

National Reform Programme 2020

April 2020

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1. Introduction

This National Reform Programme (NRP) is the product of a coordination effort that began several months before governments were forced to take drastic measures to combat the spread and the socio-economic consequences of Covid-19. In view of the progress made at the end of March 2020, it was decided to retain the original version of the NRP and to add an annex setting out the measures taken or planned to be taken by the closing date of the document (21 April 2020) in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, in the main text of the NRP as well as in the reform programmes of the federated entities (Annexes 1 to 5), the individual governments report on the structural reforms that have taken place since the country-specific recommendations of 2019 and indicate which measures may be expected in the near future, regardless of the pandemic (unless otherwise specified).

The measures presented in the main text and in Annexes 1 to 5 relate to the findings of the report on Belgium, the recommendations of 2019, the priorities of the annual strategy for sustainable growth, the trajectory for achieving the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy, and they also contribute to the implementation of the European Pillar for Social Rights. What is new in this NRP is the explicit attention devoted to the programmes developed in the framework of Agenda 2030 and the related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In addition, the discussion of each recommendation is now preceded by a political message outlining the key elements of the response.

Federal and regional parliamentary elections were held in Belgium on 26 May 2019. In the Communities and Regions, new governments took office in the course of the year and established their programme and priorities for the period 2019-2024. The NRP refers to these on several occasions. In March 2020, the federal minority government received support from other parties and special powers to be able to adequately deal with the consequences of the spread of Covid-19. In particular, it is empowered to take measures to limit the economic consequences. The governments of the Communities and Regions, among which those of the Walloon Region, the Brussels-Capital Region and the French Community were granted special powers by their respective parliaments, are also taking measures to combat the coronavirus and its socio-economic consequences. The Flemish government works without special powers, with the exception of the emergency decree voted on 18 March and entered into force on 20 March (see annex 2). The government of the German-speaking Community works without special powers, with the exception of the Corona crisis decrees voted on 6 April and 27 April 2020. Measures taken by the individual governments in response to the Covid-19 pandemic are contained in Annex 13.

The absence of a fully-fledged federal government does not prevent structural reform measures from being taken in Belgium. As stated, the Communities and Regions have governments with full powers to meet the challenges of the coming years. At the federal level, a number of action plans and policies initiated in recent years are still in place. The third phase of the tax shift is implemented, as well as a further reduction in corporate tax. A number of measures in the 2019 Jobsdeal, which includes social and fiscal measures to encourage employment, are also being implemented. Finally, at regional level, programmes launched during the previous government period are being continued and evaluated.

All levels are working to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of public spending, including through spending reviews. The resources freed up will be used for the following priorities: strategic investments and long-term care. With regard to investments, the National Pact for Strategic Investments Pact (NPSI) is implemented at the inter-federal level. This plan focuses in particular on mobility, energy, innovation and digitisation. In addition, all Belgian entities have drawn up major investment programmes that respond to the major challenges in this area. All levels of government are also working to raise the employment rate, especially of those with fewer opportunities in the labour market, by making education and training systems more inclusive and more responsive to the labour market.

This last point seems to have been successful since the two education goals of the Europe 2020 strategy were achieved in 2018. As regards the other objectives, research and development is on track to be met in time. Real progress is also being made on the employment rate and energy efficiency targets.

The Communities and Regions, as well as civil society stakeholders, are closely involved in the structural reform process. 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, the objectives of the EU2020 strategy and progress towards reaching the sustainable development goals. The NRP is approved by the Federal Government in the Council of Ministers. All the country's governments take note of the NRP in the Consultation Committee. The opinions of the social partners, the National Higher Council for Disabled Persons and the Federal Council for Sustainable Development of the Belgian Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion are also annexed. At the level of the Brussels-Capital Region, the draft Brussels contribution to the NRP was submitted to the Economic and Social Council of the Region, which issued its opinion on 19 March 2020, before being approved by the Brussels government on 23 April 2020. The presentation of this contribution before the Brussels Parliament could not be maintained given the circumstances. The latter will therefore be communicated to the Parliament, so as to let its members have the opportunity to react to it by written questions. The Walloon reform programme was approved by the Walloon government on 2 April. The various reform projects follow the consultation processes of the social partners. The issues related to the European semester are also debated in the Walloon Parliament. In Flanders, the draft Flemish reform program is transmitted to the Flemish Parliament and to the social partners. This year, no parliamentary discussion could be held. However, several written comments from the social partners were taken into account in the final Flemish 2020 reform program approved by the Flemish government on 3 April 2020.

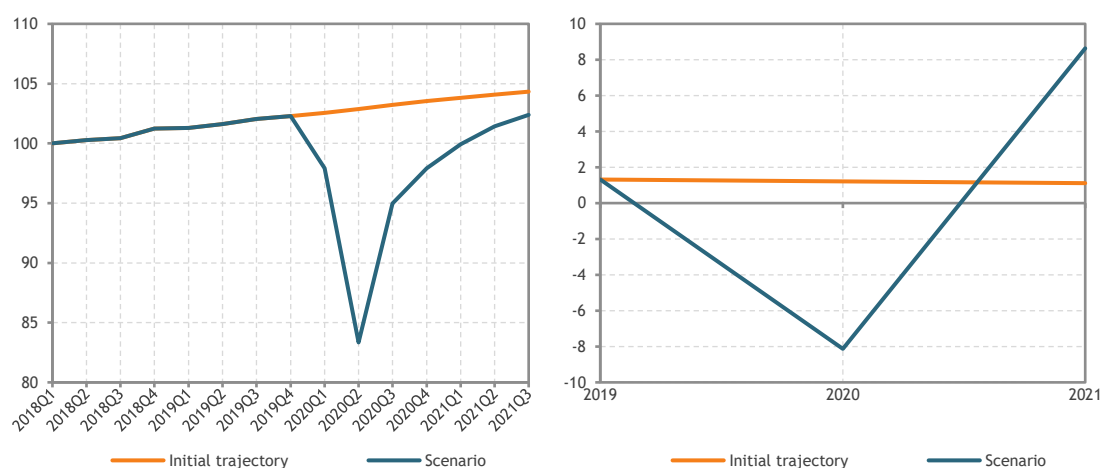
In the framework of the European Semester, an intensive dialogue is taking place – both in the fact-finding mission and in bilateral meetings – between the departments of the European Commission and the respective levels of government in Belgium. Each of those levels (Federal, Communities, Regions) brings up its measures in the framework of the European Semester. All of them also make use of the possibilities offered by DG REFORM's Structural Reform Support Programme (SRSP).

2. Macroeconomic scenario

Under current circumstances, it is impossible to make economic projections. In response to the request from the European Commission, the NBB and the FPB have, however, drawn up a scenario, which was communicated on 8 April. It should be stressed that this is indeed a scenario given the difficulty of predicting the evolution of the Covid-19 pandemic. The scenario is based on certain assumptions, namely that the restrictive measures in Belgium remain in force until 3 May 2020 inclusive and that companies do not encounter solvency problems.

Based on the assumption that restrictive measures will continue under current rules for a period of seven weeks, the real GDP of the Belgian economy should contract by 8% in 2020. We assume a recovery (+ 8,6%) for 2021, provided that the acute phase of the crisis (period concentrated in the first half of 2020) does not persistently affect the production potential of the economy. The normal functioning of almost all sectors will be disrupted. In just a few weeks, 1.2 million workers went on temporary unemployment and more than 300,000 self-employed workers had to (temporarily) stop working.

Graph 1 : GDP in volume (left) and real GDP growth (right)
Left graph: 2018K1 = 100; right graph: in % on annual base



Source: Federal Planning Bureau and National Bank of Belgium

The measures taken to preserve household disposable income should lay the foundations for a rapid recovery in consumption from the third quarter of this year. The strength of the recovery expected for the second half of the year and for 2021 is based on the assumption that this pressure will not generate a solvency problem pushing many companies to bankruptcy and, by extension, unemployment on the rise. The expected impact on public finances is proportional to the shock: the public deficit could, at the end of 2020, amount to at least 7.5% and the debt to nearly 115% of GDP. Despite the speed with which measures to compensate for the loss of income of many economic actors have been taken (cf. Annex 13), these measures could prove insufficient to preserve the productive potential of the economy during the acute phase of crisis. GDP is expected to fall by around 4% in the first quarter and 15% in the second quarter, followed by a strong recovery in the second half, which, however, will not be enough to offset the initial loss. The impact of the shock on the balance of public finances should be around 5.3% of GDP, which would bring the budget deficit to around 7.5% of GDP, mainly due to the "automatic stabilizers" linked to unemployment benefits, bridging rights and lower tax revenues.

3. Responding to key challenges

3.1. Budget and public debt (Recommendation 1)

The Council recommends that Belgium take action in 2019 and 2020 to:

Ensure that the nominal growth rate of net primary government expenditure does not exceed 1.6% in 2020, corresponding to an annual structural adjustment of 0.6% of GDP. Use windfall gains to accelerate the reduction of the general government debt ratio. Continue reforms to ensure the fiscal sustainability of the long-term care and pension systems, including by limiting early exit possibilities from the labour market. Improve the composition and efficiency of public spending, notably through spending reviews, and the coordination of fiscal policies by all levels of government to create room for public investment.

The budgetary path and coordination efforts between the different levels of budgetary authority are described in the stability programme. In addition, all governments in the country are firmly committed to improving the efficiency of public spending in order to free up resources for public investment. Several measures have also been proposed and adopted at all levels of government to mitigate the costs of population ageing on pensions and long-term care. All possible efforts are being made to limit the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic and to return to economic growth and budget improvement as soon as possible.

3.1.1. Allocate public spending effectively to support economic growth

Spending reviews are currently underway or being prepared at all levels of government. The *federal government* is still involved in a co-operation project with the OECD as part of the 2019 Structural Reform Support Programme (SRSP) to prepare for the integration of spending reviews into the budget process at federal level.

Flanders is thoroughly assessing the deployment of such programmes and their impact on the budgetary process on the basis of the Flemish pilot project conducted in the framework of the 2019 SRSP. The Flemish government is resolutely geared towards investment, freeing up additional margins for that purpose by implementing structural reforms and a sound fiscal policy. The Flemish Government will launch no less than 1.65 billion euros of additional investments over the next 5 years. The Flemish public authorities will invest in particular in all modes of transport and public works, in the construction of schools and R&D infrastructure and in higher education. Investments in hospitals, high-level cultural infrastructure, supra-local and high-level sports infrastructure. IT and real estate will also receive the necessary support. In addition to these additional investments, the financial and investment margins of local authorities are strengthened by 1.4 billion euros over the entire period 2020-2024.

The principle of efficiency of public spending also guides the work of the *Walloon government*. In 2020, the Walloon Region will initiate a 'base 0' budget approach with a view to returning to a balanced budget by 2024. A spending review process will also be launched in 2020 to provide input. In particular, the aim is to create budgetary margins for implementing the Social, Ecological and Economic Transition Plan currently being drawn up; a budget of around 4 billion euros is envisaged to support investment in research and innovation, digital, housing and insulation, renewable energies, mobility, training, health, biodiversity protection (see 3.3). In addition to the cost-saving measures already implemented in all Walloon public services (SPW), the Walloon Government intends to continue and deepen its process of evaluating the policies implemented. Several priority projects were evaluated by the Walloon

Institute for Evaluation, Forecasting and Statistics (IWEPS) during the previous government period.¹As part of the implementation of its Transition Plan, the Walloon Government wishes to set up a steering system to measure, at regular intervals, the impact of the Government's actions (particularly in social, environmental and economic terms) and the medium- and long-term future needs.

Investments represent around 20% of the current budget of the Brussels-Capital Region. To create additional budgetary margins in a multi-annual perspective to carry out the necessary investments to support growth, the Brussels-Capital Region will undertake to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of public spending, notably by introducing a spending review approach in the budgetary process. Initially, two pilot projects will be launched in the mobility and social housing sector, for which the Brussels-Capital Region has requested technical assistance of the SRSP 2020. The two pilot projects in mobility and social housing mainly help for capacity building to enable a future deployment of a spending review. A request for technical assistance has also been submitted for the implementation of a PEFA (Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability) gap analysis that should lead to an action plan for improving public financial management in the region

3.1.2. Containing the costs of ageing: long-term care and pensions

Long-term care spending is rigorously monitored by the various entities, taking into account the standard of growth in health care spending introduced by the federal government.

Regarding pensions, the *federal government* has continued its policy of containing expenditure trends and ensuring the sustainability of pension plans. The implementation of the 2019-2020 interprofessional agreement includes increased limitations on access to the system of unemployment benefits co-paid by companies (formerly known as the early retirement scheme). Part-time pensions are the subject of a bill that was presented in Parliament in September 2019 and is still under discussion.

Flanders assesses ageing-related expenditure in long-term care within the framework of both annual and multiannual budget forecasts. The aim of the evaluation is to achieve a balanced budget, also in the medium term. Strict budgetary monitoring relates to both cash benefits based on the level of care of the Flemish social protection system and mobility aids or institutional care for the elderly and family care. In addition, the Flemish government invests in prevention, outpatient care and support for the family environment in order to avoid an increased demand for care. Research has also been started to make care forecasts, looking at the possible budgetary effects of ageing to allow for the right supply to be provided, but also to take preventive measures.

In *Wallonia*, a Financial and Fiscal Monitoring Council is responsible for monitoring expenditure; it has prepared partial budgetary objectives enabling the monitoring and ensuring fiscal sustainability in the short term, in addition to monitoring the medium- and long-term objectives, and to take the necessary corrective action. In addition, emphasis is placed on prevention and home support. In this respect, the decree on prevention and health promotion was adopted by the Walloon Parliament in May 2019. It provides the regulatory basis implementing the 1st Walloon Plan for Prevention and Health Promotion (adopted in 2018), which is intended to provide stakeholders with real-life support in their practices. The decree on the organisation of palliative care at home was also passed in May. It describes the role and missions of the three Walloon structures specialising in end-of-life care. It also provides for the introduction of multiannual financing for stakeholders.

In *Brussels*, a technical commission within Iriscare, the bi-communal body responsible for managing competences in the area of social protection, is in charge of monitoring the expenditure and income of

¹ https://www.iweeps.be/projets/?fwp_proj_categories=evaluation

all the policies for which it is responsible, including long-term care. With the aim of ensuring that all persons losing their independence have access to a high-quality and accessible range of services and care, ensuring that they retain their independence as long as possible, the Joint Community Commission is developing an integrated model of community-based assistance and care, per neighbourhood, aimed at allowing persons who are losing their independence to stay at home. This model includes openness and support for alternatives to nursing homes, where possible and desirable, taking into account the "moratorium on nursing homes" decided by ordinance.

In 2020, the *German-speaking Community* will define quality standards for care facilities for the elderly, following the implementation of the new financing system in 2019. Also, the focus will be on redesigning the implementation of other competences in the context of the 6th state reform, i.e. the allowance for the elderly as well as long-term psychiatric care.

3.1.3. Towards a more efficient tax system

The *federal government* continues to implement the tax shift and corporate tax reform. In this respect, 2020 saw the entry into force of the last phase of the tax shift. This phase focuses on purchasing power via reductions in personal income tax, which mainly benefit income from professional activities (increase in the tax free bracket and increasing the 40% bracket). After the tax shift as a whole is completed, the measures to support purchasing power will have reduced the tax rate on gross wages by almost 10 percentage points for low-wage earners, by 5 percentage points for those earning 60% of the average wage and by 3 percentage points for those who are at the level of the average wage. These measures provide incentives to return to the labour market.

In addition, the second phase of the corporate tax reform comes into force in 2020. The reduction in corporate tax rates continues, with the elimination of the remaining 2 percentage points of the additional crisis contribution and the reduction in the nominal rate from 29 to 25%. The nominal rate is therefore reduced from 29.58% to 25%. These measures are financed by a broadening of the tax base, including the abolition of various tax expenditures, higher taxation of company cars and less favourable depreciation rules. The 2020 phase of the reform also includes the implementation of the ATAD (Anti-Tax Avoidance Directive) which limits deductible interest. Finally, the Jobsdeal includes tax measures that have been implemented in 2019. The tax regime for replacement income has been modified so to reduce the penalty on income from professional activity and social benefits. This activation policy applies to beneficiaries of health insurance and pension benefits. For the same purpose, training premiums for the unemployed are now tax-exempt.

A study has been commissioned, to be performed by the High Council of Finance, to examine different possible scenarios for a major tax reform in personal income tax. The publication of the study is expected by April 2020. The stated goals of the study are very much aligned with many of the remarks that have been made in the Country Report 2020 and similar reports before that, e.g.: removing inequality between different forms of cohabitation, examining how the various scenarios could be financed by a shift towards different types of taxes (including green taxation), simplification of the tax code and calculation, and shift towards more sustainable mobility.

Flanders is continuing its policy of reducing tax expenditure with the abolition of the "woonbonus" (housing bonus) for new entrants on 1 January 2020 and the reduction in the rate of tax reduction on service vouchers (lowering of the tax reduction from 30% to 20% per service voucher from 1 January 2020). The government agreement also provides for a new tax credit on income from professional activity (Jobbonus) which should come into force in 2021. Under the previous government, the Flemish tax system has already been made much greener, among other things through taxes on waste and making the road tax system greener, based on the principle of "the polluter pays". The Flemish government is continuing in this direction and is adapting the road tax system with a view to making

car fleets greener, by introducing the WLTP cycle (Worldwide Harmonised Light Vehicle Test) and by studying the possibilities of optimising the fixed kilometre levy for trucks.

The *Walloon Region* also intends to reform tax incentives for owning real estate. This will mainly take the form of a change in the housing voucher, which has replaced the housing bonus². The system will thus be geared to providing a bonus when buying a house, if energy-saving works are performed. The details of this new measure will not be known until 2020, but it can already be said that this scheme will only be aimed at first home buyers. Finally, an ongoing analysis of the modernisation of these various taxes is being carried out by the Walloon High Council of Tax Expertise (conclusions expected in the course of 2020).

As explained in its *GO4Brussels 2030 Strategy*, the Brussels government wishes to deepen the tax reform. Brussels will develop a policy that does not increase the tax burden on Brussels families, but on the contrary strengthens the purchasing power of present and future generations. Businesses will benefit from impulses following the harmonisation and (possible) reduction of regional and municipal taxes. In addition, the region will develop an environmentally friendly traffic tax scheme aimed at reducing traffic congestion in Brussels. To support access to ownership, sustainable renovation of buildings and to maintain the middle class in Brussels, the government will assess the registration and inheritance tax, so as to steer its effects more precisely.

3.2. Labour market and education (Recommendation 2)

The Council recommends that Belgium take action in 2019 and 2020 to:

Remove disincentives to work and strengthen the effectiveness of active labour market policies, in particular for the low skilled, older workers and people with a migrant background. Improve the performance and inclusiveness of the education and training systems and address skills mismatches.

By continuing the implementation of the *Jobsdeal*, the government wants to get as many people as possible working and keep them employed. All regional governments have included an increase in the employment rate in their policy plans. Within this framework, they undertake to effectively steer the unemployed and inactive people towards the labour market as much as possible. The three Communities are continuing their sweeping reforms to improve performance of the educational systems. These reforms include, among other things, improvements to the school curriculum, a thorough review of teacher training (Flanders), language measures and language integration pathways in Flanders, measures to make the teaching profession more attractive and greater job security for new teachers, new performance targets and a compulsory monitoring plan for schools in the French-speaking Community and the implementation of a "Gesamtvision" in the German-speaking Community. To improve the inclusiveness of education, the age of compulsory education has been lowered and efforts have continued to provide education that is as appropriate as possible for each student - including those with special learning needs. By putting more emphasis on work-related types of education, the acquisition of digital skills and by promoting lifelong learning, skill mismatches are taken into account to a greater extent.

² Under this Walloon scheme, you can benefit from a significant tax reduction in personal income tax for 20 consecutive years following the acquisition of your own, single home and depending on the level of the buyer's income.

3.2.1. Removing disincentives to work

Even though the *federal government* resigned in December 2018, a number of Jobsdeal measures were submitted to parliament and passed in the spring of 2019. This set of measures, consisting of a social and a fiscal component, aims to encourage labour market participation and to address the growing shortage in the labour market as well as the many hard-to-fill vacancies that are stifling growth. The implementation of these measures continued in 2019.

The number of people leaving the labour market prematurely is decreasing every year. While there were still more than 100,000 in 2015, their number fell to 50,128 in December 2019. The rules of the unemployment scheme co-paid by the company, as announced in 2018 in the Jobsdeal, are tightened further. Sector-wide agreements have been concluded in order to strengthen the age conditions for early exit from the labour market.

To meet the demand for flexibility, it was already possible from 1 February 2017 to work 100 hours of overtime per year, provided that the worker consented voluntarily and in writing. In April 2019, the social partners concluded a collective labour agreement to increase the maximum quota of voluntary overtime per calendar year from 100 to 120 hours. At a sector level, agreements can be concluded to increase this number to a maximum of 360 hours.

Flanders will tackle unemployment or inactivity traps with an employment bonus, an intervention that raises the lowest net wages without increasing employers' labour costs. This employment bonus increases the net salaries of workers whose gross monthly salary does not exceed 1,700 euros by at least 50 euros per month. For higher salaries, the employment bonus gradually decreases to zero for people with a gross monthly salary of 2,500 euros. The precise details of the employment bonus will be determined in 2020. This employment bonus will take effect from 2021. In addition, the Flemish government wants to make employment more financially attractive by making social benefits dependent on the level of income and no longer on a social status (e.g. inactive), for example.

3.2.2. Strengthen the effectiveness of active labour market policies

Since the May 2019 elections, the federated entities have formed a government and have announced their active labour market policies for the coming government period (2019-2024). *Flanders* wants to implement a structural expansion of the activation policy to currently inactive people and newcomers. The Flemish Government is making every effort to get at the head of the pack, specifically by putting 120,000 more people to work by 2024. To this end, the Flemish Government and the social partners signed a declaration of intent on 21/02/2020³. They want to achieve this goal by keeping existing workers at work, strengthening the role of the Flemish Service for Employment and Vocational Training (VDAB) and, above all, by encouraging inactive people to participate in the labour market. For this last group, priority is given to young people who are not in training and do not have a job, recipients of a living wage, people with health problems and people who have temporarily left the labour market to take on family responsibilities. To achieve this objective, intensive collaboration is required with the federal social security system (e.g. RIZIV) and social integration services (OCMW).

The public employment service in *Wallonia* is busy implementing a new model of "tailor-made support" for jobseekers, more geared to the profile and level of autonomy of the individuals. This new support scheme should make it possible to provide better overall care for the most vulnerable groups, in particular the low-skilled long-term unemployed, older workers and people with a migrant

³ <https://www.serv.be/serv/nieuws/vlaamse-regering-en-sociale-partners-sluiten-akkoord-120-000-extra-vlamingen-slag-te-helpen>

background. An evaluation of hiring incentives is under way, with a view to improving the effectiveness of these measures.

The Government of the *Brussels Region* and the social partners, in close cooperation with the Flemish and French communities, launched the Go4Brussels 2030 Strategy⁴ on 16 January 2020. Employment is a fundamental component of this strategy, which has as one of its objectives to ensure access to stable, sustainable and quality employment for all, including job seekers furthest removed from the labour market.

The *Walloon Region* will establish the legal framework to develop the "zero long-term unemployment territory" approach in voluntary areas. On the basis of a voluntary commitment from jobseekers, pilot experiments in certain employment areas will be carried out, based on work with actors in the field, in particular with the support of social economy mechanisms, by leveraging existing tools.

The *Brussels-Capital Region* has carried out a major reform of the activation systems. The Government will assess the effectiveness of these new schemes with regard to the target groups furthest from the labour market, in particular the low-skilled, people with an immigrant background, older workers and young people. This evaluation of regional activation policies will make it possible to identify the strengths and weaknesses of existing schemes, to make changes and to develop new measures under the aegis of efficiency, inclusion and administrative simplification. To enable the inclusion of job seekers who are far from the labour market, the Government will continue to develop a range of appropriate solutions. From there, a specific bonus scheme will be implemented to support employers in recruiting people with disabilities. In the *Walloon Region*, a framework agreement has been signed between Wallonia, the public employment service and the social services. The aim of this enhanced collaboration is to offer jobseekers a more coherent path to professional reintegration. The Government is also working on the implementation of a new employment incentive for the long-term unemployed.

The *Brussels-Capital Region* will also set up a regional platform for the labour market integration of newcomers with the help of the 2020 SRSP. *Wallonia* has supported the development of the services available for this target group, via specific subsidies to specialised operators.

The Anti-Discrimination Desk of the Public Employment Service (Actiris) in the *Brussels-Capital Region* is the first point of contact for job seekers who are victims of discrimination when looking for a job. In case legal action could be taken, Actiris refers the job seekers concerned to independent equal opportunity bodies. In addition, a reform of the regional diversity instruments was approved by the Government in May 2019 and entered into force on 1 January 2020. In Wallonia, the Government is planning to introduce a legal framework organising the situation testing mechanisms.

Box 1: Good practices in target group measures

Walloon Region

The ongoing project with the help of the Structural Reform Support Programme aims to develop systems to assess and recognize the learning outcomes of the Centres for Socio-Professional Integration (CISP) by mid-2021. The associated result should, in the longer term, help to improve the quality and relevance of non-formal learning and increase access to further training pathways in Wallonia for the low-skilled. The CISP train about 16,000 people/year (51% women, 49% men). This action is part of the Walloon scheme for the validation, visibility and valorisation of lifelong learning skills (Consortium for

⁴ http://go4.brussels/Textes/S2030_FR%20%20DEF%204.0%20RV%20MR.pdf

the Certification of Competences and the new "certificate of professional competence", currently being tested, relating to the mastery of all the skills attached to a profession).

Flemish Region

In its government agreement, the Flemish Government states that employment is the key to integration and participation. With regard to persons with an immigrant background, the Flemish Government wants to encourage their activation by reaching out to inactive persons - whether or not they receive benefits - who do not enter the labour market for linguistic, cultural, domestic and/or other reasons as much as possible. Special attention is also paid to women with an immigrant background, a group with a low employment rate. The VDAB is currently developing a strategy for this group. Newcomers (with job prospects) will be registered with the VDAB within two months of their arrival to be offered guidance towards work or further training. This support will be more focused on language, integrating it fully where possible into the overall employment process. Similarly, as part of on-the-job training, language support for job seekers and employers is provided. In addition, monitoring projects are set up where jobseekers with an immigration background are paired with a more experienced mentor, supported by a mentor-coach.

Brussels-Capital Region

A new regional regulatory framework for the social economy is being implemented in the Brussels Region. Important reform work has been undertaken with partners to provide Brussels social economy enterprises with a new regulatory framework. The reform entered into force gradually on 1 February 2019. From 2020, a mandate could be granted to certified social and democratic enterprises working on integration, known as "social integration enterprises". The mandate relates to the development of "Integration Programmes" specifically oriented towards assisting and supporting certain categories of unemployed jobseekers who, given their psychosocial situation or level of under-qualification, remain particularly distant from the labour market. In this respect, a social economy integration employment scheme will be available to social integration social enterprises from 2021.

3.2.3. Improve the performance and inclusiveness of the education and training systems and address skills mismatches.

Educational performance and inclusiveness

To improve the performance and inclusiveness of education, the compulsory schooling age has been lowered from 6 to 5 years throughout Belgium from the school year 2020-2021. Early participation in education is crucial to avoid early school leaving, to increase the chances of graduating from secondary education and thus to have better opportunities in the labour market.

In *Flanders*, the current M-decree will be replaced by a new and ambitious decree on tailor-made support and guidance for all pupils and their teachers. Special attention will be given to all students: regular level students, students with special educational needs, and those who learn very easily, to the inclusion of the (few) high potentials. Sick children who have to stay at home because of their illness will be provided with suitable learning opportunities, as soon as possible to guarantee their right to learning. The Flemish government agreement provides for language integration pathways for children with limited knowledge of Dutch and Dutch immersion classes where necessary.

In the *French Community*, the decree relating to steering the system sets seven objectives for improving outcomes, student progress and the equity of the system, and encourages all schools to set objectives and action plans to contribute to these objectives. The provisions relating to the reinforcement of nursery education, the language of learning and individual support for pupils in difficulty, which came

into force in September 2019, also aim to increase pupil performance and reduce failure. The decree on the strengthening of the common core curriculum, adopted on 2 May 2019, consists of a thorough review of the curriculum for pupils aged 3 to 15 years in order to adapt it to the society of the 21st century and to strengthen the basic skills of all pupils. In a perspective of greater equity in the system, the reform removes early selection mechanisms and the relegation of the most socio-economically fragile students.

With a view to making schools more inclusive, and in view of the increase in the number of pupils enrolled in special education, a decree was adopted in 2019 encouraging the opening of inclusive settings, i.e. special education classes physically located in ordinary schools. The reform aimed at decompartmentalizing regular and special education and reforming the integration mechanism is also being prepared.

The French Community has also decided to increase the social budgets for higher education. This measure fills a historical inequity that existed between universities on the one hand and university colleges and universities of applied arts on the other hand in the granting of social subsidies and promotes the integration of the most socially and economically fragile students.

The *German-speaking Community* follows the same approach in the project "Individual Support for Pupils": by setting up new structures for special education in mainstream schools and enabling children and young people to follow their own development process as far as possible. A range of projects are planned in the same gist, such as the promotion of lifelong language awareness, multilingualism, citizenship education, media education, integration of people with special needs and people with a migrant background, technical and vocational training, support for teachers and the design of modern learning environments.

Skills mismatch

To combat skills mismatches, *Flanders* continues to promote work-related training throughout the education system. The range of training opportunities and the number of students involved is increasing every year. Flanders will also gradually extend this system to higher education and adult education. As digital skills will become crucial in the coming years, Flanders wants to tackle the shortage of technically and scientifically qualified persons with a new STEM action plan. Moreover, in addition to diplomas, attention will be paid to the skills acquired, giving maximum visibility to proven skills and certifying them. Another important part of the Go4Brussels 2030 Strategy, the *Brussels-Capital Region* will adopt a "Qualification Employment" Strategy based on the evaluation of its 2020 Training Plan, in consultation with the French- and Dutch-speaking players active in the employment, vocational training and education sectors. In order to meet the needs of the labour market and job seekers with a view to their sustainable integration into quality jobs, it promotes work-related training and vocational training in enterprises as vectors for accelerated and sustainable integration into the labour market. It is stepping up its strategy to set up the Training and Employment Clusters (PFE), which aim to bring together stakeholders in the areas of training, employment and sectors to provide concrete solutions to positions facing labour shortages and to anticipate companies' future needs for skilled labour. In 2020, the Digitalcity.brussels Cluster will be inaugurated for information, communication and new technologies (ICT) professions, supporting Technicity.brussels for the technological industry professions. The *German-speaking Community* is planning to expand the range of work-related training in higher education. In *Wallonia*, the reform of the Training Integration Plan came into force in May 2019. The regional skills strategy will be strengthened, in particular to better anticipate needs, improve the continuous training of workers (upskilling), and respond to the needs of enterprises.

Wallonia has specifically developed a regional strategy for the promotion of technical and technological professions to cope with the shortages observed in certain sectors and the technological developments

in the sectors. With the *French Community*, an awareness plan has been put in place to promote training in STEM and a Digital Strategy for Compulsory Education is being implemented. The implementation of the Digital Wallonia strategy is being pursued, which includes a section dedicated to digital skills training, as well as support for the digital transition of businesses. *Wallonia* is also involved in European projects relating to digital skills for adults with little schooling and the training of workers in Industry 4.0. In order to improve the digital skills of the people of Brussels, *the Brussels-Capital Region* is developing a series of measures to improve the digital training offer available, such as the Digital Transformation Plan.

Improving the provision of and access to lifelong learning is high on the political agenda. *Flanders'* various training incentives - training leave, training vouchers and training credit - have recently been harmonised so that they can be used to the maximum extent possible according to the same rules and principles and can be used for the same training. In order to make training even more accessible, *Flanders* will set up a 'training and career' account, where every citizen can check which training courses are available to them and what support they are entitled to. To encourage greater synergy and a common vision of training, a platform "Levenslang leren (LLL) / lifelong learning" will be created, bringing together representatives from the fields of Employment, Education and Economy. This platform should make it possible to coordinate lifelong learning policy in a cross-cutting manner, to develop digital instruments to make the skills of individuals more visible, to make the training offer in *Flanders* more transparent and to introduce individual 'training and career' accounts. Similarly, the funding of universities via the education tax units (Onderwijsbelastingseenheden - OBE) will be examined and gradually increased. Following the successful implementation of work-linked training in secondary education, the system will be extended to adult and higher education. The Education Administration's database will be linked to the Employment database (see also 4.3.2.). The *Walloon Government* intends to strengthen the training of workers through a new scheme inspired by the Flemish model of "career training vouchers". These vouchers will be used to provide support and guidance for workers wishing to improve their skills or redirect themselves to a job facing labour shortages, with a focus on older workers and workers losing their jobs. The *three Regions* are strengthening the certification of competences acquired at work and skills assessments.

3.3. Investment and mobility (Recommendation 3)

The Council recommends that Belgium take action in 2019 and 2020 to:

Focus investment-related economic policy on sustainable transport, including upgrading rail infrastructure, the low carbon and energy transition and research and innovation, in particular in digitisation, taking into account regional disparities. Tackle the growing mobility challenges, by reinforcing incentives and removing barriers to increase the supply and demand of collective and low emission transport.

A high level of strategic investment is an essential lever for supporting our growth model and meeting the challenges posed by climate change, the development of digital technologies and the transition to intelligent mobility. The federal government has initiated a reflection on how to respond to the investment challenge in Belgium within the framework of the National Strategic Investment Pact (NSIP). Four thematic areas are particularly present in government programmes: mobility, energy, innovation and digitisation. A fifth axis relates to the cross-cutting measures needed to improve the investment framework in Belgium. At the same time, the governments of the federated entities have been working to develop investment programmes in line with the needs identified.

3.3.1. Towards sustainable and smart mobility

The *federal* rail investment strategy is set out in SNCB/Infrabel's Multiannual Investment Plan 2018-2020 (4.23 billion euros) and Multiannual Strategic Investment Plan 2018-2031 (1.147 billion euros). The projects included in these plans are essential to support a modal shift of people and goods to rail in order to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions while reducing congestion in and around Belgium's main urban areas. The most important projects include the construction of the regional express network (RER) around Brussels (scheduled for completion in 2031), the purchase of new rolling stock (scheduled for completion in 2024), the preparatory work for the construction of the second rail access to the port of Antwerp (scheduled for completion in 2023), and the construction of additional tracks between Ghent and Bruges (scheduled for completion in 2024) and Bruges and Zeebrugge (scheduled for completion in 2031). In addition, these plans provide for the improvement of several cross-border connections, including the modernisation of the Brussels-Luxembourg track (to be completed by 2027).

All regions have also continued to develop an innovative and sustainable mobility policy. The government of the *Brussels-Capital Region* has extended the Multiannual Investment Plan for Public Transport until 2028. The plan involves more than 6 billion euros in investments and includes the three modes of transport: metro, tram and bus. In addition, in spring 2020, a multi-annual budget (including a multi-annual investment plan) will be drawn up for the new government period, which will set the new government's mobility priorities. In the initial 2020 budget, a total of around 500 million euros is allocated to these strategic investments (see table 3.3.5). In addition, the Brussels government continues to develop its Regional Mobility Plan (RMP) 2020-2030 - Good Move. Among the 50 concrete actions planned in Good Move to achieve the mobility goals, there are 4 concerning shared and combined mobility and MaaS (Mobility as a Service). In order to develop an ambitious regulatory framework and to find the best technological solution to meet this challenge, a request has been introduced in the framework of the SRSP 2020. This request was granted. Finally, at the beginning of the government period and in partnership with cyclists' associations, the Brussels government will draw up an ambitious investment plan specific to cycling infrastructure and will systematically develop separate cycling infrastructure on the major regional roads and highways if the size of the roadway so permits. The aim is to achieve a granular, comfortable, safe and uninterrupted network. The government's objective is to double the modal share of cycling in 5 years, in particular by creating additional cycle paths and completing the network of regional cycle routes.

The Social, Ecological and Economic Transition Plan currently being drawn up in the *Walloon Region* will make mobility a priority. Walloon policy will be based on the FAST 2030 vision and the Regional Mobility Strategy adopted in May 2019, which operationalises this vision. The 2019-2024 Mobility and Infrastructures plan adopted in April 2019 will be adjusted with a view to achieving two billion euros of investment by 2025 (Secondary roads, including cycle-pedestrian facilities - Motorways - Bus lanes - Waterways). From 2021 onwards, 80 million per year will be earmarked exclusively for the implementation of additional projects focusing on soft and collective mobility. In the main urban areas (Liège, Charleroi, Namur and Mons-Borinage), the concept of "cycle motorways" will be implemented. An ambitious plan for the deployment of electrical charging poles and compressed natural gas (CNG) and liquefied natural gas (LNG) stations will also be developed. In terms of freight transport, the Walloon government will finalise the Walloon core project and will continue its commitment to the Seine-Escaut link project. The new PEREX centre inaugurated in April 2019 should strengthen the "high-tech" management of Walloon road and waterway infrastructures (investment of 30 million euros).

