus précisément sur les racines de l'inéquité du système scolaire en FWB, sur les phénomènes de relégation des publics défavorisés entre écoles, et les différences importantes de performances entre école (ségrégation). L'implémentation de cette réforme se réalisera en trois vagues successives : 900 établissements soumettront leur projet de plan de pilotage pour le 30 avril 2019 ; la 2e vague pour le 30 avril 2020 ; et la 3e vague pour le 30 avril 2021.

Le nouveau dispositif de pilotage des écoles repose en outre sur l'autonomie et la responsabilisation accrue des écoles et des enseignants en vue d'atteindre les objectifs agréés de l'école :

- Basé sur le modèle de l'organisation apprenante, le nouveau pilotage des établissements est indissociable du renforcement du travail collaboratif des équipes éducatives. Le décret relatif à l'organisation du travail des enseignants (Décret relatif à l'organisation du travail des enseignants) adopté le 13 mars 2019, intègre à l'horaire de chaque enseignant un nombre de périodes de travail collaboratif obligatoire et définit l'ensemble des missions des enseignants (y compris

les missions en sus des activités face à la classe). Cette réforme, qui sera d'application en sept. 2020, accroît également le nombre de jours de formation en cours de carrière ;

- Outre le renforcement de l'aide administrative octroyée graduellement aux directions du fondamental et du spécialisé depuis sept. 2017, trois décrets ayant trait au renforcement du leadership pédagogique des Directions (renforcement de leur rôle en matière de GRH), ont été adoptés le 12 sept. 2018 et le 13 mars 2019.
- ✓ *Réforme du cursus commun des élèves jusqu'à 15 ans (y compris le renforcement de l'accompagnement personnalisé)*

Le renforcement du tronc commun consiste à revoir en profondeur le cursus des élèves de 3 à 15 ans. Les objectifs de la réforme sont notamment :

- Définir les savoirs et compétences de tous les élèves de 3 à 15 ans, afin de supprimer les mécanismes de sélection précoces et la relégation des élèves les plus fragiles socio économiquement (suppression des options avant 15 ans, suppression des attestations visant l'orientation) ;
- Instaurer l'apprentissage personnalisé (moyens supplémentaires de remédiation) pour tous les élèves et l'adapter aux élèves les plus fragiles (mais sans classe de niveau). Cette réforme visant à renforcer l'encadrement destiné à la remédiation a été anticipée avant la mise en œuvre du tronc commun et sera effective dans les classes à partir de la rentrée 2019 (Décret adopté par le Parlement, le 10 oct. 2018) ;
- Lutter contre le redoublement en conditionnant strictement la possibilité de pouvoir prendre une décision de redoublement.

L'adoption du cadre légal par le Parlement est prévue le 23 avril 2019. La mise en œuvre du nouveau cursus commun sera effective à partir de sept. 2020 pour les trois années du maternel et à partir de sept. 2021 pour les 1<sup>e</sup> et 2<sup>e</sup> primaires.

- ✓ *Renforcement de l'apprentissage du Français pour les élèves primo-arrivant et FR vulnérables*

La réforme consiste à renforcer le dispositif relatif à l'accueil, la scolarisation et l'accompagnement des élèves qui ne maîtrisent pas la langue de l'enseignement à travers la mise en place d'un système harmonisé et renforcé de soutien aux compétences langagières, dès le plus jeune âge, en fusionnant les dispositifs existants et en renforçant les moyens qui y sont consacrés. La réforme a été adoptée dans le cadre d'un décret adopté par le 6 février 2019. La réforme entre en vigueur à partir de sept. 2019.

- ✓ *Renforcement de la qualité de l'enseignement maternel*

Le renforcement de la qualité de l'enseignement maternel joue un rôle clé pour la réduction des inégalités dès le plus jeune âge. Le renforcement de la qualité de l'enseignement maternel est axé sur les mesures suivantes, chaque mesure visant tous les élèves du maternel:

- **Renforcement de l'encadrement** (adopté en 3 phases : sept. 2017 : instituteurs ; sept. 2018 : puériculteurs, sept. 2019 : logopèdes. Budget global : 50MEUR sur une base annuelle) ;
- **Adoption d'un référentiel** pour le niveau maternel, afin d'assurer que *tous* les enfants disposent du même cadre de compétences initiales (le premier référentiel « compétences initiales » sera adopté au printemps 2019 et mis en œuvre en sept. 2020 dans les écoles) ;

- **Instauration de la gratuité** de l'enseignement maternel, sur la base du décret adopté le 16 mars 2019) prévoit qu' hormis certaines exceptions dont les montants seront désormais strictement plafonnés (activités sportives et culturelles et voyages scolaires), il ne sera plus possible pour une école de réclamer des frais scolaires aux parents dans l'enseignement maternel. Les écoles recevront une subvention spécifique pour fournir gratuitement le matériel scolaire aux élèves. A terme, cette subvention sera de 50 euros (indexé) par élève et par an. Le premier versement sera réalisé en mai 2019 en vue de la rentrée scolaire 2019 ;
- **Obligation de la fréquentation** de la 3<sup>e</sup> maternelle. Alors que les taux d'inscription en maternel sont parmi les plus élevés de l'UE, la fréquentation de l'enseignement n'est pas régulière (car, actuellement, ce niveau d'enseignement n'est pas obligatoire), ce qui contribue à accroître les inégalités de départ (socio-économiques). L'âge de l'obligation scolaire relevant du niveau fédéral, on renvoie ici à la proposition de loi adoptée en Commission du Parlement fédéral le 19 février 2019, et dont l'entrée en vigueur est prévue en sept. 2020.
- ✓ *Développer le modèle de l'école inclusive*

Le développement d'un modèle d'école inclusive (axe 4 du Pacte pour un Enseignement d'excellence) vise à lutter contre l'ensemble des mécanismes de « séparation » verticales et horizontales des élèves qui existent dans le système scolaire. Les diverses réformes qui visent à instaurer un modèle d'école inclusive auront dès lors un impact important en termes d'équité et *in fine* sur la réduction des inégalités.

- Concernant la lutte contre l'échec et le redoublement :

Les réformes mises en œuvre sont essentiellement :

- **Un objectif d'amélioration du système scolaire** inscrit dans la nouvelle gouvernance du système (Décret « Pilotage », v. ci-dessus) vise la réduction de 50% du taux de redoublement et du taux de décrochage à l'horizon 2030 ;
- La **réforme du tronc commun** (décision de redoublement strictement conditionnée à la mise en place de dispositifs d'accompagnement personnalisé de l'élève ; renforcement des moyens d'encadrement) ;
- Le durcissement, depuis 2017, de la procédure administrative liée aux demandes d'autorisation de maintien en 3<sup>ème</sup> maternelle.
- Concernant les élèves à besoins spécifiques :

Les réformes mises en œuvre sont essentiellement :

- **Un objectif d'amélioration du système scolaire** inscrit dans la nouvelle gouvernance du système (Décret « Pilotage », v. ci-dessus) vise à revenir, d'ici 2030, au pourcentage d'enfants pris en charge par l'enseignement spécialisé en 2004 (chaque établissement de l'enseignement ordinaire devra décrire dans son contrat d'objectifs ce qu'il met en place en matière d'inclusion et d'intégration) ;
- Le **Décret relatif aux aménagements raisonnables** entré en vigueur en sept. 2018 vise à améliorer l'accueil, l'accompagnement et le maintien des enfants à besoins spécifiques dans l'enseignement ordinaire en rendant obligatoire la mise en œuvre d'aménagements raisonnables; une procédure spécifique de conciliation et de recours a été créée pour soutenir le déploiement des aménagements raisonnables ; et plusieurs **projets-pilotes de « classes inclusives »**, c'est-à-dire

des classes relevant de l'enseignement spécialisé mais physiquement placées au sein d'établissements ordinaires afin de favoriser les rencontres entre enfants sont menés.

## **2. Les réformes visant à renforcer les STEM dans l'enseignement obligatoire**

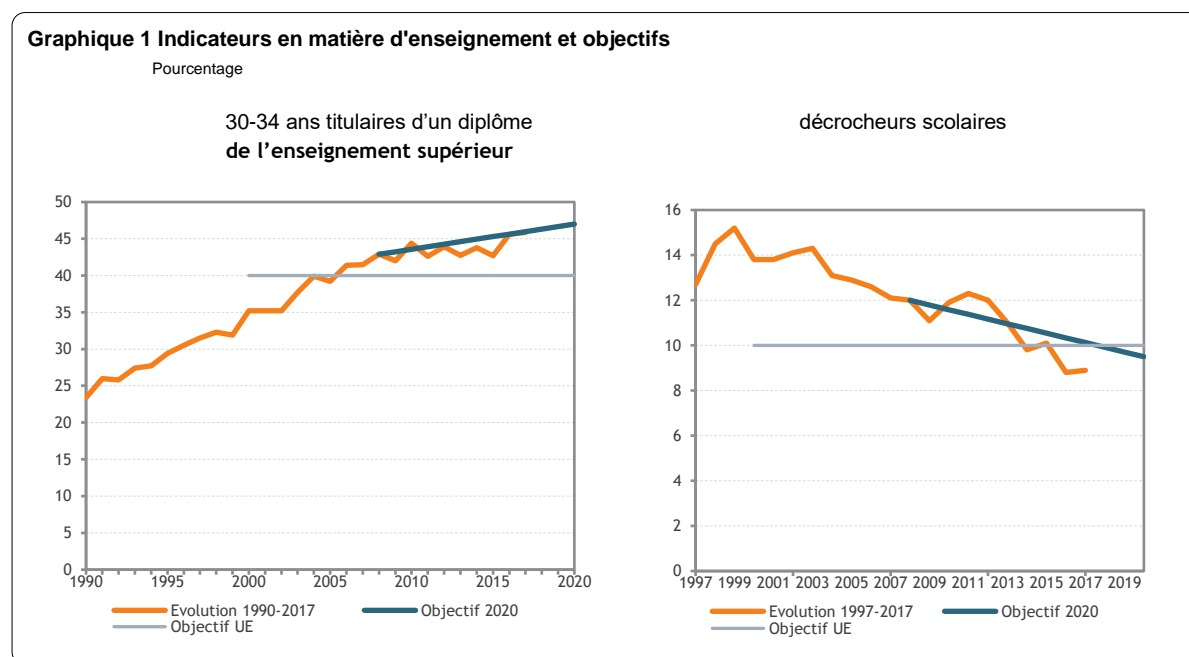
- La réforme relative au **cursus commun renforcé** (tronc commun) contribuera à renforcer les compétences STEM et les compétences numériques des élèves. Le nouveau tronc commun comprendra sept domaines d'apprentissages, dont un domaine consacré aux Maths-Sciences-Compétences techniques et technologiques-Numérique, tout au long du parcours de 3 à 15 ans. Les référentiels sont en cours d'élaboration (voir ci-dessus). Ils entreront en vigueur à partir de sept. 2020 pour les trois années du maternel, et en 2021 pour les 1<sup>e</sup> et 2<sup>e</sup> primaires et suivront ensuite la cohorte ;
- Le renforcement des compétences numériques est également au centre de l'adoption de la **Stratégie numérique pour l'Éducation** adoptée par le Gouvernement de la CF, le 10 oct. 2018 [[http://enseignement.be/download.php?do\\_id=14908](http://enseignement.be/download.php?do_id=14908)]. La Stratégie vise à rattraper le retard en matière de numérique éducatif de la CF: (1) en renforçant les compétences numériques des élèves ; (2) en renforçant la formation initiale et continue des enseignants, ainsi que l'accompagnement technique au sein des établissements; (3) en définissant une approche cohérente en matière d'équipement numérique au sein des écoles ; (4) en capitalisant sur le numérique pour échanger et partager les ressources et outils; (5) en développant l'administration numérique au niveau du système et des écoles. La CF a sollicité le *Structural Reform Support Program* de la Commission européenne (SRSP - SecGen COM) pour soutenir cette réforme.

## 2 Objectifs thématiques de la Stratégie Europe 2020

### 2.1 Enseignement supérieur

Tableau : L'objectif en matière d'enseignement

	BE2016	BE2017	EU2017	BE2020	Changement requis 2017-2020
30-34 ans titulaires d'un diplôme de l'enseignement supérieur	45,6	45,9	39,9	47,0	+ 1,1
Pourcentage des décrocheurs scolaires	8,8	8,9	10,6	9,5	-



La Belgique s'est engagée, à l'horizon 2020, à relever à 47% le pourcentage des 30-34 ans titulaires d'un diplôme de l'enseignement supérieur. Cet objectif est plus ambitieux que celui fixé au niveau de l'UE dans son ensemble (40%). Avec un pourcentage de 45,9% en 2017, la Belgique se trouvait sur la onzième place de l'UE.

- ✓ Un décret visant à la **transparence des établissements non reconnus en Communauté française** a été adopté le **28 juin 2018**. Ce décret vise à limiter l'appellation « université » ou « Haute école » aux établissements délivrant des diplômes reconnus par la Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles.
- ✓ Un décret relatif à la **réforme du financement des Hautes Ecoles**<sup>58</sup> a été adopté le 29 novembre 2018 par le gouvernement de la Communauté française, après deux ans de consultation entre les représentants des établissements. Il revoit les mécanismes de **financement des Hautes Ecoles** en les simplifiant et les revoyant à la hausse. En outre, le financement de la **recherche en Hautes Écoles** a également été revu à la hausse, passant de 250.000 euros sur base annuelle à 1 million d'euros. De plus, le même décret prévoit un budget spécifique pour financer des actions de **promotion de la réussite** au sein des Hautes Ecoles.

<sup>58</sup> Décret de la Communauté française du 29 novembre 2018 relatif à la réforme du financement des Hautes Ecoles.

- ✓ Depuis 2018, afin de contribuer à **l'amélioration du taux de réussite** chez les étudiants de première année du premier cycle et faciliter la **transition** entre l'enseignement secondaire et l'enseignement supérieur, le Gouvernement de la Communauté française **octroie aux cinq Pôles académiques<sup>59</sup> une subvention spécifique leur permettant d'organiser des activités de préparation aux études supérieures et d'aide à la réussite<sup>60</sup>.**
- ✓ Le Décret - programme adopté par le Parlement de la Communauté française le 12 décembre 2018<sup>61</sup> prévoit, pour l'année budgétaire 2018, qu'un montant de 1,2million euros soit alloué à la **promotion de l'accès aux études pour l'activation de certaines habilitations existantes**, permettant l'organisation à partir de l'année académique 2018-2019 d'un **enseignement universitaire de premier cycle**, et localisées dans un arrondissement qui observe un **déficit en étudiants universitaires de première génération**.
- ✓ En février 2019, le décret visant à la **refonte de la formation initiale des enseignants (FIE)** a été voté par le Parlement de la Communauté française. Les principales mesures du décret, qui impliquent d'importants changements au sein des établissements d'enseignement supérieur sont : l'allongement des études et le renforcement des compétences des futurs enseignants, une meilleure maîtrise de la langue française, l'augmentation du niveau de formation au niveau 7 du cadre européen des certifications, un approfondissement disciplinaire, un approfondissement pédagogique ou linguistique, une mise en commun de l'expertise des différents opérateurs de formation, un élargissement des familles de disciplines encourageant la transdisciplinarité, le développement de la recherche, une amélioration qualitative des interactions théorie/pratique. Le parcours de formation des étudiants se déroulera désormais en partie en haute école ou en école supérieur des arts et en partie à l'université<sup>62</sup>.
- ✓ Pour la mise en place de ce décret, prévue pour l'année académique 2020, deux types de soutien sont prévus afin d'accompagner la mise en œuvre de la réforme<sup>63</sup> : le financement de **conseillers FIE**, attachés aux établissements d'enseignement supérieur organisant la formation initiale des enseignants pour les années 2019 et 2020. Ensuite, une **cellule d'appui** sera mise en place au sein de l'ARES<sup>64</sup> pour les années 2019, 2020 et 2021 dont la mission sera de préparer et d'accompagner le travail mené sur le terrain par les conseillers FIE.
- ✓ Dans le cadre de **l'enseignement de promotion sociale (E.P.S)**, le décret portant diverses mesures relatives à l'enseignement de promotion sociale du 14 novembre 2018, prévoit les moyens nécessaires à l'engagement d'un **conseiller pédagogique** dans les établissements

---

<sup>59</sup> <https://www.ares-ac.be/fr/etudes-superieures/etablissements/poles-academiques>

<sup>60</sup> Communiqué de presse du cabinet de Monsieur le Ministre JC. Marcourt, 19 juillet 2018, [http://www.enseignement.be/index.php?page=27976&ne\\_id=5631](http://www.enseignement.be/index.php?page=27976&ne_id=5631)

<sup>61</sup> Décret-programme de la Communauté française du 12 décembre 2012 portant diverses mesures relatives à l'organisation du budget et de la comptabilité, aux fonds budgétaires, à l'enseignement supérieur et à la recherche, à l'enfance, à l'enseignement obligatoire et de promotion sociale, aux bâtiments scolaires, au financement des infrastructures destinées à accueillir la cité des métiers de Charleroi, à la mise en œuvre de la réforme de la formation initiale des enseignants.

