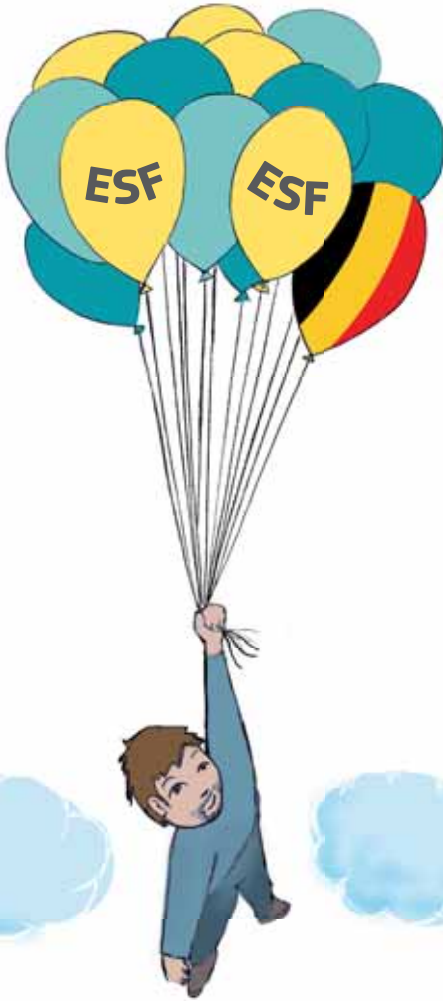




European
Commission



BELGIUM

AND THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND

Belgium is benefiting from more than EUR 1 billion from the ESF to implement employment initiatives across all of the country's communities and regions. ESF help will therefore enable it to tackle the problems associated in particular with the low employment rate and the ageing population. Each of the Belgian entities has access to ESF funding to support employment, encourage initial and ongoing training, improve social inclusion and combat all forms of discrimination.

INVESTING IN PEOPLE AND JOBS: THE CHALLENGES FOR BELGIUM

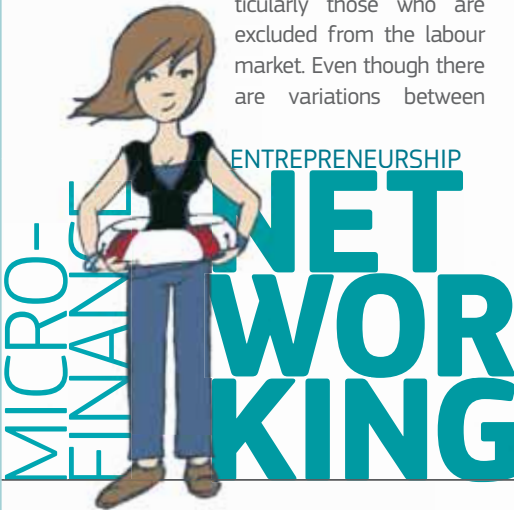
Boosting employment is one of the principal challenges facing Belgium in order to tackle weak growth in the global economic context. The Federal State, made up of the three regions and the French, Flemish and German-speaking communities, has set itself the objective of attaining an employment rate of 73.2% among the 20-64 age group by 2020. To achieve this, Belgium must reduce the disparities that typify its labour market. Access to jobs continues to be very poor at both extremes of the age pyramid. At the national level, the employment rate for young people is just 44% and as low as 37.3% for the 55-64 age group. This last figure is explained by the large number of people who have taken early retirement. The employment rate is also too low among immigrant workers. Therefore, the integration of migrants, particularly those coming from countries outside the EU, remains problematic. Training and job-insertion initiatives are being implemented in this area. Discrimination in recruitment and the workplace plays a role too, and Belgium is also combating this form of inequality. Furthermore, the country should anticipate an increased risk of poverty among the most vulnerable, particularly those who are excluded from the labour market. Even though there are variations between

Wallonia, Flanders and the Brussels-Capital Region, these structural difficulties impact on all the regions. By relying on the ESF, Belgium is pulling out all the stops to remedy this and thus meet the employment challenge.

ESF spending in Belgium

Each Member State manages ESF funds in line with the challenges it faces. Between 2007 and 2013, ESF funding will amount to EUR 1.073 billion for Belgium, on top of the joint public and private financing of EUR 1.246 billion. This brings the total spending on jobs and social inclusion, within the framework of ESF projects, to more than EUR 2.3 billion. These projects are implemented within the Operational Programmes, one at the federal level and another four for Flanders, Wallonia, Brussels-Capital and the German-speaking Community. A sixth programme covers the province of Hainaut under the Convergence Objective.

*“Promoting
employment among
older workers”*



BELGIUM'S ESF PRIORITIES

More jobs for more workers

Thanks to the ESF, Belgium is striving to integrate as many people as possible into the labour market, while also paying particular attention to disadvantaged groups. To achieve this, the Federal State, as well as each region and community, have each established specific programmes. Wallonia has set itself the priority of developing human capital, expertise, know-how and research. The ESF is contributing to this by funding training initiatives and innovative operations. For example, it is supporting the Technofutur Centre of Expertise, an organisation which provides training courses in areas that are crucial to the local economy, such as engineering and maintenance. As a result, it is training technicians whose qualifications are highly rated by certain hi-tech industrial sectors.

More advice for more jobs

For its part, Flanders has focused on integration into the labour market and on improving social inclusion. To this end, the 'Dodi' programme, for example, targets young people who risk giving up their studies without any qualifications, and makes them aware of the training requirements necessary for their chosen profession. Flanders also ensures

“Encouraging entrepreneurship”

that the people who are supported keep the job they have found. In Limbourg, more than 200 people have benefited from personalised career guidance, taking their goals into account so that they can feel motivated in their work.

Furthermore, Flanders, Wallonia and the Brussels-Capital Region all support entrepreneurship as a means of creating jobs. Thus, in Limbourg, 350 job-seekers have received advice on setting up their own business. Liège's 'Clust-art' programme assists artists in the development of cultural projects so that they can create their own jobs.

Again with ESF support, the Brussels-Capital Region is banking on professional integration and the greater participation of women in the labour market, while the German-speaking Community is encouraging social integration and active employment. At the same time, the Federal State is conducting innovative campaigns which enable new approaches to be tested, such as sharing experiences and good practices.

THE ESF IN BELGIUM: SOME EXAMPLES

Training in eco-construction

In Wallonia, the ESF is financing 'Eco+', a training programme dedicated to sustainable development. 'Eco+' gives workers the opportunity to acquire skills in ecological construction and renovation. The participants are mainly job-seekers from disadvantaged groups. They can attend courses at one of nine centres in Wallonia, three of which are located in the province of Hainaut. In this way, they acquire the skills needed to make buildings more energy efficient.

Integration of the most disadvantaged

In Flanders, 'Job&Co' supports people who are finding it difficult to get work, such as the long-term unemployed, the disabled and recent immigrants. Several obstacles impede job access, including the lack of motivation, poor qualifications or a lack of linguistic skills. This is why 'Job&Co', a partnership of three social enterprises, is helping recruits to adapt to their new working environment through personal coaching, language tuition and technical training.

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- ...understand how the ESF works?
- ...view testimonials on the ESF?

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