In Flanders, an integrated investment programme called "Geïntegreerd InvesteringsProgramma" (GIP) is established for the first time. It includes a comprehensive overview of all investments made in freight and passenger transport, public transport, cycling, inland navigation and water management. At present, the 2020 GIP is close to being adopted. In the 2020 GIP, the total amount of investment in

mobility and public works amounts to 1.854 billion euros (public transport, airports, waterways, roads and cycling infrastructure). As far as road infrastructure is concerned, Flanders is relentlessly pursuing the efforts made for Antwerp (Oosterweel project), Ghent (R4) and Brussels (R0). Over the next few years, the Mobilidata programme will implement innovative mobility solutions through co-creation with private partners, based on a digital infrastructure, intelligent traffic lights and sustainable, high-quality data sources (29 million euros invested in a data platform). By introducing the concept of basic accessibility, the Flemish government is resolutely opting for public transport on demand. Flanders is divided into 15 transport regions, which define the basic accessibility within their own region by means of an integrated regional mobility plan. The multiannual investment plan for the greening of De Lijn's rolling stock is being implemented in full. From 2020, only low- or zero-emission buses will be purchased. Flanders is also relying on river public transport. In particular, funding is planned for ferry services carrying passengers to and from the city of Antwerp and shuttles between the city and the port of Antwerp. The Flemish government will continue to invest in cycling. In the preliminary draft of the 2020 GIP, cycling investments will amount to approximately 176 million euros. Furthermore, the Flemish government continues to encourage and facilitate the use of inland navigation and estuaries. In 2020, it will continue to invest in the waterways and, in particular, in raising the bridges over the Albert Canal, the renewal of the Zeebrugge and Terneuzen locks, the Sigma Plan and the Seine-Escaut project. In 2020, within the framework of the "hinterlandconnectiviteit" (hinterland connectivity) subsidies, an amount of 12 million euros will again be granted for investments in sustainable hinterland connections by waterway (max. 8 million euros/year) or by rail (max. 4 million euros/year). Finally, Flanders is banking on the deployment of a recharging infrastructure for electric vehicles through the "Clean Power for Transport 2020" action plan. After an evaluation of the action plan, the approach for the period up to 2025 will be set in 2020.

3.3.2. Investing in energy and environmental transition

All the country's governments are committed to achieving the objectives of the National Energy-Climate Plan 2021-2030. The *federal government* continues to support the country's energy and environmental transition through major investments, including offshore wind development (see 4.4)⁵. On the other hand, the Energy Transition Fund continues to finance energy transition projects for an annual amount of 20 million euros. The last call for projects was issued on 31 October 2019. In addition, the federal government's commitment to supporting nuclear decommissioning research through the MYRRHA project remains intact. Finally, technical work is currently underway on alternative ways of financing the energy renovation of public buildings (see 3.3.4).

On 9/12/2019, the Flemish *government* approved the "Vlaams Energie- en Klimaatplan 2021-2030" (VEKP - Flemish Energy-Climate Plan). In order to attract investments in energy efficiency and renewable energy, a variety of instruments are used. These include energy policy agreements, energy subsidies for households and companies for energy efficiency investments, energy loans at reduced or zero interest rates, etc. (see 4.4). From 2019, the R&D policy for energy and climate has been further strengthened through a new initiative, the Flemish Moonshot "Vlaanderen CO₂ neutral" (innovation programme CO₂ neutral Flanders). This initiative focuses on research and innovation to make Flemish industry carbon-circular and low-carbon by 2050. Finally, the Flemish Climate Fund has made a total of 96 million euros available for the period 2016-2019 for additional investments in the energy-efficient renovation of social housing (see also 4.4).

The Government of the *Brussels-Capital Region* will focus on the transition towards a more environmentally and socially sustainable economic model by emphasising the ambitions set out in the Energy-Climate Plan. The Brussels-Capital Region's ambition is to raise the energy performance of its

⁵ See also National Energy-Climate Plan 2021-2030, p. 76.

buildings by 2050 through its strategy to reduce the environmental impact of existing buildings. For the residential sector, the objective is to achieve an average of 100kWh/m²/year in primary energy. Finally, for the tertiary sector, the objective is to move towards energy-neutral buildings in Brussels.

In the *Walloon Region*, the investments planned by the government to accompany the social, ecological and economic transition are aimed, among other things, at improving the energy performance of buildings and creating and supporting a plastic recycling industry (see also 4.4). As part of the Walloon Investment Plan, in May 2019 the government released an additional 12.5 million euros to improve the energy performance of public housing. By 1 April 2020 at the latest, the Walloon government will review the objectives and pace of the strategy for the renovation of Walloon buildings in line with the revised climate target for 2030. The government will implement, in consultation with the sector, a project to insulate and renovate 250,000 housing units and 2,500 public buildings and schools, in particular via a third-party investor mechanism and soft loans. Concerning the creation of a plastic recycling industry, six projects have been selected, representing an investment of 120 million euros, 47 million of which are financed by Wallonia, which should enable 156,000 tons of plastic waste to be processed industrially. The government has also planned to adopt an Integrated Waste Management Infrastructure Plan in order to plan the needs of Wallonia, with all management methods combined.

For its part, the *French Community* intends to develop a new energy efficiency investment programme in line with the objectives of the Community policy statement 2019-2024. Two pilot projects concerning the installation of photovoltaic panels on the roofs of twelve secondary schools, eight ADEPS centres and two cultural infrastructures were carried out in 2019 via a third party investor. A second phase is being studied to equip about thirty roofs. A third will target all relevant surfaces. Twelve projects to replace lighting fixtures in administrative buildings in the French Community have been or will be carried out for a total investment of 365,000 euros. The French Community is also looking into the use of energy performance contracts (CPE) to achieve energy saving measures by providing a guarantee of results over several years (see 3.3.4). The pilot project concerns a multi-technical CPE for sixteen schools, i.e. 4% of the school buildings in the French Community.

3.3.3. Supporting digitisation and innovation

Support for innovation at the *federal* level was reflected in particular by the continuation of the "Digital Belgium" programme and by major investments, jointly with the *Regions*, in the framework of the European Battery Alliance (275 million euros in total), the Euro-HPC project (5 million euros from the Federal State and the Walloon Region, 3.5 million euros from the Flemish Region and 2 million euros from the Brussels-Capital Region). The regions are also involved in the deployment of the European Digital Innovation Hubs (eDIH). The Federal Government has also maintained its financial support for the Smart-IRE project (52 million euros from 2019 to 2020) as well as for the construction of new infrastructure to house the Sciensano Scientific Institute of Public Health (70 million euros by 2021) and the von Karman Institute (25 million euros by 2020). At the same time, all the federated entities have increased their support for innovation and digitisation through direct investment and various support measures (see 4.2.1).

The rapid deployment of a 5G network is a priority for the *Flemish government*. The *Brussels Region* supports new technological deployments in the field of data transmission (including 5G) in compliance with the precautionary principle and after evaluation, in particular in terms of the environment and public health. *Wallonia* also intends to promote investment in 5G and fibre optics, by creating the necessary frameworks for the arrival of 5G, in compliance with radiation standards and their impacts. A framework agreement will be proposed to mobile and fixed operators with this in mind. There are also plans to ensure regulatory and administrative simplification with regard to the deployment of fixed very high speed broadband and mobile.

3.3.4. Improving the investment climate in Belgium

All the country's governments are working to improve the conditions for public and private investment to meet the challenges of the next decade. Where synergies between different levels of government are desirable in investment, the National Strategic Investment Pact can act as a catalyst. A governance structure and a permanent secretariat have been established to carry out inter-federal coordination in this area. In addition, four inter-federal working groups are currently being set up around themes common to the different entities (preparation for the InvestEU programme, improvement of the regulatory and administrative framework, strengthening the public-private partnership model - with the support of the SRSP 2020 - and contribution to the revision of European budgetary rules).

For their part, the federated entities have committed themselves to improving the investment climate through various measures. The Flemish government intends to respond better to the needs of a favourable investment climate and is resolutely opting for a reduction in regulatory pressure and for innovation-friendly regulation. During this government period, a number of new major projects and programmes are being implemented. The expertise acquired by the *Werkvennootschap*, Lantis and the departments responsible for project development and monitoring is recognised and reinforced. The decree on the framework for major projects and programmes of 22/03/2019 entered into force on 1/01/2020. Care will be taken to ensure that all major projects and programmes are properly monitored and that relevant expertise is exchanged between policy areas. The Flemish government wants to build on the possibilities offered by InvestEU.

In the *Walloon Region*, measures to simplify and speed up permit procedures provided for by the CoDT were adopted in May 2019 and entered into force on 1 September 2019. The forms for the environmental permit and the single permit have been simplified. Digitisation is planned for mid-2020.

As part of the reform of the regulations, procedures and instruments for applying for building permits, the *Brussels government* will ensure, during this government period, the orderly and harmonious implementation of the reform of the CoBAT⁶ (Brussels Code for Spatial Planning), which will enter into force on 1 September 2019. One year after the entry into force of the amended text, the implementation of the CoBAT reform will be evaluated. If necessary, the Government will propose regulatory amendments to simplify procedures. To this end, the digitization of licence applications will be accelerated in order to have a 100% digital system by 2022. The government will also ensure that planning and environmental permit procedures are further simplified and that guidance and support to the planning authorities in their efforts to comply with EPB standards (energy performance standards for buildings) is strengthened. The budget for this measure amounts to 1.140 million euros for 2020.

Finally, the *French Community* is working on drafting a new type of specifications incorporating third-party financing mechanisms (leasing) for the replacement / upgrading of lighting. The first service contract would cover the refitting of lights in several school sites and could be published in September 2020.

⁶ Ordinance of 30/11/2017 reforming the Brussels Code of Urban and Country Planning (CoBAT)

3.3.5. Non-exhaustive list of strategic investments

Project title and short description	Main objective	Total investment (millions of euros)	Source(s) of funding
[Federal] SNCB/Infrabel multiannual investment plan	Improving the interoperability and safety of rail transport, RER, improving the interconnection of ports, cross-border infrastructure [CSR3; Green Deal; TEN-T]	4.230 [2018-2020]	Federal public subsidies, Connecting Europe Facility
[Federal] SNCB/Infrabel's 2018-2031 multi-year strategic investment plan	RER [CSR3; Green Deal]	1.490 [2018-2031]	Federal public subsidies, Connecting Europe Facility
[Federal] Offshore wind development	Creating a legal framework for tendering new wind farms after 2020. [CSR3; Green Deal]	Depends on the final details of the offer selected	to be defined
[Federal] Energy Transition Fund	Promoting research and development of innovative energy projects under federal jurisdiction [CSR3; Green Deal]	20 [Annual; 2017-...]	Annual tax on the life extension of the nuclear power plants Doel 1 and Doel 2.
[Walloon Region] Social, Ecological and Economic Transition Plan	Promoting social, ecological and economic transition through investment [CSR2; CSR3; Green Deal]	4.000 [2019-2024]	to be defined
[Walloon Region] Mobility and Infrastructure Plan	Infrastructure development: Bicycle path, public transport, water transport, improvement of the quality/safety of the existing road network [CSR3; Green Deal]	2.000 [2019-2025]	Public funding
[Walloon Region] Investing in plastics recycling capacity	Creation of new recycling capacities via public-private partnerships and the SRIW [CSR3; Green Deal]	120 [2019-2021] (47 public; 73 private)	Public and private financing
[Brussels-Capital Region] STIB allocation for large-scale investments + Metro/Premetro: Renovation & Installations	STIB allocation: Purchase of hybrid buses, new generation trams, metro rolling stock. Transformation and extension of certain subway lines Metro/Premetro: Repairs and renewals, improvement of existing stations, general network improvement, modernization and extension of certain metro lines [CSR3; Green Deal]	365.229 / 2020 This is part of the Multiannual Investment Plan for Public Transport for the period 2015-2025 (extended to 2028) 6 billion of investments and concerns the three modes of transport (metro, tram and bus (redevelopment of the network, depot, ...)).	The Brussels Regional Public Service (SPRB) provides its own financing via outside funding which has an impact on direct debt. Financing is therefore carried out through the direct debt portfolio.
[Brussels-Capital Region] Viaducts & Bridges	Monitoring, Maintenance and Renovation Operations of Bridges and Viaducts [CSR3; Green Deal]	55 / 2020	
[Brussels-Capital Region] Tunnels - large-scale renovation	Heavy repairs/equipment replacement [CSR3; Green Deal]	52 / 2020	
[Flanders]	Focus on smooth, safe and intelligent mobility [CSR3; Green Deal];	1,854 ⁷ [2020]	Public funding

⁷ The figures mentioned from the draft 2020 GIP have not yet been approved by the Flemish Minister of Mobility and Public

The first 2020 Integrated Investment Programme (GIP).			
[Flanders] Energy efficiency and renewable energy investments	Building on a Flemish energy transition and supporting the climate targets [CSR3; Green Deal]	- Energy premiums for energy efficiency investments: 89 [annually] -Energy loans for a specific target group: 55 [annually] - Demolition and Reconstruction Bonus: 18 [2020] -Renewable Energy Production Support Mechanism 1100 [on an annual basis] -Annual call for projects regarding green heating, heating networks, waste heat and biomethane 20 [annually] -Moonshot CO ₂ 20 [annually; 2020-2040]	Public funding
[French Community] Photovoltaic solar panels	Installation of photovoltaic solar panels on infrastructure roofs - 2,501 kWp (17,500 m ²) [CSR3; Green Deal]	2.6 / 2020	90% Third-party financing via ESCO and 10% by crowd lending (concession with transfer of ownership to the CF at the end of the concession)
[French Community] UREBA: Windows replaced	Replacement of glazing with high insulation glazing [CSR3; Green Deal]	8 [2020-2022]	80% UREBA subsidy (Walloon region), 20% own capital
[German-speaking community] Technologiecampus Sankt Vith & PPP II	Construction of a technology campus in Sankt Vith and renovation of schools with major modernization and energy improvements [CSR3; Green Deal]	70 [2023-2026] 80 [2025-2028]	Public-private Partnership - PPP
[German-speaking community] Various strategic investments	Major modernisation and major energy improvement of infrastructure [CSR3; Green Deal]	10 [2020] 15 [annually; 2021-2023]	Public funding

Works and could therefore be (slightly) modified.

3.4. Entrepreneurship and competition (Recommendation 4)

The Council recommends that Belgium take action in 2019 and 2020 to:

Reduce the regulatory and administrative burden to incentivise entrepreneurship and remove barriers to competition in services, particularly telecommunication, retail and professional services.

The digital transition is a key factor in administrative simplification. Introducing digital administrative procedures reduces the burden inherent to these procedures. Digital skills are also part of entrepreneurship. At all levels of government, the Belgian authorities are therefore continuing to digitise and centralise their communications with businesses (and citizens). In addition, they are continuing to simplify the procedures themselves. For example, the 'Only Once' principle (TOOP) is applied (in Brussels and Flanders) and citizens and businesses are involved in the simplification process (in Flanders). Access to the profession is also facilitated, which also promotes competition. This is also encouraged by the integration of applications for commercial building permits, which is still in progress in Wallonia.

3.4.1. Fostering entrepreneurship

Digitisation / Digital Platforms

In 2019, the *federal authorities* organised a campaign to inform SMEs and micro enterprises about the benefits of digitisation. Actors that were relatively advanced in the digitisation process shared their experiences on an internet platform.

In the *Brussels-Capital Region*, several initiatives have been taken at the SME and economic policy level, including the SME toolkit, which addresses the potential negative effects of regulation on SMEs. The creation of a unique digital environment, BEDSy, is another initiative. It provides real-time management of current economic policy and analysis of its results and effects.

Under the slogan 'Digitaal eerst' (Digital First), *Flanders* has committed itself to simplifying and digitising access to services and economic support on the basis of the principles of 'digital priority', 'one time only' and 'no wrong entry'. To this end, it has, among other things, developed the digital business desk and the Agency for Innovation and Entrepreneurship (Agentschap Innoveren en Ondernemen, VLAIO) acts as a central contact point for entrepreneurs. On the digital platform www.vlaanderenonderneemt.be managed by VLAIO, entrepreneurs can create administrative case files from a central location, and monitor the evolution of these files with the Flemish administrations concerned. Companies can already apply for grants, incentives, approvals and permits from various public bodies. This platform embodies the principle of Digital First, which means that the most important transactions with public authorities can be carried out in their entirety digitally. The Flemish government is planning a Flemish agenda for digital entrepreneurship and innovation (Vlaamse agenda voor digitaal ondernemen en innoveren) during the next government period. The digital switchover of public authorities is supported by the innovative public procurement programme (Programma innovatieve overheidsopdrachten) and the work of the Flemish Information Agency (Agentschap Informatie Vlaanderen, AIV). The digital transformation of municipalities is supported by Smart Flanders, the Smart Cities call of VLAIO and the experimental space that Imec will have at its disposal in Antwerp. The Flemish authorities are also investing in artificial intelligence (AI) and the use of voice assistants such as Siri or Alexa to respond automatically to citizens' requests for information. The use of block chain is also investigated. Flanders Investment and Trade (FIT) also relies on artificial intelligence and digital technology.

The government manifesto of the *Walloon Region* provides for a further reduction in administrative burdens. These include electronic invoicing, the harmonisation of documents and the digitisation of administrative procedures. In particular, the digitisation of permits is underway, and public procurement has been digitised since 1 January. Company vouchers have been simplified and the online platform has been improved. In collaboration with the *German-speaking Community*, a multi-institutional Digital Citizens' Space has been created. The German-speaking Community is developing a proactive digital administration for 'tailor-made' communication with citizens.

Other initiatives

Easybrussels, the *Brussels Agency for Administrative Simplification*, has launched a project to ensure that businesses and citizens provide their data only once (The Once Only Principle - TOOP). This data may then be used for various purposes. The project is supported by the Structural Reform Support Programme (DG REFORM). In *Wallonia*, payment terms have been reduced and are now very close to the 30-day target. The *Flemish* government agreement includes commitments to reduce administrative and regulatory burdens. Firstly, the authorities intend to systematically tackle the burden of regulation on citizens, businesses and associations by making it less burdensome and less detailed. Secondly, experimental regulations and "regulatory sandboxes", i.e. areas exempt from compliance with the rules normally in force, are set up in collaboration with the actors directly concerned by the design, implementation and evaluation. Innovative applications are tested and introduced more quickly, as well as open standards and targeted rules. Citizens and entrepreneurs have the right to propose their own political alternatives: this is the principle of the "right of objection". Thirdly, the effectiveness of policy and communication is increased through soft incentives. Fourthly, the authorities start from the bottom up (in cooperation with local authorities) and involve citizens, businesses and associations to remove unnecessary administrative barriers and legal obligations.

3.4.2. Removing barriers to competition in the services sector

Professional Services

In Belgium, the *federal level* has competence for intellectual professions. Between February and September 2020, a working group of economists and lawyers will address the following issues: (1) the possible obstacles to professional mobility created by existing regulations; (2) the possible inevitability of a limitation of mobility in the context of regulated activities; (3) the development of less restrictive measures which nevertheless make it possible to achieve the objectives set; (4) the analysis of deontology rules for legal entities. Depending on the results of the study, proposals for legislative reform may be made.

As regards more specifically the financial professions, the law relating to the professions of chartered accountant and tax advisor and its implementing decrees will come into force in the first half of 2020. This law limits the number of professions to two: certified public accountant and certified tax advisor. The two existing professional institutes (IPCF and IEC) are merged into a single Institute of Tax Consultants and Accountants (ICE). Special attention will also be paid to training. Candidates are given more opportunities and are carefully supervised throughout the process. Exemptions are granted to candidates who have already acquired certain skills. Those who can demonstrate sufficient experience are exempt from the internship. The reform must lead to rationalisation, more transparency and economies of scale. It can increase the quality of services provided and improve access to both professions.

In 2019, the *Brussels-Capital Region* has conducted an intense consultation with the sectors concerned with the aim of reforming and modernising access to the profession, the main objective being to inform the stakeholders concerned and to gather their opinions on the future of access to the profession. The

contours of the reform, the trends observed, the challenges identified and the responses to be made, as well as the actions to be taken, were discussed. *Flanders* has abolished the professional qualification requirements for the construction sector as of 1 January 2019. As part of the evaluation of *Walloon* regulations on access to the profession, professional associations were consulted in the first half of 2019. The proposals made on this occasion are currently being examined. This revision had been deemed necessary in order to simplify and adapt to today's world.

Retail trade

The *federal authorities* are attentive to territorial restrictions on supply that impede the freedom of supply of the retail trade. These restrictions are not imposed by the authorities themselves, but rather by the production and distribution chain itself. They hinder competition and price formation. It is therefore an important political concern. This issue was addressed in the Benelux context and Box 2 (below) provides an overview. On 4 July 2019, the European Commission was asked to take these issues into account when reviewing the relevant legislation. In addition, the three Member States are in the process of setting up a contact point in each of the States and analysing how legislation can be adapted to counter the practice of territorial supply restrictions.

Box 2: Territorial restrictions on supply in the Benelux countries

Territorial supply restrictions are restrictions imposed by a supplier which prevent a retailer from obtaining supplies freely, in particular in the Member State of their choice. The State cannot choose the entity from which they would prefer to source their supplies, be it a central hub or wholesalers located in more competitive neighbouring markets offering more attractive prices and a wider range of products.

The work of the Benelux Group on this issue has focused on the nature and extent of these restrictions, possible directions to counter this phenomenon and the promotion of fair supply conditions in the internal market. In this context, its work has focused mainly on:

- awareness raising and the request to the European Commission to take into consideration the issue of territorial supply restrictions in the context of the recasting of Regulation (EU) 330/2010 (4 July 2019);
- the creation of a contact point in each Member State, in order to (i) receive information/complaints from companies which are victims of these restrictions, (ii) collect data useful for analysing the consequences of these practices and (iii) provide the necessary information/guidance to victims (ongoing);
- examination of regulatory and market practice approaches to counter or circumvent restrictions: competition law, parallel imports, unjustified geographic blocking and other forms of discrimination (ongoing).

The Benelux working group is considering the following opportunities for the future: to strengthen the cooperation of competition authorities in dealing with territorial supply restrictions; to commission an external study on the challenges and extension of the scope of (EU) Regulation 2018/302 to B2B; to commission an external study on the main practical barriers to parallel imports and the impact that an increase in parallel imports would have on territorial supply restrictions; to examine the influence of digitisation on territorial supply restrictions.

Flanders does not consider the current zoning regulations to be an obstacle to the entry of new players. The provisions have been in force since 2018 and will be evaluated in 2020, including the functioning of the Committee for Retail Trade (Comité voor Kleinhandel). The *Walloon Region* is working on standardising zoning laws. The regulations for commercial zoning and integrated permits are coordinated and, where appropriate, merged with those for the single permit. In addition, the

government declaration provides for further digitisation and simplification of procedures. Specifically, measures to simplify and speed up the building permit process entered into force on 1 September 2019 and the application forms for an environmental permit and a single permit will be simplified in mid-2020. The *Brussels-Capital Region* intends to create a single portal for permit applications in order to meet the need for digital submission, transparency and better monitoring of permits. Urban.brussels - which is responsible for urban planning and movable and immovable cultural heritage - will speed up the digital process and digitise applications from individuals and businesses, the regional and local authorities concerned and advisory bodies.

Network Industries

The *federal government* has developed a framework for auctioning the 5G frequency bands (700, 900, 1400, 1800, 2000, 2600 and 3600 MHz). A few issues still need to be resolved before the auction can take place. Work is currently underway to find solutions. Pending these solutions, the market regulator, BIPT, has provisionally allocated the frequencies. The auction allows the entry of a fourth mobile operator. The market for domestic rail passenger transport has been open since 1 January 2019. In view of the application procedures, new operators will not be able to be included in the timetables until 2020-2021 at the earliest.

3.5. Other reforms

It is not only the measures taken in response to the country-specific recommendations and those directly contributing to achieving the Europe 2020 strategy and sustainable development goals that play a leading role in structural economic growth. Other areas of economic policy also contribute to this, in particular competition policy, industrial policy, entrepreneurship (insofar as this does not apply to Recommendation 4, see §3.4.1) and the circular economy. The work of the new National Productivity Council (NPC) is also important (see Box 3).

3.5.1. Competition Law

The *Federal Act* of 4 April 2019, amending Book VI of the Code of Economic Law, which deals with the abuse of a dominant position, has entered into force. This legislative amendment - also known as B2B - introduces a general framework that regulates practices resulting from such behaviour. It is essentially a question of a ban on certain practices in relations between companies. The provisions on misleading and aggressive market practices came into force on 1 September 2019. The provisions on abuse of economic dependence will come into force on 1 June 2020, and the provisions on unfair terms will come into force on 1 December 2020.

3.5.2. Industrial policy

The new *Walloon government* is continuing the Competitiveness Clusters programme. It is part of overall social, ecological and economic transition and has redefined its main lines of emphasis. Competitiveness Clusters must be more accessible to SMEs and their integration into the clusters must be improved. Internationalisation should be increased, in particular by supporting participation in European calls for projects. Efforts are being made to increase cooperation between the clusters, particularly at the intersectoral level or on the basis of societal issues. Links and exchanges between the Competitive Clusters and training institutes are intensifying. In this respect, automated professions receive particular attention. In March 2020, a budget of 20 million euros was allocated to various research, innovation and research infrastructure investment projects, particularly in the areas of health, the environment and food.

Since January 2019, the *Brussels-Capital Region* has had an industrial plan designed to encourage productive activities, while meeting environmental, social and economic concerns. It is currently being evaluated in order to better take into account the needs and objectives of the various stakeholders and to engage in a fair and effective environmental transition of the industry (and the wider economy).

Flanders' economic policy note for the period 2019-2024 determines the role of cluster policy. The role of the six flagship clusters of the industrial innovation policy is also confirmed.⁸In 2020, the policy will be evaluated with a view to optimising it for the coming years. The intention is to strengthen the objectives in terms of effects, while paying particular attention to internationalisation and the participation of small enterprises. As part of Industry 4.0, ten new test set-ups were launched in April 2019⁹ with a budget of 4 million euros, with the aim of covering more topics and industrial sectors.

3.5.3. Entrepreneurship

At both federal and regional level, measures have been taken to support entrepreneurship in specific target groups. The *FPS Economy* has carried out a study on entrepreneurship in the population of immigrant origin and, together with the Minister of the Self-employed and SMEs, devoted a seminar to this topic. In addition to the study itself, economic projects were presented. Regional sources of information and funding opportunities were also presented. The Flemish authorities support the development of entrepreneurship among young people through the action plan on entrepreneurial education (*Ondernemend onderwijs* 2014-2019). A new policy plan targeting youth and entrepreneurship education will be developed in 2020. The *Walloon Region* is also continuing its *Généralisations entrepreneurs* (Generation of Entrepreneurs) awareness-raising project. By 2019, 30,000 children and young people from schools at all levels have been made aware of the skills necessary for good entrepreneurship. The objective is to reach 100,000 people per year during the government period. In May 2019, the Walloon Region also adopted a programme that supports female entrepreneurship in three ways: training, support for maternity leave replacements and awareness-raising actions.

3.5.4. Circular economy

The *federal* roadmap for the circular economy, "Together, let's keep the economy moving" and its 21 measures were adopted in 2016. A review of its implementation by the end of 2019 is available. In terms of awareness-raising, three events have been organized in 2019. First of all, the "Hotspot Economie Circulaire 2019" (18-20 November 2019) presented Belgian companies and organisations that promote innovation in the circular economy to numerous international participants. Then, the "Collaborative Economy Platforms" Awards (November 28, 2019) rewarded the collaborative economy platforms that have the best approach in terms of sustainable development. Finally, a "Single Market Forum 2018-2019" (3 June 2019) - co-organised with the Regions and with the support of the European Commission - focused on the challenges and opportunities of the circular economy.

The *Brussels Government's* Regional Programme for the Circular Economy (PREC) has three objectives: (1) turning environmental objectives into economic opportunities; (2) embedding the economy in Brussels in order to produce locally where possible, reduce travel, optimise land use and create added value for the people of Brussels; (3) and contributing to job creation. The program includes 111 measures divided into four strategic parts: cross-cutting measures, sectoral measures, territorial measures and governance measures. It has an annual budget of 8.2 million euros. The PREC measures will run until 2020. 2020 should also be used to set up a new regional programme to succeed the PREC.

⁸ <https://www.vlaio.be/nl/clusterorganisaties/het-clusterbeleid/speerpuntclusters>

⁹ <https://www.industrie40vlaanderen.be/proeftuinen>

Last year, 320 organisations in *Flanders* signed a Green Deal for circular construction. Each organization has committed to co-operate on at least one experimental project. A "circular construction" test set-up was launched, for which a budget of 1.25 million euros was made available to conduct research on urban mining and change-oriented construction. Flanders is developing several action plans for the coming years. They will focus on a circular economy of plastics, biomass and food, and household waste. The Implementation Plan for Plastics (Uitvoeringsplan kunststoffen 2020-2025), which creates a general framework for efforts to develop a circular plastics economy, was approved on 21 February 2020. One of the main objectives of these plans is to reduce packaging waste. To monitor all these efforts, a budget of 500,000 euros is made available annually to the CE-Centre support point. This focal point develops indicators and conducts research on new economic models and levers for the circular economy.

A new *Walloon* strategy for the circular economy will be drawn up in 2020. The strategy will propose strategic and operational objectives and cross-cutting facilitation measures. A public consultation will also be held later this year. The Green Deal on circular purchases applies between 2018 and 2021. A network of 110 companies and government agencies is collaborating on a series of pilot projects and regular exchanges of experiences. As part of the Industrial Transition Project, the European Commission has awarded a grant of 300,000 euros to launch a pilot project for the circularity of plastics. It aims to test a new approach to support innovation projects carried out by SMEs or start-ups, based on a challenge-based approach. The action is under preparation and will be launched in 2020.

Box 3: The first annual report of the National Productivity Council.

The National Productivity Council (NPC) started working in May 2019. The creation of an NPC was advised to the euro area Member States by the European Council. In Belgium, the NPC is composed of both regional and federal experts. Its first annual report, published on 19 December 2019¹⁰, presents an analysis of the structural developments in the Belgian economy.

The report finds that between 1970 and 2017, prosperity - as measured by GDP per capita - increased by a factor of 2.3 due to higher labour productivity. However, this progress is mainly concentrated in the first decades of this period. While labour productivity still grew by an average of 4.3% in the 1970s, its growth has fallen to 0.8% over the last decade. This decline was exacerbated by the financial and economic crisis of 2008 and the subsequent recession. After the recession, productivity growth remained weak, contrary to expectations.

The report cites three main reasons for this decline in productivity growth. Firstly, this growth was mainly based on increased capital needs, while total factor productivity (TFP) growth has stalled. TFP is a factor of the contribution of the improvement in the efficiency with which labour and capital are combined to ensure production. Second, productivity is unevenly distributed. On the one hand, there are companies with relatively sustained productivity growth that also stand out internationally for their efficiency. On the other hand, some companies are less productive and their position has also weakened. Thirdly, entrepreneurial dynamism is weak in Belgium. Each year, there are relatively few business start-ups or closures, and there is a lack of high-growth businesses.

Productivity growth is an essential factor of competitiveness, especially for a small, open economy like Belgium. It ensures continued growth of the economy and living standards, and thus creates opportunities for adequate financing of social security and the investments needed to make the economy more sustainable. If the trends observed by the NPC continue, the consequences could therefore be significant for the Belgian economy.

¹⁰ https://cnp-nrp.belgium.be/uploaded/files/201912190927400.CNP_NRP_Annual_report_2019_13_12_2019_FR.pdf

The NPC recommends implementing a socio-economic policy geared to developing the innovation capacities of all economic actors. It sees innovation as a long-term condition for competitiveness. Over the next few years, the NPC plans to analyse developments per branch and per region in greater detail and to study the conditions for the development of an innovative economy.

4. Europe 2020 objectives¹¹

4.1. Employment

Table 1: Employment targets
In % (unless stated differently)

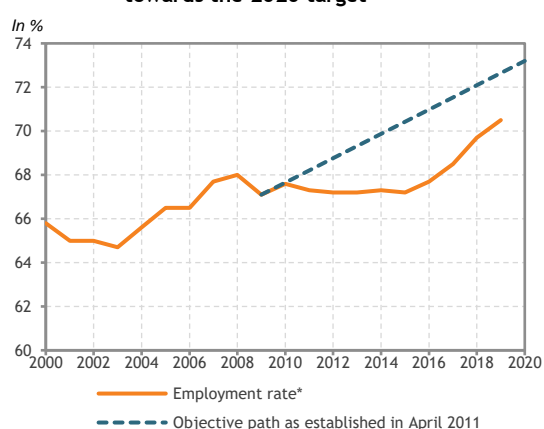
	BE2010	BE2015	BE2016	BE2017*	BE2018	BE2019	Objective BE2020	Required job creation 2019-2020**
Employment rate 20-64	67.6	67.2	67.7	68.5	69.7	70.5	73.2	204,698
Female employment rate	61.6	63.0	63.0	63.6	65.5	66.5	69.1	94,312
NEET (percentage of young people neither in employment, education or training)	10.9	12.2	9.9	9.3	9.2	9.3	8.2	
Employment rate 55-64	37.3	44.0	45.4	48.3	50.3	52.1	50.0	
Employment rate gap between non-EU citizens and Belgians	28.4	25.8	27.2	28.2	27.5	28.6	<16.5	

Source: Eurostat

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

All *regional governments* have mentioned an increase in the employment rate in their policy plans. In this way, they do their utmost to effectively integrate the unemployed and inactive into the labour market.

Graph 2: Employment rate 20-64 and pathway towards the 2020 target



Source: Statbel (Statistics Belgium), Labour Force Survey.

*) 2017: Break in series because of a thorough reform of the Labour Force Survey.

In order to ensure Belgium's competitiveness in relation to neighbouring countries, the adjustment of the *federal* wage norm adopted in 2017 was continued at sectoral level. This salary standard authorizes a maximum increase in salary costs of 1.1% for the period 2019-2020 compared to the salary costs for 2017-2018. Sectors and companies are free to negotiate within this margin, taking into account productivity and other specific characteristics.

To get more people into work and find a better work-life balance, the number of childcare places will be increased again. The *Flemish Government* will evaluate the priority rules and their application in the area of childcare and ensure effective priority is given to children of working

parents or of parents attending training as part of their path to employment. To enhance the attractiveness of organising day-care for young children, *Wallonia* and the Office de la Naissance et de l'Enfance (ONE) launched an information campaign in 2019 on the new status of childcarers, created in 2018. This enables them to enjoy the benefits of an employment contract: full social protection, paid holidays, holiday pay, income and employment stability. Following an initial pilot experiment, 200 positions were created. The Regional Political Declaration of Wallonia wants to support companies that invest in the implementation of a "parent friendly" policy. The service voucher scheme will be open to the care and transport of children aged 3 to 11 years to provide a quality alternative to parents with late

¹¹ The reporting table, attached in Annex 7, presents the main measures, including an estimate of the impact (qualitative and quantitative) for the different entities.

working hours while creating stable and quality employment in this sector. The *Brussels Government* intends to increase the number of places in day-care centres reserved for jobseekers, giving priority to single-parent families and jobseekers who want to follow vocational training.

Entrepreneurship will be encouraged further. The start-up bonus for jobseekers who set up as self-employed persons granted by Actiris has been extended to the Brussels-Capital Region. The Regional Political Declaration of *Wallonia* provides for the implementation of an extended support system integrating diagnosis, skills reinforcement and legal and accounting aspects, accessible to starters who launch their activity as a self-employed person or business creator. With its 'Ondernemend Onderwijs 2014-2019' Action Plan (action plan on entrepreneurial education), *the Flemish government* has supported the entrepreneurial spirit of young people.

The Flemish Government wishes to create additional places in the social economy by paying special attention to individual or collective 'adapted work' and work assistance. It is focusing on additional places in the social economy and on improved cooperation between the social economy and the regular economy. The Brussels Government will strengthen the accreditation mechanism for the different forms of social economy and collaborative economy initiatives. It will also support the professionalisation of social economy enterprises. The FPS Economy is also working to raise the profile of social entrepreneurship and the social economy. It has developed a special section on its website and is supporting the development of an internet platform containing information on and for the social economy. On 5 May 2020, a Single Market Forum will be held where ideas about the social economy will be exchanged and where new initiatives may emerge. This event will be organised with the Regions, with the support of the European Commission.

To strengthen interregional mobility of workers, closer cooperation has been established between the Public Employment Services (PES) of the three Regions. The Regional Political Declaration of *Wallonia* provides for the strengthening of the collaboration between Forem (Wallonia) and VDAB (Flanders) to mobilise jobseekers more towards Flanders. In addition, the language learning system in Wallonia will be evaluated and improved on the basis of this evaluation. On 1 July 2015, Actiris and the VDAB signed a collaboration agreement. Since then, a new service is offered to every *Brussels* jobseeker - regardless of their linguistic capacity and level in Dutch - wishing to follow an integration program with the VDAB to increase their chances on the labour market. Depending on the needs of each jobseeker, this program may include: Dutch language training; and/or training to obtain a qualification; and/or support in finding a job. The Brussels Region is deploying and strengthening, in collaboration with the Community Commissions, the offer of language training in a coherent network around a City of Languages to develop language skills. Finally, in addition to measures to enhance inter-regional mobility, *Flanders* has also committed itself to attracting foreign talent to fill job vacancies.

4.2. R&D and innovation

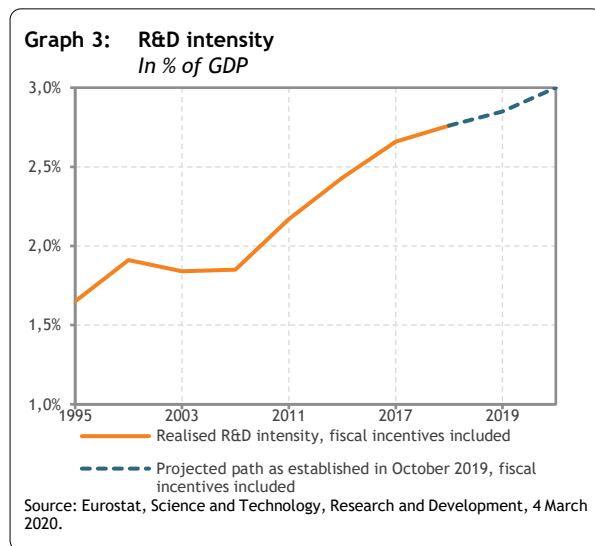
Table 3: R&D target2
In % of GDP

	BE2013	BE2014	BE2015	BE2016	BE2017	BE2018*	Target BE2020	Required change 2019-2020
R&D intensity, fiscal incentives included	2.33	2.37	2.43	2.52	2.66	2.76	3.00	0.24

Source: Eurostat, Science and Technology, Research and Development, 4 March 2020.
*) Provisional number

In 2018, Belgium spent 2.76% of its GDP on research and development (R&D). Belgium thus moves up to 5th place in the EU rankings, ahead of Finland. As in previous years, the private sector accounts for the lion's share of research spending (1.95% of GDP in 2018 compared with 1.38% in 2010). The share

of the public sector (education and the public sector) in Belgium increased from 0.65% of GDP in 2010 to 0.80% in 2018. The various entities are pursuing proactive R&D investment policies with a view to achieving the 3% objective.