<sup>62</sup> <https://www.ares-ac.be/images/emploi/ARES-Expert-e-Chef-fe-de-projet-FIE.pdf>

<sup>63</sup> Décret-programme de la Communauté française du 12 décembre 2012 portant diverses mesures relatives à l'organisation du budget et de la comptabilité, aux fonds budgétaires, à l'enseignement supérieur et à la recherche, à l'enfance, à l'enseignement obligatoire et de promotion sociale, aux bâtiments scolaires, au financement des infrastructures destinées à accueillir la cité des métiers de Charleroi, à la mise en œuvre de la réforme de la formation initiale des enseignants, article 47, p.15.

<sup>64</sup> Académie de Recherche et d'Enseignement supérieur. L'ARES est st la fédération des établissements d'enseignement supérieur francophones de Belgique.

d'E.P.S. Les missions de ces conseillers portent notamment sur le développement et la coordination des initiatives pédagogiques associées à **l'accompagnement des étudiants et à l'aide à la réussite d'adultes** en reprise d'études au sein des établissements d'E.P.S.

- ✓ Suite de l'adoption en novembre 2017 de l'Arrêté du Gouvernement de la Communauté française fixant les modalités de **valorisation des acquis** pour l'admission, la dispense et la sanction dans une ou des unités **d'enseignement de promotion sociale**, une **circulaire<sup>65</sup>** a été adoptée le **30 mai 2018** afin de communiquer toutes les informations utiles à l'organisation pédagogique et administrative du dispositif de valorisation des acquis, dans les établissements de l'E.P.S, en se référant à des règles communes. Ces dispositions permettent d'accorder davantage de souplesse à la définition des parcours personnels d'études et à l'organisation des curriculums dans le cadre du système modulaire. Elles facilitent également la mobilité des étudiants en assurant la portabilité des valorisations au travers des Attestations de réussite Valorisation.
- ✓ En février 2019, le Conseil des Ministres a approuvé le financement, à hauteur de 1,44 million d'euros, **67 projets de discriminations positives en faveur des établissements de l'E.P.S<sup>66</sup>**. Au travers de formations notamment en français, aux technologies informatiques et de la communication ou dans des filières qualifiantes, ces projets constituent de véritables leviers d'apprentissage propices à l'insertion des publics fragilisés ».

## **2.2 Recherche fondamentale**

Initié en 2018 avec une enveloppe de 8 millions d'euros, le refinancement du F.R.S-FNRS s'est poursuivi en 2019 avec l'ajout de 6 millions d'euros indexés annuellement – ce qui porte l'ensemble du refinancement à hauteur de 14 millions d'euros en deux ans.

Fin 2018 a été adopté en Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles un décret relatif à la réforme du financement des Hautes Ecoles : il s'agit de remettre à plat les mécanismes de financement en les simplifiant et en y intégrant 35% du refinancement de l'Enseignement supérieur pour les années 2018 et 2019, ce qui représente plus de 8 millions additionnels sur deux ans. En outre, à partir de 2019, le financement de la recherche en Hautes Écoles a été également revu à la hausse, et s'élève désormais à 1 million d'euros indexé annuellement, contre environ 250.000 euros sur base annuelle aujourd'hui. Cette réforme permettra également un net rapprochement entre les critères de financement des Hautes Écoles et des Universités, ce qui renforcera, à l'avenir, la cohérence globale du financement de l'Enseignement supérieur. Cette dynamique s'inscrit dans le contexte institutionnel, tracé par le décret Paysage, d'un renforcement des collaborations et des synergies entre Universités et Hautes Écoles.

En Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles, le décret sur le libre accès du 3 mai 2018 rend obligatoire le libre accès pour toute recherche financée (même partiellement) par des fonds publics et pour tous les articles publiés à partir du 14 septembre 2018, avec une période d'embargo maximale de 12 (STEM) ou 6 (SSH) mois. Le décret renforce le potentiel de la recherche à produire un impact au niveau scientifique, économique et sociétal, tout en augmentant la visibilité des chercheurs et de leurs travaux.

---

<sup>65</sup> Circulaire 6677 de la Communauté française, « Modalités de valorisation des acquis pour l'admission la dispense ou la sanction dans une ou des unités d'enseignement de l'enseignement de promotion sociale », 30 mai 2018.

<sup>66</sup> Communiqué de presse du cabinet de Monsieur le Ministre JC. Marcourt, 13 février 2019, <https://marcourt.cfwb.be/octroi-de-144-million-deuros-a-67-projets-de-discrimination-positive-dans-l-enseignement-de-promotion-sociale/>



## 2.3 Enseignement obligatoire

A l'horizon 2020, la Belgique doit ramener son taux d'abandon scolaire à 9,5%. Cet objectif est également plus ambitieux qu'à l'échelle européenne (10%). En 2017, le taux s'élevait à 8,9% en Belgique, contre 8,8% en 2016 et 10,1% en 2015.

Dans le cadre du Pacte pour un Enseignement d'excellence, la Communauté française (CF) a adopté un objectif systémique de réduction de 50% du taux de redoublement et de décrochage à l'horizon 2030 (Décret « Pilotage », sept. 2018). Chaque établissement est amené à se doter d'objectifs et d'actions spécifiques en vue de contribuer à l'atteinte des objectifs du système (voir également la description de la réforme du pilotage). Parallèlement, la CF élabore un Plan global de lutte contre le décrochage qui vise à doter l'Administration de systèmes de recueil de données et de prise d'informations efficaces sur le parcours des élèves; à redéfinir les rôles et les missions des intervenants (prévention, intervention, compensation); et à renforcer leur coordination. Le Plan global sera d'application dès sept. 2020, et visera à renforcer les dispositifs de soutien à l'accrochage scolaire actuellement mis en place avec le soutien du FSE (72 projets conjoints Enseignement et Aide à la jeunesse de 2015 à 2018). La fréquentation régulière de l'enseignement maternel est également un enjeu important de la lutte contre l'absentéisme et le décrochage. Dès sept. 2020, la fréquentation de la 3<sup>e</sup> maternel sera rendue obligatoire et ce niveau d'enseignement se verra appliquer les dispositifs de lutte contre l'absentéisme et le décrochage en vigueur dans l'enseignement primaire.

## 2.4 Inclusion sociale

Le Gouvernement de la Communauté française a approuvé un projet de décret prévoyant la mise en place d'une stratégie globale et coordonnée de lutte contre la pauvreté et la pauvreté infantile et de réduction des inégalités sociales dans toutes les politiques menées par la Communauté française.

Concrètement, le Gouvernement sera appelé à approuver un plan quinquennal dans un délai de six mois après sa constitution. Le plan définira les priorités de la législature et les actions transversales à mettre en œuvre pour y répondre.

Sa rédaction sera effectuée en concertation avec le « Conseil de lutte contre la pauvreté et pour la réduction des inégalités », une instance de réflexion composée de personnes issues des universités francophones, du Délégué général aux droits de l'enfant, de représentants des CPAS de Wallonie et de Bruxelles, de la Fondation Roi Baudouin et de l'ONE, et de membres des administrations.

Le décret prévoit ainsi la reconnaissance et le financement, pour une durée de 5 ans, d'au maximum deux centres ressources généralistes « relatifs à la lutte contre la pauvreté et pour la réduction des inégalités sociales » et d'un centre spécialisé « Experts du vécu ».

Des appels à projets seront par ailleurs organisés tous les ans.

Un budget annuel de 1.782.000 euros est prévu pour la mise œuvre du projet de décret. Il sera principalement consacré au soutien des centres de ressources et des projets associatifs.

D'autre part, le décret du 8 mars 2018 relatif à la Promotion de la citoyenneté et de l'interculturalité donne un cadre pour le financement de projets triennaux et annuels dans les domaines suivants :

- ✓ L'éducation des jeunes à la citoyenneté, dans un contexte multiculturel ;
- ✓ La lutte contre le racisme et le dialogue interculturel ;

- ✓ La promotion des droits des migrants, et plus particulièrement des femmes.

Doté de 2.040.000€ en 2019, le décret permettra de labéliser une quarantaine de projets et d'en soutenir environ 80.

Le décret prévoit également l'organisation tous les deux ans d'une campagne contre le racisme, en concertation avec le tissu associatif. Il prévoit également la mise en place d'un portail d'information spécifique permettant une visibilité pour les projets réalisés, mais aussi de faciliter l'échange de bonnes pratiques, d'outils d'animation et de formation, ainsi que la mise en réseau des opérateurs.

## 2.5 Le numérique dans l'enseignement obligatoire

Le renforcement des compétences numériques est au centre de l'adoption de la **Stratégie numérique pour l'Éducation** adoptée par le Gouvernement de la CF, le 10 oct. 2018 [[http://enseignement.be/download.php?do\\_id=14908](http://enseignement.be/download.php?do_id=14908)].

La Stratégie vise à rattraper le retard en matière de numérique éducatif de la CF: (1) en renforçant les compétences numériques des élèves ; (2) en renforçant la formation initiale et continue des enseignants, ainsi que l'accompagnement technique au sein des établissements; (3) en définissant une approche cohérente en matière d'équipement numérique au sein des écoles ; (4) en capitalisant sur le numérique pour échanger et partager les ressources et outils; (5) en développant l'administration numérique au niveau du système et des écoles. La CF a sollicité le *Structural Reform Support Program* de la Commission européenne (SRSP - SecGen COM) pour soutenir cette réforme.

Concernant la mise en œuvre de la Stratégie, les initiatives mises en place en 2018-2019 sont :

- ✓ Le renouvellement de l'équipement en matériel informatique administratif des chefs d'établissement a été entamée en 2018 et est programmée en plusieurs vagues (budget total de 4.027 k€ (sur 4 ans)) ;
- ✓ Le renforcement de l'équipement des enseignants (via un forfait annuel de remboursement de frais de 100 euros net par an) sur la base d'un budget annuel de 8.650 k€ à partir de 2019 ;
- ✓ La création de la plateforme de ressources éducatives en ligne à destination des enseignants.

## 3 Investissements stratégiques

Conformément à la Déclaration de Politique Communautaire 2014-2019 du Gouvernement de la Communauté française a développé en matière de gestion énergétique un programme d'efficacité énergétique pour les années à venir. Riche d'une première expérience réussie du projet pilote PLAGE-Ecoles<sup>67</sup> 2009-2014, initié et subsidié par la Région de Bruxelles-Capitale (RBC), la cellule énergie évolue actuellement vers une structure interne au sein du Ministère avec une orientation axée sur le service aux occupants, dans le cadre de leurs obligations légales et réglementaires relatives à la gestion énergétique.

Les bâtiments de la Communauté française, tant scolaires que non-scolaires, sont visés en premier lieu par les services et projets mis en place pour constituer le rôle d'exemplarité du Ministère en la matière. Quant aux autres bâtiments (du scolaire subventionné, des OIP et des ASBL dépendant indirectement de la Communauté française), la cellule leur propose systématiquement de bénéficier d'un service de facilitation et d'accompagnement sur base volontaire. Après un peu plus de deux ans d'existence, la

---

<sup>67</sup> PLAGE-Ecoles = Plan Local d'Action pour la Gestion Énergétique au sein des écoles

cellule énergie, constituée actuellement de 10 équivalents temps plein pour 6,5 ETP en moyenne sur les 2 dernières années, s'est attelée à mettre en place les premiers outils, services et projets au profit de la DGI et des occupants, visant à atteindre les objectifs de réduction des consommations de 35% à l'horizon 2030 et de 90% pour 2050 :

- Perspectives à venir au niveau des consommations de mazout : Il est prévu en 2019-2020 de créer une centrale d'achats pour la livraison de mazout ;
- Perspectives à venir au niveau de l'outil de monitoring : La cellule énergie proposera dès 2019 l'adhésion à l'outil de monitoring attribué sous la forme d'une centrale d'achats aux PO du scolaire subventionné, des OIP et ASBL dépendant de la FWB ainsi que les services d'analyse de leurs consommations ;
- Perspectives à venir en terme de fonds de roulement : Le système «d'intracing» (pour les bâtiments scolaires) étant inscrit dans le décret programme, des économies de l'ordre de 500k€ en 2019 jusqu'à 3M€ en 2022 pourront être réinvesties dans de nouveaux projets. La création d'un fonds similaire à l'indice 810 du fonds des bâtiments scolaires permettant de récupérer 80% des économies réalisées pour les bâtiments non-scolaires et de les réinvestir pourra faire l'objet des objectifs de la cellule énergie ;
- Perspectives à venir au niveau de la concession de toitures pour l'installation de panneaux solaires photovoltaïques et dans le cadre du financement par tiers : En parallèle aux 2 premiers projets qui seront réalisés en 2019, de nouveaux projets seront développés jusqu'en 2020 pour équiper d'autres toitures de panneaux solaires, jusqu'à 30.000 m<sup>2</sup>, rien qu'en Région de Bruxelles-Capitale. L'objectif est de développer et d'appliquer des montages financiers afin de faire appel aux investisseurs privés (tiers investissement), sans impact sur la dette publique pour réaliser tout type de projets d'efficacité énergétique et renouvelables le plus largement possible, notamment pour le passage aux LEDS et pour le remplacement de chaufferies mazout par des sources d'énergie renouvelable (leasing opérationnel). Cet objectif permettra de libérer des budgets pour réaliser d'autres projets ;
- Perspectives à venir en termes de développement et de déploiement des CPE : L'objectif de la Cellule Energie à moyen et long termes (2030 et 2050), en collaboration avec les différentes directions de la DGI sera de déployer le modèle et les outils de contrôle pour la réalisation de CPE de type 1 (visant 30% d'économie) sur les bâtiments cibles en fonction de critères de sélection et de développer les CPE de type 2 et 3 (visant un objectif de 50 à 90% d'économie, projets pilotes prévus dans les 3 prochaines années. A terme, ces projets permettront d'atteindre les objectifs imposés par les 2 régions, à savoir une diminution des gaz à effet de serre de 40% d'ici à 2030 et de 90% d'ici à 2050. Le financement de ces projets pourra également se faire sur la base de tiers financement sans impact sur la dette publique ;
- Perspectives à venir par rapport à l'objectif PLAGE imposé par la RBC : La cellule organisera en 2019 le cadastre énergétique et définira les superficies chauffées de chaque bâtiment pour créer les conditions de travail du PLAGE. Grâce à un benchmark (classement des bâtiments en fonction de leurs consommations par m<sup>2</sup>), la cellule énergie pourra optimiser l'euro investi et viser une utilisation saine des deniers publics en ciblant les plus gros potentiels d'économie. Ce projet contribuera également à atteindre les objectifs 2030 et 2050. La cellule aura également pour objectif de généraliser l'approche PLAGE aux bâtiments scolaires et non-scolaires situé en Région Wallonne ;
- Perspectives à venir par rapport à l'obligation de certification PEB des bâtiments de la FWB : La cellule a pour objectif d'engager les 4 certificateurs PEB alloués par le Gouvernement en 2018 et de réaliser la mission de certification PEB des 3.000 bâtiments concernés ;

- Perspectives à venir par rapport aux évolutions technologiques, financières et réglementaires : La cellule sera chargée de la veille en gestion énergétique, tant sur le point des technologies, des modes de financement, des approches que des réglementations en vigueur. La Cellule constituera une référence en la matière.