A first analysis (not yet published) of the budget appropriations for research (GBARD) for the year 2019 shows an increase compared to the Belgian total for 2018. After all, these budget appropriations have increased from 2,906 million euros to 3,255 million euros (the total of the scientific budgets, which also include other science-related activities, has increased from 5,534 million euros to 6,013 million euros). This increase is considerable. It is mainly due to an increase in appropriations in Flanders, where the annual recurrent budget was increased by 280 million euros, and to a lesser extent in Wallonia. In Brussels, the GBARD remains more or less constant. Two thirds of the new recurrent resources in Flanders are used to strengthen

existing channels for universities and businesses; one third of the new recurrent resources are used for new policy initiatives (including the AI Action Plan and the Cyber Security Action Plan).

Tax breaks for research and innovation remained at the same level as last year. The various tax deductions related to research and innovation amount to 2,263 million euros. If we add up all the national resources (GBARD and tax break for research), the various Belgian authorities devote more than 1% of GDP to research.

The most important decision taken by *the federal government* is the commitment made at the International Space Summit in Seville, where space priorities for the years 2020-2024 were defined. The resources for optional programmes have been increased by 250 million euros compared to the space budget (462.73 million euros).

In 2017, following a decision of the European Council, Belgium has undertaken, within the framework of PESCO (Permanent Structured Cooperation), to devote 2% of its national defence efforts to military technological and scientific research. For 2020, this will mean a 40% increase in the R&D budget and an increase in the number of projects to 90.

In terms of interregional cooperation, the BEL-SME 2020 initiative is worthy of mention. This programme supports SMEs in the three regions that wish to develop research projects together.

Flanders continues to invest in R&D and is planning investments to this end, but is also planning a number of new policy initiatives. The Action Plan on Artificial Intelligence provides for an annual investment of 32 million euros in strategic basic research (12 million euros), implementation in companies (15 million euros) and accompanying measures (5 million euros). In the Cybersecurity (CS) action plan, the Flemish government plans to invest 20 million euros each year in strategic basic research (8 million euros), implementation in companies (9 million euros) and accompanying measures (3 million euros). Subsequently, the Flemish government will invest 20 million per year for 20 years in the framework of the "Moonshot CO2" to support innovations in the field of CO2 reduction, CO2 capture and reuse.

The Flemish government is highly committed to the digitisation of society, inter alia through the Flemish Radical Digital Investment Programme ("Vlaanderen Radicaal Digitaal"), the first phase of which was implemented under the previous government. A second phase of this investment programme will take place in 2021-2023 (with a budget of 5 million euros in 2021, 10 million euros in 2022 and 15 million euros in 2023). The aim of the programme is to provide targeted support for innovative digitisation projects in different policy areas and at different levels of government in Flanders.

The Flemish government is also investing more in innovation-related initiatives which will have a positive impact on society through digitisation (Mobili-data: improving traffic flow, I-Learn: mainstreaming digital learning throughout the Flemish education system, Internet of Water: more efficient management of freshwater reserves). In addition, the Flemish government has decided to invest in an "evergreen fund" ("Flanders Future Techfund") whose mission is to combine the present in Flemish strategic research centres ("strategische onderzoekscentra - SOC's") and market-leading clusters to the market via high-potential start-ups.

In 2019, a series of investment projects will be launched in *Wallonia*. In April 2019, the Walloon Government approved the financing of three collective research infrastructure projects with a budget of 9 million euros¹². The 3rd call for projects of the COOPILOT scheme, with a budget of 25 million euros, was opened in September 2019. The latter, co-financed by the ERDF, aims to co-finance pilot units or demonstrators and to deploy their technology on an industrial production scale. 10 projects have been funded, for an amount of 23.4 million EUR, for a total investment of 48.4 million EUR.

In the digital area, let us particularly note the INFOPOLE ICT cluster which has set up the "Digital Innovation" programme to highlight digital elements in the calls for projects of the competitiveness clusters, the "Intelligent Territories" call where innovative digital projects will be supported, the new "Digital School 2020" call for projects launched at the beginning of 2020 with a budget of 9 million euros or the "Made Different Digital Wallonia" programme, aimed at supporting Walloon industrial companies in order to accelerate their digital transformation.

In addition, in July 2019 the Walloon government adopted the Digitalwallonia4.ia programme, which aims to include Wallonia in national and European initiatives on a long-term basis. Also, several Walloon actors are involved in INNOSUP (Horizon 2020) projects: MECATECH in the IoT4Industry project (implementation of full-scale prototypes and demonstrators in the tools and production means of industrial companies), the ICT cluster in the Digi-B-Cube project (IT for health) and Wagraim (S3Food on smart sensors). MECATECH and Sowalfin have also launched an Easy'Up4Process call for the funding of proofs of concept Industrie 4.0 (closing February 2020).

As far as *the Brussels Region* is concerned, there is a Joint R&D programme (the Industry of Tomorrow: Green, Human & Smart) which encourages collaboration between the academic and industrial worlds in Brussels. The topics of the calls, related to 10 technologies of the future such as artificial intelligence, blockchain or robotics, are always linked to issues and priorities specific to the Brussels Region. The projects selected under this 6 million euro call, which focuses on green, humane and intelligent industry this year, should contribute to the development of new production methods or processes, which are more sustainable, more efficient and more respectful of the environment and workers. In addition, the Co-Creation programme of participatory research/action aims to respond to the urban challenges of the Brussels Region. This funding programme is the result of the region's desire to support co-construction and specifically in the field of urban resilience in all its dimensions (ecological, economic, social and democratic).

¹² These are 3 interdisciplinary and collaborative projects in the area of animal welfare.

The *French Community*, for its part, compared to the 2019 NRP (addition of 6 million euros indexed to the 8 million euro envelope in 2018), is devoting additional amounts to the upgrading of doctoral student grants.

Following the elections of 26 May 2019, the regional governments presented their new R&D programs (with the exception of the federal government).

The *Flemish legislator* has devised a new model of innovation in which knowledge institutions, companies, public authorities and also citizens cooperate. With this new model, Flanders wants to enter the top 5 most innovative regions in the European Union, as defined in the European Regional Innovation Scoreboard (RIS). During the government period, particular emphasis will be placed on strengthening scientific excellence, improving the mobility of researchers and investing in top research infrastructure. In the field of innovation, increased cooperation between stakeholders and wider dissemination of knowledge will be a priority. Other cross-cutting priorities include a digital innovation agenda (including 5G), a climate innovation agenda and the pursuit of a circular economy.

The *Walloon Regional Policy Declaration* mainly provides for the following guidelines: updating the regional strategy of intelligent specialisation (S3) by the end of 2020 and its key areas of innovation. This should improve the policy mix, the coordination of actors and governance, with a view to greater efficiency. A reform of aid for innovation, to improve the valorisation of all R&D projects (co-)financed by Wallonia, to develop synergies and economies of scale between approved research centres, to strengthen the link between regional and European policies and to stimulate interregional collaboration is also in the making. An update of the regional R&D priorities was carried out in 2019 taking into account the priorities of the future Horizon Europe programme.

In its new General Policy Statement, the *Brussels Region* has announced that it will put its research and innovation policy at the service of social, climate and economic progress. The economic support tools will be progressively geared towards supporting the transition of all companies and industries towards decarbonised production models, towards the circular and regenerative economy, towards social and democratic entrepreneurship and towards the digitisation of the economy. The Region must therefore step up its investment in research, development and innovation. In 2019, a call for projects in the area of predictive medicine (prevention of epidemics and the risk of falling ill) has been launched. At the beginning of 2020, the projects were selected and one of them, with a grant of more than 600,000 euros, aims to achieve early detection of infectious disease outbreaks through big data analysis. This project is particularly related to the current health crisis linked to the Covid-19 epidemic.

4.3. Education and training

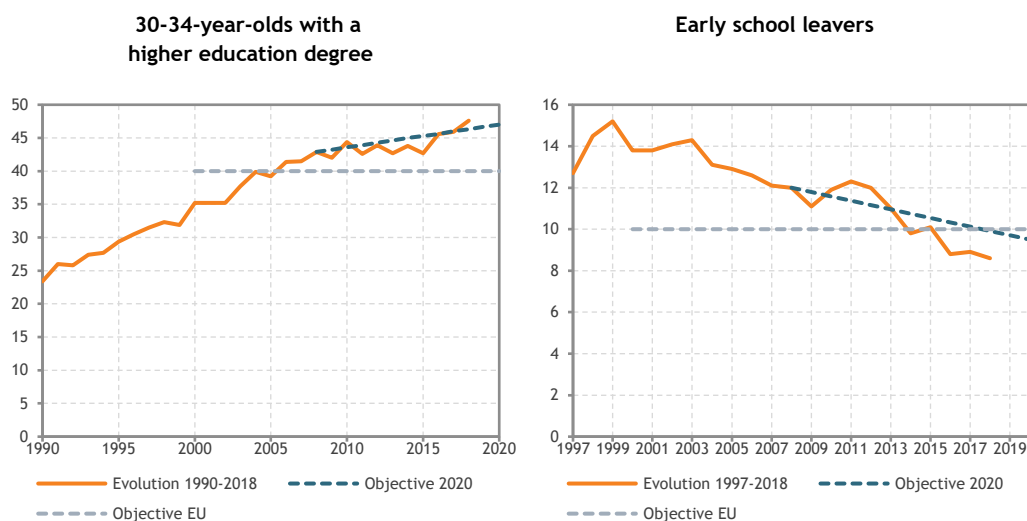
Table 3: Education targets
In %

	BE2017	BE2018	EU2018	Target BE2020	Required change 2018-2020
30-34-year-olds with a higher education degree	45.9	47.6	40.7	47.0	-
Early school leavers	8.9	8.6	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/or Regional competences. Below, we will discuss new Regional and Community initiatives relating to the Europe 2020 Strategy targets for education and training.

Graph 4: Education and training indicators
In %



Source: Eurostat

4.3.1. 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 %). With a percentage of 47.6% in 2018, Belgium was in ninth place on a European scale and had for the first time reached the 47% target.

Flanders largely exceeded the European target already in 2018. In *Flanders*, most of the measures aimed at better linking compulsory and higher education have been taken in response to Recommendation 2 (see also §3.2.3). In addition to the measures focusing on compulsory education, the further modernisation of secondary education and the announcement of the introduction of standardised tests are measures worth mentioning. The effectiveness of higher education studies is enhanced by good student guidance and rapid reorientation so as to avoid disappointment and increase the chances of success. The orientation is reinforced by taking into account the results in secondary education, the opinion of the class council, the results of the Columbus exploratory tool and the results of the compulsory but non-binding admission tests. Students are redirected more quickly if they do not pass an initial assessment. The approach of non-binding entrance tests is generalised to higher education as a whole. *Flanders* is continuing to make access to higher education more democratic; since 1 September 2019, only university colleges are entitled to organise short-type higher education courses. With regard to the financing of the universities, the units (*onderwijsbelastingeenheden*, OBE) are being reviewed and increased in a targeted and progressive manner. In this respect, special attention is given to STEM training.

Initially planned for the academic year 2020-2021, the implementation of the Decree of the *French Community* defining initial teacher training has been postponed for one year (re-entry 2021-2022) via a programme decree of 18 December 2019. The purpose of this postponement is to examine the operational capacity of institutions for higher education to implement the reform; to adapt, if necessary, the arrangements for its implementation and to assess the cost of organising the reform. The reform is part of a major effort to improve the education system under the “Pact for Excellence in Teaching”, the aim being to make compulsory education more effective and more equitable through appropriate teacher training. It will allow a better transition between the different levels of education. With regard to education in the University Colleges, the Decree of the *French Community* of 21 February 2019

provides for an increase in social subsidies calculated on the basis of the number of students from 2019 onwards. A programme decree on the implementation of the reform of initial teacher training of 12 December 2018 provided for the granting of "stimulus credits" in 2018, 2019 and 2020 aimed at promoting access to undergraduate higher education located in geographical areas with a deficit in terms of participation by first-generation university students.

The *German-speaking Community* is considering expanding the dual learning offer in higher education. For example, a new bachelor's degree course in social work (Soziale Arbeit) is being designed.

4.3.2. 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 2018, the Belgian drop-out rate was 8.6 %, compared to 8.9 % in 2017 and 8.8 % in 2016.

In the new government period, the *Brussels government* will implement the new urban renewal tool "Contrats Ecole", to which an annual budget of 5 million euros is devoted. A target of 10 School Contracts has been set for the duration of this government period. It is aimed at schools located in the Urban Revitalization Zone (ZRU) that accommodate a vulnerable school population. The Brussels Government also undertakes to strengthen the coordination of regional school drop-out schemes (DAS, DASC (support scheme for activities to assist children and young people in their education and citizenship)) and early school leaving in the local prevention and proximity plans (PLPP) and to draw up, together with the Communities, municipalities and local players, a comprehensive plan to combat early school leaving in Brussels. The government will implement a coordinated approach aimed at networking and better articulating the intervention of all actors: schools, workers, street educators, social workers, police and parents. In this respect, it will focus resources on schools that take in pupils with difficulties, often from the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods: reinforced extra-curricular activities and supervision, support and guidance at school, remediation and reinforced French and Dutch language learning.

Within the framework of the *German-speaking Community* project "BIDA" (Berufliche Integration durch Ausbildungsbegleitung in der dualen Ausbildung), which is a European Social Fund project, young people who do not yet have sufficient skills to start a normal apprenticeship are prepared for one year. One of the emphases is on the personal and social skills of young people in order to have the necessary skills to succeed in apprenticeship and to avoid dismissal from the dual apprenticeship system, usually linked to different factors. This is why the BIDA project focuses on the close monitoring of the young people enrolled and the early detection of any risk of dropping out. This "pre-apprenticeship" provides for three days of in-company training and two days of training at the school per week.

As part of the new system management, the *French Community* has set itself the objective of reducing the drop-out rate by 50% by 2030. To this end, schools are being encouraged to set their own targets for reducing absenteeism and early school leaving (decree adopted in September 2018). The reform of the common curriculum for pupils up to the age of 15 in the French Community also supports the reduction of early school leaving. The decree on the strengthening of the common core curriculum, adopted on 2 May 2019, consists of a thorough review of the curriculum for pupils aged 3 to 15 years in order to adapt it to the society of the 21st century and to strengthen the basic skills of all pupils and to promote positive guidance. The decree also provides for the establishment of personalised support, through additional remedial measures that help to combat early school leaving. The strengthening of French language learning for vulnerable newcomer and Francophone students was the subject of a decree providing for a harmonized and strengthened system of support for language skills from an early age (decree adopted in February 2019 and effective September 2019). In "qualifying education", the system

of "certification by unit" (CPU) has been extended with the aim of improving students' progress and facilitating the transition to employment.

By 2018, Flanders had largely exceeded the 10% target of the Europe 2020 strategy. Most of the measures to reduce early school leaving have been taken in response to country recommendation 2. In addition to the measures focusing on compulsory education (see also section 3.2.3), one can also mention the further modernisation of secondary education, the strengthening of primary and nursery education, inclusion measures (see also section 3.2.3, dealing inter alia with the new decree to support children in need of care, additional measures to provide extra support for gifted pupils and their teachers, the evaluation and further optimisation of support measures for sick children) and measures targeted at equality (see in particular section 3.2.3, dealing with the lowering of the age of compulsory schooling, language integration pathways for children with limited knowledge of Dutch). In the school year 2019-2020, dual apprenticeship will be fully implemented in regular and special secondary education. The database of the education administration is linked to the database in the area of employment. Young people who leave school without qualifications are automatically registered with the VDAB, thanks to the real-time data exchange between education and employment, so that they can be given immediate support on their pathway to a job or training course.

4.4. Energy and climate

Table 4 : State of affairs in 2017 and 2018 and climate-energy objectives for 2020

	BE2017	BE2018	Target BE2020	Required change 2018-2020
Greenhouse gas emissions non ETS, scope 13-20 (Mt CO ₂ eq)*	70.8	74.1	68.2	-5.5
Share of renewables (%)**	9.1	9.4	13.0	3.6
Primary energy consumption (Mtoe)**	49.1	46.8	43.7	-3.1

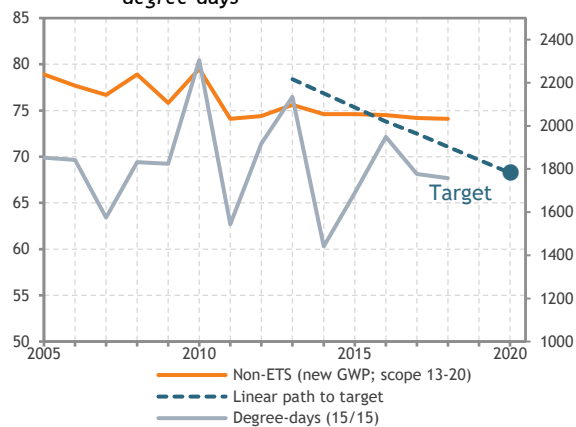
Sources: *) 2017: Decision (EU) 2019/2005; 2018: <https://www.cnc-nkc.be/en/reports> > GHG inventory (Jan 2020); **) Eurostat (February 2020). pp: percentage point.

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 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 2018, greenhouse gas emissions in non-ETS sectors stood at 74.1 Mt eq. CO₂; this is decrease (albeit a moderate one), for the third consecutive year. It remains below the 2005 level (-6.1%) but is above the reduction forecast defined for the 2013-2020 period (which gives 71.1 Mt eq. CO₂ in 2018). Emissions depend for a large part on heating requirements and 2018 was warmer than 2017. After a lacklustre development between 2012 and 2015 (see Figure 6), the share of renewable energy sources in gross final energy consumption resumed its growth between 2015 and 2018. However, the percentage in 2018 is, for the first second consecutive year, 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: 9.4% vs. 10.7 %. In 2018, the gap with 13% the target in 2020 is 3.6 percentage points.

Finally, primary energy consumption, which is one of the two indicators used to define the indicative energy efficiency target, has decreased in 2018 compared to 2017. However, primary energy consumption in 2018 (46.8 Mtoe) was 3.1 Mtoe over the Belgian target of 43.7 Mtoe by 2020.

Graph 5 : Greenhouse gas emissions reduction target in non-ETS sectors (scope 13-20)
 Left axis: Mt eq. CO₂; right axis: number of degree-days

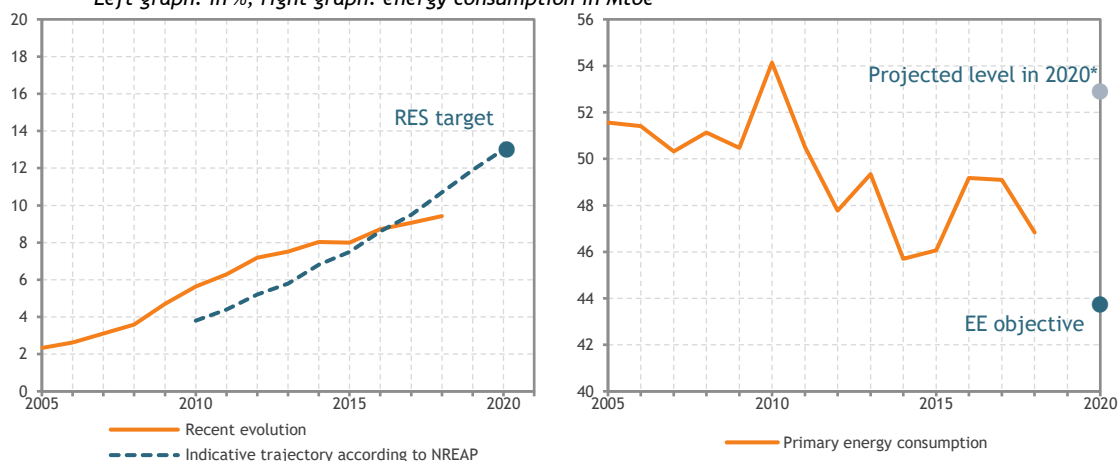


Source: www.climat.be (January 2020, provisional figures).

Competence for energy and climate policy is divided between the Federal State and the three Regions. A cooperation agreement was published on 12 July 2018 concerning the distribution between the Regions and the Federal State of the 2020 climate-energy objectives and the opportunities related to them. More recently (December 2019), Belgium completed and transmitted to the European Commission the final version of its National Energy-Climate Plan (PNEC) which, among other things, describes Belgian objectives and policies regarding greenhouse gas emissions in the non-ETS sectors, renewable energy sources and energy efficiency in 2030. The main policies and measures recently defined and decided upon by the different entities in the context of the climate-energy objectives for 2020 and 2030 are briefly described below.

Graph 6: Target for the percentage of renewable energy in the gross final energy consumption (left) and energy efficiency target (right)

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



Sources: Sources: Eurostat (February 2020), 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.

The federal government has undertaken to implement new measures in the areas of mobility, renewable energies and energy efficiency. The measures developed for the period 2021-2030 are described in detail in the federal contribution to the National Energy-Climate Plan, which was adopted by the government in December 2019. The new measures in the area of mobility include the mobility budget, which entered into force on 1 March 2019, and a change in the calculation of the benefit in kind for company car users, favouring cars with low CO₂ emissions. For renewables, the federal authority plans offshore wind capacity of 2.2 GW in 2020 (it stood at 1.6 GW at the end of 2019); this capacity will be increased to 4 GW in 2030 through an extension of the offshore concession areas and a new plan for the development of marine spaces. Since 1 January 2020, the percentage of biofuels in petrol and diesel stands at 8.5%. A draft Royal Decree plans to raise it to 9.55% from 1 January 2021. Concerning energy efficiency, a double objective is set for the rail sector: a 5% gain in energy efficiency per passenger-kilometre for the period 2017-2022 and a 20% reduction in electricity consumption per train-kilometre for the period 2020-2050.

For buildings, it is worth mentioning that the reduced 6% VAT rate for the demolition and reconstruction of buildings intended for private housing and the improvement of the energy performance of 50% of the stock of federal public buildings have been mainstreamed.

In the *Brussels-Capital Region*, the government adopted the Brussels Energy and Climate Plan (2030) on 24 October 2019. This plan contains measures specific to the Region, including measures related to the construction, renewable energy and transport sectors. As far as the construction sector is concerned, it mainly consists of the strategy to reduce the environmental impact of existing buildings. In the area of renewable energy, the focus is on strengthening support for renewable energy relevant in the urban context. By continuing and expanding efforts to promote photovoltaic and thermal solar energy and heat pumps, the Government hopes to reach 470 GWh of renewable energy production by 2030. This Brussels effort is significant given that the potential in urban areas is limited. The Region therefore also wishes to develop a policy of extramural investment in new renewable energy production facilities which should provide the Region with an additional 700 GWh of renewable energy so as to reach the threshold of 1170 GWh of renewables in 2030 by combining Brussels' efforts in the electricity and heat sectors within the Region and outside the Region. In terms of transport, the plan refers to the future regional mobility plan "Good Move", which aims mainly at reducing our mobility needs (see 3.3). The plan also develops measures to improve the performance of the remaining vehicles and to move the Brussels fleet towards a zero-emission vehicle fleet. In this respect, the government has agreed to stop allowing internal combustion engines in the region: from 2030 light vehicles equipped with a diesel engine will no longer be allowed; petrol engines should follow in the course of the following decade.

Wallonia's contribution to Belgium's National Energy-Climate Plan was approved by the Walloon government on 28 November 2019. It sets a target of reducing Walloon greenhouse gas emissions by 37% in 2030 compared to 2005 for non-ETS sectors. To achieve this, the main measures decided or planned are: new "housing" incentives for the renovation and insulation of buildings (A label on average for the entire housing stock and energy-neutral tertiary buildings by 2050), incentives and regulatory measures to increase the share of renewable energies to 23.5% in 2030 ("employment environment renewable energies" alliance, development of renewable energy communities), a reform of company vouchers to enable SMEs to access subsidies for carrying out audits and studies aimed at improving energy efficiency and the use of renewable energies, rationalisation of mobility needs, modal shift and greening of the vehicle fleet (in particular through the installation of two hydrogen production and distribution stations for captive bus fleets), research and innovation or new sectoral agreements with industrial federations. It should be noted that, in the context of the objective of carbon neutrality by 2050 at the latest, the regional policy declaration provides for an intermediate stage of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 55% in 2030 compared to 1990. It should be noted that, in the context of the objective of carbon neutrality by 2050 at the latest, the regional policy declaration provides for an intermediate stage of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 55% in 2030 compared to 1990. With a view to achieving this more ambitious objective than the one defined in the Walloon energy-climate plan, through sectoral emission budgets for the periods 2023-2027 and 2028-2032, Wallonia will develop a methodology, organise broad consultation with the sectors concerned and implement a wide-ranging consultation process.

On 9 December 2019, the *Flemish* government approved the Flemish Energy-Climate Plan 2021-2030 (Vlaams Energie- en Klimaatplan 2021-2030, VEKP), which aims to increase energy efficiency and the production of renewable energy and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions over this period. Flanders is fully committed to achieving the objectives set and to accelerating investment (both public and private), innovation and technological progress which are essential for the energy transition. Various instruments are used to attract these investments in energy efficiency and renewable energy, including the development, implementation and monitoring of voluntary energy policy agreements between the Flemish Region and companies, energy bonuses for domestic and non-domestic consumers for investment in renewable energy, low or zero interest rate energy loans, demolition and reconstruction

premium, an annual call for green heat, waste heat, biomethane and heat networks, promotion of energy storage through a battery premium and project subsidies. The Moonshot objective programme "CO₂ Neutral Flanders" is a comprehensive and widely supported innovation programme (20 million euros of aid will be spent on research and innovation every year for 20 years). The Flemish Climate Fund will continue to finance measures in non-ETS sectors. In the area of transport, the Flemish Energy-Climate Plan 2021-2030 provides for sustainable spatial planning, a further reduction in the growth of motorised goods traffic and a reduction in motorised passenger traffic, an ambitious modal shift. Flanders also aims to make the car fleet greener (from 2030 all new passenger cars will be low-carbon and at least half will be zero-emission) by developing an adequate charging and supply infrastructure.

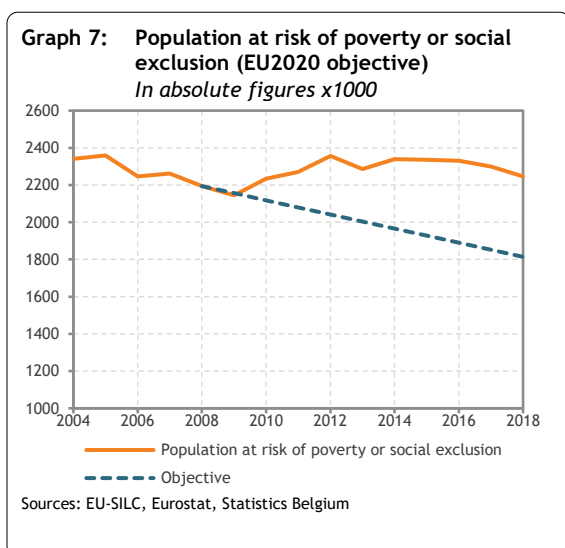
With an "integrated" energy-climate plan on several levels, the *German-speaking Community* will be able to define its own guidelines and thus make a concrete contribution to climate protection through the efficient use of resources and create added value for its population.¹³ The transfer of competences in the area of energy and climate from Wallonia to the German-speaking Community follows on from the German-speaking community's desire to take control of the means of promoting heat produced from renewable energy sources and to support households, persons governed by public law and non-commercial bodies in their efforts to achieve greater energy efficiency and rational use of energy. The will of the Walloon Region and the German-speaking Community is thus to transfer competences relating to the subsidies for the above-mentioned policies while maintaining a single piece of legislation with a view to the efficient implementation of the principle of subsidiarity and to avoid a duplication of legislation to avoid complexity and confusion.

4.5. Social inclusion

Table 5: Social inclusion target
In absolute figures x1000

	BE2008	BE2018	Objective BE2018
Population at risk of poverty or social exclusion	2.194	2.247	1.814

Sources: EU-SILC, Eurostat, Statistics Belgium



The number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion has been reduced to 2,247,000 between 2016 and 2018 as a result of the decline in the number of people in severe material deprivation and, above all, the number of people in very low work intensity households. Over the same period, however, the risk of poverty (income poverty) has increased. In 2018, the reference year for the evaluation of the Europe 2020 strategy, the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion in Belgium was approximately the same as in 2008

4.5.1. Ensuring the social protection of the population

At the *federal level*, the continued use of the welfare budget for the 2019-2020 period contributes to

strengthening the effectiveness of social security and social assistance. During the period considered here, selective increases in addition to indexation have been applied to benefits and reference amounts

¹³ On 1 January 2020, the German-speaking Community took over the competences for spatial planning, housing policy and (part of) energy from the Walloon Region. Thanks to this transfer of competences, the Community now has important levers available to face the energy and climate challenges.

in the areas of pensions, incapacity for work, insurance against accidents at work and occupational diseases, unemployment and assistance. In addition, in spring 2019, various measures were taken to improve social security for self-employed workers: on 1 May 2019, paternity and birth leave was introduced; on 1 July 2019, the waiting period for the benefit was abolished for self-employed workers who are unable to work for more than 7 days and, on the same date, the bridging right supporting self-employed workers in difficulty was extended (extension of situations of force majeure and doubling of the duration of the benefits).

The evaluation of the *Federal Poverty Reduction Plan 2016-2019* will serve as the basis for a new plan. The federal authority is also working on a coherent set of proposals to combat the non-use of social rights. During the first half of 2020, the government of the *French Community* will adopt its first plan to combat poverty and will put in place a comprehensive strategy to combat poverty and reduce social inequalities in all policy areas. In line with the regulations in force, the *Flemish Government* is expected to approve the *Flemish Action Plan against Poverty 2020-2024* on 1 October 2020. Important strengths include: better (automatic) allocation of rights, quality and accessible service provision and comprehensive family support (family coach). The *Walloon* regional policy declaration provides for the adoption of a new plan to combat poverty. An evaluation of the previous plan was carried out in 2019. The *Walloon* government has validated 196 Social Cohesion Plans submitted by 205 local authorities for 2020-2025 which aim at effective access to fundamental rights. The government of the *Brussels-Capital Region* undertakes to carry out a cross-cutting action to combat poverty and social inequalities by carrying out an impact analysis of the envisaged reforms on poverty and health.

4.5.2. Reducing child poverty

The new family allowance schemes introduced by the regions are an important instrument in the fight against child poverty. The new *Brussels* family allowance system, which came into force in January 2020, pays particular attention to vulnerable families. The first concern has been to increase the amount of family allowances for as many families as possible. Most families get more, nobody loses. Since January 2019, the "Groeipakket" in *Flanders*, i.e. the *Flemish* family allowance, provides for a basic amount automatically granted for each child and a selective participation supplement, as well as a social supplement for low incomes. By expanding the use of social and participation supplements, more vulnerable families benefit (40,000 more participation supplements through automatic allocation). In order to ensure a new, more egalitarian model of family allowances, the *Walloon* government initiated a reform in 2019, the main objectives of which are modernity (taking into account contemporary family landscapes), legibility and transparency. The automatic entitlement to the right is an important tool. Every child born on or after 1 January 2020 is entitled to the same basic amount, with possible supplements depending on the family's or child's situation, designed to protect the most vulnerable families. The new *Walloon Plan to Combat Poverty* will have to ensure that the impact of policies is assessed in order to track down the fundamental causes of child poverty and take measures to support precarious and single-parent families. *Wallonia* will further strengthen its projects to combat child poverty when it adopts its next *Action Plan on the Rights of the Child for 2020-2024*. The government of the *French Community* aims to combat child poverty through several actions: supporting parents and strengthening prevention by really looking at the causes of poverty and exclusion. Some recent measures have helped to reduce the cost of schooling, such as the pilot project for free meals in the canteens of nursery schools with differentiated support in disadvantaged socio-economic environments and the decree imposing free schooling in nursery schools.

4.5.3. Active inclusion of people far from the labour market¹⁴

In *Flanders*, groups that are not active on the labour market (including living wage recipients) will be better activated through a reinforced collaboration between the VDAB and the local authorities, using among others the following instruments: a compulsory tailor-made pathway with an explicit assessment of the willingness to work and, if necessary, a community service, for example in the framework of an individualised social integration project, tailor-made work, education or training. Particular attention will be paid to the preconditions for employment, such as quality childcare and tailor-made transport. In order to be able to make maximum use of all talents on the labour market, account will be taken not only of degrees but also of acquired skills (by making skills visible and certifying them). To enable the inclusion of job seekers who are far from the labour market, the *Brussels* government will continue to develop a range of adapted solutions. A specific bonus scheme will be implemented to support employers in recruiting people with disabilities. The cross-cutting nature of employment and training policies will be deepened in the context of partnerships between public operators (intensification of synergies with the sectors). For the unemployed, poorly educated or vulnerable job seekers, the Brussels Region is developing a socio-professional integration strategy based on an inclusive training-employment approach that relies in particular on the certification of competences for job seekers who are unable to respond to available job offers. In *Wallonia*, a reinforced collaboration between FOREM and CPAS is being developed in order to offer the most vulnerable jobseekers a more coherent path towards professional reintegration. The government is also working on a new "springboard" employment incentive for the long-term unemployed. A project is underway to develop systems to assess and recognise learning outcomes in the Centres for Socio-Professional Integration by mid-2021.

4.5.4. Combating inadequate housing and homelessness

The *Walloon* government's medium-term objective is to move towards 10% public housing (estimate: 36,298 housing units to be created). To this end, it provides for the establishment of a drawing right for investments in a public utility housing investment fund and the use of proportionate urban planning charges. The government will approve a rental allowance for households with precarious incomes who have been on the waiting list for social housing for a certain period of time. It also intends to develop actions within the Social Real Estate Agencies through various measures. In April 2019, it approved a new lease-to-own arrangement in public housing. The rent consists of the usual rental fee and an automatic amount set aside for savings. The new housing and energy bonus scheme came into force in June 2019. The government has laid down new rules to ensure better financial access and to promote the well-being of senior citizens in institutions. In May 2019, the Walloon Parliament adopted the decree on the reception of Travellers, which provides for the creation of ten new reception areas. A call for projects has been launched to finance municipalities wishing to develop such an area. Access to quality and affordable housing is a priority of the new *Brussels* government. In order to increase the availability of public housing, the government is leading the sustainable renovation of the existing housing stock and the continuation of the production of 6,400 housing units planned by the Regional Housing Plan and the Alliance Habitat. An emergency plan for social housing policy is being drawn up with the aim of providing a concrete solution for 15,000 households waiting for social housing. With regard to the private rental market, the government is supporting the development of the social real estate agency sector, which currently manages 6,300 housing units and is growing steadily. A policy to encourage private landlords to charge reasonable rents is under consideration. The government also intends to meet the specific housing needs of certain target groups, such as victims of domestic violence. It will support secret women's shelters. In *Flanders*, local authorities are partners in the provision of social housing (commitment under the Binding Social Objective). In the coming years, the Flemish authorities will continue to invest in social housing (continuation of the record level of 2019). In cooperation with

¹⁴ See also section 3.2.2. on strengthening the effectiveness of active labour market policy.

the social housing companies, additional initiatives will be taken by the Flemish authority to make social housing climate neutral. The Energy Poverty Alleviation Program will be continued. Financial support for energy-saving measures, intensive supervision and the strengthening of energy performance standards for housing are essential. The digital electric meter allows the early detection of budget slippages. The “Energiesnoeiers” are expected to further reduce energy poverty among vulnerable households and the policy of interest-free energy loans will be continued. With regard to homelessness, more attention will be paid to the whole range of measures, from prevention to intensive support, as in the 'Housing First' projects.

4.5.5. Reception and integration of people from a migrant background

To ensure that newcomers are weaned off social assistance as soon as possible, efforts on integration pathways and the labour market will be intensified in *Flanders*. During the integration process, the services of public service interpreters and translators are available free of charge. After that, the foreign-language person must pay for this service themselves. The language aid project will be continued. The government of the *Brussels-Capital Region* will implement a reception programme for newcomers on the basis of the ordinance with the same title of the Joint Community Commission, which is due to enter into force in January 2021 at the latest. Through an individualized training program, newcomers will be coached to increase their autonomy and participation in economic, educational, social and cultural matters. The *Walloon* government has developed collaborations with training providers, in order to increase the offer of services, diversify it and develop integration modules for newcomers in order to meet the increase in demand. To combat discrimination in recruitment, the government plans to introduce a legal framework for situation testing.

4.6. Governance to achieve SDGs

"In the exercise of their respective competences, the federal State, the communities and the regions shall pursue the objectives of sustainable development, in its social, economic and environmental dimensions, taking into account solidarity between generations" (Belgian Constitution, 2007). Each federated entity as well as the federal level have their own legal texts giving rise to different but coordinated strategies. In 2017, a first national sustainable development (SD) strategy was approved. It defines a common vision centred on the SDGs in order to align the efforts of the federated entities and the federal state around certain priority topics. The Interministerial Conference for SD - made up of the federal, regional and community ministers responsible for SD and development cooperation - coordinates the dialogue between the various federal and federate authorities involved. SD Advisory Councils, comprising representatives of civil society are active within each entity. Progress towards the SDGs is monitored by means of indicators, published by the Interfederal Institute for Statistics and the Federal Planning Bureau at www.indicators.be.

At the *federal level*, the 1997 SD Policy Coordination Act focuses on the implementation of SDGs through a strategy with a 5-year cycle. Among the bodies created by this law, the Interdepartmental Commission for SD coordinates the actions of the federal public services. The Regions and Communities are also represented. Following the publication of the latest Federal Report on Sustainable Development by the Federal Planning Bureau (2019), the Federal Council for Sustainable Development would like the next federal government to take its recommendations into account, particularly with regard to regulatory impact assessment and the adoption of a future federal sustainable development plan.

Flanders has developed strong governance regarding Agenda 2030 and the SDGs. Within the framework of the decree for the promotion of sustainable development of 2008, the Flemish Region adopted Visie 2050 in March 2016, the third Flemish strategy for sustainable development, outlining

the vision of the Flemish government for the future. Vision 2050 contains 7 transition priorities: the circular economy, intelligent living and housing, Industry 4.0, lifelong learning, living together in 2050, mobility and energy transition. Stakeholders are involved in both the development and implementation of transition priorities. On 5 April 2019, the Flemish government adopted *Vizier 2030*, which translates the SDGs into targets for Flanders by 2030. This framework consists of 48 objectives, based on the 17 SDGs that Flanders has set itself for the year 2030. These 48 goals are grouped by analogy with the 5 Ps of the Global Agenda 2030: people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnerships. The measures that must be developed by Flanders to achieve these objectives are taken as part of the regular policies. Monitoring will be developed, including on the basis of indicators, with the intention of reporting annually in the framework of the September declaration.

In the *Walloon Region*, the 2013 decree on the Walloon SD strategy provides for the adoption of such a strategy by the Walloon Government no later than twelve months after it is sworn in. The second Walloon SD strategy was adopted in 2016 and is part of the SDGs. It contains an action plan targeted at changing consumption and production patterns, in particular in the areas of food, energy and natural resources. The decree was amended in 2019¹⁵. SD strategies can now include topical transitions, the first of which deals with food (*Eating Tomorrow*). A second monitoring report on Wallonia's progress towards the SDGs was adopted by the government in March 2020, with recommendations.

The *Brussels-Capital Region* defined its vision for 2040 by adopting the Regional Plan for Sustainable Development (PRDD) - a strategic document aimed at meeting the SDGs in the Brussels Region - in July 2018. The PRDD aims to provide an appropriate response to the challenges and concerns facing Brussels as an urban centre, including access to housing, functional and social diversity, different types of mobility or environmental issues. In addition, the Brussels government has adopted a series of regulations aimed at achieving SD objectives: the Brussels Code for Air, Climate and Energy Management (COBRACE), for example, includes numerous measures relating to energy efficiency, the development of renewable energy sources, transport, air quality and climate.

In the *German-speaking Community*, the Regional Development Concept "Ostbelgien leben 2025" was adopted in 2009. The 31 future projects formulated in this strategic vision, organized in successive 5-year implementation phases, have been linked to the SDGs since the third phase (REK III - 2019-2024).

The *French Community* adopted an SD plan in 2010. Two external Corporate Social Responsibility audits were carried out in 2011 and 2016. The Administration Contract being prepared for the present government period will be based on the 17 SDGs and should mark the transition towards a cross-cutting and coordinated governance of SD issues.

¹⁵ Decree of 27 June 2013 relating to the Walloon sustainable development strategy and the transition issues arising from it.

5. Structural funds and investment funds

With 90% having been decided by the end of September 2019, the 2014-2020 programming of the Structural and Investment Funds (ERDF and ESF) now focuses on project implementation. 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, dissemination of technology 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, the circular economy and sustainable urban development.

The projects developed under the ESF respond to recommendation 2. In particular, they concern lifelong learning and integration into the labour market, in particular for young people and the most vulnerable groups, social inclusion and combating discrimination and early school leaving. The ESF has enabled Flanders to develop actions in the area of 'feasible' work. Wallonia has focused resources on social inclusion and developed responses to labour shortages. In the Brussels-Capital Region, additional resources from the Youth Employment Initiative have led to the development of new actions.

The various entities have begun to reflect on the preparation of the 2021-2027 programming exercise, in particular on the basis of the first guidelines drawn up by the European Commission in the context of the European Semester: consultation of partners, compliance with favourable conditions, identification of regional priorities. In Brussels, consultation work, particularly between managing authorities, has been initiated in order to identify a common approach, set priorities and a cross-cutting theme devoted to innovation. In Wallonia, a project to renew the S3 has been initiated. ESF Flanders prepared a socio-economic analysis. EFRO Vlaanderen set up substantive working groups that drafted launch notes on the policy objectives of a 'Smart Europe' and a 'Green Europe'.

6. Involvement of stakeholders

6.1. At political level

The development of the National Reform Programme (NRP) is the result of intensive and fruitful 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 and exchanges 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.

At the Belgian level, good coordination between the various levels of government with a view to implementing the reforms is ensured by the Consultation Committee, which provides the institutional framework necessary for this structured coordination. The Jobsdeal and the National Strategic Investment Pact are two concrete examples of reforms and investments the implementation of which involves the coordination and active participation of the various governments. This coordination between the various levels of power also 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. Between April 2019 (date of submission of the 2019 NRP) and April 2020 (date of submission of the 2020 NRP), numerous cooperation agreements were concluded, as in previous years, particularly in the areas of health, railway projects, residence permits, reception of newcomers, certification of competences, statistics, electronic data exchange and childcare. The list of these agreements (which complements the list already included in the 2019 NRP) is provided in Annex 8.

The social partners and civil society were also involved in the development and progress of the programme. Their contributions are also attached to the document (Annexes 9 to 12). Dialogue and mutual cooperation with the different sectors of our economy are a priority for the different governments. Under the next heading (§7.2), the participation of the social partners within the Central Council for Enterprise (CCE) and the National Labour Council (NLC) in the preparation of the NRP and - more generally - their contribution to the European Semester will be discussed in more detail. The opinions of the social partners, the National Higher Council for Disabled Persons (CSNPH) and the Federal Council for Sustainable Development (CFDD) and the Belgian Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion EU2020 are summarised in §7.3.

6.2. 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. They are also represented at the management committee level of most social security institutions and also sit on federal and regional consultation bodies. They are also 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 the permanent task of monitoring the state of Belgium's competitiveness. This law, which was amended in 2017, requires the CCE to draw up an Employment Competitiveness Report.

This involvement of the social partners is not limited to the Belgian level since they are also involved in the European Semester process, through the contacts and hearings which are organised at Council level via the Belgian representatives to the European Committees. The social partners are therefore closely involved in the work via their representatives in the EMCO (Employment Committee) and SPC

(Social Protection Committee) committees. Meetings also take place at key moments during the European semester between members of the ECC, the CNT and the Commission's Belgium Desk.

This tradition of consultation and dialogue with the social partners is also reflected in the NRP, as they are invited to make a contribution each year. This year again, the social partners worked hard.

As part of this consultation, the social partners 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 Belgium's 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 generally also 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 or prior agreements between the social partners, which are then transposed into legislation.

In its advice (see Annex 9), the CCE recalls that in order to create a prosperous and sustainable society the main policy objectives are social cohesion, wealth creation, environmental sustainability, sustainability of public finances and keeping the current account in balance. In light of these objectives and on the basis of an assessment of Belgium's performance, the CCE has identified a number of economic challenges to be addressed as a matter of priority by the federal and regional authorities. Among the challenges put forward by the CCE are: a more innovative economy in particular through better valorisation of R&D, a transition towards a circular economy, a socially and financially sustainable social security, a better matching of supply and demand on the labour market, ensuring that consumer and business-to-business prices evolve in line with the three main neighbouring countries, ensuring an energy transition towards a low carbon economy. It also calls on all the country's governments to consult and formulate their actions in order to guarantee the coherence of the mobility policy. In terms of public finances, the CCE stresses the importance of sound public finances to ensure a good level of welfare and social protection in the future while striking a balance between fiscal rules guaranteeing the sustainability of public finances and the ability of governments to enhance economic growth for productive investment. It also repeats its request to the Belgian government and the European Commission for favourable treatment of productive public investment within the framework of European budgetary rules.

The CNT focused its opinion on the 2nd, 3rd and 4th recommendation (see also Annex 9). In this context, it highlights in particular the renewal of the collective labour agreements for the period 2019-2020 concerning specific unemployment schemes with company supplements. It also underlines the work it has carried out on the reintegration of workers with health problems, diversity and equality policy, employment of older workers, prevention of burn-out, forward-looking work organisation, supplementary pensions, posting of workers. The CNT also highlights advances in the area of mobility such as the conclusion of a new collective bargaining agreement concerning the employer's financial participation in the price of public transport for workers.

6.3. The involvement of other stakeholders

In its advice (No 2020/03 of 17 February 2020, see Annex 10), the CSNPH highlights several priorities for people with disabilities, such as the effective increase in the employment rate of disabled and sick

people, the reform of the regulatory framework for disability benefits, access to and quality of training, access to transport and the importance of intermodality for adults and children with disabilities, improving access to care for people who refuse care due to lack of money or information, improving access to pensions for people with disabilities and their family carers in a context of longer careers, and the use of European structural funds for policies to support people with disabilities and their families. It also calls for an inter-federal strategy to combat poverty and social exclusion.

In its opinion (Annex 11), the CFDD calls for earlier involvement of the CFDD in the process of drafting the report. It welcomes the new focus of the European semester, putting sustainability at the heart of the policy cycle. In this context, it considers that the NRP could go further in describing governance for the SDGs in Belgium. It also emphasizes a horizontal integration of sustainable development into the various policies and their vertical integration between the different levels of power (such as the National Energy-Climate Plan 2030). It also stresses the need to redirect financial flows towards funding the low-carbon transition. In terms of investments, the CFDD is of the opinion that Belgium should reformulate its position regarding the European budgetary rules that may hinder investments in the low-carbon transition. Finally, the CFDD stresses that economic models such as the circular economy and the collaborative economy can be a great opportunity.

In its advice of 31 January 2020 (annex 12), the Belgian Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion EU2020 stresses the importance of using indicators, objectives and sub-objectives. It also discusses the importance in this framework of working in consultation between the different levels of power. The Belgian Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion EU2020 also highlights, for example, the importance of ensuring the social protection of people by raising the minimum income. It also calls for action to combat child poverty by ensuring, in particular, adequate nutrition for children and facilitating access to free health care for children. It also recalls the importance of making the labour market more inclusive. Tackling inadequate housing and homelessness is also a priority for the Platform through different actions such as, for example, developing an inter-federal strategy to combat homelessness. More information about the issue of homelessness should also contribute to achieving this objective, according to the Platform. Finally, the Platform also stresses that the fight against poverty extends to the reception and integration of people with an immigrant background. This includes the introduction of policies aimed at ensuring better integration (language courses, recognition of diplomas, etc.), better protection of the fundamental rights of all migrants and the effective application of legislation concerning legality and the fight against discrimination and racism, particularly with regard to access to housing and education.

Annex 1: Reform programme of the Brussels-Capital Region

1. Introduction

This contribution of the Brussels-Capital Region to the Belgian 2020 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.

As indicated in the introduction to this NRP, in view of the progress made at the end of March 2020, it was decided to preserve the initial version of the NRP and to add an annex which presents the measures taken or scheduled by the various entities on the document closing date (April 21, 2020) in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Consequently, the regional government presents, in this contribution, the structural reforms undertaken since the publication of the 2019 country-specific recommendations and specifies which measures are expected in the near future, regardless of the context of the pandemic.

The Brussels' proposal of contribution to the NRP was submitted to the Regional Economic and Social Council, which gave its opinion on March 19, 2020, before being approved by the Brussels Government on April 23, 2020. The planned presentation of this contribution in the Brussels Parliament will not be able to be held given the circumstances. It will therefore be communicated to Parliament, its members having the opportunity to react by written questions.

2019 was marked by a **new government** that took office in the third quarter of the year. The government wishes to take another decisive step towards an ambitious comprehensive policy in the face of the current social, economic and environmental challenges. It is therefore necessary to integrate the various thematic measures and strategic objectives into a coherent political vision at the level of the Region which, with the support of civil society, aims to empower all Brussels inhabitants throughout their lives, through access to housing, quality employment, accessible health care, a healthy and convivial living environment, infrastructure and nearby public transport. More broadly, the challenges imposed by the climate emergency require specific and collective responses from the political authorities. Given the environmental and public health issues we face, expectations are legitimately high. Solidarity measures and radical changes, which are part of a long-term approach, are indispensable in all sectors and in every area of regional competence.

Already during the previous legislature, the Brussels Region set out its vision for 2040 by adopting 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 Policy Statement of the Brussels-Capital Region lays the foundations for the GO4Brussels Strategy 2030, following on from the GO4Brussels Strategy 2025, integrating the priorities of the new Brussels government, including the economic, social and environmental transition. This strategy is based on two structural strands, broken down into a series of objectives:

- STRAND 1: Develop a Transition Strategy for the Brussels economy up to 2030, which sets out the decarbonisation of all sectors and reinforces its support for the sectors of the circular and regenerative economy, social and democratic entrepreneurship and the digitisation of the economy:

Objective 1.1: Create the conditions for the economic transition to contribute to regional climate objectives

Objective 1.2: Support VSEs and SMEs, including industry, crafts, local shops and social and democratic entrepreneurship

Objective 1.3: Mobilise research and innovation policy for the benefit of the climate, economic, social and solidarity transition

Objective 1.4: Support the economy in areas which generate quality jobs for Brussels inhabitants

Objective 1.5: Promote exports and attract foreign investment to the Brussels Region

Objective 1.6: Develop strategic zones in support of the economic policies of the Brussels Government

Objective 1.7: Broaden tax reform

Objective 1.8: Ensure the digital transition of the Brussels economy

Objective 1.9: Achieve efficient mobility that respects health and quality of life

- STRAND 2: Orient cross-cutting employment and training policies towards the specific issue of qualifications and support employment-environment alliances: sustainable construction and renovation, sustainable food:

Objective 2.1: Continue the Youth Guarantee Scheme

Objective 2.2: Ensure access to stable and sustainable jobs for all

Objective 2.3: Reinforce cross-cutting employment and training policies

Objective 2.4: Continue the Brussels programme for education and childhood

Objective 2.5: Achieve a strong regional civil service: broaden the action plan "Brussels in the Civil Service"

Objective 2.6: Actively cooperate with other regions and communities

Objective 2.7: Combat social inequalities and ensure access to health care

Objective 2.8: Contribute to European economic, employment and inclusion policies

The [GO4Brussels 2030 Strategy](http://go4.brussels/)¹⁶ is a partnership approach with a vision that makes it possible to integrate the various government initiatives. It offers common tools for steering, monitoring, consultation, communication and evaluation.

¹⁶ <http://go4.brussels/>

The measures mentioned in this programme should be understood in the context of the new Policy Statement from which the Go4Brussels 2030 strategy is derived.

Finally, the implementation of structural reforms requires significant **public investment**. Moreover, this investment, for which the economic and strategic added value has been proven, was still deemed to be inadequate in the Country Report on Belgium 2020 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. It will therefore follow with interest and contribute to the consultation process announced by the European Commission in its Communication of 5 February 2020 on the review of the EU economic governance framework.

2. Socio-economic context and outlook¹⁷

2.1. Economic activity

Growth in economic activity remains moderate in the Brussels Region

According to the latest Regional Economic Outlook, growth in economic activity in the Brussels Region over the whole of the period 2019-2024 should remain moderate, with an **average annual increase of 0.9%**. The expected growth of Brussels GDP during this period shows a negative differential compared to the national average, averaging 0.4 percentage points annually. In the medium term, 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 particularly "other market services"¹⁸.

Investment growth slows in the medium term

After catching up overall between 2013 and 2018 (average annual growth of 3.7%), investment growth in Brussels is likely to slow down in the coming years. In particular, the gradually less attractive financing conditions (expected rise in long-term interest rates) will likely weigh on investors' decisions. Investment growth (gross fixed capital formation of the private and public sectors, minus investment in housing) would thus fall to an average of 1.8% annually over the period 2019-2024 at the level of the Brussels Region, trailing the national rate (+2.2% annually). The **investment rate in Brussels** fell to 16.4% in 2012 following the crisis. Since then, it has picked up again and **is expected to continue to increase to 20.5% by 2024** (22.1% for Belgium as a whole).

Net job creation declines in the medium term

From 2019 onwards, the generally less favourable economic environment, the more sustained increase in real wage costs and higher expected productivity gains is likely to have a gradual negative effect on job creation. Job growth in Brussels will probably rise from 0.6% in 2019 to 0.3% in 2024. Over the period

¹⁷ Analysis based primarily on the results of the Regional Economic Outlook 2019-2024, published in July 2019 by the Federal Planning Bureau, the Brussels Institute for Statistics and Analysis (BISA), the Walloon Institute for Evaluation, Forecasting and Statistics (IWEPS) and Statistiek Vlaanderen. These figures are consistent with the National Economic Outlook 2019-2024, published in June 2019, and therefore do not incorporate the revisions made in September 2019 and February 2020 to the national macroeconomic context for the preparation of the economic budget.

¹⁸ The sector "other market services" includes publishing, audio-visual, advertising, IT services, advisory and consultancy services, administrative and support services, real estate activities, accounting, legal, scientific and technical activities.

2019-2024 as a whole, **the increase in employment in the Brussels Region will likely reach 0.4% annually on average** (0.7% for Belgium). As regards the number of net jobs created in the Brussels Region, this will likely halve between 2019 and 2024, from 4,200 units to just over 2,000 units. On average, almost **2,700 additional jobs** need to be created every year in Brussels over the period 2019-2024. Cumulatively, this corresponds to a total of 16,300 net jobs created over six years, bringing the number of workers in the Brussels Region to 719,000 by 2024. Most of these new jobs are likely to be in the "other market services" and "health and social action" sectors.

2.2. Demographics and labour market

The population of Brussels exceeds 1.2 million inhabitants

As of 1 January 2019, the Brussels-Capital Region passed the threshold of 1.2 million inhabitants for the first time. Compared to the previous year, the population of Brussels increased by 0.8% (i.e. 9,816 additional people). This growth rate remains higher than in the other two Belgian regions (+0.6% in Flanders and +0.3% in Wallonia), even though the growth of the Brussels population over the past six years represents a **marked slowdown compared to the demographic expansion observed previously** (particularly from 2006 to 2013, with growth averaging 1.7% annually).

The **Brussels population** is still the **youngest** in Belgium, with an average age of 37.5 as of 1 January 2019 (versus 41.4 in Wallonia and 42.7 in Flanders). Compared to the two other Belgian regions, the Brussels Region has a relatively high proportion of young adults and children under the age of 10, and a relatively low proportion of people over the age of 50.

The working population is growing significantly faster than domestic employment and the employment rate continues to rise

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, there was a total of **323,000 inbound commuters in 2019**. Conversely, in the same year, more than 68,000 Brussels inhabitants commuted to Flanders and Wallonia for work. Overall, slightly less than half of domestic employment in Brussels is accounted for by workers from the two other regions.

Since 2000, the Region's commuter balance has evolved favourably and this should continue in the coming years. Over the **2019-2024 period, the number of outgoing commuters is expected to continue rising sharply**, while the number of inbound commuters is expected to remain more or less stable. Consequently, the share of domestic employment in Brussels occupied by inhabitants of the Region should continue to increase, rising from 54% in 2019 to 55% in 2024. The weighting of Brussels inhabitants in employment in the other two regions should also increase in the coming years. Under these conditions, the working population of Brussels (concept instead of residence) is expected to continue to grow faster than domestic employment (concept used instead of work), with an average annual increase of 1.0% and 0.4% respectively between 2019 and 2024.

After having fallen sharply between 2008 and 2013, the **employment rate** in the Brussels Region **has started to rise again since 2016**. During the 2019-2024 period, it should increase from 58.8% to 60.3%. Contrary to what has been observed in the past, the increase in the number of employed Brussels inhabitants should be sufficient to absorb the (declining but still significant) arrival of working-age Brussels inhabitants.

The number of jobseekers declines for the fifth consecutive year

In 2019, an average of 88,047 unemployed **jobseekers** (demandeurs d'emploi inoccupés – DEI) were registered with Actiris, the regional public employment service of the Brussels-Capital Region. This rate was a **fall of 2.4% compared to 2018** (-2,156 people), marking the **fifth consecutive year of decline** in

unemployment in Brussels. In relative terms, unemployment among people older than 40 showed the largest decrease in 2019 (-4.8%), while the decrease was less pronounced for people aged 40-59 years (-2.7%). However, the number of DEIs aged 60 and over increased significantly (+19.5%).

Unemployment will continue to fall in the medium term

According to regional projections, the unemployment rate in the Brussels Region was 15.7%¹⁹ in 2019, down 0.8 percentage points from the previous year. Over the entire 2019-2024 period, the number of DEIs is expected to decrease by an average of 3,100 each year. **By 2024, the number of unemployed people in Brussels is expected to fall to 74,300**, corresponding to an **unemployment rate of 12.9%**. This figure is significantly lower than observations made in the past, particularly compared to the average of 20.8% observed between 2003 and 2014. We need to go back to 1990 to find such a low unemployment rate in the Brussels Region, although the definition of administrative unemployment has changed considerably since then, making comparisons difficult.

2.3. Precariousness and social exclusion

In 2017, the Brussels-Capital Region had an average of 42,912 recipients of an income paid by a Public Centre for Social Welfare (Centre Public d'Action Sociale – CPAS). The social integration income or equivalent (SII or SIIE) is paid by the CPAS to people who do not have sufficient means, whether income from work, assets (real estate, financial, etc.) or social security income (unemployment, pensions, disability, etc.). The recipients of a SII(E) in Brussels represent 28% of total recipients in Belgium, while the Brussels population is only one tenth of the national population. These **recipients** also represent **5.4% of the Brussels population aged between 18 and 64**. This percentage is much higher than in the other two Belgian regions and is the highest ever recorded in the Brussels Region. It should also be noted that this percentage is twice as high for young adults aged 18 to 24. In 2017, the number of Brussels recipients of income from the CPAS increased by 2.2% compared to the previous year. Within the Region itself, the situation varies significantly from one municipality to another, with up to 10% of the population receiving a SII(E) in certain municipalities.

The **Social Barometer 2018** for the Brussels-Capital Region also made the following observations:

- The at-risk-of-poverty and social exclusion rate is between 35% and 42%;
- 33% of Brussels residents live on an income below the at-risk-of-poverty rate; this rate is particularly high among persons living in a jobless household, or a household with a low work intensity;
- 23% of children in Brussels younger than 18 live in a household without working income;
- 21% of the working age population (18-64) lives on social assistance or replacement income (excluding pensions), for which the majority of the minimum amounts are below the at-risk-of-poverty threshold;
- 28% of the Brussels population are therefore recipients of the increased intervention in health care (36% among the under-18s);
- Among young people aged between 18 and 24, roughly one in seven left school early without having obtained a diploma of higher secondary education;
- For all these indicators, the overall figures mask significant social and geographic inequalities, given the major disparities between the districts and municipalities of Brussels;

¹⁹ The unemployment rate used in the Regional Economic Outlook is not directly comparable to the administrative unemployment rate published by Actiris, as it is calculated according to a different methodology and definitions.

- Finally, inequalities in terms of access to the labour market and income often go hand in hand with difficulties in access to housing and health care, particularly for the most vulnerable groups.

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

3.1. Public spending

CSR 1: Ensure that the nominal growth rate of net primary government expenditure does not exceed 1.6% in 2020, corresponding to an annual structural adjustment of 0.6% of GDP. Use windfall gains to accelerate the reduction of the general government debt ratio. Continue reforms to ensure the fiscal sustainability of the long-term care and pension systems, including by limiting early exit possibilities from the labour market. Improve the composition and efficiency of public spending, notably through spending reviews, and the coordination of fiscal policies by all levels of government to create room for public investment.

In the context of its Policy Statement 2019-2024, the Brussels government committed to maintaining a stable budgetary path that ensures a **structural balance**. Like the other entities, the Brussels-Capital Region does not take account of major strategic growth-generating investment expenditure in the assessment of this budgetary target. For 2020, these **investments** amount to **€500 million**. These investments primarily relate to sustainable mobility projects which are conducive to growth (such as extending metro and tram networks), which reduce congestion and are therefore also in line with the third country-specific recommendation.

After the summer of 2020, a **multi-annual budget** will be drawn up for the **new legislature**, reflecting the priorities of the new government. This multi-annual budget will also include a **multi-annual investment plan**.

In addition, the government of the Brussels-Capital Region is making considerable efforts to keep debt at a sustainable level. **The evolution of the debt** expected for the period 2019-2024 is primarily linked to the strategic investments made by the Brussels-Capital Region to reinforce growth.

The investments represent around 20% of the current budget of the Brussels-Capital Region. In order to create an additional margin for the investments necessary for growth in a multi-annual perspective, the Brussels-Capital Region will work to **increase the efficiency and effectiveness of public spending**, in particular by introducing a **spending review** into the budget process.

With the new Policy Statement, the Brussels-Capital Region undertakes not only to evaluate regional policy in terms of its impact and performance, but also to regularly assess the functioning of the regional institutions and the effectiveness of their tasks and the results achieved. The government will have an evaluation of the impact and effectiveness of all regional policy initiatives at its disposal.

Initially, in the context of a spending review, **two pilot projects** will be launched in the **mobility and social housing sector**, for which the Brussels-Capital Region has requested technical assistance from the **Structural Reform Support Programme** (SRSP) of the European Commission. The two pilot projects will serve mainly as a contribution to *capacity building* to enable future commissioning of spending reviews.

Given that spending reviews only produce maximum returns when they are structurally anchored in a mature budgetary system, with careful preparation of the budget, medium-term strategic direction and

a sufficiently strong link between the budget, policies and results (ex-ante and ex-post assessments of policy proposals and the move towards performance-based budgeting), technical assistance was also requested to carry out a PEFA²⁰ "gap analysis", which will lead to an action plan for improving public financial management in the region.

The launch of the pilot projects is planned for April-May 2020 and will last from 9 months to 1 year. The PEFA mission is scheduled to start in April/May 2020 and will last approximately 9 months.

In addition, in Brussels, a technical commission within Iriscare, the bicomunal body responsible for managing competences in social protection, is responsible for monitoring the expenditure and revenue of all the policies for which it is responsible, including long-term care. In order to guarantee to everyone with reduced autonomy a quality and accessible supply of services and care, ensuring to maintain this autonomy for as long as possible, the Joint Community Commission is developing an integrated aid model and proximity care, by district, aimed at keeping people with reduced autonomy at home. This model includes openness and support for alternatives to nursing homes, where possible and desirable, taking into account the "moratorium in nursing homes" decided by ordinance.

Finally, in connection with the GO4Brussels 2030 Strategy, the Brussels government continues to pursue the development of its fiscal policy. Overall, Brussels will develop a policy which does not increase the tax burden on Brussels households and which strengthens their purchasing power as well as that of future generations. In terms of fiscal policy, we will continue to work on various fronts. By harmonizing, simplifying and (possibly) reducing regional and municipal taxes, we will encourage businesses. In addition, the Region will also develop a road tax system which supports the objectives of making Brussels an environment-friendly region while aiming at the reduction of car congestion. In order to facilitate access to property, sustainable renovation of buildings, and the preservation of the middle class in Brussels, the Government will assess the registration and inheritance tax regimes to better target their effects.

3.2. Labour market, education and training

CSR 2: Remove disincentives to work and strengthen the effectiveness of active labour market policies, in particular for the low skilled, older workers and people with a migrant background. Improve the performance and inclusiveness of the education and training systems and address skills mismatches.

3.2.1. Remove the disincentives to work and strengthen the effectiveness of active labour market policies, in particular for the low-skilled, older workers and people with a migrant background

As announced in its Policy Statement 2019-2024, and linked to the GO4Brussels 2030 Strategy, the Brussels Government's ambition is to guarantee access to stable and sustainable jobs for all, as well as equal rights and to effectively tackle discrimination. Within this framework, the following strategies will be implemented to effectively improve the inclusiveness of the labour market.

Developing adapted solutions

Following the previous transfer of competences, the Region carried out a major reform of the activation mechanisms. Since 2017, new employment aids have been available. The government will evaluate the effectiveness of these new mechanisms with respect to the target groups furthest from the labour market, including the low-skilled, people with a migrant background, older workers and young people.

²⁰ Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability

This **evaluation of regional activation policies** will make it possible to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the existing mechanisms, make adjustments and develop new measures under the banner of efficiency, inclusion, accessibility to small businesses, and administrative simplification.

To enable the inclusion of jobseekers who are furthest from the labour market, the government will continue to **develop a range of adapted solutions**. From there, a specific bonus scheme will be implemented to support employers in recruiting people with disabilities.

Optimisation of the framework for tackling discrimination in hiring, and diversity promotion

The Brussels-Capital Region relies on a combination of preventive and awareness-raising actions and a sanctioning framework, the first of its kind, to best approach cases of discrimination occurring on the labour market. Improving knowledge of the existing tools, continuing and intensifying collaboration between the various stakeholders and strengthening the legal framework by sharpening the regulatory possibilities will help to ensure inclusion through an appropriate employment policy; an essential and transversal condition for success for the implementation of the GO4Brussels Strategy.

In this context, the **Anti-discrimination desk**²¹ of Actiris, the new dedicated toll-free number for cases of discrimination in hiring and the new online reporting form were inaugurated in December 2019. It is the first point of contact for jobseekers who are victims of discrimination in their search for a job. The desk consists of a front-line service but also a network of anti-discrimination advisers in the branch offices, and beyond. To this end, four missions have been set out: information, guidance and empowerment, awareness-raising and providing recommendations.

Since 1 January 2020, a **reform of the regional diversity instruments**²² has come into force. This covers: access to the various types of diversity plans for the private sector (mini-plans, comprehensive plans and thematic plans); a label that is now a go-to reference; the introduction of the notion of employees of foreign origin and a reinforcement of the obligation to integrate gender issues. These new instruments make it possible to better understand the elements of the Brussels context and to respond to the specific needs of companies. Their objectives include raising awareness of diversity issues within companies, tackling discrimination, corrective actions in the event of convictions and the implementation of a sectoral approach.

Measures for newcomers

The Brussels-Capital Region will also set up a **regional platform for the labour market integration of newcomers** (legally resident) with the help of DG REFORM of the European Commission. This platform is the backbone of the project, which is part of an overall strategy that includes the following strands:

- Increase awareness within companies in terms of committing to more diversity within their organisations;
- Create a new job adviser position within Actiris for newcomers;
- Strengthen cooperation between Actiris and the relevant actors (BON, BAPA, Fedasil, etc.);
- Monitor the pathways of people from the target group towards employment.

²¹ Ten-point action plan to promote diversity and tackle discrimination in employment. This plan was approved by the government on 8 December 2016; this measure is in line with the Go4Brussels Strategy 2030 - Objective 2.2: Ensure access to stable and sustainable employment for all.

²² The decree was approved in May 2019 and implementation is envisaged for 2020 (https://www.etaamb.be/fr/arrete-du-gouvernement-de-la-region-de-bruxellescapit_n2019012519.html).

3.2.2. Improve the performance and inclusiveness of education and training systems and address skills mismatches

As announced in its Policy Statement 2019-2024, the Government will broaden the cross-cutting aspect of the implemented employment and training policies, through strong partnerships between public employment and training operators. In this context, synergies will be intensified with the sectors in order to make the pathway of jobseekers towards employment more dynamic and effective.

Employment and training poles

The strategy for implementing the **Employment and Training Poles** (pôles formation emploi – PFE), which were the result of sectoral framework agreements, will be intensified, and rely on the Sectoral Facilitation Service of the Economic and Social Council. The Employment and Training Poles aim to bring together the actors involved in training and employment, and the different sectors. This strategy aims to improve the qualifications of jobseekers, and from there their sustainable integration into the labour market; to develop the skills of workers in light of the ongoing changes in the labour market; and to develop a forward-looking sectoral watch to anticipate the future needs of companies in terms of skilled labour. The Employment and Training Poles provide specific solutions to professions with labour shortages. In 2020, the Digitalcity.brussels pole will be inaugurated for ICT professions, following the Technicity.brussels pole for technological industry professions.

"Job Qualification" strategy

Based on the evaluation of the Training Plan 2020, a **"Job Qualification" strategy** will be adopted. The main aim is to enable the inhabitants of the Brussels-Capital Region, and jobseekers in particular, to achieve the level of skills required on the metropolitan labour market. It will be concerted with the French and Dutch-speaking actors in employment, vocational training and education in the Brussels Region.

The Region promotes **work-study training and vocational training in companies** as drivers for accelerated and sustainable integration into the labour market. This type of training allows jobseekers to acquire practical skills through on-the-job training. Examples include the S.Kool project, a public-private partnership, which consists of a 3-month training course in the field supplemented by practical workshops and running an operational concept store. There have been two editions to date.

Support for the process of **validating acquired skills** will be maintained, developed and evaluated for the benefit of Brussels jobseekers who are unable to respond to the job offers available on the labour market. At the same time, developments in the procedures for recognising skills acquired in training and certification procedures will be extended.

In addition, in order to improve the **digital skills** of Brussels inhabitants, the Region is developing a range of measures to improve the training offer in the digital field, such as the Digital Transformation Plan.

Paid educational leave reform

The **system of paid educational leave will be reformed** in consultation with the social partners. This transformation will aim to improve vocational training to meet labour market needs and stem job vacancies under the umbrella of administrative simplification. In full respect for the individual right of the worker, paid educational leave will become a true continuous education tool to accompany workers facing changes in the labour market.

3.3. Investments

CSR 3: Focus investment-related economic policy on sustainable transport, including upgrading rail infrastructure, the low carbon and energy transition and research and innovation, in particular in digitalisation, taking into account regional disparities. Tackle the growing mobility challenges, by reinforcing incentives and removing barriers to increase the supply and demand of collective and low emission transport.

Investment strategy of the Brussels-Capital Region

As regards to **investments**, the government of the Brussels-Capital Region has opted to focus on the transition to a **more environmentally and socially sustainable economic model** by emphasising the realisations set out in the Energy-Climate Plan: transport and mobility, the energy transition of buildings and social housing:

1. Transport and mobility:
 - a. Development of public transport: extension of the metro network, extension of the tram network, conversion of bus lines into tram lines to meet the growing number of passengers, increase in the frequency of public transport, etc.;
 - b. Improvements to user services (MaaS - *Mobility as a Service*);
 - c. Roll-out of a network of electric vehicle charging points on the road through a concession with a private player. A basic network of 100 charging stations on the regional main roads will be operational by summer 2020. In a second phase, the network will be further expanded based on local needs and questions. The expected investment for the first phase of this concession is 1,260,000 euros;
 - d. Promotion of active mobility with an emphasis on developing the public space and cycling infrastructure.
2. The energy transition of buildings: renovation and insulation of buildings, both in the residential and tertiary sectors (hospitals, businesses, etc.).
3. Social housing:
 - a. Provision of an additional 6,400 residential units;
 - b. Renovation of the complete housing stock, with a view to respecting the environment.

A multi-annual budget will be drawn up for the new legislature in spring 2020, reflecting the priorities of the new government. This **multi-annual budget** will also include a **multi-annual investment plan**.

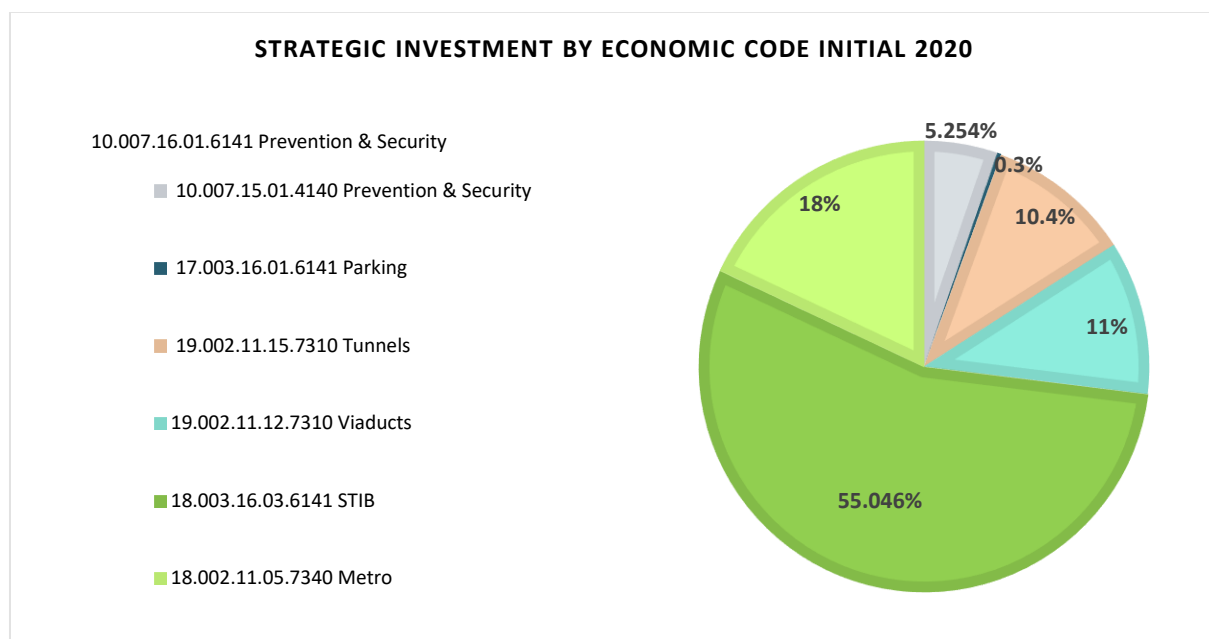
In the initial budget for 2020, a total of **€499.8 million** is allocated to these **strategic investments**. This figure is broken down as follows:

Code & Budget Allocation and item name	Initial amount 2020
10.007.16.01.6141 <i>Prevention & Security</i>	€26.08 million
17.003.16.01.6141 <i>Parking</i>	€1.5 million
19.002.11.15.7310 <i>Tunnels</i>	€52 million
19.002.11.12.7310 <i>Viaducts & bridges</i>	€55 million
18.003.16.03.6141 <i>STIB</i>	€275.23 million
18.002.11.05.7340 <i>Metro/Pre-metro</i>	€90 million
Total	€499.8 million

As shown in the table above, the various strategic investments are identifiable by means of specific budget allocations.

The following graph gives an overview of the proportions of the different allocations. Priority is given to "green mobility" (metro and STIB), which represents about 73% of the 2020 regional budget allocated

to strategic investments. The Brussels Region has opted to finance these investments through the Region's direct debt portfolio.