## Annex 6: Reporting table on the assessment of the policy response to CSRs: qualitative assessment

Table A1. Description of the measures taken and information on their qualitative impact											
			Information on planned and already enacted measures								Foreseen impacts
CSR number (1)	CSR sub-categories (2)	Number and short title of the measure (3)	Description of main measures of direct relevance to address the CSRs					Europe 2020 targets	Challenges/Risks	Budgetary implications	Qualitative elements
			Main policy objectives and relevance for CSR (4)	Description of the measure (5)	Legal/ Administrative instruments (6)	Timetable on progress achieved in the last 12 months (7)	Timetable on upcoming steps (8)	Estimated contribution to Europe 2020 targets (9)	Specific challenges/risks in implementing the measures (10)	Overall and yearly change in government revenue and expenditure (reported in mIn. national currency) Contribution of EU funds (source and amounts) (11)	Qualitative description of foreseen impacts and their timing (12)
CSR1: Federal	Taxation	Tax shift – third phase	Decrease the taxation on labour (employers and employees) to promote competitiveness and	Reduction in the employers' social security contributions and adaptations in the personal income tax system	Law of 26 December 2015 on raising job creation and competitiveness	Implemented in 2019	Final phase of the tax shift in 2020			Reduction in personal income taxes 1.58 billion euros in 2019	

			job creation, increase the incentives to work and support purchasing power.	(increase in the employment bonus, the tax exempt amount and change of tax scales)							
CSR1: Federal	Pensions	Introduction of a mixed pension for (contractual) civil servants	In view of medium-term fiscal sustainability, a "mixed pension" has been introduced for (contractual) civil servants.	For new retirees as of 1 May 2018, periods of contractual employment after 30 November 2017 are no longer considered in the calculation of a civil servants' pension, but in the pension system of wage earners (which is less generous). Teachers are exempt under certain conditions.	Law of 30 March 2018 (Published in Belgian Official Gazette on 17 April 2018)	Implemented in May 2018	Part of a bigger pension reform package				
CSR1: Wallonia	Long-term care	Creation of the Walloon social protection,	Ensuring sustainability of long-term care	Transfer of competencies covering long-term care and autonomy insurance	Creation of an agency, including financial and budget monitoring	Taking over the competency on 01/01/19					Structures and modalities put in place to ensure budget control of health expenditures.
CSR1: Wallo-	Long-term	Reform of prevention and promotion of health policies	Ensuring sustainability of long term care by increased prevention	Reform of support modalities, monitoring	Decree and action plan	Decree and action plan adopted in 2018					Improving health in the long run

CSR1: Flanders	Efficiency and composition of public spending	Introduction of spending reviews	The introduction of spending reviews has the potential to detect efficiency savings and opportunities for cutting low-priority or ineffective expenditure, and can therefore contribute to the achievement of smart fiscal consolidation and free up space for new policy priorities, e.g. the need for additional public investment spending.	With the support of the Structural Reform Support Service (SRSS) of the European Commission, the Government of Flanders is preparing the structural incorporation of a spending review approach in its budgetary process.		As a first step, the Flemish Government is carrying out a pilot project with a focus on a specific topic, as recommended by the Eurogroup.	The pilot project will be completed in spring 2019. In spring 2019 the SRSS will provide additional assistance regarding the structural incorporation of spending reviews in the budgetary process.		The additional assistance from the SRSS in spring 2019, will provide a clearer view of the challenges ahead.		
CSR1: Flanders	Debt reduction	Development of a debt standard	Keep the debt under control	The Flemish Community has developed a debt standard. One of the measures of this debt standard is a decree about the optimization of the management of the financial assets of the Flemish Government entities. This decree obligates entities that belong to the consolidation scope and that meet certain criteria to	Decree and Decision of the Flemish Government (18/05/2018) regarding the optimization of the management of financial assets	The decree has entered into force on 01/10/2018.				According to the first forecasts this decree will lead to a reduction of the consolidated debt by approximately 600 million euro in 2018.	

				invest their surplus liquidity In the Flemish Community or a government entity with a certain rating.							
CSR2: Brussels	Labour market	Activa Brussels	<p>The main objective of the measure is to put Brussels job seekers from the following target groups to work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Long-term unemployed;</li> <li>- Young job seekers under 30 years of age who do not have a certificate of upper secondary education;</li> <li>- Workers and job seekers aged 57 and over;</li> <li>- People exiting one of the following employment aid measures: art 60-61, integration contract....;</li> <li>- People exiting a "professionalising" training course;</li> <li>- People exiting a work-linked</li> </ul>	Activa Brussels allows an employer hiring a job seeker, who is in possession of the Activa certificate, to deduct an allowance from his worker's net salary. The employment contract must be on a part-time basis at minimum and for a minimum period of 6 months.	Ordinance of 23 June 2017 on employment aids available in the Brussels-Capital Region; Implementation Decree of the Ordinance of 14 September 2017 on employment aids available in the Brussels-Capital Region;	<p>The measure started in October 2017.</p> <p>It represents a drastic simplification of the previous federal measure: reduction from 32 different types of activities to two different types.</p> <p>The measure has been the subject of a first internal quantitative analysis (November 2018). In addition, an external consultant conducted a satisfaction survey (September-November 2018) among both workers and beneficiary employers.</p>	For all regionalised measures: development of a specific data warehouse within Actiris to facilitate monitoring and evaluation work. The available data and the satisfaction survey show that the incentive for training is not well known and therefore not widely used. Possibilities will be explored to improve its visibility. Regarding the aim targeted by the reform of the measure, the first quantitative analyses indicate that the objective of faster access to the system seems to have been achieved, especially for young people.	The measure aims to integrate vulnerable groups into the job market, including low-skilled and older workers, but also the long-term unemployed. The quantitative evaluation carried out internally in November 2018 also indicates that 46 % of the targeted job seekers have a diploma obtained abroad and not recognised in Belgium. This indicates that the measure reaches people of foreign origin. This last point is confirmed by the satisfaction survey, which shows that 55% of the beneficiary workers who responded	For this type of measure, the main risks are the deadweight effect, the substitution effect and the trap of rotating positions. However, an analysis on this subject shows the requirement for a greater time frame (the benefit can be spread over 30 months).	No contribution from European funds.  The expenditure on activation for the Activa.Brussels measure amounts to 7.8 million euros from October 2017 to September 2018. During the same period, expenditures were made under the former federal Activa measures that are being phased out. The latter will be nil in 2019, with the extinction period ending on 31 December 2018.	A first satisfaction survey (not yet published) covering both beneficiary workers and employers shows a high level of satisfaction.



			<p>training;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Job seekers with reduced capacity.</li> </ul>					to the survey are of non-European origin.		As the Activa Brussels measure has not yet reached its cruising speed, an increase in expenditure can be expected over the next two years.	
CSR2: Brussels	Labour market	Reform of diversity plans for companies	As part of the reform of economic expansion, the Government introduced an increase in aid for companies with more than 100 employees concluding a diversity plan. Since May 2018, companies with more than 100 employees have had to conclude a diversity plan to benefit from the aid provided for by the economic expansion reform.	Actiris supports private companies located in Brussels that want to establish a diversity plan. The Diversity Plan is carried out by the company itself, with the collaboration of a diversity consultant. It is composed of a state of affairs pertaining to diversity in the company on the one hand, and proposals for actions to improve the company's diversity situation on the other.	Ordinance of 3 May 2018 on aid for the economic development of companies and its implementing decrees		The Plan, envisaged for 2 years, is submitted for approval to the Non-Discrimination and Diversity Council (CNDD), which brings together representatives of the social partners of the Actiris management committee, the Minister of Employment and Employment Administration.			For the year 2018, the amount of subsidies granted by the Region to the Non-Discrimination and Diversity Council amounted to 750 000 euros.	
CSR2 : Flanders	Education and	Reform of the existing system of training incentives	The main goal was to make the system more efficient in order to prevent the obsolescence of qualifications and to	In July 2017 the Flemish government concluded an agreement with social partners to reform	A new decree has been adopted in October 2018. The decree has 3 pillars: the reform						

			<p>make sure people stay longer active on the labour market.</p>	<p>the existing system of training incentives. The main ingredients for the reform were the following: only labour (and future-) market-oriented training curricula will be promoted, training providers should respect a general quality framework, training curricula will be assembled in a public training register, uniform monitoring will result in an annual evaluation report and digital and administrative simplification will be enhanced. Workers in the private sector will benefit from 125 hours each year to follow training on the basis of his specific needs (tailor made). The new system will enter into force in September 2019.</p>	<p>of the paid educational leave system to a Flemish training leave system, to end the system of social promotion and to change legislation with regard to certificates validating experience/skills profiles.</p>						
--	--	--	--	---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

CSR2: Flanders	Education and training	Modernization of secondary education reform	The renewed system of secondary education allows a pupil to make a more motivated choice of study on the basis of its interests and capacities. A better transition to higher education or the labour market is provided. This must allow more pupils to leave secondary education with success and without study delay.	In the first stage of secondary education, the basic education is strengthened and all pupils have to reach a pre-determined level. In addition choice section will be set up to enable better orientation for students. In the second stage a rationalisation and new classification of the study offer will be set up. The third stage result in a more transparent study offer with a more clear finality.	Decree and implementing decisions	On the 28th of March 2018, the Flemish Parliament adopted the decree that establishes the modernisation of the organisation and the structure of the secondary education. The Flemish government approved the decision with regards to the implementation of the decree. The approval of this decree constitutes the final but crucial piece of the puzzle in the modernisation of secondary education in Flanders.	The decree will come into force by the 1th of September 2019.	A better transition to higher education will add to the national target for tertiary education and early school leaving.	After consultation with the Education providers and the wider education field, the Flemish government decided In order to guarantee a qualitative start-up, that the school year 2018-2019 would be functioning as a switching year for the schools to prepare the modernization. A good preparation has been regarded as a key for the implementation.		
CSR2: Wallonia	Labour market / skills mismatch	Reform of employment support (APE)	Simplification and enhanced efficiency of employment support, with a controlled budget	Reformed modalities for allocating aids, based on simplification, responsabilisation and transparency principles	Decree	Adoption by the Government in October 2018	Text under discussion in the parliament for final adoption (q1 2019)	Increasing the employment rate			Ensuring sustainability of key public services while supporting employment in those sectors, and activation of jobseekers.

CSR2: Wallonia	Labour market / skills mism.	Fight against skills gaps	Developing swift answers to identified skills gaps	Reform of the training/insertion plan New financial incentive to training for in-demand function Developing tailor-made training plans for identified needs	Government acts	Measures adopted and in force		Increasing the employment rate			Improving skills of jobseekers in functions where gaps are identified, to strengthen access to labour market.
CSR2 : French Community	Education and training	Adopting and implementing the new school and system governance [part of the Pact for Excellence in Teaching]	The new school governance aims at steering schools and the systems in order to: improving pupils performances and reducing inequity. It aims at drastically reducing grade repetition and school drop out, and developing the inclusive school model ; as well as improving school climate and well being at school.	Establishing a stronger central steering and reinforcing schools' autonomy and responsibility by: - Setting 7 objectives at system level; - Involving every school in the new legally binding governance (through the "school contract"); - Preparing and upskilling the Administration services (DCO) - Establishing WBE (the official school network of the Walloon-Brussels Federation - FWB) as an autonomous network	Decree of 13 September 2018 defining the priority missions of basic and secondary education and organizing the structures to achieve them in order to deploy a new management framework,  Decree of 13 September 2018 establishing the General Piloting Service and establishing the status of the DZ and DCO (Delegates to the contract of objectives).  Special Decree of 6 February 2019 establishing the public body responsi-	Legal framework has been adopted by Parliament and major implementation regulations have been adopted by Government.  For April 30 (at the latest): 850 schools will submit their plan; in April 2020, 900 schools will be enlisted; and in April 2021, the remaining 800 schools will be.  New DCO (50) will be appointed in April 2019.  The new management of	The new school governance should be fully implemented by September 2021 (all schools being involved and having submitted their action plan).  Measures to be adopted: measures for responsabilization of schools' networks should be adopted by Parliament in April 2019.  Implementation of measures related to 'Performance gap schools' should be in place in April 2020.	By improving performances and reducing grade repetition, drop out, and school segregation, the new school governance set of measures contributes to the EU 2020 objectives (early school leaving and tertiary education attainment)	No specific risk since the reform is now well supported by the Unions and most of the stakeholders.	Budget foreseen for the Pact	See the targets set in the legal framework; 2030

				<p>Reinforcing principals' pedagogical leadership</p> <p>Revaluating and modernizing teachers' work</p> <p>-</p>	<p>ble for the function of organising education organised by the French Community.</p> <p>Decree of 13 September 2018 establishing the status of directors and teaching staff members</p> <p>Decree of 13 March 2019 on the organisation of the work of educational staff</p>	<p>WBE should be in place in September 2019.</p> <p>Administrative support for principals implemented in 2017,2018, 2019, according to the school enrollment in the new governance system.</p> <p>Teachers: collaborative work start in September 2019.</p>					
CSR2 : French Community	Education and training	Strategy for digital Education <a href="http://ensei-gnement.be/download.php?do_id=14908">http://ensei-gnement.be/download.php?do_id=14908</a>	Tackling the digital competences gap under 15 will contribute to reinforce attractiveness of STEM fillières and pathways	The Strategy aims at: (1) enhance digital skills in students curricula; (2) improve teachers initial and continuing training and providing professional support for schools; (3) implementing a consistent approach regarding digital infrastructures and equipment; (4) using digital potential for supporting learning activities; (5) developing digital	Strategy for Digital Education; adopted by the CF Government, 10 October 2018.	Digital competences (Axe 1): see "common curricula" measure;	Axe 3: Developing common approach and reinforced coordination amongst entities/jurisdictions (FWB, RW , RBxl) in order to implement a common standard on minimal equipment for all schools.	Digital transition is lagging behind in BEfr Education system. FWB Pisa 2015 analysis shows that the share of pupils never using internet at school is one of the highest in the OECD (FWB : 55% ; OECD average : 25%). The FOREM's list of qualifications and occupations short-ages pinpoints short supply in relation with the IT sectors/skills .	Risks: - Lack of common approach regarding equipment infrastructure and school support (need for a paradigm change through specific (ex ante) coordination with Regions); - Insufficient funding.	Budget foreseen by the Pact, except for school equipments and infrastructure.  Measures related to teachers and principals' equipment have been founded by the Gvt (budget 2018 and 2019).  Specific	Reducing digital gaps and disparities within the compulsory BEfr Education system and between schools

				administration at both system and school levels.		Digital platform for teachers (Axe 4): to be on line in April 2019;  Governance (Axe 5): new decree on digital governance to be adopted by Parliament in April 2019.		As reported in the 2018 BE Country Report, shortages in digital skills and ICT sectors appear to be one of the major barrier to growth and innovation (2018 BE CR, p. 46). Those elements suggest that digital education challenges have spillover effects on employment policy area.	NB: Support by the EC SRSP	technopedagogical resources for networks/FPO (2019 and onwards) are founded through the budget foreseen for the Pact.	
CSR3: Federal	Mobility	Mobility allowance 'cash for car'	Alternative to company cars provided by employers	Employees' allowance, subject to the same fiscal and parafiscal system as company cars	Act	Approval by Parliament on 16 March 2018.  Retroactively entering into force on 1 January 2018					
CSR3: Federal	Mobility	Mobility budget	Access to more flexible alternatives to the company car	Within the budget – which is based on the 'total cost of ownership' – employees may choose for a cleaner car and/or sustainable transport alternatives and/or a cash balance	Act	Approval by Parliament on 28 February 2019. Entering into force on 1 March 2019					

CSR3: Brussels	Entrepreneurship	Mybusinesspass	Based on public and private initiatives in Brussels, Mybusinesspass has been launched in July 2018 with an information website in order to respond to the needs of entrepreneurs at each step of their entrepreneurial project.	Mybusinesspass proposes a complete and comprehensible offer in terms of support to entrepreneurs and future entrepreneurs, in partnership with private actors, each with their own specialty. Based on a strong public-private partnership, the objectives are to: - Simplify and increase the comprehensibility of the existing support offer for target audiences; - Link the offer more to the life cycle of businesses; - Respond to target-audience needs that are not met by the existing support offers.		Three months after the operational launch of mybusinesspass.brussels, more than 300 entrepreneurs, of which 50 % women, have submitted a request on www.mybusinesspass.brussels. Among the latter, 65 % are in the entrepreneurial project phase, and 35 % have an existing enterprise.					
CSR3: Brussels	Entrepreneurship	Reform of the Brussels code for urban planning (Code bruxellois de l'aménagement du territoire – CoBAT / Brussels	The reform has the aim of simplifying and streamlining urbanistic procedures (granting of town planning permits + new legislative	The reform of the Brussels code for urban planning will replace the current time frames by deadlines which are obligatory.	Ordinance of 30 November 2017 reforming the Brussels code for urban planning, published in the Belgian official Gazette on 20 April 2018		Will enter into force in September 2019.  A commercial development plan will be elaborated.				From September 2019 onwards, the administration will be obliged to adhere to the deadlines provided for

		wetboek van ruimtelijke ordening – BWRO)	framework for retail establishments)	The obligation to submit a town planning declaration is also abolished for any new construction project which envisages the establishment of a business, as well as any project to modify or extend the commercial activity within a building which is already assigned to commercial purposes, or to establish a new business within a building assigned to a function other than commercial purposes.							in the Brussels code for urban planning. The advantage for the applicant of the permit is that the deadline will be known at the moment of the request of the permit. This is a major step forward since the private sector and the citizens of Brussels were asking for more comprehensibility and predictability in this matter.  Simplification of the procedures for the installation of commercial activities.
CSR3: Wallonia	Entrepreneurship	Creating a one-stop-shop for SMEs	Administrative simplification for SME, fostering entrepreneurship	Creation of a single point of contact for SMEs and entrepreneurs for helping them to access to information, support, advices...	Website + support services within the agency for SME (SO-WALFIN)	Created in December 2018					Facilitating access to information and supports for SMEs and entrepreneurs



CSR3: Wallonia	Mobility	Strategic framework for mobility – FAST 2030	Strategy for reducing congestion and promoting modal shift	The strategy set ambitious targets that are translated in concrete actions	Strategic framework adopted by the Government	Different implementing measures have been adopted: investment in charging points for electric mobility, reform of the public transport operator, investment in public transport and mobility solutions....	Horizon 2030 New tramway in Liège to be operational in 2021, start of works in May 2019					Reducing congestion and GHG emissions
CSR3: Flanders	Entrepreneurship	Deregulation of the general business establishment license	Deregulation of the general business establishment license	Reducing the regulatory and administrative burden to incentivise entrepreneurship	Decree of 18 May 2018 abolishing the legal provisions on basic knowledge of business management with effect from 1 September 2018.	Decree of the Flemish Parliament 18 May 2018	Deployment of a number of supporting measures in the course of 2019					
CSR3: Flanders	Mobility	Integrated Investment Programme (GIP) 2019	The Flemish transport administration initiated a yearly integrated investment programme (Geïntegreerd Investeringsprogramma - GIP) in 2018. The GIP is a new approach to the investment challenges in the transport sector and foresees for	Commitments have been made to invest 1.5 billion euros in transport infrastructure in the GIP 2018. Investments in transport infrastructure are expected to increase to approximately 2.2 billion euros in 2019. There are major investments in large	N/A	Investments in transport infrastructure reached a historic high in 2018 (1.5 billion euros).						

			<p>2019 a record budget of over 2 billion EUR. The aim of the GIP is to provide a yearly integrated (across the different transport modes) and plan-based (PCDA cycle) investment programme in the field of mobility and public works. In 2016, the Flemish Government had already founded De Werkvennootschap NV with the aim of tackling large infrastructure projects in a more accelerated and integrated manner. De Werkvennootschap NV continues to coordinate large infrastructure projects in 2018.</p>	<p>infrastructure projects such as the Oosterweel project, the optimization of the Brussels Ring (R0) – including Brabantnet, the construction of three tram(bus)lines in the North of Brussels – and the construction of the new lock in Terneuzen.</p>							
--	--	--	---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

## Annex 7: Reporting table on national Europe 2020 targets and other key commitments

Table A3. Description of the measures taken and information on their qualitative impact		
Target / policy area	List of measures and their state of play that were implemented in response to the commitment	The estimated impacts of the measures (qualitative and/or quantitative)
	<b>National Europe 2020 targets</b>	
Employment (see also CSR 2)	<p><b>Wallonia</b> Reform of the support measure facilitating transition to full time independent work (from unemployment of complement independent activity)</p>	<p><b>Wallonia</b> 85% of the people having completed the 2 years compulsory pathway are still in activity.</p>
	<p><b>Flanders</b> (<i>Wage cost reductions for target groups</i>) Businesses employing low or medium educated youth, workers over 55 or people with a disability receive a reduction of the wage cost, improving their prospects on the labour market. Employers receive a reduction of their social security contributions for the employment of low or medium educated youths (younger than 25) with a gross monthly wage below €2.500. This reduction may last up to 8 quarters. For the employment of workers over 55, employers receive a lasting reduction of contributions. When hiring jobseekers over 55, they receive a higher reduction for up to 8 quarters, after which they revert to the normal reduction for workers over 55. For people with a disability, the wage cost reduction takes the form of a premium (fixed percentage of the wage cost). The measures aimed at youths and jobseekers over 55 came into full effect in 2018. As of 1 January 2019, this policy was expanded. For the employment of low educated youths and jobseekers over 55, employers are now completely exempt from paying social security contributions. The premium for hiring people with a disability was expanded to part-time self-employed workers, and a temporary premium was introduced. This temporary premium is aimed at people who are still in treatment or recovery.</p>	<p><b>Flanders</b> - Flemish Europe 2020 target: 76%. - Flemish Employment rate (aged 20-64) (2018): 74.6%.  The measures aim to contribute significantly in reaching the overall employment target rate of 76%.</p>

	<p>The measures aimed at youths are expected to ease the transition from school to work, avoiding unemployment at the start of the career, which is known to have a potentially lasting impact on people's careers. The measures aimed at people over 55 will increase their chances at being hired and decrease the odds of them being coerced into early retirement. This should increase the employment rate.</p>	
	<p><b>Brussels</b> (<i>Social economy reform</i>) The Ordinance of 23 July 2018 concerning the authorisation and support of social enterprises has entered into force on 1 February 2019. This new normative framework aims to open up new horizons to entrepreneurs who choose this economic model, via a series of economic levers, whilst at the same time preserving the specific and historical mission of socio-professional insertion of the social economy. It answers to a renewed general interest for social entrepreneurship and social enterprises and provides support for this movement by economic policy elements recognising the diversity in the types of social enterprises.</p>	
R&D and innovation	<p><b>Brussels</b> Recently this year, Innoviris launched a new programme called Start, a new funding tool for business development. Start focuses on the technical (proof of concept) and business validation (proof of business) of future projects and services. Start also gives the opportunity to present working hypotheses to professional experts and established CEOs. Regardless of the sector in which recipients operate, Start offers funding covering 50 to 70 % of a work programme budget of 3 to 9 months.</p>	
	<p><b>Wallonia</b> New support programme for collaborative R&amp;D infrastructures in companies (associating SMEs), budget 6 millions € for 2018.</p>	<p><b>Wallonia</b> Supporting the technological, scientific or technical developments in SMEs, supporting the development of innovation in SMEs</p>
	<p><b>Flanders</b> In 2018 (initial budget), total science budget of the Flemish Government reaches 2.512 billion euro, a historic height. The R&amp;D part thereby reaches 1.608 billion euro. An extra provision of 280 million euro for investments in R&amp;D&amp;I is foreseen for 2019 (recurrent). In addition, a provision of 120 mln euro for on-off investments in R&amp;D and businesses is foreseen for 2019.</p>	<p><b>Flanders</b> - Flemish Europe 2020 target: 3%. - Flemish R&amp;D-intensity (2016): 2.70%.</p>
GHG emission reduction	<p><b>Wallonia</b> Adoption of the draft Energy-Climate Plan 2030, with actions in mobility (modal shift, electric mobility and green vehicles), building renovation, renewable electricity production.</p>	<p><b>Wallonia</b> Objective to reduce non-ETS emissions by 37% compared to 2005. Main sectors concerned: transport, buildings (tertiary and residential – reduction of 29% of the energy consumption compared to 2005) and renewables (increase in the share of consumption to 23.5%)</p>

	<p><b>Brussels</b></p> <p>The contribution to the NECP (National Energy and Climate Plan) adopted in July 2018, contains 52 measures specific to the Region, including 20 building related measures, 17 transport measures and 14 renewable energy measures.</p> <p>With regard to the building sector, the Brussels NECP focuses mainly on the strategy to reduce the environmental impacts of existing buildings. The aim of this strategy is to bring the building stock to a high level of energy performance by 2050:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ For residential buildings, the objective is to achieve an average of 100 kWh/m<sup>2</sup>/year in primary energy.</li> <li>▪ For the tertiary sector, the objective is to move towards energy-neutral buildings.</li> </ul> <p>The decarbonisation of heating and domestic hot water solutions is also discussed: the next decade will mark the end of the installation of coal-fired (2021) and oil-fired (2025) heating systems. The Brussels plan also foresees looking at the future of natural gas installations after 2030.</p>	
	<p><b>Flanders</b></p> <p>The Flemish Mitigation plan (2013-2020) includes measures in all non-ETS sectors reducing greenhouse gas emissions in accordance with the Flemish target. In February 2018, the second progress report of the Climate Policy Plan 2013-2020 was presented to the Flemish Government (<a href="http://www.vlaamseklimaatop.be/hoever-staat-de-uitvoering-van-het-vlaams-klimaatbeleidsplan-2013-2020">http://www.vlaamseklimaatop.be/hoever-staat-de-uitvoering-van-het-vlaams-klimaatbeleidsplan-2013-2020</a>). In this report all measures are mentioned that have been taken and/or are planned in 2018/2019 by different sectors in Flanders, including transport, agriculture, buildings, industry and energy. The report also lists the measures financed through the Flemish Climate Fund.</p>	<p><b>Flanders</b></p> <p>Flemish Europe 2020 target: Reduction of GHG emission by 15.7% in 2020 (compared to 2005).</p> <p>Non-ETS GHG emissions: 43.5 Mton CO<sub>2</sub>eq (2017)</p>
Renewable energy	<p><b>Flanders</b></p> <p>The Flemish government finalised the Energy plan 2020 in October 2017, setting out new renewable energy sub-targets. To meet these targets, increasing investments in solar energy, wind power and renewable heat are needed (see below investments energy).</p>	<p><b>Flanders</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Flemish Europe 2020 target: According to the intra-Belgian burden sharing agreement, the renewable energy target for Flanders corresponds to a production of 2 156 Mtep (25 074 GWh) renewable energy in 2020.</li> <li>- Share of renewable energy in gross final energy consumption: 6.7% (2017). The total share of renewable energy in gross final energy consumption rose from 6.5% in 2016 to 6.7% in 2017.</li> </ul> <p>In 2017 renewable heat contributed 40% to the total production based on renewable energy, renewable electricity for 42% and renewable energy in transport for 18%.</p>

	<p><b>Brussels</b> SolarClick: installation of rooftop photovoltaic panels on regional and local government buildings.</p>	<p><b>Brussels</b> SolarClick aims at the production of 11 GWh per year by 2020.</p>
	<p><b>Wallonia</b> Pax Eolienica: 15 concrete measures adopted to support the development of wind energy, notably through simplification and safe legal framework.</p>	<p><b>Wallonia</b> Objective is to foster investment in wind energy</p>
Energy efficiency	<p><b>Flanders</b> Increasing the renovation rate of the Flemish housing stock while at the same time realizing deeper renovations is not only crucial in the context of the Energy Efficiency Directive, but also in achieving the other European climate and energy objectives, in particular the greenhouse gas reduction target. for non-ETS sectors and the renewable energy target. To support the financing of in-depth energetic renovations various new support measures have been worked out, among others:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Since 1 January 2019 the new EPC+ was launched. The main difference is that not only a numeric energy score but also an energy label is provided. This label can go from A+ (very good) to F (very bad). The EPC+ will make more recommendations to make your home more energy-efficient and will provide a cost indication. In other words, it will provide an individualized renovation trajectory.</li> <li>▪ Recently, the so-called “home pass” was launched. The home pass is a digital passport with an overview of the certificates and information that the Flemish government has about a house, plot and its surroundings. It is also an excellent instrument that aims at implementing the Renovation Pact. If you have an EPC or EPB declaration for your home, you can also compare this information with the average energy scores of the municipality or city, province and Flanders. With the energy information via the EPC in the home pass, you can also see which investments are best carried out in order to obtain a better energy performance of the home.</li> <li>▪ Other additional measures for residential buildings include the introduction from 2019 of a temporary premium for a heat pump boiler, the development of an approach for accelerating the degree of renewal of heating installations, the introduction of a ban on oil boilers (in the case of new construction and major energy renovation) from 2021, etc.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Flanders</b> - Primary energy consumption: 1632 PJ (2017)</p> <p>To contribute to the national target (43.7 Mtoe primary energy consumption in 2020), and in accordance with the targets for final energy use in the Energy Efficiency Directive, the Government of Flanders aims at:</p> <p>achieving yearly savings of 1.5% in the period 2014-2020 (base: the average annual energy sales to final consumers in 2010-2012); This equals a total saving of 172 PJ between 2014 and 2020.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• energy policy agreement (108 PJ)</li> <li>• premium grid operator (52 PJ)</li> <li>• kilometer charging trucks (12 PJ)</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Wallonia</b> Adoption of the ‘light plan’ for Walloon roads: equipment of the road network with LED lighting</p>	<p><b>Wallonia</b> Energy economy of 30% projected.</p>

	<p><b>Brussels</b> NRClick: energy accounting and energy management programme projects for regional and local government buildings</p>	<p><b>Brussels</b> NRClick aims at reducing the partners' energy consumption by 15% for gas and 5% for electricity. The savings could reach 69 GWh and 139 GWh cumulated.</p>
Early school leaving	<p><b>Brussels</b> The reform of the regional school reintegration schemes, (dispositif d'accrochage scolaire - DAS), which has been adopted in April 2018 by the Brussels Government, aims to combat school drop-outs and prevent truancy, violence and antisocial behavior. The objective is to better coordinate interventions and consolidate actions within the framework of a multi-annual funding scheme. Within the framework of the implementation of the school reintegration schemes, a new call for projects has been approved and aims to grant aid to municipalities for the years 2018-2020 (384 projects were supported for a total amount of 5 852 609 euros).</p>	
	<p><b>Flanders</b> 2018 was a key year for many education reforms during the current legislative period. Important decrees were approved by the Flemish Parliament on almost all educational levels. On the 1st of September 2018 the reform regarding the pupil guidance system came into force. This reform tackles several phenomena underlying early school leaving, such as school failure, wrong choice of study, lack of motivation, educational delay and truancy. The reform will enable even more young people than today to leave secondary education with qualifications. The Action Plan 'Together against Early School Leaving' (Actieplan 'Samen tegen Schooluitval') is being further rolled out as well. The plan contains more than 50 actions regarding learning entitlement, truancy and early school leaving. Thirty actions were already completed, the rest is still ongoing.</p>	<p><b>Flanders</b> - Flemish Europe 2020 target: 5.2% - Early school leaving (2018): 7.3%.</p>
	<p><b>French Community</b> The Pact for Excellence in Teaching has been adopted by the government in 7 March 2017. Reducing early school leaving is one of its core objectives (in connection with reducing drastically grade repetition). The following measures have been adopted and/or are put in place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Setting of a global objective for the education system of the Walloon-Brussels Federation (FWB): reduction by 50% for the early school leaving rate before 2030 (see the new school governance reform). More than 800 schools are now preparing their action plan on the basis of common indicators (notably ESL/drop out school indicators provided by the FWB Ministry/Education Administration) New school action plans to be in place as of September 2019.</li> </ul>	<p><b>French Community</b> The EU 2020 target is 10% Brussels, 2016: 14.8% Brussels, 2017: 12.9% Wallonia, 2016: 10.3% Wallonia, 2017: 10.5% In 2017 Belgium scored 8.9%. The Belgian 2020 goal is 9.5%.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The new programme for personal support and guidance (remedial) for pupils aims at preventing grade repetition and school drop out. It is going to be in place in schools as of September 2019).</li> </ul> <p>The Global Plan to Reducing School Drop out is being prepared at administration level. It will be presented to the government at the end of 2019.</p>	
Tertiary education	<p><b>Flanders</b> Both the access to and the quality of higher education remain priorities for the Government of Flanders. Flanders has completed the legislative work regarding higher vocational education (hoger beroepsonderwijs/associate degree). The relevant decree has been adopted by the Parliament on the 4th of May 2018 and established the associate degree as a fully-fledged component of higher education. A more strongly developed associate degree will attract pupils who currently do not yet find their way to tertiary education, and will contribute as such to the further democratisation of higher education in Flanders.</p>	<p><b>Flanders</b> - Flemish Europe 2020 target: 47.8% - Tertiary education (2018): 48.2%. Flanders has achieved its objective.</p>
	<p><b>French Community</b> The access and the quality of higher education remain a priority for the Government of the French Community of Belgium. Dual education program in higher education is organized since the decree of 30 June 2016 organizing higher education alternately (<a href="http://www.gallilex.cfwb.be/document/pdf/42853_000.pdf">http://www.gallilex.cfwb.be/document/pdf/42853_000.pdf</a>). This teaching offers the student a double opportunity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>discover the world of business and acquire the social, technical and professional skills expected on the job market;</li> <li>acquire a higher education degree through a practice-oriented methodology, while receiving an allowance.</li> </ul> <p>Practical arrangements are defined by an agreement between the higher education institution, the company and the student. Many students are also active in Adult Education School (second chance education) which also organizes higher level education</p>	<p><b>French Community</b> The EU 2020 target is 40% In 2017 Belgium scored 45.9%. Brussels, 2016: 51.9% Brussels, 2017: 54.4% Wallonia, 2016: 39.6% Wallonia, 2017: 40.9% The Belgian 2020 goal is 47%.</p>
Poverty	<p><b>Federal</b> Structural mechanism for adapting social security and social assistance benefits to the development of the general standard of living. Implementation in 2019 -2020.</p>	<p><b>Federal</b> Supporting the income of the lowest income categories through an increase of social assistance and (selected) social security benefits on top of the adjustment to the consumer price index. The proposal by the social partners regarding the use of the welfare envelope 2019-2020 is being discussed by the federal government.</p>
	<b>Brussels</b>	<b>Brussels</b>