Title of the project and brief description	Main strategic objectives	Total investment	Financing source(s)
10.007.16.01.6141 <i>Prevention & Security</i>	Strengthen security in the Brussels Region (consequence of the March 2016 terrorist attacks)	26,079,000	The Brussels Regional Public Service (BRPS) secures its own financing via calls for funding which have an impact
17.003.16.01.6141 <i>Parking</i>	Create 'Park and Ride' car parks in strategic zones to encourage "green" mobility, thereby avoiding pollution in the city centre.	1,500,000	
19.002.11.15.7310 <i>Tunnels - large scale renovations</i>	Major repair works and replacement of equipment necessary to ensure the availability of tunnels under minimum safety conditions for users. These renovations must be carried out with low-energy technical solutions requiring devices with low energy consumption (LEDs). In addition, significant emphasis is placed on protecting the human and natural environment (noise, dust, visual inconveniences, waste management, protection of trees etc.).	52,000,000	
19.002.11.12.7310 <i>Viaducts & Bridges</i>	Monitoring, maintenance and renovation of bridges and viaducts to ensure the desired availability of the structures for users. The programme will take into account, in particular, environmental and safety conditions.	55,000,000	

18.003.16.03.6141 <i>STIB allocation for large-scale investments</i>	Purchases of hybrid buses, new-generation trams, metro-related rolling stock. Conversion and extension of certain metro lines.	275,229,000	on the direct debt. Financing is therefore arranged through the direct debt portfolio.
18.002.11.05.7340 <i>Metro/Pre-metro - Renovation & installations</i>	*Repairs and renovations; *Improvement of existing stations; *General improvement of the network; *Modernisation and extension of certain metro lines. The renovations are intended to improve the use of public transport but also to integrate economical lighting while using long-lasting materials. The electric switchboards used must be recyclable. The energy performance of escalators is also a focus point. Photovoltaic panels will be installed on the roofs of metro stations. Other improvements such as thermally insulating certain metro stations are also being made. STIB uses green energy to power the metro trains. It should also be noted that the new trains are equipped with a braking energy recovery system.	90,000,000	
TOTAL		€499,808,000	

The previous table summarises the **6 strategic investments** in the Brussels Region.

In 2015, the Brussels government adopted a **Multi-annual Investment Plan for Public Transport** for the period **2015-2025**. The plan has been extended to 2028, involves more than €6 billion in investments and covers the three modes of transport: metro (modernisation and extension of the network, rolling stock, depot, etc.), tram (extensions of the network, rolling stock, depot, etc.) and bus (redevelopment of the network, depot, etc.). The Plan is updated quarterly. It is also an integral part of the public service contract of the Brussels public transport operator, STIB, for the period 2019-2023 adopted by the Brussels Government on 10 April 2019.

The renovation of the Brussels tram network will **reduce the ecological footprint** caused by the excessive use of cars and the outdated network. The current network is made up of materials that are unsustainable and uneconomical from an energy perspective. This was the impetus for the renovation/construction of the various metro lines. STIB already deploys hybrid buses but will be adding new technologies to its fleet of metro trains which, in addition to being less energy-consuming than the previous generation, will in turn produce energy via the braking system.

We can also highlight the fact that photovoltaic panels are already installed on the roofs of certain metro stations. In addition, the modernisation of the metro will double the transport capacity of certain lines. The stations will be equipped with low-energy consuming devices (e.g. LEDs) on the one hand, and devices made of sustainable materials (e.g. electrical switchboards) on the other.

The Park and Rides will also help reduce the number of vehicles in the centre of Brussels.

As explained above, from a financial perspective, the Brussels government is granting a total of €499.8 million for all these strategic investments in 2020. More than half of this figure is allocated to public transport investments (STIB and metro) to promote soft mobility (see graph "*strategic investment by economic code*").

The main objective of these strategic investments is therefore to reduce the pressure from cars in Brussels, with the aim of significantly improving air quality and reducing CO2 emissions, in line with Brussels' contribution to the National Energy-Climate Plan (NECP – see below). In conclusion, we can see from these specific investments the importance the Brussels Government attaches to a green and sustainable policy.

In addition to the strategic investments in the field of mobility by the Brussels Region itself, the development of the S-net (formerly known as the Regional Express Net) in the territory of the Brussels-Capital Region is also closely monitored by the federal government. The Brussels Region is asking to accelerate investments in both infrastructure and operations. The Region also acts as a partner of the federal government to accelerate the multimodal organisation of the various stations in the network in order to connect as closely as possible to the existing transport modes.

In order to anchor them in a sustainable perspective, **the following measures will be part of a framework for enhancing and optimising the impact of these transport and mobility investments:**

The Regional Mobility Plan 2020-2030 - Good Move

In line with the new Policy Statement, which aims to achieve a mobility policy at the service of Brussels residents and their quality of life, the Region continues to develop its **Regional Mobility Plan** (Plan Régional de Mobilité – PRM) **2020-2030 - Good Move**²³.

In early 2020, it is expected that the government will definitively adopt the Regional Mobility Plan 2020-2030 (Good Move) following the adoption of the draft plan on 4 April 2019, the public inquiry that was held from 17 June to 17 October 2019 and a participatory drafting process conducted since 2016. Without waiting for the final adoption of the Plan, the implementation of most of the actions has already started.

The PRM's vision pertains to the structure of mobility regarding journeys linked to the Brussels-Capital Region and therefore concerns both journeys within the Region and around the periphery. The ambition is to increase the proportion of journeys made as a car driver from 33% to 24% for all journeys in connection with the Region. The PRM is split up into an operational action plan which will make it possible to supervise, coordinate and steer all regional mobility interventions over the period 2020-2030. The Plan proposes **6 strategic action programmes**:

- **GOOD NEIGHBOURHOOD:** the organisation of mobility in the neighbourhoods (with in particular the implementation of the "City 30" on 1 January 2021);
- **GOOD NETWORK:** transport networks (pedestrian, bicycle, public transport);
- **GOOD SERVICE:** mobility services (and their integration);
- **GOOD CHOICE:** territorial measures and incentives aimed at influencing and directing personal and collective choices on travel (including moving away from combustion engines);
- **GOOD PARTNER:** governance;
- **GOOD KNOWLEDGE:** knowledge and communication of information.

Moreover, among the 50 specific actions envisaged in "Good Move" to achieve the mobility strategy, four of these are linked to shared and combined mobility, as well as **MaaS (Mobility as a Service)**. In order to develop a regulatory framework with ambition and find the best technological solution to this challenge, an application was submitted in October 2019 to the **Structural Reform Support Programme (SRSP)**, which was successful.

Finally, the Government will establish, at the start of the legislature and in partnership with cyclist associations, an ambitious investment plan specific to **cycling infrastructure** and will systematically

²³ Ordinance of 26 July 2013 establishing a framework for mobility planning and amending various provisions with an impact on mobility

develop separate cycling infrastructure on major regional axes and highways where possible. The goal is to arrive at a fine, comfortable, safe and continuous mesh network. The Government's objective is to double the modal share of cycling in 5 years, in particular by targeting the creation of additional cycle paths and the completion of the RCR network (Regional Cycling Routes).

The Low Emission Zones committee

The LEZ aims to make a significant contribution to reducing the concentrations of NO₂, fine particles and black carbon, which all affect the health of the Brussels population. As a reminder, the application of the LEZ legislation is progressively (on an annual basis) stricter for vehicles, following the Euro standard for vehicles, their category and fuel²⁴. The creation of a new permanent and strategic **Low Emission Zone (LEZ) committee** (made up of independent experts) is planned for the near future, in accordance with the Policy Statement of the new Brussels government. It will be tasked with assessing the timetable for the currently envisaged restrictions and may lead to more rapid implementation of these restrictions if deemed necessary to achieve the objectives of the LEZ. The LEZ also needs to be supported by measures to reduce the number of kilometres travelled by car and promote alternatives to passenger cars (walking, cycling, public transport, etc.), which requires cooperation between the different levels of government.

The reform (or greening) of vehicle taxation

The Policy Statement of the new Brussels government plans to use **fiscal measures** as a strategy to achieve **greening** in various areas, including vehicle taxation. More specifically, it aims to revise current vehicle taxes in order to achieve - among other things - the reduction of traffic congestion and the greening of the car fleet. The Brussels-Capital Region has taken over management of road tax and car registration tax from the federal level since 1 January 2020. This gives the Region more room for manoeuvre and opportunities to significantly reform these taxes.

Focus investment-related economic policy on the energy transition and a low-carbon economy

A strategy for the sustainable renovation of buildings in Brussels

The Government of the Brussels-Capital Region intends to pursue a comprehensive energy policy aimed at improving energy performance, both in terms of consumption and production. To this end, it has undertaken to fully implement the Strategy for the sustainable renovation of buildings in Brussels in accordance with the commitments of the National Energy-Climate Plan (NECP).

In order to achieve the medium and long-term climate objectives (2030 and 2050) but also reduce the overall cost of housing in Brussels and improve its quality, the **sustainable renovation of buildings** is a major challenge of the ecological transition. It is also an opportunity for the creation of activities and jobs which cannot easily be outsourced, supported by the "Employment-Environment-Finance Alliance". This will bring together all actors from the sector around the implementation of the Strategy for the sustainable renovation of buildings in Brussels. The public and private funding actors will be involved in order to identify all possible avenues for financing the transition of the built environment.

Taking into account the opportunities offered by this strategy for the employment of Brussels residents, the Government will pay close attention to providing economic and social support, but also to the adherence of the actors to the proposed measures and their dissemination. Support for individuals and legal entities for both commercial and non-commercial ends needs to be direct and financial, but also indirect through robust information, involvement and support measures, particularly for the most

²⁴See <http://lez.brussels> for all information on the application of the LEZ in the Brussels Region.

vulnerable groups. In terms of **budget mobilisation**, the Government will develop an incentivising and ambitious renovation policy by directing public and private investment towards this issue, in particular through the next ERDF programme and the use of the third-party investor mechanism. During the legislature, the Government will achieve a significant increase in the resources allocated to support the energy-related renovation of buildings, to reach the objective of a renovation rate of 3 to 5%.

This renovation policy will also reflect the Government's social policy, by concentrating funding assistance primarily on low and middle-income earners and the fight against energy poverty. The large-scale reorientation of investments towards the energy transition requires a comprehensive vision of contributions and reward mechanisms to ensure a fair distribution of public funds. The Government is therefore studying the possibility of a single fund dedicated to the energy transition of buildings, grouping together the current contributions to the energy-related improvement of buildings (green certificates, energy and climate fund, renovation premiums, etc.) and including other financial contributions.

In order to take into account the diversity of the situations encountered (co-ownerships, landlords, etc.), the government will activate a variety of financing solutions, both public and private. It will establish, in collaboration with private and public financial operators, various innovative financing formulas, adapted to energy-related renovation, such as mortgages repayable over terms corresponding to the financial return on the planned renovation or energy-related renovation loans repayable during the transformation. In order to maximise the opportunity, provided upon transfer of ownership, to undertake ambitious renovations, the government will undertake to induce a price signal linked to the energy efficiency of the property at the time of transfer, through a reduction in registration fees, inheritance or gift tax, conditional on the completion of a comprehensive energy renovation within a given timeframe and after analysis of the Energy Performance of the Building (EPB) and development of an improvement strategy. More broadly, the Government will explore the modalities of a tax incentive to encourage homeowners to improve the EPB rating of their property.

With regard to the **regional bonuses**, work is ongoing to simplify the procedure for renovation for candidates, in order to introduce an **integrated bonus scheme** for renovation, bringing the energy and renovation bonuses fully into line with each other. This system will unify the access conditions, procedures and tools, leading in particular to a uniform image, a single application form for bonuses and a single platform for exchanging documents with the administration. The bonuses will be adapted to encourage a comprehensive and integrated approach to the renovation.

The government is also committed to ensuring that the public authorities set a good example in the area of building renovation. Taking into account the long-term objectives of the Energy Pact for Public Buildings, every major acquisition and renovation of regional public buildings or buildings financed by the Region has been in line with these objectives since 2019.

The 'NRclick' and 'Solarclick' programmes will be evaluated and reoriented towards specific support for the renovation of regional and municipal public buildings. The Government will also assess the possibility of integrating the community commissions into the programme and adding a funding tool that can mobilise various sources of capital.

Lastly, investments regarding construction costs (works, land, etc.) of the projects provided for in the Regional Housing Plan and the Habitat Alliance amount to 54,555,863 million euros.

The Resources and Waste Management Plan (PGRD²⁵)

With regard to resource and waste management, the new Policy Statement promotes a public policy of cleanliness and waste collection that **encourages reduction, reuse and recycling**. In this respect, the **Resources and Waste Management Plan (PGRD)²⁶** legally implements the regional waste policy with the following objectives:

- Achievement of European recycling targets;
- Benchmark of best urban waste practices;
- Establishment of a biomethanisation plant, separate collection and decentralised processing;
- Support for re-use and repair initiatives;
- Limiting of plastics and over-packaging;
- Incentives for Zero Waste events.

The resource-waste policy addresses both the issue of restrained and responsible consumption upstream, as well as traditional waste management downstream, including new collaborative economy and sharing practices at the intermediate levels. There are 3 general objectives of the PGRD:

- anchor a transformation to more sustainable and circular consumption practices;
- maximise the preservation and valorisation of the material, if possible locally;
- train the supply side of the economy in circular practice.

Finally, the measures envisaged include: the provision of a bio-waste facilitator for households and businesses; a study on the implementation of a biomethanisation unit; the modernisation of the functioning of EPR (extended producer responsibility); and the regulation of the use of single-use plastics.

Development of urban agriculture

Among the new and promising economic sectors for the Region, urban agriculture is also a driver of various beneficial effects. In addition to its environmental or healthy eating benefits, urban agriculture helps to rebuild social ties and provide viable economic activity and meaningful employment in certain neglected areas of the city.

In order to promote urban and peri-urban agriculture, the Government intends to set itself voluntary targets in this area, namely the production of at least 30% of the annual consumption of fruit and vegetables by the inhabitants of Brussels by 2035.

It will mobilise ambitious resources to develop this sector and achieve these objectives, such as enhancing, after evaluation, the Good Food Strategy²⁷, around a common vision created with all the actors in this sector, including public authorities.

Industrial policy

Since January 2019, the Brussels-Capital Region has had an industrial plan intended to encourage productive activities, while responding to environmental, social and economic concerns. It is currently under evaluation, in order to better take into account the needs and objectives of the various

²⁵ 'Plan de Gestion des Ressources et Déchets'

²⁶ The main legal framework related to the PGRD is the Ordinance on Waste of 14 June 2012, which lays down in detail the content, preparation, monitoring and evaluation of a waste plan in articles 11 to 15. The PGRD was adopted on 22/11/2018 by the Brussels Government.

²⁷ <https://www.goodfood.brussels>

protagonists and to engage it in an environmental transition of industry (and more broadly of the economy) in a fair and efficient manner.

3.4. Entrepreneurship and competition

CSR 4: Reduce the regulatory and administrative burden to incentivise entrepreneurship and remove barriers to competition in services, particularly telecommunication, retail and professional services.

Fostering entrepreneurship

The government will continue to implement the **Regional Commercial Development Plan**, in cooperation with the municipalities, and will support the idea of a coordinated and integrated overall strategy for business in Brussels. The objective is to create an environment that reinforces businesses in the city and, through this, the quality of life, and to support shopping districts in order to have a commercial mix, the dynamism of shopping districts, the confidence of shop owners, their level of solidarity, etc.

As part of the finalisation of the action plan, which will be presented to the government for decision in the first quarter of 2020, the following seven measures are:

1. Make commercial impact studies systematic in the case of large-scale projects in shopping districts;
2. Reorganise and optimise communication between project managers and users during construction phases;
3. Strengthen shop owners' associations;
4. Create an information portal for shop owners;
5. Analyse and harmonise municipal tax regulations that affect business;
6. Draw up mobility profiles of shopping districts;
7. Optimise deliveries to shopping districts.

At this stage, it is a question of setting in motion the actions which are simply described and accompanied by unquantified objectives. Quantitative indicators will be specified at the start of implementation. The 20,000 shop owners in the Region are directly or indirectly concerned. They represent 1 in 7 jobs in the Brussels Region.

In addition, to contribute to the economic development of our region, the government will also intensify its **support for entrepreneurs abroad** (see objective 1.5 of the Go4Brussels 2030 Strategy) while reducing their export-related risks. To this end, the government will put in place individualised export support as well as measures and tools to encourage Brussels companies to venture into markets with high growth potential, such as sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia at the geographical level, new technologies at the sectoral level, and new exports at the entrepreneurial level, in particular by regularly optimising the network of economic and commercial attachés. Through awareness raising and active prospecting, the aim is to increase the number of Brussels-based exporting companies listed by hub.brussels, and to increase the number of companies that solicit support (individual and/or collective) from hub.brussels to start exporting or to export for the first time outside the European Union.

Administrative and regulatory simplification

In addition, in the context of the **reform of the regulations, procedures and instruments for applying for building permits**, the government will ensure, during this legislature, the orderly and harmonious

implementation of the **reform of the Brussels Spatial Planning Code (CoBAT)**²⁸, which came into force on 1 September 2019. One year after the entry into force of the amended text, a first evaluation of the implementation of the CoBAT reform will be carried out. If necessary, the Government will propose regulatory amendments to simplify procedures. To this end, the digitisation of licence applications will be accelerated in order to have a 100% digital system by 2022. The government will also ensure that planning and environmental permit procedures are further simplified and that guidance and support to planning authorities in their efforts to comply with EPB (energy performance of buildings) standards is strengthened.

A shared online platform has been developed and is being used for the exchange of information and experience on the application of the new regulations between all relevant public actors, both at regional and local level. Training courses and workshops on this topic were held in August 2019. A practical guide will be published in 2020 and an evaluation of the reform is planned, with a view to possible adaptations of rules, procedures and instruments. The **single digital portal for online licence applications** is a process that will be underway in 2020 and 2021, with the goal of moving to a fully digital licensing process by 2022, as described in the Policy Statement.

With regard to simplification in the **audiovisual sector**, the government will strengthen its support for screen.brussels, which since May 2016 brings together all the regional support services for its audiovisual industry, to ensure a structuring effect for the creative industry and the audiovisual sector, and will strengthen the synergies between the four operators of screen.brussels²⁹. The aim is to facilitate the procedures of the actors in the audiovisual sector and increase their administrative skills.

There are also a number of other initiatives pertaining to SMEs and economic policy, including an "**SME Toolkit**" that identifies, measures and minimises, as the case may be, the potential negative regulatory impacts on SMEs; and the creation of a region-wide single digital environment ("**BEDSy**") that allows for the real-time management of current economic policies and the analysis of their outcomes and impacts.

Furthermore, in order to reduce administrative burdens on regional and local administrations, Easybrussels – the Agency for administrative simplification in the Brussels-Capital Region – is deploying its project on the application of the principle of single data collection (**TOOP - The Once Only Principle**) with the help of the **Structural Reform Support Programme**. The draft "Once Only" ordinance has been approved by the government and is expected to be adopted by the Brussels Parliament in 2020. The mission to analyse and simplify the administrative forms envisaged in the operational plan was launched in December 2019.

Finally, the government also intends to pursue the dynamic of the **Small Business Act (SBA)** in order to support the reception and maintenance of new businesses in Brussels. To do this, the rationalization of the reception of and assistance to future entrepreneurs and traders, as well as the reduction of administrative procedures remain a priority. Particular attention is paid to measures that allow small businesses to develop. Support towards entrepreneurship is therefore one of the government's priorities, not only in terms of trade but also in terms of the self-employed and SMEs. As such, the Policy Statement provides for several axes, such as the pursuit of administrative simplification for entrepreneurs, the creation of "legal, accounting or management" cheques for starters, the reinvestment of capital in the Finance.brussels group, and the creation of a proxy loan to stimulate support from the private sector towards Brussels businesses.

²⁸ Decree of 30/11/2017 reforming the Brussels Spatial Planning Code (CoBAT) – 'Code Bruxellois de l'Aménagement du Territoire'

²⁹ <https://screen.brussels/en/about-us>

Access to professions

In view of the abolition in Flanders, the future changes in Wallonia and the limits of European regulations, **access to professions must be reformed³⁰ and modernised** in order to become an effective and operational instrument. In 2019, an intensive consultation with the sectors in question took place with the main objective of informing the actors of these sectors and asking their opinion on the future of access to professions in the Brussels-Capital Region. The consultation focused on the outlines of the reform, the trends observed on the ground, the challenges identified, the relevant solutions and the actions to be undertaken. It is now up to the new government to develop a policy vision on access to professions.

4. Measures in support of the Europe 2020 Strategy objectives and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

4.1. The SDGs in the Brussels-Capital Region

In September 2015, the sustainable development goals were formally adopted by the United Nations General Assembly with the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development. To this end, Belgium is committed to achieving the 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) by 2030 by taking the necessary decisions and implementing the required initiatives.

Belgium's first report in 2017, entitled "*Pathways to Sustainable Development*", shows that less than two years after the sustainable development goals (SDGs) were set out, our country is already able to present initiatives and achievements in various areas. Belgium also presented its "*National Voluntary Report*" in 2019.

The Brussels-Capital Region is committed to implementing these sustainable development goals. They have an impact on the competences of the Brussels-Capital Region and on **regional policy** in a transversal manner.

The implementation of the SDGs in Brussels

The following strategic documents are part of the pursuit of the sustainable development goals:

- The Regional Plan for Sustainable Development (PRDD)³¹;
- The Regional Nature Plan, The Regional Circular Economy Programme³², Good Food;
- The Water Management Plan, The Air-Climate-Energy Plan;
- The Good Move regional mobility plan (see above);
- Strategy GO4Brussels 2030.

³⁰ Title II of the programme law of 10 February 1998 for the promotion of independent enterprise; Directive 2005/36 on the recognition of professional qualifications; Directive 2018/958 on a proportionality test before adoption of new regulation of professions.

³¹ 'Plan Régional de Développement Durable'

³² The Brussels government's Regional Circular Economy Programme (RCEP) has three objectives: (1) transform environmental objectives into economic opportunities; (2) anchor the economy in Brussels in order to produce locally when possible, reduce transportation, optimize the use of the territory and create added value for Brussels residents; (3) and help create jobs. The program includes 111 measures divided into four strategic parts: transversal measures, sectoral measures, territorial measures and governance measures. It has an annual budget of 8.2 million euros. The RCEP measures are still running until 2020. The year 2020 will also be used to set up a new regional program which will succeed the RCEP.

In addition, the Brussels government has adopted a number of regulations aimed at achieving these sustainable development goals, such as:

- The Brussels Air, Climate and Energy Management Code (COBRACE)³³, a framework ordinance adopted on 2 May 2013, including numerous measures relating to energy efficiency, the development of renewable energy sources, transport, air quality and climate;
- The ordinance of 29 April 2004 on environmental conventions;
- The ordinance of 20 October 2006 establishing a framework for water policy;
- The ordinance of 28 May 2015 creating a public interest body centralising the management of prevention and security policy in the Brussels-Capital Region;
- The ordinance of 29 March 2012 on gender mainstreaming in the policy lines of the Brussels Region.

Finally, the [2020 Country Report for Belgium](#) mentions the significant inequalities in labour market outcomes between certain population groups and regions, with an explicit reference to Brussels. By addressing this issue, Brussels could make progress in promoting SDG 8 (decent work) and SDG 10 (reduced inequalities). The actions described below provide an initial response to these challenges. Other measures will also be addressed in the context of the sustainable development goals, such as the Digital Innovation Hub (SDG 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure).

4.2. Employment and training

New regulatory framework for the social integration economy

In line with the new government declaration to ensure access to stable and sustainable employment for all and to stimulate economic innovation for the transition, a new regional regulatory framework for the social economy is being implemented. The objective is to [support social integration enterprises](#) that develop a professional integration programme and provide specific support to unemployed jobseekers who, given their psychosocial situation, reduced aptitude or level of under-qualification, remain particularly remote from the labour market. Important reform work has been undertaken with partners to provide Brussels social economy enterprises with a new regulatory framework. The reform came progressively into force on 1 February 2019 and a new approval procedure for social and democratic economy enterprises has been in force since then.

From 2020, a mandate may be issued for social enterprises working for integration, known as "social integration enterprises". The mandate relates to the development of "Integration Programmes" specifically aimed at assisting and supporting certain categories of unemployed jobseekers who, given their psychosocial situation or level of under-qualification, remain particularly remote from the labour market. In this context, an 'integration job in the social economy' scheme will be available to social integration enterprises from 2021 onwards.

Integration job referred to in Article 60, §7

Following the transfer of competences, the Brussels Region [reformed the "Article 60" mechanism](#)³⁴. The intention is that the scheme should be a lever for the employment and sustainable integration of the workers concerned and that professional and social support should also be provided. The target group

³³ 'Code Bruxellois de l'Air, du Climat et de la maîtrise de l'Énergie'

³⁴ Ordinance on the integration job scheme within the framework of article 60, §7, of the law of 8 July 1976 on the organisation of public centres for social welfare of 28 March 2019; Decree of the Government of the Brussels-Capital Region on integration jobs referred to in article 60, §7 of 23 May 2019.

for this scheme is made up of users of the CPAS and recipients of the Social Integration Income (SII) or equivalent.

The intrinsic objectives of the reform are:

- the harmonisation and enhancement of practices between the 19 CPAS, the operators of the scheme. This requires a common and shared definition, a regional framework recognising the socio-professional integration missions of the CPAS, a salary reference scale and a user intervention scale;
- the strengthening of the qualitative aspect, including the formative aspect of the scheme. This is done through a skills acquisition plan for each worker and a grant for specific training costs: €3,000 per beneficiary.

An evaluation will be carried out from 2022 when the reform has been fully implemented.

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

The activities organised by the 70 partners of Bruxelles Formation for jobseekers furthest from the labour market (socio-professional integration organisations, teaching of social promotion, training through work workshops, specialised training organisations for people with disabilities, etc.) have made it possible to train and support around 5,500 participants. The Flemish Community Commission (VGC - Vlaamse Gemeenschapscommissie) has supported 9 **training and work experience projects**. The projects are active in four sectors: construction (FIX and Casablanca), healthcare (non-profit "Familiehulp", non-profit "Solidariteit voor het Gezin", non-profit "Elmer", non-profit "Aksent"), catering (non-profit "EAT" and non-profit "Atelier Groot Eiland") and multimedia (MAKS). In the context of these projects, low-skilled long-term jobseekers can gain work experience. The duration of the pathway can vary, among other things, according to the type of contract (on average from one to two years for an Article 60 contract (via the CPAS) and 2 years for a PTP contract (professional transition programme). The pathway prepares participants for the mainstream labour market, or restores the link in the education or training chain for the most vulnerable group. The projects have a department which is associated with the VGC network which meets social needs in Brussels.

Strengthening cross-cutting policies for employment and training

The Brussels Region is committed to promoting **synergies between public employment and training actors** in order to optimise, simplify, dynamize and increase the offering of services adapted to the needs and expectations of jobseekers, companies and workers. The Training Plan 2020 will be evaluated in order to set up a "job qualification" strategy (cf. GO4Brussels 2030 Strategy). The latter will make it possible to respond effectively to the qualification needs of jobseekers, so they can integrate sustainably into the labour market and meet the labour needs of employers, and will also respond to the problem of professions with labour shortages. To achieve this, the cross-cutting aspect of the implemented employment and training policies will be broadened, through strong partnerships between public employment and training operators, as well as between these operators and services.

Development of language learning in a multilingual option by rolling out the language training offer in a coherent network around a 'Cité des langues' (Language City)

The Brussels Region is developing and strengthening, in collaboration with the Community Commissions, the **language training offer in a coherent network around a 'Cité des langues'**. Work has been undertaken to develop language skills. This involves activating an important lever to sustainably integrate the most vulnerable groups into the labour market, to meet the needs of employers and to anticipate the changes at work. Enhancing the language skills of jobseekers will be coupled with

the objective of stimulating employers' efforts to integrate the language training of their workers into their training policy for the benefit of all, but particularly the most vulnerable workers.

Language support initiatives aimed at increasing labour market opportunities for native speakers of foreign languages and socially vulnerable target groups

The 'House of Dutch' in Brussels ("Huis van het Nederlands Brussel") supports and optimises the **NT2 offering** (Dutch as a second language) for adults at the Basic Education Centre and the Adult Education Centres. To this end, the House supports the CVOs (adult education centres) in developing functional, **occupation-specific and occupation-oriented pathways** and **teaching** group pathways for parents of pupils in Dutch-speaking education in Brussels, by integrating and promoting opportunities to practise Dutch in the NT2 class and by organising the "Taalgarage". The "Taalgarage" is an advice point that guides people wishing to learn Dutch in choosing a self-learning format, and gives advice on how and where they can practice their Dutch.

In addition, in the context of the Youth Guarantee Scheme, for example, young people aged between 15 and 25 at the Centres for Apprenticeship and Work (CLW) who **do not have sufficient knowledge of Dutch to follow their studies** and gain work experience **can rely on the "Taalkot"** of Abrusco. Taalkot is an innovative learning environment outside school where young people learn the basics of Dutch. Taalkot has developed a unique and cross-cutting approach that combines the expertise needed for the target group of part-time education with that of NT2: intensive orientation, learning at various speeds depending on the level of young people in a group, flexible entry and exit. In this way, Taalkot can offer a tailor-made offering to every young person who attends. Students attend classes at the CLW two days a week and come to Taalkot for two days.

Supporting sustainable and quality employment through an adapted public policy

The Government intends to significantly increase the opportunities for Brussels jobseekers to gain access to quality jobs and to develop fully within them. To this end, tools for defining, steering and monitoring will be developed in full consultation with the social partners to address the concept of quality of work and capitalise on the work of the Observatory for reference prices in public procurement. From there, **permanent monitoring of the quality of the job will be implemented** and carried out on a recurrent basis. Analysis of the results will make it possible to draw up recommendations and promote a systemic, cross-cutting and shared approach around the notion of "quality" of work.

In addition, the Brussels government intends to support the increase of the number of places in nurseries reserved for job seekers, by favoring single-parent families and job seekers looking for vocational training. The departure bonus for jobseekers who wish to establish themselves as self-employed, which Actiris grants, has also been extended in the Brussels-Capital Region.

4.3. Research, Development & Innovation (RDI)

In its new Policy Statement, the Brussels Region has announced that it will put its research and innovation policy³⁵ at the service of social, climatic and economic progress (see objective 1.3 of the GO4Brussels 2030 Strategy). The economic support tools will be increasingly orientated towards supporting the transition of all businesses and sectors towards decarbonised production models, towards the circular and regenerative economy, towards social and democratic entrepreneurship and

³⁵ To enhance R&D spending in the Brussels Capital Region, Innoviris has implemented various measures that were included in its Regional Innovation Plan (2016-2020). These measures aim not only to increase public funding for R&D, but also to strengthen the RDI ecosystem, improve the innovation cycle and, more generally, foster a culture of RDI. In so doing, these measures create a favourable climate for R&D and R&D spending.

towards the digitisation of the economy. The Region must consequently step up its investment in research, development and innovation. In this respect, Brussels will actively contribute to the national objective of 3% of GDP (of which one third public) devoted to research and development. On this point, if a major part of public support for RDI comes from the federal government, via tax incentives (partial exemption from payroll taxes for researchers), the Region contributes to a direct support with an always ambitious budget; a strong incentive for intersectoral collaboration (academic, commercial, non-commercial) and the consolidation of the innovative ecosystem - which encourages private investments in RDI; strengthening of RDI activities in the non-profit sector; and finally, the desire to support and develop innovative public markets which will mobilise additional RDI resources via public procurement. Finally, the Brussels Region wishes to highlight the following measures³⁶ since the last National Reform Programme in the area of RDI.

Innoviris, the Brussels Institute for Research and Innovation, in collaboration with hub.brussels and Brussels Economy and Employment, has recently entered the selection process for the *European Digital Innovation Hub (eDIH)*, launched by the European Commission, and for which a call for expressions of interest was launched at the end of January at regional level. The objective of this eDIH is to enhance, in one or more priority sectors for the region, the adoption of innovative digital technologies, and more specifically AI, cybersecurity and high-performance computing in order to develop applications of these technologies that will guide the Brussels Region towards greater resilience in the face of climate change. To achieve this, the eDIH will have to propose a comprehensive support offering in terms of R&D, training, access to investment and regional and European collaboration. The call for expressions of interest was launched in January 2020 and is open until 3 April 2020. An information session was held on 4 February to invite potential stakeholders to express their interest. The DIH is expected to be operational by 2021. Budgetary commitments are currently under discussion at the government level.

In addition, the Brussels Region was presented as an example of best practice in 2019 on the European Smart Specialisation Platform for the collaborative design of its smart specialisation strategy³⁷. The new regional innovation plan is under way (launch of the specifications) and the collaborative method will again be applied.

In 2019, a call for projects on the theme of predictive medicine (prevention of epidemics and the risks of falling ill) was launched. In early 2020, the projects were selected and one of them, subsidized for more than 600,000 euros, aims to carry out an early detection of epidemics of infectious diseases by analyzing big data. This project is particularly relevant to the current health crisis linked to the Covid-19 epidemic.

Moreover, with the *Co-Creation programme*, a participatory action research programme aimed at responding to the urban challenges of the Brussels Region, Innoviris is innovating in the area of research policy. This funding programme is anchored in the regional desire to support co-creation and specifically in the area of urban resilience in all its facets (ecological, economic, social and democratic). It is underpinned by objectives and values such as exchange, citizen ownership of scientific research and the response to the needs of Brussels inhabitants that have so far gone unmet. Finally, it is based on the conviction of the added value provided by citizen participation in the political decision-making process. This year, the programme is taking the participatory aspect a step further, as a citizen jury is involved in assessing the projects. We can also highlight the fact that the Co-Creation programme was

³⁶ Legal framework:

- Ordinance of 26 June 2003 on the creation of the Institute for the encouragement of Scientific Research and Innovation of Brussels;
- Ordinance of 26 March 2009 designed to promote research, development and innovation;
- Implementing decisions of 21 January 2010: R&D projects/protection of intellectual property/innovation in procedures and organisation/supranational projects/recruitment of highly qualified personnel, concerning the implementation of the ordinance of 26 March 2009 designed to promote research, development and innovation.

³⁷ <https://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/-/designing-a-policy-mix-for-responsible-research-and-innovation?inheritRedirect=true>

launched in 2015 and has therefore gained expertise over the years; expertise that it is now able to share, since European actors come to study it and take it as an example.

In addition, the **corporate spin-off** programme supports the creation of new businesses in the Brussels-Capital Region in order to economically valorise the research and development results obtained within the industrial fabric. This program provides funding for projects whose objectives are to translate research or development results into an innovative product, process or service. The projects funded must have a favourable impact on the economy, employment and environment of the Brussels-Capital Region. The program was launched in June 2019 and posted on the Innoviris website. No projects have been selected for the programme to date. However, this programme will be presented to business incubators and universities in Brussels on various occasions during 2020, as part of the regular promotion of business support by Innoviris within the innovative ecosystem. The planned budget for 2020 is €400,000.

Furthermore, the **Joint R&D (the Industry of Tomorrow: Green, Human & Smart) programme** encourages collaboration between the academic and industrial worlds in Brussels. The themes of the calls, in connection with 10 technologies of the future such as artificial intelligence, blockchain or robotics, are always linked to issues and priorities specific to the Brussels Region. This year, the call will focus on green, humane and smart industry. The projects selected under this call, endowed with 6 million euros and targeted at the green, human and intelligent industry this year, must contribute to the development of new production methods or processes that are more sustainable, more efficient and more respectful of the environment and workers. A budget of €6 million is earmarked for 2020. Following the launch of the call, successful projects will be required to submit a full proposal by October, which will be evaluated by a panel of scientific experts.

Finally, the Brussels Region supports the deployment of new data transmission technologies (5G and others) in accordance with the precautionary principle and only after having assessed, among other things, the impact on the environment and public health.

4.4. Education - Training

The Brussels Region supports the education sector through a number of mechanisms.

The School contract

Under the new legislature, the Brussels government will implement the new urban regeneration tool "**School Contracts**", which receives an annual budget allocation of €5 million. A target of 10 School Contracts has been set for the term of this legislature.

There are **three objectives** to the School Contract³⁸:

- Improving the urban integration of schools;
- Increase the offer of collective facilities to the inhabitants of a neighbourhood by opening schools outside school hours: access to sports facilities, canteens, opening of school yards, etc.;
- Encourage the opening of schools to the neighbourhood via socio-economic actions aimed at promoting social cohesion and public space repurposing projects.

³⁸ The legal framework for the new urban renewal scheme "School Contract" was adopted on 29 April 2019. The Ordinance of 16 May 2019 on the School Contract therefore sets out the policy guidelines, including: the objectives and general principles, the adoption procedure, the methodology for adopting the programme and implementing each Contract, the beneficiaries and their obligations, the deadlines for implementation and the financing arrangements.

This is intended for schools located in the Urban Regeneration Zone (ZRU)³⁹ and which have a **vulnerable school population**. The scheme is managed and steered by the Schools Service of perspective.brussels.

Following the call for applications launched by the Schools Service, on 5 December 2019 the Government selected 4 School Contracts for the period 2020-2024 and 2 School Contracts for the period 2021-2025. At the same time, the action and investment programmes for the School Contracts in progress (pilot phase) are continuing.

Regarding school infrastructure, the pilot projects will make it possible to integrate the schools in the city as well as possible, notably through the development and connection of the school forecourt with the public space (securing the forecourt, creating a biking course, area planning, setting up a kiss & ride), transforming an auditorium into a theater accessible to the public in the neighborhood, and setting up a school street.

Coding

In a context of an ever more digitised society, the Brussels Region also intends to **strengthen the digital skills of students, specifically in the area of coding**. A call for projects was launched in 2018 with the voluntary sector specialising in science and technology to carry out coding learning activities with students and teachers. The projects are aimed primarily at schools with vulnerable populations and located in the urban regeneration zone. Particular attention is paid to the gender dimension, so that girls, who are generally far removed from science and IT in their choice of studies, are made aware of this sector which offers promising jobs. On 9 May 2019, following the launch of the call for projects by the Schools Service, the government selected 15 projects for a total amount of €150,000. The activities organised in this context will take place throughout the 2019-2020 school year. A total of 17 schools, from kindergarten to secondary school, participate in the activities.