	The Brussels Actions Program for the Fight against Poverty was adopted in July 2018. The programme contains different measures, in particular the creation of two reception centers offering social and health services for marginalized groups (homeless people, migrants...).	These initiatives aim at reintegrating homeless people in the society and decreasing their number in the Brussels-Capital Region.
	<b>Flanders</b> The Flemish Government continues work on the further implementation of the Flemish Action Plan on Poverty reduction. One of the actions in this plan involves raising awareness among citizens about participation, creation, organization or use of initiatives of informal and voluntary care. Research shows that people in poverty have fewer opportunities to establish and maintain sustainable relationships. A reinforced social network can benefit the quality of life of people in poverty. A scientific study of informal network reinforcement was conducted. On this basis, a project call was launched which focuses on the model where a voluntary key figure is enabled to support a person in poverty, the so-called Buddy workings. 28 projects are funded for a total amount of 1,343,295.52 euro. The Flemish government also organizes a learning network to support and strengthen these projects.	<b>Flanders</b> - Flemish Europe 2020 poverty or social exclusion target: 10.5% - Flemish score (2017): 13.5%.
	<b>Wallonia</b> Reform of the support framework for the elderly.	<b>Wallonia</b> Creation of 12 000 new places by 2030, increasing the quality of accommodations, control of prices.
<b>Strategic investments</b>		
Investments / Energy	<b>Flanders</b> The Flemish government finalised the Energy plan 2020 in October 2017, setting out new renewable energy sub-targets. To meet these targets, increasing investments in solar energy, wind power and renewable heat are needed. Several measures as included in the Solar plan have been implemented, in order to accelerate the development of solar energy by citizens, companies and governments. The actions of Wind plan 2020 are also being implemented. There is a strong focus on the assistance of local authorities and developers of wind energy projects in order to realize the technically and socially acceptable potential for wind energy in Flanders and a strong focus on tackling obstacles concerning aviation. As regards renewable heat a project call resulted in 10 approved projects. Furthermore, district heating systems in Antwerp and West-Flanders were started and a Flemish guarantee scheme for geothermal heat projects was approved.	<b>Flanders</b> Flanders is currently on the right track to meet these new renewable energy sub-targets.
Investments / Mobility & infrastructure	<b>Brussels</b> In terms of mobility, 5.2 billion euros in total will be invested by 2025 with the aim of modernising and extending the metro and tram lines towards the north of Brussels. Furthermore, the MIVB/STIB fleet will be renewed by introducing less polluting vehicles: 250 hybrid and electric buses will	

	<p>be added to the urban landscape. The first electric buses are in a testing phase; the aim is to have a full electric fleet by 2030. The new "Plan Directeur Bus" will connect districts in a systematic manner and open up parts of the city which had less good connections in the past.</p> <p>Moreover, in the Brussels-Capital Region, in 2016, the government approved a multiannual investment programme for the tunnels, amounting to 750 million euros for a period of ten years. Within the same model, the Region developed a multi-year investment programme for bridges and viaducts with a budget of 24 million euros for inspections, safety works, maintenance and repair works scheduled to take place between 2018 and 2021.</p>	
Investments / School infrastructure	<p><b>Flanders</b></p> <p>The major catching-up program to renew and modernize school buildings and expand them within the framework of the Master Plan for School Building is continued without delay. With regard to the grants in 2018, it can be pointed out that regular budget appropriations of around € 401 million were foreseen in 2018.</p> <p>On the basis of the results of the 2018 second school infrastructure capacity monitor of the obligatory education a new budget of €150 million for the period 2019-2021 will be additionally distributed to those cities and municipalities with the largest estimated capacity needs, with a large focus on future capacity needs in secondary education. The administration closely monitors the progress of the approved capacity projects. In the period 2018-2021, we expect to add 20,245 additional places for pupils, of which 8,240 in 2018, 5,464 in 2019 and 3,123 in 2020.</p>	
Investments / Urban revitalisation	<p><b>Brussels</b></p> <p>In terms of strategic investment, one of the priorities of the Brussels-Capital Region is to respond to the demographic boom, in particular through the diversification of urban revitalisation tools which have made it possible to invest 337 million euros, via neighbourhood contracts, urban renewal contracts, new urban policy programmes and school contracts. It pursues the threefold objective of renovating school facilities and ensuring necessary new places; increasing the supply of community facilities; and strengthening the quality of life.</p>	
Investments / Industrial Policy	<p><b>Wallonia</b></p> <p>In the framework of the Walloon investment Plan: launch of a call for creating an industrial capacity in plastic recycling. This is complemented by specific support for collaborative innovation projects and the creation of an innovation platform on the topic, in collaboration with Clusters and research centers. Budget 60 millions €.</p>	<p><b>Wallonia</b></p> <p>Positioning of Wallonia as key actor in plastics recycling, developing innovation and recycling capacity, with a view to creating jobs and seizing opportunities of circular economy.</p>

Investments / Innovation	<p><b>Wallonia</b></p> <p>Adoption of a new Digital Wallonia plan for 2019-2024. Various new initiatives have been taken in implementing the plan: digital school equipment, training initiatives, digitalisation of the public service, investment in smart cities and in infrastructures, start-up support and support to digitalisation of SMEs, demonstrators for industry and building sector....</p>	<p><b>Wallonia</b></p> <p>Deployment of ICT in the whole economy and society, developing ICT skills and ICT capacities in SMEs,...</p>
<b>Other key commitments</b>		
Cluster policy	<p><b>Flanders</b></p> <p>Concerning the cluster policy, the Flemish Government launched in the period 2016-2018 six spearhead clusters in strategic domains and several Innovative Business Networks (IBN). Spearhead clusters are large-scale, ambitious and can receive up to 10 years of funding. They collaborate in a triple-helix format, with companies, knowledge centres and the government, in order to develop and implement an ambitious long-term strategy and competitiveness programme for the respective Flemish strategic domain. IBNs are typically small-scale initiatives with a support period of three years. The spearhead clusters are: Catalisti (sustainable chemistry), SIM (smart materials), VIL (logistics), Flux50 (smart energy networks), Flanders Food (agrofood) and the recently (28 June 2018) launched Blue Cluster (sustainable, promising economic activities and investments in the North Sea and beyond). More information available at :</p> <p><a href="https://www.vlaio.be/nl/andere-doelgroepen/clusterorganisaties/innovation-clusters-flanders/spearhead-clusters">https://www.vlaio.be/nl/andere-doelgroepen/clusterorganisaties/innovation-clusters-flanders/spearhead-clusters</a></p>	<p><b>Flanders</b></p> <p>Clusters are characterized by an active involvement of enterprises and a sustainable collaboration, both mutually between enterprises as between enterprises and knowledge institutes. The clusters create an environment to foster the process from discovery to market introduction. By making the link between knowledge creation and valorisation of the results, the clusters contribute to reduce the innovation paradox</p>

<p>Various actions within the Industrie 4.0 Actieplan, the elaboration of the Concept Paper on "Make the leap to Industry 4.0" which the Flemish Government has approved Spring 2017.</p>	<p><b>Flanders</b>  Spring 2017, the Flemish Government took note of the Concept paper "Make the leap to Industry 4.0 " and "Continue the transition to the circular economy", each of which are a part of the long term future Vision 2050 strategy of the Flemish Government.  The related action plan for Industry 4.0 from 24 February 2017 lists these 5 priorities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Maintain a platform that distributes and sensitises information about Industry 4.0;</li> <li>2. Strengthen the knowledge base;</li> <li>3. Accelerate the application by supporting companies in a targeted way, depending on their familiarity and involvement with the transition</li> <li>4. Contributing to good environmental conditions;</li> <li>5. Support international cooperation, especially at European level.</li> </ol> <p>In 2019, 10 new living labs were selected, starting in April, for a budget of 4 million euros and with the objective of covering more industrial sectors and themes.</p>	
<p>SMEs</p>	<p><b>Wallonia</b>  Creation of a Walloon Council for Export with the objective to develop a strategy for enhanced dynamism of regional exports, mainly in SMEs.</p>	<p><b>Wallonia</b>  Increasing the number of exporting SMEs and diversification of products and markets in Walloon exports performances.</p>
<p>Circular Economy</p>	<p><b>Wallonia</b>  Adoption of the Walloon plan Waste-resources. 700 actions are proposed through 157 measures to better reduce, reuse, sort, recycle and recover waste.</p>	<p><b>Wallonia</b>  Develop the circular economy.</p>

## Annex 8: List of cooperation agreements

31 JANVIER 2019. - Accord de coopération d'exécution entre la Commission communautaire commune et la Commission communautaire française relatif à la composition et au fonctionnement de la Commission permanente de concertation

MB: 22-02-2019

Source : COMMISSION COMMUNAUTAIRE COMMUNE, COMMISSION COMMUNAUTAIRE FRANCAISE

21 DECEMBRE 2018. - Accord de coopération entre la Communauté française et la Communauté flamande relatif à l'utilisation de fréquences numériques pour le DAB+ sur le territoire l'autre partie

MB: 08-02-2019

Source: FRANSE GEMEENSCHAP - COMMUNAUTE FRANCAISE

29 NOVEMBRE 2018. - Accord de coopération entre la Communauté française, la Commission communautaire commune et la Communauté germanophone relatif à l'usage partagé de la plate-forme électronique sécurisée de commande de vaccins et de registre vaccinal

MB: 29-01-2019

Source : COMMUNAUTE FRANCAISE, COMMUNAUTE GERMANOPHONE, COMMISSION COMMUNAUTAIRE COMMUNE

28 NOVEMBRE 2018. - Protocole d'accord conclu entre le Gouvernement fédéral et les autorités visées aux articles 128, 130, 135 et 138 de la Constitution, concernant la gestion et le financement de l'appliquatif informatique de financement des maisons de repos et de soins, maisons de repos pour personnes âgées, centres de soins de jour, centres de rééducation fonctionnelle, maisons de soins psychiatriques et équipes multidisciplinaire d'accompagnement pour les soins palliatifs et centres palliatifs de jour (RVT)

MB: 05-02-2019

Source INSTITUT NATIONAL ASSURANCE MALADIE-INVALIDITE

8 NOVEMBRE 2018. - Accord de coopération entre la Commission communautaire commune et la Commission communautaire française concernant la création et le fonctionnement de la commission permanente de concertation en matière de transport médico-sanitaire

MB: 15-01-2019

Source : COMMISSION COMMUNAUTAIRE COMMUNE

5 NOVEMBRE 2018. - Protocole conclu entre le Gouvernement fédéral et les autorités visées aux articles 128, 130 et 135 de la Constitution, établissant les structures génériques pour la gestion sectorielle santé des crises de santé publique et leur mode de fonctionnement pour l'application du Règlement Sanitaire International (2005), et la décision n° 1082/2013/UE relative aux menaces transfrontières graves sur la santé

MB: 14-12-2018

Source : SECURITE DE LA CHAINE ALIMENTAIRE ET ENVIRONNEMENT

5 NOVEMBRE 2018. - Avenant au protocole d'accord du 24 février 2014 relatif à l'imagerie médicale

MB: 14-12-2018

Source : SANTE PUBLIQUE, SECURITE DE LA CHAINE ALIMENTAIRE ET ENVIRONNEMENT

5 NOVEMBRE 2018. - Protocole d'accord conclu entre le Gouvernement fédéral et les autorités visées aux articles 128, 130, 135 et 138 de la Constitution concernant l'organisation et le financement d'un point de contact national concernant les soins de santé transfrontaliers

MB: 16-01-2019

Source : SANTE PUBLIQUE, SECURITE DE LA CHAINE ALIMENTAIRE ET ENVIRONNEMENT

5 NOVEMBRE 2018. - Protocole d'accord entre l'Autorité fédérale et les autorités visées aux articles 128, 130, 135 et 138 de la Constitution concernant la profession paramédicale d'ambulancier de transport non-urgent de patients

MB: 01-02-2019

Source : PUBLIQUE, SECURITE DE LA CHAINE ALIMENTAIRE ET ENVIRONNEMENT

5 NOVEMBRE 2018. - Protocole d'accord conclu entre le Gouvernement fédéral et les autorités visées aux articles 128, 130 et 135 de la constitution, concernant l'organisation et le financement de l'enquête de consommation alimentaire 2022

MB: 19-02-2019

Source : SANTE PUBLIQUE, SECURITE DE LA CHAINE ALIMENTAIRE ET ENVIRONNEMENT

5 NOVEMBRE 2018. - Protocole d'accord sur la répartition du nombre maximum de 25 réseaux hospitaliers cliniques locorégionaux sur les entités compétentes pour l'agrément

MB: 16-01-2019

Source : SANTE PUBLIQUE, SECURITE DE LA CHAINE ALIMENTAIRE ET ENVIRONNEMENT

25 OCTOBRE 2018. - Accord de coopération entre la Commission communautaire commune et la Commission communautaire française concernant la création et le fonctionnement de la Commission permanente de concertation en matière de transport médico sanitaire

MB: 07-02-2019

Source : COMMISSION COMMUNAUTAIRE FRANCAISE

3 OCTOBRE 2018. - Avenant n° 13 à l'accord de coopération du 15 septembre 1993 entre l'Etat fédéral et la Région de Bruxelles-Capitale, relatif à certaines initiatives destinées à promouvoir le rôle international et la fonction de capitale de Bruxelles

MB: 17-10-2018

Source : REGION DE BRUXELLES-CAPITALE

12 JUILLET 2018. - Accord de coopération entre la Région wallonne et la Communauté germanophone portant sur le traitement des régularisations en matière de Prestations familiales

MB: 26-02-2019

Source : COMMUNAUTE GERMANOPHONE

2 JUILLET 2018. - Accord de coopération entre le Gouvernement wallon et le Gouvernement de la Communauté germanophone portant exécution de l'accord de coopération conclu le 13 juillet 2017 entre la Région wallonne et la Communauté germanophone concernant l'organisation des élections locales du 14 octobre 2018 sur le territoire de la région de langue allemande

MB: 16-07-2018

Source : SERVICE PUBLIC DE WALLONIE

25 JUIN 2018. - Accord de coopération du 25 juin 2018 entre l'Etat fédéral, la Communauté française et la Communauté flamande relatif à la protection culturelle du livre

MB: 18-01-2019

Source : FRANSE GEMEENSCHAP

30 MAI 2018. - Accord de coopération entre la Communauté flamande, la Région wallonne, la Commission communautaire commune et la Communauté germanophone concernant la transposition dans la législation des prestations familiales de la Directive 2009/50/CE du Conseil du 25 mai 2009 établissant les conditions d'entrée et de séjour des ressortissants de pays tiers aux fins d'un emploi hautement qualifié, de la Directive 2014/66/UE du Parlement européen et du Conseil du 15 mai 2014 établissant les conditions d'entrée et de séjour des ressortissants de pays tiers dans le cadre d'un transfert temporaire intragroupe et de la Directive (EU) 2016/801 du parlement européen et du Conseil du 11 mai 2016 relative aux conditions d'entrée et de séjour des ressortissants de pays tiers à des fins de recherche, d'études, de formation, de volontariat et de programmes d'échange d'élèves ou de projets éducatifs et de travail au pair

MB: 18-06-2018

Source : CHANCELLERIE DU PREMIER MINISTRE

30 MAI 2018. - Accord de coopération entre la Communauté flamande, la Région wallonne, la Commission communautaire commune et la Communauté germanophone portant sur la répartition des réserves des caisses libres agréées en vertu de la LGAF au moment de la reprise de la gestion et du paiement des allocations familiales par une entité fédérée

MB: 18-06-2018

Source : CHANCELLERIE DU PREMIER MINISTRE



30 MAI 2018. - Accord de coopération entre la Communauté flamande, la Région wallonne, la Commission Communautaire Commune et la Communauté germanophone relatif à la création de l'organe interrégional pour les prestations familiales

MB : 09-07-2018

Source : AUTORITE FLAMANDE - SERVICE PUBLIC DE WALLONIE - COMMISSION COMMUNAUTAIRE COMMUNE - COMMUNAUTE GERMANOPHONE

29 MARS 2018. - Accord de coopération entre la Communauté française, la Région wallonne et la Commission communautaire française visant la coordination des politiques d'intervention en lien avec le milieu carcéral

MB : 26-04-2018

Source : COMMUNAUTE FRANCAISE - SERVICE PUBLIC DE WALLONIE - COMMISSION COMMUNAUTAIRE FRANCAISE

29 MARS 2018. - Accord de coopération d'exécution entre la Communauté française, la Région wallonne et la Commission communautaire française relatif à la concertation intrafrancophone en matière de santé et d'aide aux personnes et aux principes communs applicables en ces matières

MB : 04-05-2018

Source : COMMUNAUTE FRANCAISE - SERVICE PUBLIC DE WALLONIE - COMMISSION COMMUNAUTAIRE FRANCAISE

28 MARS 2018. - Accord de coopération entre la Communauté française et la Région wallonne relatif à la restauration, la réaffectation, le redéploiement, la conception de projets immobiliers à caractère culturel, patrimonial et/ou touristique en Wallonie

MB : 11-04-2018

Source : COMMUNAUTE FRANCAISE - SERVICE PUBLIC DE WALLONIE

28 MARS 2018. - Accord de coopération entre la Communauté française et la Région wallonne relatif à la restauration, la réaffectation, le redéploiement, la conception de projets immobiliers à caractère culturel, patrimonial et/ou touristique en Wallonie

MB : 11-04-2018

Source : SERVICE PUBLIC DE WALLONIE

26 FEVRIER 2018. - Accord de coopération entre la Région flamande, la Région wallonne et la Région de Bruxelles-Capitale relatif à la création de la Fondation Forêt de Soignes

MB: 10-09-2018

Source : REGION DE BRUXELLES-CAPITALE

12 FEVRIER 2018. - Accord de coopération entre l'Etat fédéral, la Région flamande, la Région wallonne et la Région de Bruxelles-Capitale relatif au partage des objectifs belges climat et énergie pour la période 2013-2020

MB: 12-07-2018

Source : CHANCELLERIE DU PREMIER MINISTRE

2 FEVRIER 2018. - Accord de coopération entre l'Etat fédéral, la Région wallonne, la Région flamande, la Région de Bruxelles-Capitale et la Communauté germanophone portant sur la coordination des politiques d'octroi d'autorisations de travail et d'octroi du permis de séjour, ainsi que les normes relatives à l'emploi et au séjour des travailleurs étrangers

MB: 24-12-2018

Source : INTERIEUR

## **Annex 9: Opinion of the Central Economic Council and the National Labour Council**

### **Saisine**

Par lettre du 14 février 2019, Monsieur C. MICHEL, Premier ministre, sollicite la contribution du Conseil national du travail et du Conseil central de l'économie, sous forme d'avis, à la préparation du Programme national de réforme 2019.