In addition, Innoviris regularly organises its programme to make young people in Brussels aware of science, technology and innovation, as well as the studies leading up to them and the opportunities they offer. Among the important initiatives in this area, the I love Science festival⁴⁰ was held in April 2019 and will be repeated in 2020.

The fight against school drop-outs

The Government undertakes to strengthen the coordination of **regional schemes to tackle school drop-outs** (DAS, DASC and the school drop-out strand of the PLPP)⁴¹ and to draw up a comprehensive plan to combat school drop-outs in Brussels, together with the Communities, municipalities and local players. The government will implement a coordinated approach aimed at networking and coordinating the intervention of all actors more effectively: schools, workers, street educators, social workers, police, parents, etc. In this context, it will concentrate resources on schools that have students with difficulties, often from the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods (ISEF index): enhanced extra-curricular activities and supervision, support and assistance at school, enhanced remediation and learning of French and Dutch. The aim is to tackle school drop-outs by supporting activities carried out in schools, but also outside, by the voluntary sector, with disadvantaged groups. Municipalities are also supported in the activities they implement at the local level, to tackle school drop-outs.

On 26 April 2018, the government adopted a coordinated strategy to tackle school drop-outs and tasked the Schools Service with managing the three regional programmes aimed at promoting staying in school

³⁹ 'zone de revitalisation urbaine'

⁴⁰ <http://ilovescience.brussels>

⁴¹ Dispositif d'Accrochage Scolaire; Dispositif de soutien aux activités d'accompagnement à la scolarité et à la citoyenneté des enfants et des jeunes ; plans locaux de prévention et de proximité

and the budgetary resources linked to this priority policy. An overall annual budget of almost €8 million is devoted to the fight against school drop-outs.

The Schools Service now manages the 3 regional programmes to tackle school drop-outs:

- The School Attendance Scheme (DAS) for actions carried out in schools (384 projects selected for the period 2019-2021);
- The Support Scheme for schooling and citizenship support activities for children and young people (DASC) for actions carried out by the voluntary sector (58 projects selected for the period 2019-2021);
- Support to municipalities for their local actions to encourage school attendance ("fight against school drop-outs" strand of the PLPP), whose effective takeover by the Schools Service was set for 1 January 2020 (129 projects supported in 2020).

In 2020, the Schools Service will work to enhance the integration of these measures as part of an integrated strategy to combat school drop-outs. It will set out the orientations, strategic objectives and priority selection criteria for financing activities to promoting staying in school in the Brussels Region. It will provide support for the coordination of the actions carried out in this area under the Youth Guarantee Scheme.

In addition, since September 2017, the Flemish Community Commission (VGC) has been supporting the non-profit "Triptiek" for the development of "KANS Centraal Meldpunt Brussel" (CMB). Triptiek is an alliance of the three CLBs (Student Learning Centres) of the three education networks. The non-profit association contributes **to the fight against school drop-outs and the outflow of unskilled young people from Dutch-speaking education in Brussels**. Developing KANS CMB has resulted in better information, efficient and targeted detection of young people dropping out of school, better registration and enrolment, and offers flexible and tailor-made guidance programmes, individually and in groups, with time-ins and time-outs. The target group consists of young people who attend a Dutch-speaking school in Brussels or who live in Brussels and for whom it is advisable to bring them into contact with the Dutch-speaking education and social assistance in Brussels, their parents, the Dutch-speaking schools in Brussels and external education and welfare services and organisations.

Multilingualism in Brussels

Brussels is home to around 180 nationalities with more than a hundred different spoken languages. This makes Brussels one of the most cosmopolitan regions in the world today, and therefore a laboratory and pioneer of multilingualism. In accordance with its Policy Statement, the Brussels Government therefore intends to develop a comprehensive policy that promotes multilingualism among Brussels inhabitants, thereby strengthening Brussels' identity and citizenship, social promotion and social cohesion within the Region.

In the first phase, a **vision document on "Multilingualism in Brussels"** was drafted and submitted to the Brussels Parliament for discussion. The general objective is that all children in Brussels should be fluent in French, Dutch and English by the age of 18.

This document contains proposals for highly specific objectives to achieve this goal, such as a mapping of the existing initiatives and projects in this area, the creation of a "Council for Multilingualism", the promotion of teacher exchanges in schools, the creation of a "Language Point" that develops and reinforces the language training offers for jobseekers, and the possibility of providing a "Multilingualism Label" to companies and organisations that actively promote the language skills of their staff.

4.5. Environment – Climate – Energy

The Brussels Energy and Climate Plan (2030), adopted on 24 October 2019, contains measures specific to the Region, including measures in the **buildings, transport and renewable energy sectors**. Many of these 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, or that will be launched in 2020.

As regards the building sector, the NECP (National Energy and Climate Plan)⁴² 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 **100 kWh per m² per year in primary energy**;
- For the tertiary sector, the objective is to move towards **energy-neutral buildings**.

To contribute to this objective, among others, the Local Action Plan for Energy Management (PLAGE⁴³), mandatory for managers of large immovable heritage (public or private), has been implemented since 1 July 2019. The first energy cadastres are expected for 2021.

The decarbonisation of heating and domestic hot water systems is also covered: the next decade will be marked the end of the installation of 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 relevant in the urban context. By continuing and expanding efforts to stimulate solar photovoltaic and thermal energy, and heat pumps, the government hopes to achieve **470 GWh of renewable energy generation** by 2030. This Brussels effort is significant given that the potential in urban areas is limited.

To go even further, 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 **700 GWh of additional renewable generation** by the end of the decade 2021-2030.

In the area of **transport**, the NECP refers to the future regional mobility plan "Good Move" (see chapter 3.3). 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 onwards. Petrol engines are expected to follow in the next decade.

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 21% reduction in final energy consumption (compared to 2005);
- 1170 GWh of energy produced from renewable sources, of which 700 GWh will be produced outside the Region;

⁴² On 24 December 2018, Regulation (EU) 2018/1999 of 11 December 2018 on the Governance of the Energy Union entered into force. 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 (PNEC 2030). This national plan for Belgium includes a Brussels component.

⁴³ 'Plan Local d'Action pour la Gestion Energétique'

- A 40% reduction in the Region's direct greenhouse gas emissions (compared to 2005) to get on track for 2050.

The implementation of the Brussels NECP 2030 and the renovation strategy will primarily be financed by the regional climate fund (set up in COBRACE⁴⁴), which is designed to finance measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and produce renewable energy. The **European structural and investment funds** will also be mobilised as part of their 2021-2027 planning to meet the objectives of the NECP.

The long-term strategy for reducing greenhouse gases

The Policy Statement 2019-2024 envisages the conception of a **regional low-carbon vision** by 2050, resulting from a participatory process involving citizens, social, economic and institutional actors and local authorities⁴⁵.

In the context of the Brussels Region's contribution⁴⁶ to Belgium's long-term strategy to reduce greenhouse gases, the government of the Brussels Region undertakes to pursue the following objectives:

- Achieve the same level of ambition for indirect emissions by 2050 as for direct emissions by 2030;
- Aim to neutralise its carbon footprint by the end of 2050. This relates to both direct and indirect emissions from the Brussels Region;
- Initiate a public debate in 2020 involving Brussels citizens, economic, social and institutional actors, transition initiatives and local authorities on a "low carbon" vision for Brussels by 2050 to complement this first exercise.

4.6 Social cohesion and poverty reduction

Social-health plan

The government of the Brussels-Capital Region is committed to fighting poverty and social inequalities in a transversal way, based on an impact analysis of the envisaged reforms with regard to the determinants of poverty and health. It will therefore endeavor to develop an integrated Brussels social-health plan common to all the competent entities inside the Brussels territory, reflecting a territorial approach to social action and health. To this end, the government will initiate a Brussels States General for health and social affairs in a co-construction approach between public and associative actors, users and researchers. Pending their conclusions, the implementation of existing plans will be continued.

Implementation of the social cohesion mechanism

The government will strengthen social cohesion policies, both in their territorial development aspect (sustainable neighbourhood contracts, urban renewal contracts, urban policy) and in their support for civil society aspect (lifelong learning, social cohesion, school service, etc.) for the tasks they take on in order to combat the aggravating factors of discrimination (social exclusion, school failure, illiteracy, etc.). For the **social cohesion mechanism** set up by the French Community Commission, a process of implementation of the decree⁴⁷ is ongoing and will require a transitional period before its full

⁴⁴ Brussels Air, Climate and Energy Management Code

⁴⁵ Belgium's long-term strategy is made mandatory by Article 15 of Regulation (EU) 2018/1999 of 11 December 2018 on the governance of the Energy Union.

⁴⁶ The regional contribution to Belgium's long-term strategy was adopted by the government on 7 November 2019.

⁴⁷ Decree of the French Community Commission of 16 November 2018 on social cohesion

application. For 2020, the total annual budget allocated to social cohesion amounts to €11,608,000. 250 non-profit organisations have been subsidised under the social cohesion mechanism.

The social cohesion mechanism comprises a municipal and a regional component. 13 Brussels municipalities have a municipal social cohesion contract and other operators with more cross-cutting operations benefit from a regional social cohesion contract. The actions supported correspond to the four priority themes for the five-year period 2016-2022: support and accompaniment for schooling, learning of and proficiency in the French language as an active citizen, intercultural citizenship, which can be divided into two types of action, namely socio-legal services for migrants and people from an immigrant background, and initiation modules to civic life, and the theme of living together, which can be broken down into two types of action, namely the production and dissemination of socio-cultural tools aimed at improving living together and the dissemination of tools to raise awareness of interculturality.

Disabled Persons - Autonomy targeted

In addition, the new Policy Statement stresses the importance of **supporting people who are dependent or losing their autonomy**. The assistance and care services offer (all competent bodies in Brussels combined) will have to be planned jointly for all districts of Brussels, in conjunction with the planning of assistance and services for **people with disabilities**. The competence for individual aid for disabled people will be activated with a view to ensuring that it is exercised as coherently as possible within the Brussels territory. The main strands set out in the Government Agreement of the French Community Commission (COCOF) are as follows:

- Implement a "guarantee of autonomy" for dependent persons, in particular through an integrated model of local assistance and care, by neighbourhood, aimed at helping people with a loss of autonomy to keep living in their homes;
- Continue and build on the dynamic initiated by the decree of 17 January 2014 on the inclusion of persons with disabilities, which aims to make effective the right of persons with disabilities to live in society (UNCRPD)⁴⁸;
- Carry out a strategic study on the future of companies for adapted work in order to determine the best ways of financing and deploying employment aid and the social economy;
- Adopt a cooperation agreement aimed at simplifying and harmonising access to individual aid for people with disabilities, as this aid enables them to remain independent for longer and avoid having to move to an institution;
- Develop a specific policy for autism in Brussels through a Brussels dependency plan based on the resolution on autism adopted on 26 April 2019 by the Brussels French-speaking Parliament and on the cross-cutting "autism" plan, in consultation with associations and stakeholders, involving the Region and the COCOM (Common Community Commission) in their respective areas of competence.

Access to housing

Access to quality and affordable housing is also a **priority** of the new Brussels government. In order to increase the availability of public housing, the government is working on the sustainable renovation of the existing housing stock and continuing construction of 6,400 housing units provided for under the Regional Housing Plan and the 'Alliance Habitat'. An **emergency plan for social housing policy** is also being drawn up with the aim of providing a concrete solution for 15,000 Brussels households on the waiting list for social housing. With regard to the private rental market, the government supports the

⁴⁸ UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

development of the social housing agencies sector, which currently manages 6,300 housing units and is growing steadily. An agreement policy to encourage private landlords to charge reasonable rents is also under consideration. Finally, the new Brussels government also intends to respond to the specific needs of certain target groups. For example, the Government will improve the reception of victims of domestic violence and strengthen secret shelters for women.

Child poverty in Brussels

For many families, **family allowances** constitute a significant share of their disposable income and effectively play a role in preventing or **reducing poverty and child poverty**.

In a study conducted by the Association of Family Allowance Funds (ACAF) in 2015⁴⁹, 76.5% of Brussels parents stated that "family allowances constitute an important part of the *household* budget". Family allowances are spent in the household budget and cannot be used for other purposes. Only 13% of parents said they can save the amount of the family allowance, the others said they use it for child-related expenses. 65.2% of the parents surveyed say they use child benefit for basic expenses (food, clothing, etc.). 44.6% use them for education-related costs (school materials, days out, etc.), and 17.6% for childcare.

In this context, the **new system of family allowances in Brussels**, which came into force on 1 January 2020, pays particular attention to vulnerable families.

Most families gain more, nobody loses. The main concern has been to increase the amount of family allowances for as many families as possible and to ensure that none of them are adversely affected. A double objective fully met given that:

- About 75% of households will receive a higher amount;
- The principle of *acquired rights* guarantees all families that the new amount cannot be lower than the one received under the old system of family allowances.

Top-ups are provided for families with low incomes and for the middle classes on modest incomes. They are granted on condition that the family's gross taxable income does not exceed certain ceilings:

- less than €31,000 per year: maximum amount;
- between €31,000 per year and less than €45,000 per year: reduced amount;
- from €45,000 per year: no top-up.

Under the old system, there was only one income level (adjusted according to whether the family was single or two-parent).

Since it is well known that large families are more vulnerable, the emphasis is also placed on increased assistance according to family size (the amounts are increased per child from 2 children upwards). Specific attention is also given to single-parent families, whose financial situation is known to often be precarious.

Moreover, unlike the old system, which limited the granting of social supplements to certain socio-professional categories (unemployed, disabled, etc.), all households are now taken into consideration. The *working poor* are no longer the *forgotten people* in the system.

⁴⁹ ACAF (2015). *The family allowance barometer*. Online survey conducted by the ACAF.

It is estimated that 63% of children will now be eligible for a social top-up compared to around 32% under the old system. Selectivity is expected to account for about 23% of the budget, compared with only about 11% under the old system. However, the impact of these measures on the poverty rate is not yet measurable.

Furthermore, Médecins du Monde organises its activities thanks to the ERDF project for young people. In 2019, Médecins du Monde welcomed 635 minors within its Brussels projects, including 576 in its outreach projects (meeting patients in their living environments), including 123 unaccompanied minors in Belgium. The average age is 11 years old. Most of the minors in outreach were there in the context of the activities of the Humanitarian Hub (84.20%). Out of 291 minors for whom we have information, 96.91% did not have access to health care, despite the existence of the free child health care scheme. More than 99% of the minors met in the outreach project were foreign nationals.

Lastly, the VGC has a **Child Poverty Reduction Plan** which is based around 4 objectives (accessibility of childcare services and support for families, pre-school participation and skills development) and for which specific subsidies are used to combat child poverty. The VGC also supports a number of actions aimed at combating poverty in the Brussels-Capital Region through the policy of subsidising social projects, including the non-profit EVA BXL (developing and supporting new initiatives to combat poverty) and Nasci (supporting vulnerable children and families with a focus on pregnant women in emergency situations).

Autonomy of elderly people

The United College of the Common Community Commission intends to put in place the conditions to ensure that all persons losing their autonomy have an available and accessible supply of services and care, guaranteeing them that they will retain this autonomy for as long as possible. To achieve this, the United College will co-create an integrated model of assistance and community care with the actors in the field, by neighbourhood, aimed at ensuring that people with loss of autonomy can keep living at home. This integrated model of aid and care will be built on the basis of the initial analysis and conclusions of the three pilot projects carried out in the COCOM and based on neighbourhood advisers, a role which could be rolled out more broadly if necessary.

This integrated model will be based in particular on a planning of structures for home support, reception and accommodation of elderly people, and networking of the relevant actors within each neighbourhood. This planning will go hand in hand with a comprehensive reflection on the quality of care in the institutions, also integrating an openness and support for alternatives to nursing homes, where possible and desirable. At the same time, the "Moratorium on Nursing Homes" ordinance will be implemented, in particular with regard to the conversion of "Nursing Home" (MR) beds into "Nursing and Care Home" (MRS)⁵⁰ beds.

The United College will take over the management of the Assistance Allowance for Elderly Persons, following the sixth state reform. In this context, the procedure will be accelerated and a single operator will be designated.

The fight against homelessness

The budget for the **fight against homelessness** will be increased by almost €15 million in 2020. In addition, the broader policy to combat homelessness is undergoing a transition from a **focus on emergency shelters to reintegration and structural solutions**. "Housing First" projects, which will double in capacity by 2020, play an important role in this transition.

⁵⁰ 'Maison de Repos'; 'Maison de Repos et de Soins'

Compulsory civic integration programme for newcomers in Brussels

In the context of tackling inequalities and more particularly in developing solutions tailored to specific target groups, the government will develop a **Brussels reception pathway for newcomers** on the basis of the COCOM ordinance of the same name, which provides for a compulsory integration pathway for newcomers (i) who are between 18 and 65 years of age; (ii) who have registered for the first time in a municipality of the Brussels-Capital Region with (iii) a residence permit valid for more than 3 months; and (iv) who have not lived in Belgium for more than 3 years. These provisions were further developed in the decision of the United College of the COCOM of 19 July 2018 and in the cooperation agreement of 20 December 2018 concluded between the COCOM, COCOF and the Flemish Community, approved by the various parliaments in May 2019. The objective is to guide newcomers through an adapted and individualised training programme to increase their autonomy with a view to their participation in the economic, educational, social and cultural fields. Preparations are underway for the implementation of the regulations; the aim is for all regulations to come into force by January 2021 at the latest.

The gender dimension

The Government is committed and ensures to include a gender dimension in the implementation and evaluation of the impact of all policies conducted through "**gender mainstreaming**" and "**gender budgeting**". It is an essential strategy based on various legal tools, such as the Ordinance of 29 March 2012 related to the integration of the gender dimension into the policy lines of the Brussels-Capital Region, or the Decree of 14 July 2016 establishing a method for integrating the gender dimension into the budget cycle.

In addition, the Brussels-Capital Region has set up the "**equal opportunities test**" which makes it possible to analyse and verify the impact of political measures on different groups of the population whose situation and specific needs are sometimes not taken into account when introducing general policy measures. Since 1 January 2019, each new law and regulation is evaluated with this tool. This also applies to management contracts, strategic planning tools as well as public procurement contracts and grants of more than 30,000 euros.

More specifically, the Government intends to carry out an action plan related to single-parent families. In 86% of the cases in Brussels, single-parent families are made up of single women with children. A situation that can be a risk factor for poverty and discrimination. With the support of the voluntary sector, but also on the basis of the own-initiative opinion of the Economic and Social Council of the Brussels-Capital Region proposing courses of action to improve the situation of single parents, transversal measures are envisaged in order to offer these families guidance and equitable access to housing, employment, training, mobility or nurseries. In the meantime, a regional website is being created, it will include all the information necessary to support and guide single parents in their efforts.

5. Structural 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, which is coming to an end, the National Reform Programme (NRP), 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 the promotion of equal opportunities.

The ERDF Operational Programme (OP) in the Brussels Region

The **2014-2020 Programming of the ERDF**, with a consumption rate of 98% agreed and at the (end of) its implementation phase, will give priority support to projects which, in accordance with the priorities of the Policy Statement, contribute to economic innovation serving the transition (in particular themes 1, 3, 4 and 5), the strategy for the sustainable renovation of Brussels' buildings, the public policy of cleanliness and waste collection that promotes reduction, re-use and recycling, the priority development of strategic zones, the quality of life of Brussels residents at the centre of the priorities, and a mobility policy that promotes active modes of transport.

The 2014-2020 Programme is divided into 5 operational strands which guide the use of the appropriations managed by the ERDF Unit within the Brussels-Capital Region:

1. Strengthening research and improving the transfer and promotion of innovation – 11 projects (including 1 financial instrument);
2. Strengthening entrepreneurship and improving the development of SMEs in promising industries – 13 projects (including 2 financial instruments);
3. Supporting the development of a circular economy through the rational use of resources in promising industries (low carbon) – 16 projects;
3. (bis) Supporting the development of a circular economy and the rational use of resources in promising industries (environment/rational use of resources) – 9 projects (including 5 relating to decontamination from projects from other strands);
4. Improving the quality of life in the neighbourhoods and for vulnerable populations – 13 projects.

As regards the ERDF OP 2014-2020, the main achievements since the last NRP concern the selection of 12 new projects in line with the objective of "supporting the energy transition of public infrastructure and public housing". The implementation of these projects will allow, after the works, a total annual reduction of 19.88 million kWh/year of primary energy and 3.45 million tons of CO₂.

The implementation of the 46 projects selected in 2015 continues (sometimes funded under several strands of the Programme, thus falling within the same investment under several themes supported by the EU), in particular with the pre-opening in November 2019 of the *Center for Arts, Sciences, Technologies, Innovations and Inclusion (CASTII)*, the operation of an eco-chiller at UZ Brussels, the closing event (in June 2019) on the achievements of the companies for adapted work accompanied by the Dev'Up Team project, the purchase in June 2019 of the building in Molenbeek (social-sanitary incubator) and the temporary occupancy of the Ixelles Barracks. As regards the OP 2021-2027, initial contacts have been made with partner administrations and with the responsible regional authorities.

On the basis of the latest annual implementation report available (2018), 38 SMEs were supported under Strand 1, 112 under Strand 2 and 75 under Strand 3. It should be noted, however, that a Commission audit excluded a significant number of realisations, nonetheless achieved, with regard to the supported SMEs, considering that the eligible SMEs could not be organised in the form of non-profit organisations: the Belgian regulatory framework does not, however, prevent these organisations from making profits or carrying out commercial activities, it obliges them to comply with the rules on State aid, and the Programme explicitly supports the social economy or health sector, in which a significant number of the companies are organised in the form of non-profit organisations. The quantitative assessment is therefore affected by this audit.

As the ERDF OP 2014-2020 supports a significant number of multi-annual investments, its implementation is also not yet complete and realisations for the other OP indicators are, at this stage, limited (apart from the hiring of 15 researchers in various entities). The permits (town planning, etc.) required for real estate investments have been obtained for a relatively large number of projects and the expenditure per strand is in line with the Programme's commitments.

The implementation of the operations selected under OP 2014-2020 will continue, aiming at the completion of the last expenditure until 2023. As regards OP 2021-2027, this is being prepared and should be presented in the coming months to the Commission for validation. After this phase, calls for projects will make it possible to allocate the Programme's resources to specific operations related to the selected themes.

The certified expenditure of the ERDF operational programme, with a total budget of almost €190 million, amounted to €51,842,205.79 cumulatively (of which €19,127,485.76 for the year 2019); planned expenditure in 2020 is €22,000,000.

The ESF Operational Programme in the Brussels Region

The **European Social Fund Operational Programme** for the **period 2014-2020** in the Brussels-Capital Region is structured around 3 strands aimed at different target groups. Part of the first strand corresponds with the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) programme.

In 2019, the budget for the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) was increased for a third time. The 2019 YEI allocation for Belgium has been increased by €2,747,723. The amount for the ESF OP in the Brussels Region would amount to €380,284 only for the YEI share (13.84% of the amount for Belgium). The additional YEI amount is made available to all current YEI actions.

On the basis of the latest annual implementation report available (2018) we can conclude that all the OP projects are operational and are approaching the end-of-programming target values.

TO 8, Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility, IP the sustainable integration into the labour market of young people who are not working, studying or undergoing training involved **more than 4,770 young people in 2018** in terms of realisation. TO 8, IP access to employment for jobseekers and inactive persons and mobility support involved **almost 12,310 people in 2018**.

TO 9, Promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination, IP active inclusion involved **more than 18,000 people in 2018** in terms of realisation. The job coaches in the Brussels CPAS accompanied the majority of these jobseekers.

The financial data below represents the situation as of 31 December 2018 following the last interim payment request of 21 December 2018.

The financial package committed for the programming, after the budget amendment, represents a total amount of €101,970,817, of which €55,336,292 corresponds to support from the Union, broken down as follows:

- €75,865,516 for the ESF (74.4% of the allocated budget);
- €26,105,301 for the YEI (100% of the budget allocated for this fund and 25.6% of the total package).

For the period 2014-2018, the use corresponding to interim payment applications (IP) by the Certifying Authority to the Commission amounts to €32,928,486.78 (32.29% of the total package), effectively representing the budget. This amount can be broken down as follows:

- Consumption Strand 1 ESF (excluding YEI): €1,743,475.03 (24.48%)
- Consumption Strand 1 YEI: €13,719,432.15 (52.55%)
- Consumption Strand 2 ESF: €11,257,697.34 (29.19%)
- Consumption Strand 3 ESF: €5,674,342.20 (21.61%)
- Consumption Technical Assistance: €533,540.06 (13.60%)

Although this absorption rate may still appear relatively low at this stage of the programming, the rate of payment requests is accelerating and their amount is increasing.

Preparation of future programming (2021-27)

The Brussels Government has decided to set up a coordination mechanism to ensure coherence between the GO4Brussels 2030 Strategy and European policies relating to the economy, employment and inclusion (objective 2.8 of the Strategy). This coordination will aim to better integrate and take advantage of the opportunities offered by the European Union's Structural Funds, in particular the ERDF and the ESF(+), which are mobilised in support of the policies pursued in the Brussels Region by integrating the EU's objectives and recommendations.

Achieving this objective requires the drafting of a Brussels strategy common to all the programmes active in the Brussels Region and the implementation of enhanced coordination between the authorities responsible for executing these funds, through the creation of a strategic committee for programme coordination. This coordination will also make it possible to respond as effectively as possible to European requests, in particular in the context of the European Semester and the drafting of this annex to the NRP.

The first project under the Objective will involve drawing up a **Brussels strategy agreement** on the use of the European Structural Funds. This strategic document will be drawn up on the basis of a diagnosis of the context of intervention of the funds, presenting the evolution of the socio-economic context up to 2030, the strengths and weaknesses of the 2014-2020 partnership agreement as well as past and current programmes, the recommendations within the framework of the European semester, the key elements of the fund regulations, etc. This Brussels strategy agreement will specify the main strands of the Region's investment strategy with the support of the ESF and ERDF, their links with the European Commission's guidelines and recommendations, and the monitoring mechanisms that will be linked to them.

This strategy agreement, which will serve as a common working basis for the drafting of the various operational programmes, will be based on the regulations (in particular the principle of thematic concentration and the available indicators), the investment guidelines (Annex D) of the Country Report for Belgium 2019, and, more broadly, the priorities identified in the context of the European Semester, including the Country Specific Recommendations; but also on the elements deemed to be priorities of the new Policy Statement and in line with the framework of the funds.

Annex 2.1: Reform programme of the Flemish Region and Flemish Community

Preface

The present *Flemish Reform Programme 2020 (Vlaams Hervormingsprogramma/VHP)* is the tenth in a row to be drawn up by Flanders and the first 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 2019-2020 and the Europe 2020 targets. The present FRP pays extra attention to (digital) skills, lifelong learning and the digital transition, a theme that takes a prominent place in the current European Semester (ES). Taking into account the growing impact of and new developments in the ES, the FRP should, more than ever, ensure that the European Commission (EC) is given an excellent picture of the measures Flanders is taking within the framework of the ES.

It is the explicit ambition of the current Government of Flanders to make sure that Flanders becomes an undisputed reference in the Europe of the twenties. Both economically and societally, Flanders turns its focus to the north and measures itself against societies such as the Netherlands and Scandinavia. As stated in the Flemish Coalition Agreement 2019-2024, the current Government will be committed to excellent education, a strong innovative economy and labour market, a warm and caring Flanders, an inclusive society, a trim public administration with a sound budget, environment, climate, energy and, finally, mobility. The Government of Flanders sets the bar high in all areas of society, which is also reflected in several of the targets it pursues. For example, the present Government of Flanders will do everything in its power to get 120,000 extra people into work and subsequently help Flanders move towards an employment rate of 80%. This Government wants Flanders to rank among the top 5 innovative knowledge regions in Europe, as defined in the EU's Regional Innovation Scoreboard (RIS). This ambition is the key touchstone of our innovation policy. Achieving the 3% standard for joint (government and corporate) R&D investments in Flanders should help further this ambition. Moreover, the present Government of Flanders is more than ever a real government of investment, earmarking an additional sum of €1.65 billion for investments for the current term of office. In addition to these investments, the Government of Flanders strengthens local authorities' financial leeway and room for investment. Over the period 2020-2024, the financial injection will amount to €1.4 billion in total. The COVID-19 pandemic has an enormous impact on Flanders' economy. For this reason, the Government of Flanders has taken a range of measures to slow down the further spread of the coronavirus and to have the impact on the healthcare system level off on the one hand, and to financially support affected citizens and companies on the other. These support measures can be found in Chapter 2.6.

The Government of Flanders is self-aware and will continue to invest fully in an ambitious and coherent international policy. The EC services can, as always, count on Flanders' active involvement in and contribution to the ES. Thanks to Flanders' active input to the ES process, Flemish policy measures and data have over the years featured more largely in (analysis) documents of the EC, including the Country Report. The excellent cooperation with the European Semester Officers (ESOs) is an important lever in this respect. As clearly shows from the present FRP, Flanders is also taking action in response to the EC's Structural Reform Support Programme (SRSP). Notwithstanding the excellent Semester cooperation with the EC, the Government of Flanders keeps urging the EC explicitly to also receive *region-specific recommendations*. This final step should allow the Government of Flanders to provide an

even more customised response to these recommendations and analyses and to subsequently increase political and societal support for the ES in Flanders.

Jan JAMBON

Minister-President of the Government of Flanders

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⁵¹ This document is the English translation of the Flemish Reform Programme (FRP) 2020. The official version of the FRP (in Dutch) was adopted by the Government of Flanders on 3 April 2020 and can be consulted at <https://www.flandersineu.be/nl/vlaams-hervormingsprogramma-2020>

Executive Summary

The Flemish Reform Programme, abbreviated as FRP (Vlaams hervormingsprogramma/VHP), is the Government of Flanders' response to the challenges arising within the framework of the ES. By drawing up 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 2020 is composed of 5 parts.

PART 1 describes the main macro-economic developments in the Flemish Region. A lot of indicators are green. In 2018, economic growth in Flanders exceeded that in the other Regions and in Belgium. The 2019 growth prospects were better for Flanders, but the outbreak of the corona crisis will undoubtedly have a noticeable impact on 2020 (to be quantified later). With an employment rate (20-64 age group) of 75.5% in 2019, Flanders again records a sharp increase. The unemployment rate (15-and-over age group) was 3.3% in 2019, the lowest level ever. With an investment ratio of 25.9% in 2019, Flanders is in the European top. Flanders' goods exports reached a new record high in 2018, amounting to €328 billion, which is a 3.45% increase compared to 2017.

PART 2 describes the measures taken by Flanders within the framework of the key economic challenges (the four CSRs and investment challenges) and again constitutes the main focus of the FRP.

With regard to **CSR 1 (public finances)**, the Government of Flanders is aiming for a balance from 2021 onwards and is also making efforts to reduce debt. With reforms and a sound fiscal policy, more scope is created for additional investment.

As regards **CSR 2 (labour market and education/training)**, the Government of Flanders wants to further the achievement of an 80% employment rate by getting 120,000 extra people into work. This requires a whole range of activation measures. The Flemish job bonus and measures for the activation of economically inactive people and the reintegration of long-term ill people and newcomers should contribute to this. Customised guidance for vulnerable groups is also focused on, including important measures such as faster screening of jobseekers and a new community service scheme. The Government of Flanders wants to stimulate a learning culture in Flanders by, inter alia, setting up a lifelong learning (LLL) platform. Important new educational reforms are to guarantee the quality and inclusiveness of Flanders' education and training system. The Government of Flanders wants sufficient, strong and motivated teachers, which is why further work is done to reform teacher training, roll out the various collective bargaining agreements (collectieve arbeidsovereenkomst/cao) for teaching staff and organise quality induction guidance for novice teachers. The modernisation of secondary education, the reform of the curriculum with the implementation of new attainment targets, the focus on the Dutch language and the introduction of standardised cross-network tests will also positively influence the quality of education in Flanders. In order to make education in Flanders more inclusive, the existing M-Decree (Decree containing measures for pupils with special educational needs) will be replaced with a new support and guidance decree. Said decree will also devote attention to highly gifted pupils. Guidance for ill children will be optimised so that a quality educational career is guaranteed for them as well. From 1 September 2020 onwards, the start of compulsory education will be lowered by 1 year to 5 years, which will ensure a higher participation in pre-primary education. Finally, a reinforced use of SES resources and instruments will ensure that these resources better reach the pupils for whom they are intended.

As regards **CSR 3 (investments in research and innovation, digitalisation, energy transition and mobility)**, the Government of Flanders continues to earmark additional R&D budgets and adopted the policy plans 'Artificial Intelligence' and 'Cybersecurity'. The Government of Flanders focuses broadly on the digitalisation of society via the investment programme 'Flanders Radical Digital' (Vlaanderen Radicaal Digitaal), among other things. In order to efficiently address future mobility challenges, an Integrated Investment Programme (Geïntegreerd Investeringsprogramma/GIP) is being drawn up for 2020, with investments totalling €1.854 billion, spread over the different modes. Apart from the necessary investments in road infrastructure, the Government of Flanders is committed to having motorised traffic growth level off further. Investments in collective transport, a demand-oriented public transport network, cycling infrastructure and inland navigation should contribute to an ambitious *modal shift*. On 9 December 2019, the Government of Flanders gave its final approval to the Flemish Energy and Climate Plan 2021-2030 (Vlaams Energie- en Klimaatplan/VEKP) so that work can continue during this period to improve energy efficiency, increase renewable energy production and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In order to attract the necessary investments for this purpose, several instruments are put in place, such as energy premiums for RUE investments, cheap or interest-free energy loans for specific target groups, renewable energy certificates, etc. The VEKP also includes investments in research and innovation. In this context particular reference can be made to the Flemish Moonshot 'Flanders CO₂ neutral' (Vlaanderen CO₂ neutraal).

As far as **CSR 4 (entrepreneurship)** is concerned, the Government of Flanders is committed to reducing administrative and regulatory burdens. Flanders Innovation & Entrepreneurship (Agentschap Innoveren en Ondernemen/VLAIO) acts as the central point of contact of the Flemish authorities for entrepreneurs and manages an e-desk to which all government agencies offering services to entrepreneurs are connected.

This year an **investment chapter** is again included in response to the Country Report Belgium 2020 which clearly shows that the Government of Flanders is a government of investment. This investment ambition is translated in the Coalition Agreement and amounts to an additional €1.65 billion in the period 2019-2024.

The present FRP contains a chapter which was included as a result of **the corona crisis**. In March, the National Security Council (Nationale Veiligheidsraad) took a number of measures necessary to contain the spread of the coronavirus. The economic impact is huge, which is why the Government of Flanders has taken several important measures to slow down the further spread of the coronavirus and to have the impact on the healthcare system level off on the one hand, and to financially support affected citizens and companies on the other. Both the measures already taken by the Government of Flanders and the measures it is still looking into are explained in this chapter.

PART 3 looks at the state of play of Flanders' Europe 2020 targets and Flanders' governance in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Employment rate. Employment continued to rise rapidly in recent years and in 2019 the employment rate climbed to 75.5%, the highest rate ever. The European 2020 target was achieved, and Flanders is getting very close to its Europe 2020 target of 76%.

Education. The share of early school leavers in Flanders ended at 6.2% in 2019, which means Flanders is well below the EU target of 10%. As for the share of 30 to 34-year-olds with a higher education (HE) diploma, Flanders scored 48.5% in 2019. This means that both the European target of 40% and Flanders' target of 47.8% have been achieved.

Research and development (R&D). Flanders continues to invest additional resources in R&D, which translates into a continuous increase in R&D intensity to 2.89% in 2017. This is yet another record and brings the Flanders' Europe 2020 target of 3% within reach.

As far as the Europe 2020 targets for **climate and energy** are concerned, Flanders is still faced with great challenges. 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 CO₂ eq) for the period 2013-2020. Cumulated over the period 2013-2018, 265 Mt of the emission allocation was used, which is within the emission allocation provided for the period 2013-2018. The total share of **renewable energy** in gross final energy consumption more than doubled between 2008 and 2018 to reach a share of 6.9% in 2018 or a production of 19,590 GWh. In implementation of the 2012 Energy Efficiency Directive, Belgium set an indicative **energy efficiency target** for 2020 in June 2013. The federal government and the Regions jointly committed, without sharing the burden, to save 18% of primary energy by 2020 compared to the BAU scenario. Under Article 7 of the Energy Efficiency Directive Flanders must achieve a cumulative saving of 47.75 TWh by 2020. On the basis of the figures validated up to 2017 and the forecasts for the period 2018-2020, it can currently be assumed that 96% of the target will be achieved.

People in **poverty or social exclusion** represent 12.9% in Flanders, which makes it rank second among the EU's top performers. By 1 October 2020 at the latest, the Government of Flanders will adopt the Flemish Poverty Reduction Action Plan 2020-2024 (Vlaams Actieplan Armoedebestrijding). In the course of 2020, the Flemish Ministers will set to work to fine-tune the objectives and actions for the current term of office. The main spearheads include a better (automatic) granting of rights, good and easily accessible services and comprehensive guidance for families (family coach). The Growth Package (Groeipakket) is an important instrument in the fight against child poverty.

The fact that Flanders continues to perform excellently on the social level in EU context also shows from the good results on the relevant indicators in the **Flemish Social Scoreboard**.

With regard to the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, Flanders has established a strong governance framework. On 5 April 2019, the Government of Flanders adopted Focus 2030 (Vizier 2030), which translates the Sustainable Development Goals to the context of Flanders.

PART 4 discusses the use of the structural funds ERDF and ESF.

In implementation of **ERDF Flanders**, 92% (€163 million) of Flanders' available ERDF budget has been committed to 224 projects. Support for innovation and research, low-carbon economy and sustainable urban development is very much concentrated on investment in, inter alia, infrastructure, whereas for entrepreneurship more attention is paid to operational activities.