Dans son courrier, le Premier ministre indique que l'avis des Conseils sera annexé audit programme et, dans la mesure du possible, pris en considération dans le corps du programme. En annexe dudit courrier ont été transmis le document de planification du Programme national de réforme 2019 ainsi que les recommandations 2018.

L'avis des Conseils est demandé pour le 8 mars 2019 au plus tard.

Le présent avis est composé de deux parties reprenant les contributions respectives du Conseil central de l'économie et du Conseil national du travail au PNR 2019.

L'avis est adopté en séance plénière commune le ... 2019.

### **AVIS**

#### **Remarques préliminaires**

Les interlocuteurs sociaux représentés au sein du Conseil central de l'économie (le CCE) et du Conseil national du travail (CNT) ont pris connaissance du plan de travail et de la structure du texte pour le Programme national de réforme 2019 ainsi que du timing très serré et des contraintes de rédaction pour la remise des contributions et avis.

Le Programme national de réforme (PNR) 2019 doit s'efforcer de rassembler les mesures prises par les différentes autorités du pays au cours des derniers mois dans les domaines concernés par les recommandations européennes ainsi que les priorités pour les mois à venir. De plus, le PNR s'inscrit dans le cadre de la stratégie et des objectifs de « Europe 2020 » pour une croissance économique « intelligente, durable et inclusive » que l'Union européenne a adoptée en 2010. Il constitue l'instrument de suivi et d'évaluation du volet national de la stratégie européenne. Depuis 2011, dans le cadre de la mise en place du Semestre européen, le PNR s'articule aussi avec les programmes de stabilité et de convergence. Un volet particulier de la structure de texte du PNR concerne « les autres réformes et l'utilisation des fonds structurels » et devrait traiter des investissements, de l'économie circulaire, de la politique industrielle, du climat entrepreneurial ainsi que de l'utilisation des fonds structurels.

La rédaction du PNR est assurée par un comité de rédaction dirigé par la Chancellerie du Premier ministre. Sont représentés dans ce comité : le SPF Finances, le Bureau fédéral du plan, le SPF Affaires sociales, le SPF Emploi, les Régions et les Communautés. La responsabilité finale du PNR incombe au gouvernement. Des domaines importants repris dans le PNR relèvent de la responsabilité partielle ou exclusive des Régions ou des Communautés, ce qui nécessite une coordination entre le gouvernement fédéral et les gouvernements des Régions et des Communautés. Cette coordination est organisée au

sein d'un Comité d'accompagnement politique créé à cette fin, ainsi que du Comité de concertation qui rassemble les différentes autorités.

Le Conseil central de l'économie et le Conseil national du travail (les Conseils) relèvent l'intention du gouvernement de prendre en considération dans le corps du programme l'apport du dialogue social dès lors que les deux Conseils sont au niveau fédéral les instances de discussion, et les lieux d'appropriation des enjeux de coordinations des politiques socio-économiques européennes ainsi que des recommandations européennes adressées à la Belgique.

Les Conseils demandent au gouvernement d'entendre le point de vue des interlocuteurs sociaux concernant les propositions de recommandations de la Commission européenne avant que celles-ci ne soient discutées au niveau des comités européens (Comité de politique économique, Comité économique et financier, Comité de l'emploi, Comité de la protection sociale).

## **1 Contribution du Conseil central de l'économie au PNR**

La loi de 1996 (modifiée en 2017) sur la promotion de l'emploi et la sauvegarde préventive de la compétitivité confie au Conseil central de l'économie une mission de surveillance de l'état de la compétitivité de la Belgique et des politiques menées dans le domaine de l'emploi. La loi prévoit la publication d'un Rapport Emploi-Compétitivité (le REC).

Le REC analyse les dynamiques en œuvre en matière de productivité et de compétitivité qui influent aussi bien sur l'accumulation et la correction des déséquilibres macroéconomiques que sur l'examen de l'impact socio-économique des politiques publiques qui sont menées et l'efficacité des ajustements engagés. Ces problématiques sont également au cœur du Rapport pays de la Commission européenne et des recommandations européennes.

Cette année, la publication du REC aura lieu en mai 2019. En reportant de quelques semaines sa publication, le CCE souhaite apporter une contribution au développement d'une vision pour l'économie belge en mettant des points à l'ordre du jour du programme des politiques du prochain gouvernement.

Il n'en demeure pas moins que le CCE propose au gouvernement que les axes de travail et les analyses menées par les interlocuteurs sociaux dans le cadre de la rédaction du REC trouvent un écho dans le corps du PNR, actuellement en préparation. Cette valorisation des travaux du REC dans le cadre du PNR constitue certainement une plus-value sous l'angle du suivi des recommandations européennes, de la stratégie Europe 2020 au plan national et sur la base duquel, entre autres, les instances européennes adressent leurs prochaines recommandations en juin/juillet 2019.

De plus, cette valorisation du REC dans le PNR complète adéquatement les initiatives prises par les Conseils en collaboration avec la Commission européenne, par l'intermédiaire de sa représentation en Belgique, visant à développer le dialogue, l'échange d'arguments entre les interlocuteurs sociaux et la Commission européenne sur le Rapport pays et les recommandations spécifiques par pays lors des étapes clés du semestre européen.

### **1.1 Les défis de l'économie belge**

Le Rapport Emploi - Compétitivité du Conseil central de l'économie du mois de mai 2019 identifie les priorités et les défis à relever pour atteindre les principaux objectifs de politique économique de la Belgique en termes de cohésion sociale, de création de richesse, de soutenabilité environnementale, de soutenabilité des finances publiques et d'équilibre de la balance des opérations courantes. Le rapport épingle aussi, sous forme de focus, les facteurs de politique économique à activer pour relever ces défis ainsi que les principes qui doivent guider la mise en œuvre de ces facteurs. Ces focus, qui sont en cours

de finalisation, concernent la bonne réglementation (en ce compris les coûts administratifs et la prévisibilité de la réglementation) ; la formation tout au long de la vie ; le développement de la multimodalité ; le développement des entreprises à forte croissance, les liens avec la productivité et l'emploi ; le focus énergie-climat portera sur l'importance de développer une vision à long terme cohérente, l'importance du dialogue social pour dégager un consensus large dans la société, sur la coordination des différents niveaux de pouvoir et sur l'efficacité énergétique dans les bâtiments.

C'est donc au départ de préoccupations communes et d'un diagnostic partagé sur la situation socio-économique du pays que le rapport met en exergue les défis économiques suivants, qui devraient se retrouver à l'ordre du jour des travaux du gouvernement :

- Dans un environnement socio-économique et technologique changeant, *la capacité innovatrice de l'économie est essentielle*. Elle lui offre les outils pour s'adapter au mieux à ces changements afin de continuer à créer de la valeur, à assurer la cohésion sociale et à donner des réponses aux grands défis sociétaux. Ceci recouvre tant l'innovation disruptive que la diffusion de l'innovation entre entreprises ou entre secteurs. Pourtant, l'économie belge présente des faiblesses dans ces deux domaines. Pour y remédier, elle doit s'assurer de la présence de plus d'entreprises d'une taille critique suffisante, créatrices de nouvelles connaissances et d'innovations disruptives, ainsi que d'un environnement permettant une bonne propagation des nouvelles technologies à l'ensemble de l'économie. Une base de connaissances solide (y compris les compétences nécessaires), un dynamisme entrepreneurial suffisant, un accès aux marchés étrangers et une ouverture internationale sont essentiels à cet effet.
- La transition vers *une économie circulaire* – où la valeur des produits et des matériaux est conservée au maximum et où la production de déchets est réduite au minimum – sera nécessaire afin de répondre à un ensemble de défis, qu'ils soient économiques, environnementaux ou sociaux. Sur le plan économique, la transition vers une économie circulaire peut répondre à la forte hausse de la demande de matières premières qui a été observée ces dernières décennies et qui affecte leur sécurité d'approvisionnement et leurs prix. Du côté environnemental, elle doit permettre de s'attaquer à la destruction des écosystèmes et au changement climatique, en réduisant par exemple le prélèvement des ressources et la production d'émissions et de déchets. Enfin, la transition est susceptible de générer de nouvelles activités et de réorganiser les activités existantes, ouvrant des possibilités de création de valeur et d'emplois, participant in fine au renforcement de la cohésion sociale.
- En même temps que la meilleure garantie de protection des revenus et de protection contre la pauvreté sont les opportunités de chacun à accéder au marché du travail, une *sécurité sociale soutenable sur le plan social et financier* est un élément fondamental pour la cohésion sociale. Outre le fait que la sécurité sociale garantit une certaine sécurité de revenu et offre une certaine protection contre la pauvreté, elle remplit aussi une fonction de stabilisateur automatique. Des tendances pèsent actuellement sur la soutenabilité financière et sociale de la sécurité sociale : la base de financement, l'impact du vieillissement croissant de la population (dépenses de pensions et soins de santé) sont parmi les plus importants. Les développements technologiques ont pour effets des possibilités de création d'emplois, de modifications des types de compétences requises et d'adéquation entre l'offre et la demande sur le marché du travail. La digitalisation et l'économie collaborative créent de nouvelles formes de travail. La migration, les modifications des structures familiales ainsi que les changements environnementaux peuvent aussi avoir un impact sur la soutenabilité sociale et financière de la sécurité sociale.
- L'économie belge est confrontée à un *problème structurel d'inadéquation sur le marché du travail*. D'un côté, de nombreux postes restent difficiles à pourvoir. D'un autre, des groupes spécifiques de la population continuent à être exclus de l'emploi. Ce phénomène se révèle être en Belgique

un frein sérieux à l'activité économique et une menace pour la cohésion sociale. En outre, il risque encore de s'aggraver en raison des changements technologiques et démographiques et des transformations liées à la transition environnementale auxquels l'économie devra faire face.

- Des *prix à la consommation et des prix business-to-business en phase* avec les trois principaux pays voisins est fondamentale. Une évolution des prix plus rapide en Belgique que dans les pays de référence pèse sur le pouvoir d'achat des ménages et freine ainsi la croissance de la demande et donc la croissance économique. Le niveau élevé des prix de certains services qui sont consommés par les entreprises exportatrices handicape leur compétitivité-coût.
- *La transition énergétique vers une économie bas carbone* doit permettre de respecter les limites environnementales et les engagements environnementaux de la Belgique tout en garantissant des prix énergétiques compétitifs pour les entreprises sensibles aux prix de l'énergie et en concurrence avec des entreprises étrangères et abordables pour les citoyens (et plus particulièrement pour les moins favorisés). La transition énergétique ; doit aussi garantir la sécurité d'approvisionnement. C'est à ces conditions que la transition pourra contribuer, dans le cadre d'une économie mondiale, à la consolidation d'une société durable et d'activités économiques garantissant des emplois de qualité et une croissance de la valeur ajoutée dans l'économie nationale.
- La Belgique est confrontée à un défi majeur en termes de *mobilité plus durable et fluide*. L'accessibilité durable des zones économiques et résidentielles est en constante diminution, en grande partie à cause de l'augmentation de la congestion du trafic. Les embouteillages freinent la prospérité économique et pèsent sur le bien-être de la population. Ils participent au changement climatique et ont un impact négatif sur la qualité de l'environnement, laquelle est importante pour la santé publique des générations actuelles et futures.

Concernant le chapitre du programme portant sur le budget et la dette publique qui fait l'objet de la première recommandation spécifique (CSR 1), le CCE réitère son point de vue sur l'importance d'avoir des finances publiques saines pour pouvoir continuer à garantir à l'avenir un bon niveau de bien-être et de protection sociale. Néanmoins, même en respectant les engagements budgétaires pris envers l'Europe, la Belgique fera encore face à un risque sérieux en raison de son haut taux d'endettement, et à un risque non négligeable en raison des défis budgétaires de long terme. Il est important de prendre des mesures structurelles en misant sur des hausses de productivité et sur une augmentation du taux d'emploi. Dès lors, il convient aussi de trouver l'équilibre entre, d'une part, des règles budgétaires garantissant la soutenabilité des finances publiques et, d'autre part, la capacité des gouvernements à renforcer la croissance économique par des investissements productifs<sup>68</sup>. Il rappelle sa demande adressée au gouvernement belge de demander à la Commission européenne un traitement favorable des investissements publics productifs dans le cadre des règles budgétaires européennes.

Il y a nécessité de prendre en compte la nature quantitative des dépenses publiques mais aussi la qualité et l'efficacité de celles-ci, et ce au regard de la croissance économique et de l'emploi mais aussi de la cohésion sociale.

C'est sur base de ces critères que le CCE rappelle l'importance des investissements, publics et privés, et particulièrement de ceux d'infrastructure (mobilité, énergie, etc.). Afin de profiter au maximum des effets attendus du Pacte national pour les investissements stratégiques<sup>69</sup>, celui-ci doit s'intégrer dans

---

<sup>68</sup> Programme national de réforme 2018 Avis - 28/03/2018

<sup>69</sup> Pacte national pour les investissements stratégiques - Avis du CCE - 25/10/2017

une politique économique générale de stimulation de la croissance durable et des investissements privés, de développement de l'emploi et de renforcement du bien-être social. Une hausse des investissements, et en particulier des investissements publics additionnels, doit viser à stimuler tant la croissance économique à court terme que la croissance économique potentielle à long terme. Ce dernier élément est essentiel pour garantir des finances publiques soutenables, en raison notamment des défis de long terme posés par le coût futur du vieillissement de la population.

## **2 Contribution du Conseil national du travail au PNR**

### **2.1 Introduction**

Dans leur contribution au PNR 2017, qui a fait l'objet de l'avis n° 2.031 du 7 avril 2017, le Conseil national du Travail (CNT) et le Conseil Central de l'Economie (CCE) ont eu l'occasion d'exposer le contenu du dernier accord interprofessionnel 2017-2018 du 2 février 2017 et les premiers points mis en oeuvre, notamment en matière de norme salariale et de liaison au bien-être.

Dans sa contribution au PNR 2018 (avis n° 2.082 du 28 mars 2018), le Conseil national du Travail a fait rapport des principaux travaux menés en son sein en lien avec le semestre européen. Ces travaux s'inscrivaient très largement dans le cadre de l'accord interprofessionnel 2017-2018.

La présente contribution au PNR 2019 n'entend pas revenir sur ces éléments d'information présentés dans ces deux précédentes contributions pour lesquelles il est renvoyé aux deux précédents avis du Conseil.

Par ailleurs, le Conseil ne saurait présenter dans la présente contribution les priorités des partenaires sociaux interprofessionnels et les perspectives de leurs travaux pour les deux prochaines années, lesquelles dépendront de la conclusion et du contenu d'un accord interprofessionnel pour les années 2019-2020. A cet égard, un projet d'accord est intervenu le 26 février 2019 qui fait actuellement l'objet de consultations au sein des organisations. Les principaux points de cet avant-projet d'accord concernent la coordination au niveau interprofessionnel de l'évolution des salaires en vue des négociations à mener dans les secteurs pour la période 2019-2020, l'augmentation du salaire minimum, la revalorisation d'une série d'allocations sociales aussi bien dans le but de lier ces allocations au bien-être que dans le but de poursuivre la réduction de l'écart de pauvreté sans créer de nouveaux pièges à l'emploi et à l'inactivité (enveloppe bien-être), la concrétisation et le développement d'une approche visant à apporter des réponses à court et à moyen terme à la question de la mobilité, la problématique des heures supplémentaires, la question de l'utilisation d'une partie de l'indemnité de préavis afin d'augmenter l'employabilité des travailleurs sur le marché du travail, ainsi que la problématique des critères d'accès aux emplois de fin de carrière et au régime de chômage avec complément d'entreprise (RCC). Le projet d'accord prévoit également la prolongation d'un certain nombre de dossiers en cours et, notamment, des efforts en faveur de personnes appartenant à des groupes à risques.

Le présent avis se limitera par conséquent à présenter brièvement les principaux travaux menés en lien avec les recommandations adressées à la Belgique et le semestre européen qui n'ont pas déjà été repris dans une précédente contribution du Conseil.