In 2019, **ESF projects** reached approximately 87,000 participants. Just under 60,000 participants took part in projects for guidance and training of job seekers in cooperation with the Flemish Service for Employment and Vocational Training (Vlaamse Dienst voor Arbeidsbemiddeling en Beroepsopleiding/VDAB), in work experience pathways for young people (Werkinleving voor Jongeren/WIJ) or in one of the 80 projects for the guidance of vulnerable groups. In 2019, ESF training projects enabled more than 25,000 employees to strengthen their skills, with a focus on digital, transversal and basic skills. The ESF programme is also one of major stimulators of workable work in Flanders. In 2019, 13 new calls were realised and a total of 249 projects were approved. In 2020, ESF

continues to focus fully on outreach activities towards economically inactive people, activation, social inclusion, lifelong learning and workable work.

Preparations for **Flanders’ future ERDF and ESF programmes 2021-2027** have been ongoing for quite some time now.

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 the Flemish Economic and Social Consultative Committee (Vlaams Economisch Sociaal Overlegcomité/VESOC)). This should illustrate that the successful realisation of the ES is the responsibility of all levels of government and stakeholders.

Part 1. Macro-economic developments in the Flemish Region

The Flemish Region represents 57.6% of the Belgian **population** and 59.2% of the Belgian **gross domestic product** (GDP) (2019 data), which makes it the most important Region in Belgium. Flanders’ GDP per capita is estimated at €37,600 purchasing power standard (PPS) in 2019 (source: Statistics Flanders, HERMREG 2019). This is 18% higher than the EU-28 average and 10% higher than that of the 15 EU countries prior to the 2004 enlargement. If we make corrections for commuting movements between Flanders and the Brussels-Capital Region (BCR), Flanders’ GDP per capita is estimated at 40,100 PPS in 2019. This is 26% and 18% higher than the EU-28 and EU-15 averages.

Summary table: macroeconomic figures

	Flemish Region	BCR	Walloon Region	Belgium	Source
Economic growth (2018)	1.7%	1.0%	1.3%	1.5%	NBB (02/2020)
Expected economic growth (2019)	1.5%	0.8%	1.2%	1.3%	FPB (07/2019) ⁵²
Expected economic growth (2020)	1.5%	0.9%	1.2%	1.3%	FPB (07/2019)
Expected economic growth (2020)	No revised growth projections for the Regions			0.4%	FPB (03/2020)
GDP (2018)	269,886.2	83,986.5	105,694.6	459,819.8	NBB (02/2020)
Employment rate 20-64 age group (2019)	75.5%	61.7%	64.6%	70.5%	Belstat
Unemployment rate 15-and-over age group (2019)	3.3%	14.4%	7.7%	5.7%	Belstat

Three factors determine the **GDP per capita**. (source: Statistics Flanders on the basis of HERMREG and Eurostat). **Labour productivity is the most important factor for Flanders**. In 2019, Flanders’ labour productivity was €87,400 PPS, which is 28% and 21% higher than the EU-28 and EU-15 averages. Compared to 2000, Flanders’ lead in terms of labour productivity decreased compared to the EU-28 (in 2000: +35%) and hardly changed compared to the EU-15 (in 2000: +19%).

⁵² https://www.plan.be/uploaded/documents/201907121050420.For_HermReg_2019_11942_N.pdf

In 2019, the **working age population** represented 63.4% in Flanders, which was below the EU-18 and EU-15 averages (64.4% and 64.2%).

Economic growth. In 2018, economic growth in Flanders was at 1.7%, which is higher than in the other Regions (BCR: 1.0% and Wallonia 1.3%) and Belgium (1.5%) (source: NBB⁵³). According to the medium-term model HERMREG of July 2019, the **real-terms growth** of Flanders' economy was 1.5% in 2019 and will be 1.5% in 2020 as well. Recent forecasts of the Federal Planning Bureau (Federaal Planbureau/FPB) estimated Belgium's real-terms growth for 2019 and 2020 at +1.4% and 0.4%⁵⁴. The FPB states that, just like in 2019, international trade conflicts would push down global economic growth this year. For Belgium, this translates into a weakened export growth. For 2020, the coronavirus outbreak will have a noticeable impact on initial growth rates. According to the state of play of the measures taken on 11 March 2020, Belgium's economic growth would be 1 percentage point lower than initially estimated. The FPB mentions that there are significant downside risks in the short term. The Government of Flanders has followed the measures proposed by the scientists to contain the coronavirus. The spread of the virus in our country will be continuously monitored and, if necessary, adapted measures will be taken (see also 2.6.).

In 2018, **employment grew strongly**. According to the Institute of National Accounts (Instituut voor de Nationale Rekeningen/INR), total employment increased by 1.7% in the Flemish Region in 2018, compared to +1.1% in the Walloon Region and +0.6% in the BCR. The total increase in Belgium by 65,700 persons could be attributed for 72.1% to the Flemish Region, for 20.9% to the Walloon Region and for 6.6% to the BCR⁵⁵. Employment growth reached +1.4% in the EU-28 in 2018 (source: Eurostat, analogous definition as INR). Employment in Belgium is expected to rise by 53,000 persons this year⁵⁶. The HERMREG model estimates an increase by 38,000 persons or +1.4% in employment in Flanders. This is better than in Belgium as a whole (+1.1% in 2019). Business services have traditionally been a strong driver of employment growth (2019: +2.4%). In industry there would be a status quo (+0%).

The last time employment grew so strongly was in 2008 (+1.9% at the time). Over the past years, job creation was fostered by wage restraint and by the reduction in employers' social security contributions. Moreover, labour supply is growing because of the career extension, the activation and guidance of jobseekers and, finally, the part of the tax shift that supports purchasing power. The reforms are thus bearing fruit. The slightly weaker employment growth expected for 2019 is due to the somewhat slower economic growth and the dynamics of real wage costs.

The **employment rate (20-64 age group)** (share of employed people living in Flanders compared to the population aged 20 to 64) amounted to 75.5%⁵⁷ (source: Statbel - LFS) in the Flemish Region in 2019. This is above the European average of 73.1% in 2018, which makes Flanders the best performing Region. Both the Walloon Region and the BCR perform less well with 64.6% and 61.7%. A striking increase was recorded in the employment rate of the 55-64 age group from 34.3% in 2008 to 54.9% in 2019. The employment rates of non-EU-born people and low-skilled people rose as well. The **unemployment rate** (15-64 age group) in Flanders reached 3.3% in 2019 (source: Statbel - LFS), the lowest level ever. The

⁵³ <https://www.nbb.be/doc/dq/e/dq3/histo/necr1718.pdf>

⁵⁴ https://www.plan.be/uploaded/documents/202003200852480.FOR_MIDTERM_2020_2025_NL

⁵⁵ <https://www.nbb.be/doc/dq/e/dq3/histo/necr1718.pdf>

⁵⁶ <https://www.plan.be/press/communiqu-1964-nl-de+belgische+economie+zou+met+1+4+groeien+in+2020>

⁵⁷ As a result of a change in the measurement method from 2017 onwards, caution is required when benchmarking with previous years.

unemployment rate is significantly higher in the EU-28 (7.8% in 2018). In 2019, the unemployment rate is clearly higher in the Walloon Region and the BCR (7.7% and 14.4%).

Just as GDP is a measure of wealth produced, **disposable income** is a measure of wealth earned. According to recent HERMREG forecasts (July 2019), the real disposable income is said to have grown by 1.2% in 2018. In 2019, the growth of this indicator would pick up to +2.4%. According to the FPB this is mainly due to the final phase of the tax shift and the increase in gross wages.

The **investment ratio** (investments including residential buildings as % of GDP) in the Flemish Region was estimated at 25.9% in 2019 (HERMREG 2019). This indicator remains more or less stable. The Flemish Region ranks among the top EU countries. Only Hungary (28%) and the Czech Republic (26%) are doing equally well or better.

Flanders is an **innovation-driven economy**. This requires a well-educated working population. A positive element is that 48.5% of the population aged 30 to 34 in Flanders had a higher education diploma in 2019. Innovative applications must be produced as a next step. In 2018, 8.8% of the working population in the Flemish Region was employed in high-tech sectors (source: processing by Statistics Flanders on the basis of Eurostat). This is higher than in Belgium as a whole (7.1%) or the EU-28 (7.8%). R&D expenditure in the Flemish Region represented 2.9% of GDP in 2017, which means it has been going up in recent years (source: Eurostat). Companies accounted for 70% of total R&D expenditure in 2017. Their share increased over the years to 66% in 2009. Belgium has a slightly lower R&D intensity of 2.7%. The EU-28 average is 2.0%, which is even lower. Patents constitute the final step in the innovation process. In 2015, 253 patents per million inhabitants were applied for in the Flemish Region. Patent intensity is lower in Belgium and the EU-28, but higher in the neighbouring countries Germany and the Netherlands.

Flanders' goods exports⁵⁸ reached a **new record high** of €328 billion in 2018. This is a 3.5% increase compared to 2017. Over the first 10 months of 2019, Flanders' goods exports fell by 0.8% compared to the same months of 2018. The year 2018 was therefore a peak year. In 2019, uncertainty arose following trade conflicts (China - US). The FPB also mentions stronger wage growth and the euro appreciation as hampering factors⁵⁹. Within Belgium, the Flemish Region accounts for 83% of Belgium's total exports in 2018. The Walloon Region represents 14% and the BCR 2%.

When considering **Flanders' exports geographically**, it can be concluded that the lion's share (71.1%) of its exports in 2018 was destined for countries within the EU-28, with neighbouring countries Germany, the Netherlands, France, the United Kingdom and Luxembourg in the lead. This clearly illustrates the importance of the single market. During the first 10 months of 2019, Flanders' exports to the Netherlands and the UK (both -1.9%) and to Germany (-0.8%) dropped slightly. Exports to France went up by 0.8%.

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 followed closely by the transport equipment sector which represents a 12.6% share of

⁵⁸ Analysis of 2018 export figures based on an analysis by Flanders Investment & Trade (FIT) of the NBB's import and export figures for 2018.

⁵⁹ https://www.plan.be/uploaded/documents/201910090934050.FOR_SHORTTERM1920_11988_N.pdf

Flanders' total annual exports. The fastest growing industry is that of mineral products, with an increase of €5.2 billion or +18.1% in 2018.

Flanders' goods imports rose by 5.6% in 2018. Over the first 10 months of 2019, a 1.3% decrease was recorded. Among our neighbouring countries, imports from the Netherlands fell back by -2.4%. There was an increase in imports from Germany and France (+1.5% and +0.9%). What is also striking is the strong growth in imports from the US over the first 10 months of 2019 (+11.0%), making it the third most important importing country (preceding France).

Part 2. Measures within the framework of major economic challenges

2.0. The Country Report Belgium 2020

On 9 July 2019, the Council made four country-specific recommendations (CSRs)⁶⁰ to Belgium. These pertain to (1) budgetary objectives, (2) labour market and education, (3) investment and (4) entrepreneurship and competition.

Flanders again participated actively in the Fact Finding Mission (FFM) which took place on 25 October 2019 between the EC services and Belgium. It also held two presentations itself on education and investment, which was a first. Flanders again used the opportunity to formulate remarks on the draft Country Report Belgium (27 January 2020) and found that the final Country Report Belgium 2020 (26 February 2020) took many of Flanders' amendments into consideration. The Government of Flanders is particularly pleased to find that, compared to previous Country Reports, the **Country Report Belgium 2020**⁶¹ refers to even more measures and statistics of Flanders and that regional differences are increasingly highlighted. This increased visibility of Flanders in the Country Report Belgium shows that the close monitoring of the European Semester by the Flemish authorities is bearing fruit. The Government of Flanders does not agree with the fact that the EC services did not consider Flanders' proposal to select additional regions for support from the Just Transition Fund (JTF). The Government of Flanders advocates a consistent application of the principle of subsidiarity in the distribution of the Fund's resources.

The Government of Flanders is convinced that the measures entered in the present FRP implement the CSRs 2019-2020 (see also 2.1. through 2.4.), the investment challenges (see also 2.5.) and the Europe 2020 targets and Sustainable Development Goals (see also Part 3) and as such provide a concrete response to important points for improvement in the Country Report Belgium 2020.

⁶⁰ https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:JOC_2019_301_R_0001&from=EN

⁶¹ https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/2020-european_semester_country-report-belgium_en.pdf

2.1. Country-specific recommendation 1

Ensure that the nominal growth rate of net primary government expenditure does not exceed 1.6 % in 2020, corresponding to an annual structural adjustment of 0.6 % of GDP. Use windfall gains to accelerate the reduction of the general government debt ratio. Continue reforms to ensure the fiscal sustainability of the long-term care and pension systems, including by limiting early exit possibilities from the labour market. Improve the composition and efficiency of public spending, in particular through spending reviews, and the coordination of fiscal policies by all levels of government to create room for public investment.

2.1.1. Budgetary elements

The Government of Flanders continues to adhere to budgetary orthodoxy. Just like in 2017 and 2018, Flanders has achieved a structurally balanced budget in 2019 as well. The Government of Flanders will keep the budget deficit as small as possible in 2020 and is aiming for a balanced budget in 2021. This objective is in line with the advice of the High Council of Finance⁶² and ensures that Flanders takes its responsibility in achieving Belgium's medium-term objective of a **structural balance by 2021**.

2020 is a more difficult year from a budgetary point of view, since the effects of the economic downturn are being felt partly as a result of troubled trade relations and the corona crisis. In 2020, a number of measures will reach cruising speed, such as the impact of the federal tax shift, 25% of which is financed by the Regions, and of the collective bargaining agreements concluded with the social partners in welfare, education and the Flemish public administration. Finally, a tax shift in the housing tax system is being realised in Flanders. The reduction in registration duties will be immediately reflected in our budget, whereas the phase-out of the home bonus (woonbonus) will only lead to a gradual increase in budgetary margins. As a result, Flanders will have⁶³ an estimated budget deficit of €431 million in 2020. The costs related to the Oosterweel connection are not taken into consideration by the Government of Flanders, since this project is widely recognised as a one-off and highly exceptional investment of major economic importance at local, regional, national and euroregional level. A differentiated tolls system will be used for financing said project.

Table: Expenditure for the Oosterweel project excluded from the budgetary objective (in thousand €)

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Oosterweel construction cost (incl. interest)	191,897	260,114	390,084	590,151	607,490

Source: Multiannual estimate 2019-2024 for preparation of 2020 budget, p. 38,

<http://docs.vlaamsparlement.be/pfile?id=1499421>

⁶² High Council of Finance, Budgetary path in preparation of the Stability Programme 2019-2022 (Begrotingstraject ter voorbereiding van het stabiliteitsprogramma 2019-2022), 28 March 2019, https://www.hogeraadvanfinancien.be/sites/default/files/public/publications/hrf_fin_advies_2019_03.pdf

⁶³ When the budget for 2020 was drawn up, the balance with respect to the balanced budget objective was estimated at €431 million. The budgetary adjustment process was still ongoing during the compilation and discussion of the present document.

The measures (see also 2.6.) Flanders has taken to slow down the further spread of the coronavirus and to level off the impact on the healthcare system, as well as the measures it has introduced to financially support affected citizens and companies will have a budgetary impact that is difficult to estimate as yet. For this reason, a provision of at least €2 billion will be entered in the 2020 budget adjustment to be submitted to the Flemish Parliament at the end of April. A second budget review will be held in September 2020, which will include more details on the additional expenditure and revenue shortfalls resulting from COVID-19. In the meantime, all measures are being closely monitored.

Furthermore, the Government of Flanders is making **debt reduction efforts**. The Decree and the Government of Flanders Order (Besluit van de Vlaamse Regering/BVR) on optimising the management of the financial assets of Flemish public entities entered into force on 1 October 2018. Said Decree and BVR oblige entities belonging to the consolidation circle and meeting certain conditions to invest their surplus liquid assets in the Flemish Community or a public entity with a certain minimum rating. This not only reduces the consolidated debt position of said public entity, but also the consolidated debt as a whole. After all, the INR immediately deducts these invested amounts from Flanders' total debt. At the end of 2018, the aforementioned decree led to a reduction in consolidated debt by approximately €1,100 million.

SRSP (2018 cycle). With technical assistance from the EC's Structural Reform Support Service (SRSS), the structural anchoring of spending reviews in the budgetary process was prepared. This will be done after the service voucher pilot project has been reviewed. Spending reviews lead to a more efficient composition of public expenditure and can create budgetary room for manoeuvre that can be used for new policy impulses, additional productive public investment or tax reduction. All these measures result in a more growth-friendly composition of the budget.

2.1.2. Investment

By implementing reforms and a sound budgetary policy, the Government of Flanders is creating **additional room for investment** in the coming term of office. These investments are a priority of the Government of Flanders to prepare Flanders for the rapidly changing world. The investment ambition of the Government of Flanders is translated in the Coalition Agreement and amounts to **€1.65 billion** in the period 2019-2024. The Government of Flanders will mainly invest in all transport modes of mobility and public works (mobiliteit en openbare werken/MOW), in the construction of schools (mainly in secondary education) and in the construction of infrastructure for R&D and higher education. Investments in hospitals, excellent cultural infrastructure, supra-local sports and top-level sports infrastructure, IT and immovable heritage also receive the necessary attention. In addition, the Government of Flanders keeps investing in social housing by maintaining the record level of 2019 in the coming years. The main focus of these investments is on renovation and sustainability. Of the total investment envelope of €1.65 billion, additional investments amounting to €100 million will be committed by the Flemish Region in 2020.

Not only the Region, but local authorities as well are an important driving force in boosting the pace of investment and increasing the growth potential of Flanders' economy. In addition to the investments made by the Government of Flanders, the financial leeway and room for investment of the local authorities will be strengthened by financing half of the accountability contribution to the pension bill, by introducing a new financial incentive for local authorities to preserve as much open space as possible, and by maintaining the growth norm of 3.5% in the Municipal Fund (Gemeentefonds). As a result, on top of the increase in the Municipal Fund, local authorities will receive an injection in excess of €400

million in 2024 that can be used to meet local needs, close to the citizens. Cumulative over the period 2020-2024, it concerns an injection of €1.4 billion.

2.1.3. Budgetary sustainability of long-term care systems

In order to maintain a structurally balanced budget, the costs of ageing and long-term care need to be kept under control. This expenditure is evaluated within the framework of Flanders' budget forecasts and the multiannual estimate. For each budget formulation and adjustment this expenditure is evaluated with a view to achieving a structurally balanced budget, including in the medium term. This strict budget monitoring concerns the various components of public expenditure in Flanders that may evolve in an open-ended manner on the basis of the ageing population, such as the cash allowances based on the severity of care in Flemish Social Protection (Vlaamse Sociale Bescherming) and the mobility aids. Other budget expenditure related to ageing, such as residential care for older persons and family care, comes under a regulatory framework that sets the growth norm and can therefore be enforced via legislation.

In addition, the Government of Flanders is investing in prevention, outpatient care and support of the home environment to avoid a greater care demand. Research has also been set up to produce healthcare projections, which assess the potential budgetary impact of ageing, so that policymakers can intervene not only to ensure a proper provision, but also to take preventive action.

SRSP (2018 cycle). The SRSS offers technical support for the project regarding the implementation of the **reform of Integrated Primary Care 2017-2025 (Geïntegreerde Eerste Lijn)** in Flanders in order to facilitate the implementation of some reform issues in primary care. In 2019, an evaluation was initiated 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 final workshop took place on 9 October 2019 and the relevant report will be made public by the University of Amsterdam.

2.1.4. Labour market

The Government of Flanders is doing everything in its power to raise the employment rate to 80%. This translates into a target of 120,000 people by 2024. The Government of Flanders and the social partners signed a declaration of commitment to this end on 21 February 2020 (see 2.2.1.). In order to get 120,000 extra people into work, 24,000 additional working people are needed on an annual basis. On top of that, there is an annual replacement demand of 13,000 people who are retiring. There is, however, an expected growth of 26,000 extra jobs per year. In concrete terms, this means that, on top of the expected growth, 11,000 extra working people will be needed each year during this term of office. A tight labour market, an ageing population and structural unemployment among certain disadvantaged groups, combined with deteriorating economic forecasts, all mean that structural policy reforms will be needed to realise this ambition. To this end, the Government of Flanders will focus on activating jobseekers and inactive people and making work more rewarding by increasing the difference with inactivity through the introduction of a job bonus. The job bonus and the full range of measures to raise the employment rate are discussed in detail in the next chapter.

2.2. Country-specific recommendation 2

Remove disincentives to work and strengthen the effectiveness of active labour market policies, in particular for the low-skilled, older workers and people with a migrant background. Improve the performance and inclusiveness of the education and training systems and address skills mismatches.

2.2.1. More people at work

The new Government of Flanders (2019-2024) has set itself the objective of getting an additional 120,000 people into work by the end of its term of office. On 21 February 2020, the **Government of Flanders** and the **social partners** signed a **joint declaration of commitment** to this end. This objective of the **Strategy 120,000** (Strategie 120,000) is pursued by means of a **three-pronged approach**: (1) keeping employed people in work, (2) strengthening the role of VDAB and (3) mainly attracting people who are currently not participating in the labour market. Within the latter group, priority is given to **four categories**, viz. (1) young people who are not in training and employment, (2) people on social assistance, (3) people with health problems and (4) people who have temporarily left the labour market to take on caring responsibilities. To enable them to participate, extensive cooperation is needed with, among others, the National Institute for Health and Disability Insurance/NIHDI (Rijksinstituut voor Ziekte- en Invaliditeitsverzekering/RIZIV), the Agency for Integration & Civic Integration (Agentschap Inburgering & Integratie), Education and the local authorities.

The social partners will be collaborated with in order to identify barriers and find solutions. These include accessible and affordable childcare and mobility, financial barriers, especially for low incomes, and the fact of having obtained a diploma or not. The social partners and the Government of Flanders jointly commit to structural consultation. At the same time, agreements have been made on an annual follow-up and monitoring report which maps the employment rate, the number of people in work, unemployment and the quality of employment. This is also broken down into groups who today are underrepresented in the labour market. These groups are the short-skilled, over-55s, jobseekers with a migrant background and people with a work-limiting disability.

At a time when unemployment in Flanders is historically low, the Government of Flanders is thus stepping up efforts **to activate economically inactive people**. VDAB's services will be gradually extended to this target group with the deployment of special youth consultants, among other things, with the main focus in 2020 being on detecting and reaching economically inactive people and on identifying the most appropriate actions.

The **reintegration of long-term ill people** will also be an important spearhead. The existing cooperation agreement with NIHDI and the health insurance funds will be extended, so that more reintegration pathways can be offered. Innovative methodologies will also be experimented with in order to better adapt the pathways to the beneficiary's needs. For those who become ill, it will be examined as early as 3 months after the start of the incapacity for work whether reintegration is possible.

In the **social economy**, the number of places in collective supported employment (collectief maatwerk) will be increased and individual supported employment (individueel maatwerk) will be developed as well. As a result, target group employees will also be supported in mainstream companies, which will benefit the progression to the mainstream labour market.

The Government of Flanders states in its Coalition Agreement that work is the key to integration and participation. As far as **people with a migrant background** are concerned, the Government of Flanders wants to stimulate activation by establishing as much as possible contacts with inactive people - whether entitled to benefits or not - who do not enter the labour market for linguistic, cultural, domestic and/or other reasons. With a view to activation and societal integration, the barriers that prevent them from taking up employment are removed by **offering them realistic career prospects and making their competencies visible**. Through monitoring projects, non-Dutch jobseekers are paired with more experienced mentors and labour market coaches. Special consideration is also given to **women with a migrant background**, a group with a low employment rate. VDAB is devising an adapted strategy for this purpose.

Newcomers (with job prospects) will be registered with VDAB within two months after their arrival for guidance to work or additional training. This guidance will focus increasingly on language and, where possible, be integrated fully into the pathway to work as a whole. **Language support** for both jobseekers and employers is also provided within the framework of on-the-job training. VDAB actively guides newcomers to customised work at the proper level in close cooperation with all bodies involved. Automatic data exchange between VDAB and Actiris, the agencies for integration and civic integration, local authorities and education is important here. In order to ensure that newcomers can be employed more quickly in the labour market at their level of education, the activities of the National Academic Recognition Information Centre (NARIC) will be reinforced, among other things, with regard to the **recognition of foreign diplomas**.

The Flemish authorities will **work together** more closely **with local authorities**, inter alia to reach and activate young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEETs), people on income support, newcomers, and other economically inactive people. New cooperation agreements will also be concluded with the employment services of the **other Regions**, Actiris and Le Forem, in 2020. Cooperation with border regions in Limburg and West Flanders will be enhanced, as will the continuation of the economic migration policy.

Unemployment or inactivity traps will be combated with the **Flemish job bonus**, an allowance that raises the lowest net wages without increasing employers' wage costs. This job bonus raises the net wages of working people with a gross monthly salary up to maximum €1,700 by at least €50 per month. For higher wages, the job bonus gradually drops to zero for people with a gross monthly wage of up to €2,500. People working part-time receive a job bonus that is proportional to their employment percentage. The exact terms of the job bonus will be determined in 2020, with maximum account being taken of any possible side effects.

Within **childcare**, the priority rules and their application will be reviewed, ensuring actual priority for children of working parents and parents who follow training as part of a pathway to work.

Sectors and companies will be supported to facilitate job transitions between sectors and to proactively anticipate corporate restructurings. Furthermore, the Government of Flanders is committed to creating additional places in the social economy and to improving cooperation between the social and mainstream economies.

2.2.2. Customised guidance for vulnerable groups

Flanders will **screen** newly registered **jobseekers more quickly** (within two months after registration), and make binding agreements on their pathway within three months after registration. **Artificial**

intelligence will be used to estimate their distance to the labour market. In this way, VDAB can offer efficient support where necessary and make sure that the proposed pathway meets their needs to the maximum extent.

The **target group policy** was adjusted in 2019 and 2020, with wage cost reductions for low-skilled young people and jobseeking over-58s being upgraded to a full exemption from employer's contributions. The target group reduction for medium-skilled young people is phasing out, and the reductions for older employees now have a starting age of 58 instead of 55. The reduction amounts for over-60s were increased from €1,150 to €1,500 per quarter. A new (customised) target group reduction on the basis of the distance to the labour market will be developed in 2020.

For long-term jobseekers, work experience and competence enhancement remain priorities. The existing systems of 'temporary work experience' (tijdelijke werkervaring) and 'neighbourhood work' (wijkwerken) will be reviewed and complemented by a new system of **community service (gemeenschapsdienst)**. Anyone who still has not found a job after two years, despite having received customised guidance, can be obliged - or not - to work in this community service, so as to avoid alienation from the labour market and to maintain a certain work rhythm. The precise framework for this community service will be designed in 2020.

2.2.3. Stimulating a learning culture in Flanders

Flanders is aware of the need to create a culture of lifelong learning. In 2019, Flanders and the OECD finalised the Skills Strategy Flanders, an extensive report with widely supported recommendations for strengthening skills and lifelong learning (LLL) in Flanders. The new Government of Flanders has acted upon these recommendations:

- In order to stimulate synergies and joint vision development, a **lifelong learning platform** will be set up with representatives of the Work, Education and Economy policy areas. This should make it possible to coordinate LLL policy across policy areas, to develop digital tools to make the skills of individuals more visible, to make the training offer in Flanders more transparent, and to introduce individual learning and career accounts. The financing of university colleges by the Education Tax Units (Onderwijsbelastingseenheden/OBEs) will also be reviewed and augmented in different stages.
- After the roll-out of **dual learning** in secondary education (SE), Flanders will start to extend this system to adult education, where many low-skilled people can be reached, and to higher education (see 2.2.8.).
- The various training incentives in Flanders, i.e. training leave (opleidingsverlof), training vouchers (opleidingscheques) and training credit (opleidingskrediet), have recently been harmonised so that they follow the same rules and principles and can be used for the same training courses to the maximum extent. In addition, to make training even more accessible, the Government of Flanders will create a **learning and career account (leer- en loopbaanrekening)**, in which every citizen can check which training courses are available to them and to which support they are entitled.
- The **new attainment targets** are based on 16 key competences. These key competences have a clear link with the European key competences for lifelong learning and 21st century skills, as recommended by the EC and OECD. They help create a positive mentality towards (lifelong) learning. In the roll-out of the new attainment targets in SE, particular attention is paid to the

interplay between professional qualifications and attainment targets. Pupils from vocational secondary education (beroepssecundair onderwijs/bsso), and if necessary technical secondary education (technisch secundair onderwijs/tso), are thus well-prepared for the labour market.

- In adult education, the low participation of low-skilled, unemployed and older people poses a challenge. The current learning offer still reconciles learning, work and family life insufficiently. For this reason, the **new financing system for adult education** offers, from 1 September 2019 onwards, a stable financial framework to the adult basic education centres (centra voor basiseducatie) and the adult education centres (centra voor volwassenenonderwijs), which encourages them to increasingly turn their focus towards vulnerable learners.

2.2.4. Measures with a specific focus on teachers/the teaching profession

The teaching profession faces several important challenges across the EU⁶⁴. For example, there are problems with finding sufficiently qualified teachers, attracting and retaining strong teachers in training, and achieving innovation in pedagogical approaches. The Government of Flanders is therefore committed to strengthening the teaching career with specific focus on teacher professionalisation (CPD, ITE, pedagogical support, etc.). Some 5,000 to 7,000 motivated, passionate and well-trained novice teachers are needed each year at all levels of education. A number of measures have been taken to meet this need:

- The **reformed teacher training courses** at university colleges and universities launched this academic year (2019-2020) offer students the opportunity to become a teacher by undertaking a bachelor's or master's programme or an educational graduate programme. Thanks to the new educational master's programmes, those who opt for a university programme can choose to become a teacher at the start of their studies. Adapted evening or weekend courses and/or distance learning provide a flexible offer for lateral entrants.
- With the introduction of **dual teaching**, teachers and lecturers are encouraged to teach and work in a company at the same time. This leads to a win-win-win situation for schools, pupils and companies, as the number of specialised teachers increases, lessons become practice-oriented lessons and interaction between education and the labour market grows.
- In the most recent **collective bargaining agreement** several measures were taken to increase the job security of novice teachers and to make their careers more stable. For instance, from 1 January 2021, there will be a linear wage increase and an additional wage scale after 36 years of seniority.
- Since 1 September 2019, teachers can get a **temporary appointment of continuous duration** (tijdelijke aanstelling van doorlopende duur/TADD) **more quickly** after 400 days instead of 600 days of actual employment, provided they received a positive assessment. This makes the 'probationary period' for novice teachers shorter but more intense. During this period, the member of staff is entitled to induction guidance (see below). More opportunities for permanent appointment will also be created. Since 1 September 2019, schools receive more structural funds for policy support, induction guidance and professionalisation.

⁶⁴ See the Education and Training Monitor 2019 in which teachers and teaching take centre stage: <https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/document-library-docs/volume-1-2019-education-and-training-monitor.pdf>

- In case of a temporary appointment for a specified period (tijdelijke aanstelling voor een bepaalde periode/TABD), staff members are entitled to **induction guidance (aanvangsbegeleiding)**. This allows new employees to grow in their position and to further develop the competencies they have acquired during initial teacher training.

SRSP (2020 cycle). In order to support the implementation of the induction guidance, the Flemish authorities call on the support of the EC through an SRSP project. Through the project 'Implementing an effective induction system for novice teachers in Flanders' Flanders wants to develop evidence-informed methodologies that help schools to embed induction guidance more structurally in the school. This grant was awarded by the EC in March 2020.

- Administrative burden remains an important topic. **Reducing red tape** is the shared responsibility of the authorities, umbrella organisations, community education (Gemeenschapsonderwijs/GO!) and school management. School management is encouraged to take measures, in consultation with the teaching team, to reduce reporting. The Flemish authorities are setting up a contact point for reporting planning burdens, viz. 'Kafka in education' (Kafka in het onderwijs). The Education Inspectorate is instructed to monitor administrative burden during inspections and to advise schools on how to reduce it.

2.2.5. Measures with a focus on compulsory education

The **modernisation of SE** is being rolled out incrementally year by year. Reducing the number of pupils who leave education without qualifications (preventing early school leaving) is one of the main objectives of the modernisation. At the same time, the Government of Flanders continues to work on the reform and update of the educational curriculum. After the introduction of new attainment targets in the 1st stage of SE, new attainment targets for the 2nd and 3rd stages of SE are now being developed. Subsequently, new attainment targets will also be developed for basic adult education and adult education. All SE courses must be in line with either the needs of the labour market or the starting qualifications of higher education, or both. The complete study offer of SE is brought together in **one simple and uniform table** that gives parents and pupils an overview of all possible learning pathways. This table includes the matrix developed by the authorities with the study domains, final objectives⁶⁵ and forms of education (general secondary education (algemeen secundair onderwijs/aso), vocational secondary education (bso), art secondary education (kunstsecundair onderwijs/kso), technical secondary education (tso)) as well as the basic options and packages of the first stage.

The new Government of Flanders will introduce **standardised and validated tests** that will be taken at 4 moments in the educational career of pupils. This instrument will facilitate international benchmarking and is intended to measure three things: the extent to which pupils achieve the attainment targets, the learning gains of individual pupils and the learning gains at school level. These tests will not be used to rank schools, but to increase learning gains. Schools whose pupils achieve significantly lower learning gains from these validated and standardised tests will enter into a freely chosen guidance pathway to improve the quality of their education.

Together with the Government of Flanders, the education partners are developing a **competence framework for school leaders**. On the basis of this framework, possible selection criteria and a

⁶⁵ There are three final objectives: 1) progression in aso courses and some tso or kso courses: these courses are abstract and theoretical and prepare pupils for further studies in higher education, 2) courses with a two-fold final objective in tso and kso: these courses prepare pupils both for higher education and for direct entry into the labour market, 3) labour market-oriented courses in bso: these courses are hands-on and practical and prepare pupils for direct entry into the labour market.

professionalisation and assessment policy for school leaders will be developed. This competence framework constitutes the basis for the further development of a school leadership training course.

Every school year, schools receive funds for their daily operation. They use them to buy materials, pay training courses for teachers and ensure school maintenance. From this school year (2019-2020) onwards, **pre-primary schools in Flanders** will receive the **same operating budget as primary schools**. An additional €52 million will be earmarked to guarantee this harmonisation. In concrete terms, schools will now receive €662 per pre-primary child instead of €477, which is an increase of almost 40%. Since 1 September 2019, primary schools (mainstream and special needs education) also receive extra **administrative support** each year amounting to €20 million. In concrete terms, this means a minimum of 380 and a maximum of almost 500 additional full-time administrative staff for Flanders.

2.2.6. Measures with a focus on inclusiveness

The M-decree will be replaced by a **guidance decree (begeleidingsdecreet)**, which is aimed at supporting and guiding all pupils and their teachers. Every pupil is given a place in the education system that best suits their needs.

Flanders is committed to all pupils: average learners, pupils with greater care needs and very good learners, as well as the (exceptionally) **highly gifted**. Teachers learn to identify these children as early as possible and ensure that education remains sufficiently challenging for them. Teachers can call on support for these pupils as well. Pupils are provided with technical support that allows them to tailor the teaching provision to their specific needs.

Children who are ill and housebound as a result of their illness will receive a customised offer as soon as possible, so that their entitlement to learn, their chance of progression and the smoothest possible educational career are guaranteed. The education offer for ill pupils, such as temporary education at home (tijdelijk onderwijs aan huis/TOAH), synchronous Internet education (synchroon internetonderwijs/SIO), hospital school (ziekenhuisschool), psychiatric services for children and youngsters (diensten met onderwijsbehoeften/DMOB), the non-profit organisation 'School & Ziekzijn' (School and Illness), etc. will be reviewed, as well as the cooperation with the home school.

2.2.7. Measures with a focus on equality

From school year 2020-2021 onwards, the **compulsory school age will be lowered from six to five years**. Non-participation or insufficient participation in pre-primary education is a strong predictor of early school leaving. This measure therefore helps to ensure that a higher number of pupils leave school with an SE qualification.

Pre-primary education lays the foundations for Dutch language competency and makes sure that as many children as possible start their school career with equal opportunities. All five to six-year-olds will be subject to **uniform and standardised cross-network and cross-umbrella language screening**. Based on the results of said language screening, pupils who do not have a sufficient command of Dutch will have to follow an active Dutch language integration course. This includes a language immersion class or a fully-fledged alternative that leads to the same results.

The Government of Flanders will provide **language integration courses for children with a limited knowledge of the Dutch language**. Excellent Dutch language skills are essential, as pupils who insufficiently develop the school academic register of Dutch will have more problems throughout their school career. Dutch is the key to strong educational performance, to full integration, but also to good communication in the classroom.

The **SES operating resources**, allocated on the basis of the socio-economic status of pupils, **will be enhanced**. In this way, children with a difficult home situation will receive targeted support and reduce their chances of unqualified outflow. The allocated resources can be used where necessary for the organisation of Dutch lessons, teaching material for Dutch as a second language and homework guidance. Children who do have a good knowledge of the Dutch language also continue to receive targeted support in order to maximise their chances of qualified outflow.

Higher education will become (even) more accessible. Since 1 September 2019, graduate programmes are organised by university colleges. As a result, graduate programmes can attract students who today do not opt for higher education studies. This contributes to the further democratisation of higher education in Flanders. The future graduate programmes will be financed on the basis of an open-ended mechanism during the first years in which they are organised. In this way the budget matches student numbers. From 2019, the Government of Flanders appropriates €10 million of additional investment funds per year for university colleges, so as to enable them to adapt their infrastructure or provide extra classrooms and practice rooms.

2.2.8. Dual learning

Dual learning means that young people from the age of 15 combine workplace learning with learning at school. In other words, they obtain a professional or educational qualification as they prepare for the labour market. It is a fully-fledged learning pathway next to full-time SE.

SRSP (2019 cycle). In order to support teachers in teaching in the new dual system, Flanders developed the SRSP project 'Dual Learning in Flanders: Professionalisation of Teachers' in 2019 with support from the EC.

During school year 2019-2020, dual learning will be **fully implemented**: since 1 September 2019, a total of 186 schools offer 79 courses, including healthcare, electromechanical techniques, management of green areas and gardens and painting. In addition, the Flemish Parliament adopted the decree which allows for dual learning within special needs secondary education (Buitengewoon Secundair Onderwijs/BuSO). Finally, dual learning will be extended to training in university colleges and adult education. The terms, possibilities and preconditions of dual learning in adult education are being explored through 14 pilot projects.