### **2.2 Travaux en lien avec les recommandations n° 2 et 3 adressées à la Belgique**

**Recommandation 2** : supprimer les contre-incitations à travailler et renforcer l'efficacité des politiques actives du marché du travail, notamment pour les travailleurs peu qualifiés, issus de l'immigration et

âgés ; poursuivre les réformes dans le domaine de l'éducation et de la formation, notamment en favorisant l'équité et en augmentant le nombre de diplômés en sciences, en technologie, en ingénierie et en mathématiques ;

**Recommandation 3** : réduire la charge administrative et réglementaire afin de favoriser l'esprit d'entreprise et d'intensifier la concurrence dans le secteur des services, en particulier le commerce de détail, la construction et les services professionnels; s'attaquer aux problèmes croissants de mobilité, notamment en procédant à des investissements dans les infrastructures de transport existantes ou nouvelles et en renforçant les incitations à utiliser les transports collectifs et à faibles émissions.

### **2.2.1 Retour volontaire des travailleurs présentant un problème de santé**

La problématique du retour volontaire des travailleurs présentant un problème de santé continue de faire l'objet d'une attention constante du CNT. Un suivi sur une base régulière de la mise en oeuvre du nouveau dispositif légal et réglementaire mis en place par le Gouvernement est ainsi organisé au sein d'une plateforme réunissant autour du CNT tous les acteurs institutionnels et de terrain pertinents pour cette problématique.

Dans ce cadre et à la suite de son avis n° 1.924, le Conseil a adopté l'avis n° 2.099 du 25 septembre 2018 portant évaluation et propositions relatives à la réglementation en matière de réintégration. La vision qui y est développée a encore été réaffirmée par le Conseil dans son avis n° 2.108 du 18 décembre 2018 relatif au Deal pour l'Emploi. Cette vision s'articule autour des éléments suivants :

- l'évaluation de la réglementation en matière de réintégration (principes, données chiffrées, monitoring et évaluation future) et le financement de la procédure de réintégration ;
- des propositions concrètes en vue de l'optimisation de la procédure de réintégration et du trajet de réintégration en ce compris l'instauration d'une concertation préalable à toute décision d'incapacité définitive du conseiller en prévention-médecin du travail ;
- le renforcement de l'accompagnement ;
- la communication entre les différents acteurs concernés ;
- la concordance des règles en matière d'assurance maladie-invalidité et de réintégration telles que prévues par le code du bien-être au travail ;
- les règles de cumul entre un revenu professionnel découlant d'un travail autorisé et l'indemnité d'incapacité de travail.

### **2.2.2 Politique de diversité**

Les travaux se poursuivent au sein du Conseil entre partenaires sociaux en vue de la publication d'une brochure visant à favoriser la diversité et l'égalité dans le recrutement.

Le Conseil a par ailleurs adopté le 25 septembre 2018 l'avis n° 2.098 sur un projet d'arrêté royal fixant les conditions de l'action positive en exécution des trois lois anti-discrimination du 10 mai 2007. Dans son avis, le Conseil rappelle toute l'importance qu'il accorde à cette problématique et souligne à nouveau la nécessité d'exécuter les lois anti-discrimination en mettant en place un cadre juridique adéquat garantissant la sécurité juridique des actions menées sur le terrain par les secteurs et les entreprises. Si l'initiative prise par le Gouvernement de fixer un cadre réglementaire aux mesures d'action positive y



a été saluée, le Conseil a toutefois formulé une proposition alternative afin de répondre mieux aux attentes des entreprises tant en termes d'accès au dispositif que de sécurité juridique.

### **2.2.3 Travailleurs âgés**

Suite à la conclusion d'un accord cadre européen sur le vieillissement actif adopté en mars 2017 par les partenaires sociaux européens, un rapport des mesures prises au niveau national en vue de mettre en oeuvre une politique favorisant l'emploi des travailleurs âgés est sollicité chaque année pendant une période de trois ans.

Afin de répondre à cette demande, le Conseil a établi un premier rapport de mise en oeuvre (rapport n° 109 du 26 juin 2018). Celui-ci fait état des actions mises en place en faveur des travailleurs âgés afin de les encourager à rester sur le marché du travail. Ces actions, prises tant au niveau interprofessionnel qu'au niveau régional et sectoriel, portent sur différents domaines tels que la formation, le tutorat, une organisation du travail adaptée, l'allègement du poste de travail. Même si ces initiatives sont pour la plupart d'entre elles centrées spécifiquement sur les travailleurs âgés, elles ne sont pas exclusives d'une politique plus générale d'emploi de qualité tout au long de la vie qui participe également à l'emploi des travailleurs âgés.

Par ailleurs, dans son avis n° 2.108 du 18 décembre 2018 relatif au Deal pour l'emploi, le Conseil s'est prononcé favorablement sur un projet d'arrêté royal concernant le droit aux indemnités d'incapacité de travail en cas de poursuite de l'activité en tant que travailleur salarié après avoir atteint l'âge légal de la pension.

### **2.2.4 Simplification administrative**

#### **Exécution de l'accord interprofessionnel**

La deuxième phase des travaux sur ce point de l'accord interprofessionnel 2017-2018 est toujours en cours, dans le but de voir les interlocuteurs sociaux formuler des propositions concrètes de simplification.

#### **Eco-chèques**

Le monitoring du passage vers les éco-chèques électroniques ainsi que par rapport au contenu de la liste des produits s'est poursuivi, dans le cadre fixé par le CNT dans ses précédents avis.

Dans son avis n° 2.096 du 25 septembre 2018, le Conseil, après avoir constaté les évolutions positives du passage des éco-chèques papier vers les éco-chèques électroniques, s'est prononcé sur la date du passage total et définitif vers les éco-chèques électroniques et l'écoulement des derniers éco-chèques papier. Le dispositif réglementaire pour assurer ce passage dans un environnement juridiquement sûr n'a cependant pas encore été adopté par le Gouvernement.

#### **Avantages non récurrents liés aux résultats**

Le Conseil a conclu le 27 novembre 2018 la convention collective de travail n° 90/3 qui a pour objectif de rendre possible un modèle d'acte d'adhésion et de plan d'octroi électroniques dans une première phase et un modèle de convention collective de travail électronique, dans une seconde phase (e-bonus). A terme, les modèles électroniques devraient seuls être autorisés. La convention collective de travail apporte en outre quelques simplifications administratives découlant de la pratique administrative.

Dans son avis concomitant n° 2.107, le Conseil précise notamment les conditions à respecter afin de permettre les modèles électroniques et les aspects techniques et pratiques à mettre en oeuvre, entre autres en matière de signature électronique et d'intégrité des formulaires et quant au contrôle des mandats afin de permettre aux prestataires de services de remplir valablement les formulaires au nom des employeurs.

### **2.2.5 Budget mobilité**

Le Conseil national du Travail et le Conseil central de l'Economie ont émis, le 25 septembre 2018, un avis unanime sur les projets de loi soumis par le Gouvernement pour introduire le budget mobilité.

Dans leur avis, les Conseils ont d'une part, constaté qu'il a été donné suite à leur demande d'instaurer un budget mobilité en complément de l'allocation de mobilité. Ils ont toutefois formulé des recommandations visant à éliminer quelques lacunes importantes dans le dispositif proposé, au regard des préoccupations et équilibres exposés dans leurs avis n° 2.030 du 7 avril 2017 et n° 2.075 du 21 février 2018. Le dispositif légal a été voté au Parlement le 28 février 2019, pour une entrée en vigueur prévue le 1<sup>er</sup> mars 2019.

## **2.3 Travaux du Conseil National du Travail en lien avec le Semestre européen**

### **2.3.1 Burn-out**

En exécution de l'accord interprofessionnel 2017-2018 qui portait l'engagement de travailler sur la problématique du burn-out, les partenaires sociaux ont élaboré au sein du Conseil national du Travail une approche globale et un cadre pour la mise en place de projets-pilotes destinés à la prévention primaire du burn-out, consignés dans leur avis n°2.080 du 27 février 2018.

Dans cette optique, du 1<sup>er</sup> juillet au 15 septembre 2018, les entreprises et les (sous-) commissions paritaires ont pu introduire, auprès du Conseil national du Travail, un projet concret leur permettant d'obtenir une subvention pour le développement de pratiques visant la prévention primaire et effective du burn-out en leur sein. Ce sont ainsi 194 demandes qui ont été introduites de la part des entreprises et 8 demandes au niveau des (sous-)secteurs, témoignant d'un véritable besoin dans les entreprises d'améliorer la prévention primaire du burn-out. Les partenaires sociaux se félicitent dès lors de l'approche choisie qui s'appuie sur la volonté d'encourager le développement de pratiques et d'expériences innovantes sur le terrain, en tenant compte du contexte particulier de chaque entreprise et/ou (sous)-secteur.

### **2.3.2 Organisation du travail tournée vers l'avenir**

La base légale pour financer des projets pilotes relatifs à une organisation du travail tournée vers l'avenir a été créée dans la loi du 14 décembre 2018 portant des dispositions diverses relatives au travail, mais l'arrêté d'exécution qui permet de libérer un crédit n'a pas encore été pris.

L'exécution de ce point de l'accord est toujours en discussion, au sein du Conseil, la priorité ayant été accordée pour 2018 par les partenaires sociaux et le Gouvernement à la mise en place des projets pilotes relatifs au burnout.

### **2.3.3 Digitalisation de l'Économie et économie collaborative**

Le rapport intermédiaire émis le 4 octobre 2017 par le Conseil national du Travail et le Conseil central de l'Économie dans le cadre de l'accord interprofessionnel 2017-2018, dans lequel ils ont posé un premier diagnostic de la situation, a été enrichi par deux demi-journées de colloque organisées conjointement par les deux Conseils les 23 et 24 avril 2018. Quatre workshops concernant les skills, l'organisation du travail, la fiscalité et l'E-Government ont été organisés dans le but d'aboutir à une série de recommandations tout en s'inscrivant dans la réflexion globale menée au niveau de l'OIT sur le futur du travail. Les travaux sur ce point se poursuivent.

Dans le cadre du suivi du rapport du 4 octobre 2017 et en exécution de son avis du 29 novembre 2017, une attention particulière est accordée par le Conseil au nouveau cadre légal pour les plateformes numériques et la nécessité d'avoir un level playing field.

### **2.3.4 Travail intérimaire**

Les organisations représentées au sein du CNT ont conclu, dans l'avis n° 2.091 du 24 juillet 2018, un engagement portant sur le recours aux contrats de travail intérimaire journaliers successifs. Cet engagement s'est concrétisé par la conclusion de la CCT n° 108/2 modifiant la convention collective de travail n° 108 du 16 juillet 2013 relative au travail temporaire et au travail intérimaire.

Dans le cadre de cet engagement, les partenaires sociaux souscrivent tout d'abord au principe selon lequel le recours aux contrats journaliers successifs doit être une exception pour des raisons économiques et ne peut pas être un modèle économique en soi. Ils insistent par ailleurs sur le fait que le recours aux contrats journaliers successifs par les travailleurs qui en font eux-mêmes explicitement et volontairement la demande n'est pas lié à la présente problématique.

Les partenaires sociaux se sont ensuite engagés à lutter contre les recours à ce type de contrats et à parvenir, à partir de 2018, à une diminution importante de la part des contrats journaliers successifs (CJS) dans le nombre total de contrats de travail intérimaire. Cet engagement s'accompagne d'éléments complémentaires portant sur le rôle de l'Inspection Contrôle des lois sociales, le rapportage trimestriel de l'ONSS aux partenaires sociaux ainsi que l'évaluation du recours aux contrats journaliers successifs qui sera réalisée dès que les données des années 2018 et 2019 seront disponibles.

### **2.3.5 Restructurations**

En exécution de l'accord interprofessionnel, des discussions approfondies ont été organisées au sein du CNT sur la problématique des restructurations et l'adaptation de la loi dite « Renault ». Les pistes résultant de ces travaux ont été transmises au Groupe des Dix et sont toujours en discussion.

### **2.3.6 Liaison au bien-être**

Dans le cadre du projet d'AIP, des travaux sont en cours afin de définir l'attribution de l'enveloppe pour le bien-être 2019-2020. Pour rappel, le Conseil national du Travail, le Conseil central de l'Économie et le Comité général de gestion pour le statut social des travailleurs indépendants doivent se prononcer tous les deux ans sur l'importance et la répartition des moyens financiers destinés à l'adaptation au bien-être des prestations de remplacement de revenus dans la sécurité sociale et des allocations d'assistance sociale.

## **2.3.7 Suivi du semestre européen en tant que tel**

### **Dialogue avec la Commission européenne**

Le dialogue initié depuis quelques années maintenant avec la Commission européenne concernant le semestre européen est une pratique bien ancrée dans l'agenda des travaux des Conseils et très appréciée par les partenaires sociaux.

Une réunion a été organisée entre les membres du CNT, du CCE et de la Commission européenne (desk Belgique) en date du 29 novembre 2018. Comme chaque année, cette réunion a été l'occasion pour la Commission européenne d'informer les membres sur les étapes à venir du prochain semestre européen 2019 ainsi que de présenter la structure du Country Report pour la Belgique, dont la publication était prévue le 27 février 2019.

Les organisations syndicales et patronales ont ensuite, chacune à leur tour, exposé leur analyse sur un certain nombre de points relatifs à la situation de la Belgique.

Une seconde rencontre avec la Commission européenne est prévue le 13 mars 2019, dans la foulée de la publication du Country Report par la Commission européenne.

### **Suivi des activités du Comité de protection sociale et du Comité de l'Emploi**

Via la participation des représentants belges au sein du comité de protection sociale et du comité de l'emploi aux travaux de la « Commission Europe » du CNT, les membres du Conseil national du Travail sont étroitement associés aux activités de ces comités et disposent d'informations privilégiées sur l'évolution du semestre européen. La participation de la représentation permanente belge aux travaux de cette commission permet également un suivi régulier des principaux dossiers législatifs en discussion au plan européen.

Cette information renforce la capacité des organisations de se positionner sur le semestre européen tant au niveau national qu'europpéen (notamment au niveau du comité du dialogue social européen).

## Annex 10: Opinion of the National High Council for the Disabled

Avis n° 2019/03 du Conseil Supérieur National des Personnes Handicapées (CSNPH) relatif au PNR 2018-2019.

Avis rendu suite à la demande du Premier Ministre, datée du 14 février et reçue par voie postale le 28 février. Avis pris en urgence suite à une consultation électronique des membres qui s'est déroulée les 6 et 7 mars 2019.

### 1 Objet

Dans le cadre de la Stratégie européenne économique de Lisbonne, chaque état membre remet chaque année à l'Union européenne un inventaire des réalisations et projets permettant de rencontrer les recommandations de l'Union européenne (appelé « Plan National de Réforme » - PNR).

Le 23 mai 2018, la Commission européenne remettait à la Belgique une série de recommandations concernant son programme national de réforme de la Belgique pour 2018 et 2019 <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/NL/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52018DC0401>

Le Premier Ministre a demandé l'avis du CSNPH en vue de la préparation du PNR 2019.

### 2 Analyse

La Commission européenne recommande que la Belgique s'attache, au cours de la période 2018-2019, à:

1. veiller à ce que le taux de croissance nominal des dépenses publiques primaires nettes n'exède pas 1,8 % en 2019, ce qui correspond à un ajustement structurel annuel de 0,6 % du PIB; utiliser les recettes exceptionnelles pour accélérer la réduction du ratio de la dette publique; poursuivre les réformes des pensions envisagées et contenir la hausse prévue des dépenses liées aux soins de longue durée; poursuivre la mise en œuvre intégrale de l'accord de coopération de 2013 relatif à la coordination des politiques budgétaires des différents niveaux de pouvoir; améliorer l'efficacité et la composition des dépenses publiques à tous les niveaux de pouvoir afin de libérer des marges pour l'investissement public, en procédant notamment à des revues de dépenses;
2. supprimer les contre-incitations à travailler et renforcer l'efficacité des politiques actives du marché du travail, notamment pour les travailleurs peu qualifiés, issus de l'immigration et âgés; poursuivre les réformes dans le domaine de l'éducation et de la formation, notamment en favorisant l'équité et en augmentant le nombre de diplômés en sciences, en technologie, en ingénierie et en mathématiques;
3. réduire la charge administrative et réglementaire afin de favoriser l'esprit d'entreprise et d'intensifier la concurrence dans le secteur des services, en particulier le commerce de détail, la construction et les services professionnels; s'attaquer aux problèmes croissants de mobilité, notamment en procédant à des investissements dans les infrastructures de transport existantes ou nouvelles et en renforçant les incitations à utiliser les transports collectifs et à faibles émissions.

### 3 Avis

Le CSNPH salue l'initiative du Premier Ministre qui a pris en compte l'avis 2018-12 : il demande avant que la rédaction du PNR ne soit terminée et bien avant que le rapport ne soit déposé à la Commission européenne (30 avril 2019), l'avis du CSNPH. C'est une manière de procéder qui est tout à fait conforme à l'esprit de l'UNCRPD et à son article 4.3 en particulier. Le CSNPH souhaite que cette approche du Premier inspire le gouvernement qui sortira des élections fédérales de mai 2019.

Le CSNPH souhaite voir figurer au titre de priorités dans le corps du PNR les points suivants:

- a. **Augmenter effectivement le taux d'emploi des personnes handicapées et malades.** Pour rappel, l'Europe a fixé dans sa Stratégie 2020 un objectif de relèvement d'emploi pour toutes les personnes handicapées exclues en raison de leur handicap du marché du travail. La création d'emploi de ces derniers mois n'a cependant pas profité aux personnes handicapées et malades. Les mesures
- b. « Back to work » n'ont pas permis de remettre au travail un nombre significatif de travailleurs. De nombreuses personnes présentant une incapacité partielle ont été licenciées parce que les employeurs n'ont pas mis en place les mesures d'accompagnement nécessaires à leur maintien à l'emploi. Il est urgent que le gouvernement instaure, de manière concrète, une **responsabilité sociale des employeurs du secteur privé et la mise en œuvre concrète du protocole inter-fédéral sur les aménagements raisonnables de 2007**. Le CSNPH recommande certaines pistes dans son avis 2017-01
- c. **Réformer le cadre réglementaire.** Le régime des allocations pour personnes handicapées - **loi du 27 février 1987** - ne répond plus du tout aux besoins des personnes handicapées : ainsi la prise en compte des revenus de l'année -2/-1, les couches de lasagnes des différents abattements, le délai de traitement des dossiers, l'impossibilité d'accéder à des ressources minimales durant les périodes d'incapacité de travail, etc. Le régime ne prévoit par ailleurs aucune mesure concrète ni passerelle vers un accompagnement à une reprise au travail. Le CSNPH a soutenu un projet de réforme en 2015 et demande qu'il devienne effectif en 2019. Par ailleurs, à l'**article 100 de la loi coordonnée du 14 juillet 1994** (régime INAMI), la notion d'« état antérieur » fait obstacle à un accompagnement à la (re)mise au travail d'une personne présentant une perte de capacité de gain. Le CSNPH demande aussi une réécriture de ce texte de manière à permettre une protection sociale du travailleur handicapé.
- d. **La formation doit gagner en accessibilité et en qualité.** Les considérations de ces dernières années relatives au décrochage scolaire, à des orientations abusives et à l'inadéquation des formations et des **filières non ou peu qualifiantes** par rapport aux besoins du marché valent aussi pour les étudiants en situation de handicap bien évidemment, et peut-être encore plus que pour tout autre adolescent car s'ajoutent les obstacles liés aux déplacements, à un environnement non adapté et non inclusif, à l'absence de locaux et de matériels adaptés, à la continuité de soins pendant la journée scolaire, etc. ... Le CSNPH rappelle par ailleurs sa demande pour un enseignement plus inclusif, qui devrait aussi aider à limiter le décrochage scolaire. Cela ne veut pas dire supprimer l'enseignement spécialisé, mais adapter l'enseignement ordinaire aux besoins des enfants en situation de handicap, par des pédagogies différenciées et partant des besoins de l'élève et non pas de son handicap.
- e. Dans le domaine de la mobilité, il faut mettre une priorité sur les **transports accessible pour tous** et sur l'**intermodalité** pour faciliter l'accès aux formations et à l'emploi

- f. Dans le domaine de **l'accès à la pension**, le CSNPH rappelle que l'allongement de la carrière est difficilement réalisable pour beaucoup de **personnes handicapées mais aussi pour leurs aidants proches** ; il faudrait pouvoir au contraire aménager leur fin de carrière et assimiler des périodes d'interruption en cours de carrière. Les personnes handicapées et/ou leurs aidants proches ont bien souvent vu leurs perspectives de travail et de carrière réduites, sans même qu'elles y consentent mais parce que leur corps et/ou l'environnement du travail se sont imposés à elles, avec toutes les situations d'exclusion sociale et de pauvreté induites.
- g. L'arrivée à la pension pour les personnes handicapées résonne souvent comme une seconde descente aux enfers, alors que les frais liés au vieillissement et à leur état de santé augmentent inéluctablement. La mise en place d'un autre mécanisme devrait également être étudiée par le gouvernement à savoir une comptabilisation plus avantageuse des années de carrière effectuées par les personnes handicapées et ce, afin d'encourager l'emploi. Le CSNPH estime, au contraire, qu'un accès anticipé à la pension de retraite (tout en conservant ses droits) doit être examiné pour les personnes handicapées. Cela encouragerait les personnes handicapées à travailler et tiendrait en même temps compte du caractère pénible pour elles.
- h. De même, il n'est pas tolérable de sanctionner des aidants proches qui présentent une carrière incomplète parce que, à cause manque de réponse du politique, ils se sont arrêtés de travailler pour s'occuper d'un proche handicapé ou malade.
- i. Dans le domaine des Fonds structurels, le CSNPH rappelle que les textes réglementaires prévoient la participation et l'implication des personnes handicapées à chacun des stades de la programmation, de la mise en œuvre et de l'évaluation. Force est de constater que, malgré la condition *ex ante*, l'article 4.3 n'est pas correctement appliqué avec pour conséquence que de nombreux appels à projets ne répondent pas suffisamment aux besoins des personnes handicapées. Le CSNPH demande que les Fonds structurels soient consacrés à des politiques qui soutiennent véritablement les personnes handicapées et leurs familles dans le développement d'une vie autonome et dans leur inclusion dans la vie collective (emploi, logements, aides collectives).
- j. Dans le domaine de la **lutte contre la pauvreté**, le CSNPH rappelle une nouvelle fois le pilier de la Stratégie 2020 relatif à la lutte contre la pauvreté et en particulier l'objectif visant à la diminution du nombre de personnes vivant dans la précarité en Belgique. Depuis des années, les chiffres de la pauvreté augmentent. Il est fondamental que les prochains gouvernements travaillent dans la cohérence et la complémentarité, autour d'un **plan national de lutte contre la pauvreté et l'exclusion sociale** de tous les groupes fragilisés, et de celui des personnes handicapées en particulier. Il faut considérer ce plan comme **une contribution indispensable à la stabilité économique et sociale du pays.**
- k. Le CSNPH insiste une nouvelle fois sur le lien entre handicap et pauvreté. Les personnes handicapées perçoivent des allocations (loi du 27 février 1987) largement en-deçà du seuil de pauvreté ; **l'allocation de remplacement de revenus devrait garantir un minimum de moyens d'existence et son montant être relevé à tout le moins au seuil minimum de pauvreté.** Le CSNPH demande que cette mesure soit considérée comme une priorité pour le prochain gouvernement fédéral.
- l. Dans le domaine **des statistiques**, il n'existe pas de définition unique du handicap ni de connexion entre les divers régimes de reconnaissance. Ainsi, les personnes handicapées reconnues à la DG Han ne le sont pas nécessairement par les agences régionales (AVIQ, Phare, VDAB ...) et donc sortent des radars de l'emploi et de la formation. Les prochains gouvernements doivent

intégrer leurs bases de données et travailler ensemble pour développer des politiques qui répondent véritablement aux besoins des personnes dans les domaines précités.

- m. Sur le plan du fonctionnement politique, il devient vraiment nécessaire et urgent que les **différents niveaux de compétence se parlent et travaillent ensemble** pour apporter des réponses complètes et intégrées aux besoins des personnes. **Toutes les CIM doivent être réactivées.**

## 4 Transmis

- Pour suivi au Premier Ministre ;
- Pour information à Monsieur Kris Peeters, Ministre chargé des Personnes Handicapées ;
- Pour information à UNIA ;
- Pour information au mécanisme de coordination interfédéral.

Pour le CSNPH

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Gisèle Marlière', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Gisèle Marlière  
Présidente



## Annex 11: Opinion of the Federal Council for Sustainable Development

Monsieur Charles Michel  
Premier ministre  
Rue de la Loi 16  
1000 Bruxelles

Notre référence  
FXdD/MD/2802-19

Bruxelles,  
Le 15 mars 2019

Objet : Demande d'avis Programme national de Réforme 2019

Monsieur le Premier ministre,

Le CFDD a reçu votre demande d'avis du 14 février 2019 en rapport avec la préparation du Programme national de Réforme 2019 (ci-après : PNR). Le Conseil se réjouit de la demande d'avis que vous lui avez adressée, car il plaide depuis plusieurs années en faveur d'une implication plus forte de nos membres dans ce processus et, en termes de contenu, en faveur d'une meilleure intégration du concept de durabilité dans le programme.

Nous vous envoyons par ce biais en guise de contribution au Programme national de Réforme 2019 certaines préoccupations que le CFDD désire souligner en la matière. Ces préoccupations sont basées sur des avis récents du Conseil et sur ses activités actuelles lorsque ces dernières sont pertinentes pour le PNR, avec chaque fois une référence aux recommandations du Conseil européen et au compte rendu de la Commission européenne.

En ce qui concerne l'approche générale dans le PNR, le CFDD a souligné dans plusieurs avis la nécessité de situer la politique menée dans notre pays dans un **cadre de développement durable** pour pouvoir parvenir sous cet angle à une intégration de divers domaines politiques (économie, affaires sociales, fiscalité, enseignement, énergie, budget, mobilité, climat, etc.). Pour cette raison, le Conseil demande de faire explicitement référence dans l'introduction du PNR 2019 à l'importante évolution que constitue dans ce domaine le *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* – qui renferme les objectifs de développement durable ou ODD. Notre pays s'est en effet engagé à réaliser aussi ces objectifs. À cet égard, le programme devrait renvoyer à l'aperçu du suivi des indicateurs de développement durable pour notre pays.

En plus d'une intégration politique horizontale (entre des domaines politiques), le CFDD a toujours été dans ses avis partisan d'une **intégration politique verticale** (entre des niveaux de pouvoir). Ces dernières années, le Conseil a constaté à plusieurs reprises que cette intégration verticale était problé-

matique dans notre pays et que cet aspect pesait sur la performance de la politique dans divers domaines. À la lumière de cette constatation, le CFDD se déclare en faveur d'une série d'initiatives inter-fédérales ou nationales comme un Plan national intégré Energie-Climat 2030<sup>70</sup> robuste dans lequel un pacte interfédéral pour la qualité de l'air devrait être intégré<sup>71</sup>. Le Conseil plaide en faveur d'une vision stratégique interfédérale en matière de mobilité ainsi que d'une plateforme transversale nationale pour la transition vers un système alimentaire durable<sup>72</sup> et prépare actuellement un avis sur la loi spéciale sur le climat qui vise également une meilleure coordination de la politique dans notre pays. À cet égard, le CFDD déplore donc le fait qu'un mécanisme national comme le PNR ne soit en de nombreux points encore rien de plus qu'un « *inventaire de ce qui est fait aux différents niveaux de pouvoir* »<sup>73</sup> et le Conseil demande que le PNR 2019 accorde dans divers domaines plus d'attention aux initiatives qui sont prévues pour parvenir à un fédéralisme coopératif, avec « *une meilleure collaboration entre les niveaux de pouvoir pour permettre un renforcement mutuel.* »<sup>74</sup>

En ce qui concerne l'**investissement public**, les recommandations du Conseil européen au sujet du PNR 2018<sup>75</sup> stipulent que : « *L'investissement public est faible par rapport aux normes européennes, surtout au regard des dépenses publiques totales, alors qu'il pourrait stimuler la croissance à long terme. Non seulement, le stock de capital public est faible, mais la qualité des infrastructures publiques s'est également détériorée* » (§ 13). Ce besoin d'investissement dans les infrastructures de transport et d'énergie est confirmé dans le « *Country report Belgium 2019* » de la Commission européenne qui vient d'être publié.

Le CFDD a également souligné dans des avis récents la nécessité d'un programme d'investissement à grande échelle. Dans un avis consacré au financement de la rénovation énergétique des bâtiments, le CFDD avait demandé à ce propos « *que les pouvoirs publics reconnaissent dans les décisions relatives à des dépenses futures l'importance d'investissements productifs en général et d'investissements dans l'efficacité énergétique en particulier.* » Dans cet avis, le Conseil avait également formulé des suggestions visant à maintenir ces dépenses d'investissement hors du budget de l'État (et de la limitation européenne en la matière)<sup>76</sup>. L'avis du CFDD « *au sujet du pacte national pour des investissements stratégiques et du financement de la transition vers une économie zéro carbone* » de mai 2018 renferme aussi des suggestions en la matière.

Pour ce qui est de la **fiscalité**, le CFDD réitère dans son message destiné au gouvernement fédéral futur sa demande de révision de la fiscalité énergétique pour intégrer progressivement la dimension environnementale et un prix carbone sur les vecteurs d'énergie (fossile), avec certaines conditions. La transition énergétique exigera en effet des investissements considérables qui devront être répartis. Les efforts devront être payables pour tous les ménages, en particulier les publics précarisés, pour les PME et pour les entreprises afin de pouvoir garantir leur compétitivité.

---

<sup>70</sup> <https://www.frdo-cfdd.be/sites/default/files/content/download/files/2018a06f.pdf>

<sup>71</sup> [https://www.frdo-cfdd.be/sites/default/files/content/download/files/2018a11f\\_0.pdf](https://www.frdo-cfdd.be/sites/default/files/content/download/files/2018a11f_0.pdf)

<sup>72</sup> <https://www.frdo-cfdd.be/sites/default/files/content/download/files/2018a06f.pdf>

<sup>73</sup> [http://www.frdo-cfdd.be/sites/default/files/content/download/files/2014a02f\\_0.pdf](http://www.frdo-cfdd.be/sites/default/files/content/download/files/2014a02f_0.pdf)

<sup>74</sup> [https://www.frdo-cfdd.be/sites/default/files/content/download/files/2018a11f\\_0.pdf](https://www.frdo-cfdd.be/sites/default/files/content/download/files/2018a11f_0.pdf)

<sup>75</sup> [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/FR/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32018H0910\(01\)&from=FR](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/FR/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32018H0910(01)&from=FR)

<sup>76</sup> Voir <http://www.frdo-cfdd.be/sites/default/files/content/download/files/2017a06f.pdf>

En termes d'**énergie** et de **climat**, il ressort à nouveau du « Country report Belgium 2019 » qu'en l'absence de modification de la politique, notre pays ne réalisera pas les objectifs EU2020 dans les domaines des émissions de gaz à effet de serre, de proportion d'énergies renouvelables et de consommation d'énergie primaire. Le rapport stipule donc que « *The achievement of the 2030 energy and climate targets calls for sustained green investments.* » le CFDD demande que le PNR 2019 aborde en détail les mesures structurelles qui sont adoptées aux différents niveaux pour faire évoluer à nouveau ces indicateurs dans la direction des objectifs visés, dans l'attente du futur Plan national intégré Énergie-Climat 2030 qui devra permettre à notre pays de concrétiser la transition vers une société bas carbone.

En ce qui concerne la **mobilité**, le Conseil européen déclare au sujet du PNR 2018 que : « *Les autorités peuvent encourager une utilisation plus efficace des infrastructures existantes et un transfert modal des moyens de transport individuels vers des solutions alternatives plus collectives et à plus faibles émissions.* » (§ 25) Le Conseil encourage un transfert modal entre les différentes formes de transport qui s'inscrit dans le droit fil des trois objectifs qu'une politique de mobilité durable doit viser simultanément, comme déterminé dans un avis préalable. Il est important d'améliorer l'offre et les services à la fois des transports publics et du transport privé ainsi que leur intégration. Le transport en train doit d'ailleurs jouer un rôle d'axe de transport structurant pour la mobilité. Il est important d'entretenir, d'améliorer et de compléter les infrastructures de transport ainsi que les plateformes intermodales. Les différentes infrastructures doivent être intelligentes et doivent communiquer entre elles. L'utilisation des infrastructures existantes doit être optimisée et les infrastructures qui sont nécessaires pour une mobilité douce doivent être développées. Des investissements seront donc nécessaires. Au niveau européen, le Conseil recommande de travailler avec une politique continentale au profit du transport en train grâce à laquelle des services intégrés à l'échelle internationale peuvent être introduits et l'interopérabilité entre des réseaux ferroviaires peut être favorisée.

Nous espérons que ces éléments clarifient la valeur ajoutée élevée que peut offrir une durabilité pour la politique actuelle et que notre contribution sera effectivement reprise dans le PNR 2019. Le Conseil est toujours disposé à discuter avec les pouvoirs publics de la façon dont un développement durable sera intégré dans le **nouveau cadre stratégique de l'Union européenne (après EU2020)**. Dans le 'Reflection paper' de la Commission publié récemment et intitulé « *Towards a Sustainable Europe by 2030* », des scénarios en la matière sont proposés en vue d'une mise en œuvre des ODD par le biais d'une politique européenne forte, via ou non une stratégie globale ou via une intégration dans les mesures stratégiques pertinentes. De cette façon, le processus du Semestre européen et le PNR pourraient jouer dans le futur un rôle plus important pour la mise en œuvre des ODD. Le CFDD espère que notre pays contribuera au maximum durant les prochains mois, par le biais de ses avis sur le processus décisionnel européen avant et après les prochaines élections européennes, à l'intégration des ODD dans la nouvelle stratégie européenne qui suivra EU2020.

Veuillez agréer l'expression de mes sentiments distingués,

François-Xavier de Donnea  
Président du CFDD