Together with the Department of Work and Social Economy, dual learning will also be rolled out in higher education. The dual offer will also be extended in SE to more courses with a two-fold final objective (progression/labour market), final progression objective tso, and where possible in aso courses.

Lateral entrants (e.g. employees, jobseekers) can use dual learning pathways to work on a professional level whilst making the most of their opportunities in higher education. For employees who find the transition to lifelong learning difficult today, the functional setting of dual learning can be attractive. In addition, dual learning physically brings education to companies, which reduces the threshold for employees to engage in LLL.

2.2.9. STEM Action Plan

To encourage careers in mathematics, exact science, engineering and technology, the Government of Flanders drew up a **STEM Action Plan (STEM-actieplan)** for the period 2012-2020. Within the framework of this action plan, the STEM Monitor was developed. This instrument offers insights into evolutions of relevant STEM indicators, such as inflow, progression and outflow data of pupils and students in STEM-related courses of study in SE, adult education and higher education. The latest STEM Monitor of June 2019 (data for the school year 2017-2018) confirms that more and more young people opt for a course of study or studies in science and technology. STEM is growing again in the 2nd and 3rd stages of SE. Whereas in school year 2010-2011 (reference year) 53,806 pupils enrolled in a technology or science course of study in the 2nd or 3rd stage, their number rose to 55,153 in the school year 2017-2018 (plus 1,300 pupils). In higher education, too, the proportion of young people enrolling in STEM courses went up compared to the reference year.

The Government of Flanders wants children to become familiar with STEM at an even earlier age. The Flemish authorities will encourage interest from pre-primary education onwards by offering them positive experiences with science and technology both in and outside school.

To enhance support for technology, innovation and science among people in Flanders, various policy areas (Economy, Science Policy, Innovation, and Youth and Media) are working on a **new ambitious STEM Action Plan 2020-2030**.

2.3. Country-specific recommendation 3

Focus investment-related economic policy on sustainable transport, including upgrading rail infrastructure, the low carbon and energy transition and research and innovation, in particular in digitalisation, taking into account regional disparities. Tackle the growing mobility challenges, by reinforcing incentives and removing barriers to increase the supply and demand of collective and low emission transport.

2.3.1. Research, innovation and digitalisation

Flanders is investing heavily in R&D. Over the past terms of office it has continuously invested additional resources in R&D, which translates into an impressive growth path in R&D intensity, up to 2.89% by 2017. The current Government of Flanders also keeps up R&D investment with an eye to achieving the 3% target and becoming one of the top 5 knowledge regions in Europe by 2024. To this end, it is planning, by the end of this term of office, to increase the annual budget by €250 million as well as one-off investments worth €195 million in R&D infrastructure.

In 2019, the Flemish authorities spent an additional (one-off) budget of €120 million, of which €44.47 million on R&D&I. In addition, the annual (recurring) budget was raised by €280 million. Two thirds of these new recurrent funds serve to strengthen existing channels targeted on universities and businesses, including the Research Foundation - Flanders (Fonds voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek) (€40 million extra), the Special Research Fund (Bijzonder Onderzoeksfonds) (€35 million extra) and the Industrial Research Fund (Industrieel Onderzoeksfonds) (€20 million extra). One third of the new recurrent funds is used for new policy initiatives. The most important of these **new policy initiatives** are:

- The **Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy Plan**: The Government of Flanders annually earmarks €32 million for investment in strategic basic research (€12 million), implementation in companies (€15 million) and supporting measures (skills, legal and ethical aspects, awareness raising) (€5 million).
- The **Cybersecurity (CS) Policy Plan**: The Government of Flanders annually reserves €20 million for investment in strategic basic research (€8 million), implementation in companies (€9 million) and supporting measures (€3 million).
- **Moonshot CO₂**: The Government of Flanders annually invests €20 million over a 20-year period to support innovations in the field of CO₂ emissions, CO₂ capture and CO₂ reuse (see also 2.3.3.).

Flanders is currently focussing broadly on the **digitalisation of society**, with the Flanders Information Agency (Agentschap Informatie Vlaanderen) as key actor. The Flemish government wants to become a data-driven government that delivers state-of-the-art digital services to its citizens, businesses and organisations. An important way to increase the efficiency of these services and improve their user-friendliness is by maintaining the **'once only' principle**. Instead of constantly asking citizens or businesses for the same information, public bodies are obliged to reuse the data already in their possession. To this end, the Flemish authorities continue to invest in the successful **Crossroads Bank Flanders** (Kruispuntbank Vlaanderen), i.e. an intelligent data exchange platform that allows reuse of data stored in so-called **authentic data sources**, which are reliable sources of public authority data that can be used in all administrative procedures.

The Flemish authorities want to expand the existing network of Flemish authentic data sources with more data sources, viz. **real-time data** from IoT sensors in Flemish cities (e.g. regarding air quality or traffic flows). By using artificial intelligence, the Flemish authorities want to convert this data to **smart data** that can be used to tackle societal problems in the field of mobility, healthcare and safety and security. By following the data standards of the **OSLO** (Open Standards for Linked Organisations) **programme**, the authorities also want to make this data available to the private sector so that it can develop innovative applications using this data.

The Flemish authorities offer citizens a portal site, **www.vlaanderen.be** where citizens can find information, start online administrative procedures and request support. This portal is built in a web content management system, **web platform**, that allows Flemish and local administrations to better inform their target groups and support them during their online transactions. An essential part of this web platform is **My Citizen Profile (Mijn Burgerprofiel)**, an online gateway that can be integrated into websites of Flemish or local administrations. My Citizen Profile gives an overview of the data which the public administration stores about you, the status of the administrative files it handles for you, the official e-mail stored in your electronic mailbox provided by the administration, etc. This allows the authorities to adhere to the **'no wrong door' principle**: no matter which government website you visit, you will always have access to your essential personal data and your own files.

The Government of Flanders is planning a **Flemish agenda for digital entrepreneurship and innovation** in the coming term of office. The roll-out of 5G is one of its top priorities. The Flemish authorities have started the development of a digital platform, **www.vlaanderenonderneemt.be**, where entrepreneurs can initiate their administrative files from a one-stop shop and follow the progress of these files with the Flemish administrations concerned (see also 2.4.2.). Companies can already apply for subsidies, premiums, accreditations and permits with various public bodies. Together, these two

portals implement the '**digital first**' principle, which means that the most important public transactions can be carried out entirely by digital means.

In 2015-2017, the Flemish authorities financed the **Flanders Radical Digital (Vlaanderen Radicaal Digitaal) investment programme** and will run a second phase of this investment programme in 2021-2023, with a budget of €5 million in 2021, €10 million in 2022 and €15 million in 2023. The aim is to offer targeted support to innovative digitalisation projects within the different policy areas and at the different levels of government in Flanders. The first investment programme succeeded in significantly increasing the digitalisation level of public services in Flanders to 66%⁶⁶. The second investment programme is expected to bring us even closer to the 100% target by the end of the current term of office in 2024.

The Flemish authorities also invest in **AI**, e.g. the use of chatbots to support the operation of the call centre, and the use of voice assistants such as Siri or Alexa to automatically answer requests for information from citizens. The use of **blockchain** is being explored, in particular to fully rethink some existing administrative procedures, such as the automated payment of grants to citizens and organisations in support of their forest management activities. Flanders Investment & Trade (FIT) is also resolutely committed to AI and digitalisation. In this context reference can be made to the SRSP project below.

SRSP (2019 cycle). Within the SRSP project '**Artificial Intelligence in Trade and Investment Promotion Agencies**' FIT is planning specific efforts to improve: (1) access to data (assessment of the current use of data within FIT, as well as a *road map* with specific recommendations for improvement), (2) investments in data and Artificial Intelligence (the provision of a long-term strategy that justifies future investments in both data and AI), (3) the digital skills gap (delivering an assessment of the current awareness of AI (as a digital skill) and data across all layers of the organisation, also with a view to drawing up specific training pathways as a guideline for staff professionalisation) and (4) effective institutions and quality authorities (drawing up an AI strategy will provide FIT with the necessary guidelines to develop specific *tools* or implement organisational changes to be able to function optimally in a rapidly changing digital environment and thus meet the increasing demands of customers and to guarantee continued operational excellence).

One of the main objectives of the Flemish authorities is to transform Flanders into a **smart region**. To this end, two major investment programmes have already been set up: the **Smart Flanders support programme** (2017-2019), aimed at the development of real-time open data applications with local authorities, and the **City of Things programme** (2018-2019), aimed at trial projects in smart city applications (in the field of environment, traffic management, healthcare, etc.) and space for experiments that Imec will be given in Antwerp. These investments will be continued in order to create a viable ecosystem in Flanders with smart region applications.

Furthermore, in 2019, several **theme-based initiatives** and projects were launched that benefit the digitalisation of society (Mobilidata, I-Learn, Internet or Water, etc.):

- €29 million is invested in a data platform that collects traffic data and is to improve traffic flow (**Mobilidata**, see also 2.3.2.)
- €20 million is invested in a project to bring personalised digital learning to the entire education system in Flanders (**I-Learn**)

⁶⁶ Source: Flanders Information Agency

- €10 million is invested in a project which aims to develop a basic monitoring and management infrastructure that will contribute to more effective and efficient management of freshwater reserves (**Internet or Water**, see also 5.4.)

To conclude, it can be indicated that the digitalisation of government is supported through the **Programme for Innovation Procurement (Programma Innovatieve Overheidsopdrachten)**.

In 2017, the Flemish authorities earmarked €3.5 million for a first series of living labs⁶⁷ within the framework of **Industry 4.0**. One year later, these living labs deliver targeted services to a wide range of companies. At the beginning of 2019, 10 new living labs were selected which started in April with a budget of €4 million and with the objective of covering even more industrial sectors and themes.

The Government of Flanders has also decided to invest €75 million in an evergreen fund '**Flanders Future Techfund**'. The mission of this new fund is to bring the technology expertise available in the Flemish strategic research centres (strategisch onderzoekscentrum/SOC) and spearhead clusters (see also 2.3.3.) to the market via start-ups with a broad product portfolio and strong growth potential or by means of licensing agreements with existing companies.

With the **Science Communication Policy Plan (Beleidsplan Wetenschapscommunicatie)** and the **STEM Action Plan**, €14 million was spent in 2019 to popularise science and innovation and to raise awareness of STEM courses and professions. As a result, the ICT Impulse Programme (ICT-impulsprogramma) was continued (€600,000), seven new Citizen Science projects were supported (€1 million), the STEM academies were expanded (€2.5 million) and numerous initiatives by structural partners were made possible such as FTI vzw, science communication expertise units of universities and university colleges, RVO society and EOS vzw. The impact of all these actions on the general public and on specific target groups (pupils, teachers, entrepreneurs) is measured periodically by the **Science Barometer (Wetenschapsbarometer)**. The 2018 baseline measurement shows that 51% of Flanders' population is positive about technological innovations, 65% is interested in science and technology, 90% recognises the importance thereof and 96.4% has great confidence in science. The 2019 results will be available in early 2020.

2.3.2. Addressing mobility challenges

In the policy period 2019-2024, the Government of Flanders will continue its investment in transport infrastructure and **sustainable transport measures** undiminished in order to provide an answer to increasing mobility and congestion pressure. The focus will be on measures designed to enable citizens and businesses to switch smoothly between different modes of transport. Public transport and bicycles should be fully-fledged, efficient and green alternatives to cars. In addition, the Government of Flanders continues to invest heavily in **large-scale infrastructure projects** on roads and waterways.

In order to address future mobility challenges efficiently, an **Integrated Investment Programme (GIP)** is being drawn up for the first time for the year 2020. The GIP contains an overarching overview of the investments of all entities of the MOW Policy Area across the different modes of transport. The GIP 2020 proposal was discussed in the Flemish Parliament in the context of the budget vote in late

⁶⁷ https://www.industrie40vlaanderen.be/sites/default/files/downloads/living_labs_poster_industrial.pdf

December 2019. Currently, final bilateral discussions are being held with the stakeholders involved, with a view to the formal approval of the GIP 2020 by the Flemish Minister for MOW.⁶⁸ A detailed explanation of the GIP 2020 and an overview of the main priority investment projects in the field of MOW are given in Chapter 2.5.2.

In the field of **road infrastructure**, Flanders is keeping up its efforts around Antwerp (Oosterweel project), Brussels (Ring Road/R0) and Ghent (R4).

After the Oosterweel works on Left Bank (Linkeroever) and on the motorway in Zwijndrecht were started in March 2019, the Oosterweel works will reach cruising speed with five new sites from March 2020 onwards. In the first instance, the reconstruction of the Antwerp Ring Road (R1) section between the Antwerp-West and St-Anna Left Bank nodes will start in April 2020. The most difficult works and traffic conversions (reconstruction E17 Kruikebeke - Zwijndrecht, E34 Waasland Port-East - St-Anna/Left Bank, and Antwerp-West) will be carried out in the months of July and August when traffic is lowest. In addition, the first demolition works on Oosterweelsteenweg will start in February 2020, where the new traffic node between the port and the Eilandje - the Oosterweel node - and the tunnels under the Albert Canal will eventually be built. The integrated environment permit application for the Scheldt Tunnel and the infrastructure works on Right Bank (Rechteroever) will be submitted in the spring of 2020. The main works are expected to be awarded according to the following schedule:

- First half of 2020: Scheldt Tunnel and traffic and tunnel technical installations (verkeers- en tunneltechnische installaties/VTTI)
- End of 2020: Right Bank part A: Oosterweel node and Royers lock
- Second half of 2021: Right Bank part B: Channel tunnels and R1.

The works for the re-organisation of the Brussels Ring Road (R0) will also continue in 2020. Within the framework of the construction of bus lanes for the Ringtrambus, the works for the Ringtrambus' own bed were started in 2019. From April 2020, the first trambus will be put into service on the adapted section of the Ringtrambus. In 2020, work will also continue on the expansion of the 60km new bicycle highways in the periphery of Brussels, the first of which was already inaugurated in September 2019.

A smooth and safe mobility system is a major priority for the Flemish authorities, which is why the ambitious **Mobilidata programme** was launched in 2019. In the coming years, the programme will realise **innovative mobility solutions** through co-creation with private partners on the basis of digital infrastructure, smart traffic lights and qualitative, sustainable data sources. This will allow policymakers, businesses, governments, residents and app builders to make traffic smoother, more sustainable, more comfortable and safer for every road user and to help them make the most efficient mobility choice.

During this term of office, the Government of Flanders will further build a cost-efficient and demand-driven public transport network. In April 2019, the **Flemish Decree on Basic Accessibility (Vlaams Decreet Basisbereikbaarheid)** was adopted by the Flemish Parliament. The implementing orders are yet to be adopted and implemented. With the introduction of basic accessibility, the Government of Flanders resolutely opts for **demand-oriented public transport**, with supply being better attuned to the

⁶⁸ The figures mentioned originate from the draft GIP 2020 and have not yet been finally adopted by the Flemish Minister for MOW. As a result, they can still (slightly) change.

transport demand of travellers and to the actual transport flows. In this way, more efficient use can be made of transport options and financial resources. Flanders will be divided into 15 transport regions, which will further flesh out basic accessibility within their own region by means of an integrated regional mobility plan. Customised mobility solutions allow to anticipate new developments such as sharing systems, the combination of different modes of transport (combined mobility), smart transport systems and mobility as a service. In 2020, the implementation of the Decree on Basic Accessibility will be given further shape in the field. The new public transport plans, including the core network, the supplementary network and customised transport, will be developed within the different transport regions in the course of 2020. By December 2021 at the latest, the complete switch to demand-driven basic accessibility will coincide with the modification of the timetable of the train network of the Belgian National Railways (Nationale Maatschappij der Belgische Spoorwegen/NMBS), which is the main public transport network.

In the meantime, investments in the activities, operational service and rolling stock of the Flemish Public Transport Company - De Lijn (Vlaamse Vervoersmaatschappij/VVM - De Lijn) will continue undiminished. The multiannual investment programme for **greening De Lijn's** rolling stock is continued. In collaboration with the European Investment Advisory Hub a study was carried out in 2019 into the various scenarios and technologies. A market exploration for the supply of electric buses was also published in December 2019. As regards financing, the various options for the coming years are being considered in cooperation with the European Investment Bank (EIB). From 2020, only low- or zero-emission buses will be purchased. The objective to serve the city centres with emission-free buses by 2025 at the latest remains unchanged.

In 2020, around €160 million will be invested in **collective transport**. Investments are being made, for instance, in the roll-out of the Ringtrambus in the periphery of Brussels (see earlier) and the fine-meshed public transport network of tramlines and express buses in North Limburg (Spartacus), among other things. In addition, Flanders is committed to **public transport on waterways**. Funds will be earmarked, inter alia, for ferry services carrying passengers, for example to and from the city and Port of Antwerp. From 2020 through 2024, the Flemish Region will appropriate funds for the operation of DeWaterbus in the Antwerp transport region, which offers travellers a fully-fledged transport alternative to commuter traffic. Said measure is one of the supporting measures within the framework of the large-scale infrastructure investments in the region (Oosterweel) to offer end users sustainable alternatives and as such mitigate congestion in and around Antwerp.

SRSP (2018 cycle). The SRSS supports the Antwerp Port Authority (Havenbedrijf Antwerpen) in an inland navigation project that consists of two parts: 'nautical inland navigation coordination' (nautische binnenvaartcoördinatie) and 'design of a concept of transferia from/to the port' (vormgeving van een concept van trasferia van/naar de haven). This study has been completed. First of all, the results indicate that advisory inland navigation coordination is the best possible scenario given the potential benefits and implementation. Taking into account the complexity of the implementation of optimally functioning advisory inland navigation coordination, it is advisable to start with informative inland navigation coordination in the first instance and to extend it to advisory coordination in the second instance. The results will be taken into account in the development and implementation of an IT platform for the inland navigation sector. In addition, the study indicated that a night hub on the western side of the port in the first instance and a transferium on the eastern route in the second instance are recommended to deal with congestion. These results are now being considered in determining the strategy of the Port of Antwerp.

SRSP (2019 cycle). The SRSS will support the Antwerp Port Authority in a railway project intended to increase railway usage (7 to 15%) in the port. The first parts of the study have been carried out and are now being used to determine the number of tracks as well as their location in the port expansion (ECA project and equipped with an additional tidal dock).

The Government of Flanders will continue the upward trend in **cycling investments** in 2020, inter alia through the construction of bicycle highways in the periphery of Brussels (see earlier). Further investments in cycling infrastructure will be made in 2020: in the preliminary draft of the GIP 2020, cycling investments amount to approximately €176 million.

In addition, the Government of Flanders will keep stimulating and facilitating the use of **inland and estuary navigation**. In 2020, further investments will be made in waterways, including the raising of the bridges over the Albert Canal, the new Zeebrugge lock, the new Terneuzen lock, the Sigma plan and the Seine-Scheldt project. By means of the hinterland connectivity grants, up to €12 million will again be granted in 2020 for investments in sustainable hinterland connections by waterways (max. €8 million/year) or by rail (max. €4 million/year).

Finally, in 2020, the current sections of the kilometre charge for heavy goods vehicles will be optimised. A speed reduction from 120 km/h to 100 km/h on the Flemish section of the Brussels Ring Road (R0) will still be introduced in 2020. This reduction is one of the measures specified in the Flemish Climate and Energy Plan (VEKP) (see also 2.3.3.).

In the field of **sustainable transport**, the VEKP sets out a far-reaching three-pronged approach. Sustainable spatial planning supports sustainable accessibility. Efforts are also being made to make growth in motorised freight traffic level off further, to reduce motorised passenger traffic and to achieve an ambitious modal shift in both passenger transport and logistics (see earlier). Finally, the further **greening of the existing vehicle fleet** is pursued. From 2030, all newly sold passenger cars will be low-carbon vehicles and at least half of them will be emission-free. In the previous term of office, taxation in Flanders was already greened to a considerable extent in accordance with the polluter pays principle, among other things via waste taxes and road taxes. The Government of Flanders continues along this path and adjusts road taxes with a view to greening the vehicle fleet when introducing the WLTP cycle and studying optimisation possibilities in the kilometre charge for heavy goods vehicles.

In the meantime, the Government of Flanders further implements the **Action Plan 'Clean Power for Transport (CPT) 2020'**. In recent years, a lot of work was done to roll out the charging infrastructure. Following a review of the action plan, the approach for the period up to 2025 will be defined in 2020. With BENEFC, Flanders is leading an EU-financed CEF project. Together with the Netherlands and the BCR two calls were already launched. As a result, 33 infrastructure investment projects are ongoing, mainly along the TEN-T network. Flanders is also a partner in two other European projects, e-MOPOLI and IDACS, which seek to harmonise charging infrastructure and interoperability. Flanders again launched its own CPT call for projects (€1 million/year) with 'charging infrastructure in companies' as main theme. Thirty projects are either in progress or have already been completed. At the end of 2019, 12 new projects were selected, representing an investment of €840,000.

2.3.3. Focusing on an energy transition

On 9 December 2019, the Government of Flanders gave its final approval to the **Flemish Energy and Climate Plan 2021-2030 (VEKP)**⁶⁹, so that during this period efforts can continue to increase energy efficiency and renewable energy production and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Flanders is fully

⁶⁹ For a comprehensive overview of the way in which Flanders intends to tackle the climate issue in the coming years: <https://www.lne.be/vlaams-energie-en-klimaatplan-2021-2030>

committed to effectively achieving the agreed targets and to accelerating investment, innovation and technological advancements which are key to the energy transition.

The transformation of the energy system requires large-scale investment, which needs to be financed with both private and public funds. We therefore create a clear, predictable and cost-efficient investment framework and strive for a fair distribution of costs and revenues. A variety of instruments are deployed to attract investment in energy efficiency and renewable energy, inter alia:

- Preparation, implementation and monitoring of the voluntary energy policy agreements between the Flemish Region and companies.
- Domestic and non-domestic energy premiums for RUE investments, including discount vouchers, energy scans and premiums for solar boilers and heat pumps (average €89 million per year).
- Cheap or interest-free energy loans for a specified target group in need of financing support (€55 million/year) and promotion of energy loans from banks.
- Interest-free necessity purchase loans (€15.5 million in 2020).
- Demolition and reconstruction premium (€18 million in 2020).
- Renewable energy production support mechanism: operating aid through green energy certificates.
- Annual call for green heat, heat networks, residual heat and biomethane (€20 million per year).
- Promotion of small and medium-sized wind turbines through investment aid (€1 million in 2020).
- Stimulation of energy storage through battery premium and project grants (€3.7 million in 2020).
- Granting of investment aid to companies, so-called ecology support (approximately €3.4 million per year).
- Support regulation of the Flemish Agricultural Investment Fund (Vlaams Landbouwinvesteringsfonds/VLIF) for investments in energy efficiency and renewable energy sources in agriculture (€7 million per year).

The building stock of the Flemish authorities is not forgotten either. The objective is to reduce the CO₂ emissions of entities of the Flemish public administration by 40% (compared to 2015) by 2030. In addition, a 30% decrease (compared to 2015) in primary energy consumption is aimed at. Flanders' own target will be sharpened to 2.5% per year and a monitoring system will be developed for this purpose. In addition to calls from the Flemish Agency for Public Sector Energy Saving (Vlaams Energiebedrijf/VEB) for energy efficiency projects co-financed by a reduction in the energy consumption budget, renewable energy techniques were also applied to suitable Flemish public administration buildings (€8.3 million in 2018).

The VEKP describes in detail which investments the Flemish authorities intend to make in the field of **research and innovation** in support of energy and climate policy in the coming years. Apart from the regular R&D financing channels, **structural funds are allocated to the strategic research centres**. These centres include the Flemish Institute for Technological Research (Vlaamse Instelling voor Technologisch Onderzoek/VITO) engaged in sustainable development and cleantech innovations, the Interuniversity Micro-Electronics Centre (Interuniversitair Micro-Electronica Centrum/Imec) engaged in PV technology, battery research and ICT with specific applications for the energy transition and smart cities, and Flanders Make which aims to develop more energy-efficient products and process technologies.

The Policy Memorandum ‘Economy’ 2019-2024 (Beleidsnota Economie 2019-2024) confirms the role of the **cluster policy** and the functioning of the six spearhead clusters as showcase for industrial innovation policy. These spearhead clusters focus on 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 via the spearhead clusters Flux50 (cross-sector collaboration between the energy, ICT and buildings sectors), Catalisti (sustainable products and processes in the chemistry and plastics sectors) and the Blue Cluster (sustainable blue economy), and via the innovative business networks Power to Gas, Groen Licht (Green Light), etc. In 2020, the cluster policy will be reviewed in order to optimise it in the coming years. The aim is to sharpen the objectives in terms of impact, with a particular focus on the internationalisation and involvement of small businesses.

Attention is also paid to supporting businesses in making a radical switch to climate-friendly production systems. The R&D policy for energy and climate was additionally strengthened from 2019 onwards with a new initiative, i.e. **the Flemish Moonshot ‘Flanders CO₂ neutral’**. This initiative pursues research and innovation towards realising a carbon circular and low-carbon industry in Flanders by 2050. In practice this means that innovative research under this Moonshot will contribute to the development in Flanders of breakthrough technologies by 2040 to implement new and better processes for producing new and unique carbon smart products. Both facets (processes and products) can substantially help reduce CO₂ emissions in Flanders and around the world in the future. This initiative seeks to build up knowledge with a longer time horizon. Aid amounting to €20 million will be reserved annually for this purpose over a 20-year period for research and innovation that can further CO₂ emission reduction and CO₂ capture, storage and reuse.

The **European Structural Funds** (from 2021 onwards) will also continue to be used to promote innovation for the energy transition and to foster a carbon-free economy.

The **Flemish Climate Fund (Vlaams Klimaatfonds)** is used in non-ETS sectors to help realise Flanders’ greenhouse gas reduction target for 2030. The table below gives an overview of outgoing payments in previous years (amounts in €).

Climate and energy actions	2016	2017	2018	2019
Education		24,000,000	18,000,000	39,700,000
Tuning of boilers and RUE investments in educational buildings (AGION)		14,000,000	8,178,000	25,920,000
Tuning of boilers, boiler room renovation and RUE investments in educational buildings (GO!)		4,000,000	2,247,000	7,280,000
Tuning of boilers and RUE investments in educational buildings (Higher Education Fund)		5,125,000	6,875,000	6,500,000
STEM call and the call for the Climate Project (Education Department Fund)		875,000	700,000	
Mobility	180,888	12,640,032	7,500,000	27,900,000
Greening of De Lijn fleet		12,500,000	7,500,000	17,900,000
Flanders Logistics consultant green/sustainable logistics	155,888	69,832		

Development of shore power facilities		70,200		
Charging infrastructure for 5 park-and-ride facilities	25,000			
Shore power infrastructure, combined mobility and charging infrastructure				10,000,000
Buildings	20,109,125	42,198,000	54,345,000	95,457,000
Expenditure on thorough energy refurbishments and replacement construction of social housing	20,000,000	20,000,000	23,000,000	33,300,000
Set-up of structural activities of specialised energy consultants for immovable heritage	109,125			
Energy Efficiency Action Plan via Flemish Agency for Public Sector Energy Saving			2,025,000	4,975,000
Improvement of energy efficiency of buildings in Welfare, Public Health and Family sector		7,000,000	10,000,000	11,000,000
Cultural infrastructure of supra-local importance		3,000,000	5,000,000	7,300,000
HFB action plan on internal measures for climate impact on Flemish public administration buildings		12,198,000	13,320,000	32,882,000
Energy-saving investments in buildings of vzw de Rand			1,000,000	3,500,000
Energy refurbishment of the Maritime Rescue and Coordination Centre				2,500,000
Agriculture	97,500	3,767,979	3,234,775	1,659,647
Enerpedia, project for energy consultancy to farmers	97,500	48,243		
Enerpedia, follow-up project for energy consultancy to farmers		119,736		159,647
Additional greenhouse gas emission reduction measures by Flemish Agricultural Investment Fund		3,600,000	3,000,000	1,500,000
Co-financing ERDF project GLITCH: innovation in low carbon greenhouse cultivation			234,775	
Energy			6,516,000	53,300,000
Support of local energy projects in the context of citizen challenges of Stroomversnelling			6,516,000	53,300,000

In the period 2016-2019, a total of €96 million was earmarked from the **Flemish Climate Fund** for additional investments in the energy refurbishment of social housing. The principle of co-financing is now introduced for financing from the Flemish Climate Fund of greenhouse gas reduction measures in non-ETS sectors, as is the case for many European funds. This means that greenhouse gas reduction measures cannot be financed entirely from the Flemish Climate Fund, but must in part also be financed with private funds or other public resources. This creates a leverage effect with the Climate Fund and increases the Fund's impact.

2.4. Country-specific recommendation 4

Reduce the regulatory and administrative burden to incentivize entrepreneurship and remove barriers to competition in services, particularly telecommunication, retail and professional services.

2.4.1. Promoting entrepreneurship

In 2018, 57,903 businesses were established in the Flemish Region⁷⁰. As a result, Flanders scores significantly better than Wallonia (23,000) and Brussels (12,000). The renewed policy on commercial establishments entered into force on 1 August 2018. This policy, including the functioning of the Retail Committee (Comité voor Kleinhandel), will be reviewed in 2020. This review may give rise to a proposal to amend the July 2016 Decree on the Integrated Commercial Establishment Policy. Since 1 September 2019, the professional competence requirements for the construction sector have been abolished. The Business Management Basic Knowledge certificate (attest Basiskennis Bedrijfsbeheer) is no longer required either since September 2018 to start a business.

With the **Action Plan on Entrepreneurial Education 2014-2019 (actieplan ondernemend onderwijs)**, the Flemish authorities promoted an entrepreneurial attitude among young people. A new policy plan relating to young people and entrepreneurial education will be drawn up in 2020. The general tenor of entrepreneurial culture in Flanders, and especially among young people, is positive. The policy report 'Entrepreneurial Culture and Behaviour in Flanders; Situation in 2017' (Ondernemerschapscultuur en ondernemend gedrag in Vlaanderen; situatie 2017) of the Policy Research Centre Entrepreneurship & Regional Economics (Steunpunt Ondernemen en Regionale Economie/STORE) shows that total entrepreneurial activity in Flanders has never been so high. In total, 8.2% of the population aged 18 to 64 was active as budding or new entrepreneur, which equals the European average of 8.1%. Young people aged between 18 and 29 indicate remarkably more often than other age groups that they regard entrepreneurship in Flanders as a desirable career choice (69%). No less than 77% of Flemish people aged between 18 and 29 and between 30 and 34 indicate that successful entrepreneurs in Flanders enjoy prestige and respect.

2.4.2. Reducing administrative and regulatory burdens

Reducing administrative and regulatory burdens features high on the agenda of the new Government of Flanders. The Coalition Agreement 2019-2024 outlines the following commitments:

- The Government of Flanders wants to systematically reduce regulatory burdens for citizens, companies and associations by making regulations less restrictive and less detailed.
- The Flemish authorities stimulate entrepreneurship and innovation. Full use is made of the experimental regulations and low-regulation zones introduced in the Governance Decree (Bestuursdecreet). The involvement of the actors directly engaged in the design, implementation and evaluation of experimental regulations or low-regulation zones is ensured. This also allows innovative applications to be tested and implemented more quickly, in addition

⁷⁰ <https://www.statistiekvlaanderen.be/en/incorporation-of-enterprises>

to open standards and target requirements. Citizens and entrepreneurs have the right to come up with their own policy alternatives: this is the 'right to challenge' principle.

- By means of nudging, the effectiveness of policy is enhanced and more efficient communication is pursued.
- Unnecessary administrative burdens will be eliminated and regulatory burdens reduced.
- Administrative simplification will be worked on from the bottom up, in cooperation with local authorities, whilst citizens, businesses and associations will be asked to help remove administrative barriers and unnecessary legal obligations.
- Commitment to digitalisation, including the 'digital first' principle (see below), the 'only once' principle and the 'no wrong door' principle (see also 2.3.1.).

The Economy, Science and Innovation (Economie, Wetenschap en Innovatie/EWI) policy area actively contributes to reducing administrative burdens for companies and research institutions. Whenever an administrative burden is introduced, other burdens should be abolished with a view to effect an overall reduction in administrative burdens. Under the motto '**Digital First**' (**Digitaal Eerst**), EWI is dedicated to simplifying and digitalising access to economic services and support. To this end, the e-desk (digitaal loket) for businesses is being developed, among other things. Flanders Innovation & Entrepreneurship (VLAIO) acts as the Flemish public administration's central point of contact for entrepreneurs and manages an **e-desk** to which all government agencies offering **services to entrepreneurs** are connected. The e-desk will serve as the unique gateway to and follow-up system for services and support to entrepreneurs in Flanders (www.vlaanderenonderneemt.be).

2.5. Responding to investment challenges

2.5.0. Introductory comments

The Government of Flanders is a government of investment, which creates additional room for investment by introducing structural reforms as well as focusing on a sound budgetary policy (see also 2.1.2.). The translation of this investment ambition totalling **€1.65 billion extra investments** in the period 2019-2024 is included in the Coalition Agreement. The table below shows these additional investments by the Government of Flanders (multiannual estimate 2020-2024)⁷¹. Investments will be made primarily in all modes of transport (see also 2.3.2. and 2.5.2.), in school construction (mainly in secondary education, see also 2.5.3.) and in the construction of R&D infrastructure (see also 2.3.1.) and higher education (see also 2.2.7.).

Additional investments by the Government of Flanders (in million €)	Policy fields	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	TOTAL
	Mobility and Public Works	40	75	120	170	230	635
	School construction (incl. rental subsidies)	25	50	75	145	205	500
	R&D infrastructure (e.g. SOCs, spearhead clusters and higher education)	10	25	40	45	75	195
	Excellent cultural infrastructure	15	15	15	20	30	95
	Immoveable heritage	10	10	20	20	20	80

⁷¹ Source: multiannual estimate 2019-2024 (<http://docs.vlaamsparlement.be/pfile?id=1499421>)

Hospitals	0	10	10	20	20	60
Sport (supra-local and top-level sport)		10	10	15	20	55
IT investments VRD II		5	10	15		30
Total of extra investments	100	200	300	450	600	1,650

Flanders is also working on a strong supporting investment climate. The Government of Flanders is putting the new legislative policy of **fewer regulatory burdens and more innovation-friendly regulations** at the service of a stronger investment climate in Flanders (see also 2.4.2.). During the present term of office, several new large-scale projects and programmes are in the pipeline. The expertise of De Werkvennootschap, Lantis and the specialist departments in rolling out and monitoring projects is acknowledged and reinforced. The **framework Decree on large-scale projects and programmes (kaderdecreet grote projecten en programma's)** of 22 March 2019 entered into force on 1 January 2020. It will be made sure that all large-scale projects and programmes are properly monitored and that the relevant expertise is exchanged between policy areas.

The Government of Flanders wants to make greater use of the opportunities offered by **InvestEU**. After all, an evaluation of the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI) has shown that the resources flowing to Flanders from EFSI are rather limited. The EFSI resources, i.e. signed investment decisions or investments already approved by the Board of Directors of the European Investment Bank (EIB), which Flanders is estimated to have received in the period from June 2015 through November 2019, total €712 million and are broken down as follows:

- Lending totalling approximately €94 million via EIB for R&D activities for companies based in Flanders.
- Total EFSI lending to Belgian offshore wind farms is estimated at €941 million. The share of this amount that will be spent on Flanders' economy is estimated at approximately €320 million.
- It is expected that about €60 million of the multi-country EFSI investments will flow to Flanders via EIB.
- Flanders can also benefit from the guarantee agreements of the European Investment Fund (EIF) with Belgian banks and via Flanders Holding Company (ParticipatieMaatschappij Vlaanderen NV/PMV), for which EIF is building up €125 million in reserves with EFSI funds.
- EIF invests an estimated €113 million in five investment structures in Flanders through its fund-of-fund activity.

The following initiatives were taken to increase the focus on InvestEU:

- The Government of Flanders is setting up a specific task force to fully map all these investment vehicles, to detect opportunities within these financing vehicles and funds for public and private investments in Flanders and to devise a strategy to maximise the use of these European funds for both public and private investments in Flanders.
- An important change under InvestEU compared to EFSI is that, in addition to the EIB Group, national and regional promotional banks and institutions (NPBIs) can also apply to realise InvestEU on the market⁷². Flanders Holding Company (PMV) acts as NPBI for Flanders. Due to its extensive experience with financial instruments and its knowledge of Flanders' economic

⁷² The EC requires that each implementing partner must undergo a pillar assessment. By means of this procedure, the EU assesses whether the entity concerned is able to adequately protect and safeguard the EU's financial interests. During a pillar assessment the investment strategies, internal control systems and monitoring processes are reviewed, among other things.

fabric, PMV is well-placed to act as implementing partner for InvestEU in Flanders. PMV wants to use this opportunity to be acknowledged as implementing partner and submitted the formal application for the pillar assessment on 29 November 2019. The procedure is expected to be successfully completed by the end of 2020. PMV is preparing for the pillar assessment and evaluating its in-house processes and systems in view of the EC requirements for indirect management of EU funds.

SRSP (2020 cycle). InvestEU allows financial institutions other than EIB and EIF, including regional promotional banks and institutions such as PMV, to manage financial instruments with EU support. For PMV to be allowed such an opportunity, it has to undergo a pillar assessment. The Directorate-General for Structural Reform Support (DG REFORM) invited prospective regional promotional institutions to apply for grants for technical support in the pillar assessment process. PMV's application for such support was selected under the SRSP. The budget also includes support for dissemination of InvestEU opportunities to stakeholders in Flanders' economic landscape. This grant was finally confirmed by the EC in March 2020.

- In the autumn of 2019, PMV and the Flanders Department of Foreign Affairs organised a series of information sessions on InvestEU for interested policy areas. There was great interest, including from the cities and municipalities. Contacts are ongoing to detect opportunities.

On 11 December 2019, the new EC published its Green Deal, which is its new growth strategy that aims to transform the EU into a fair and prosperous society, with a modern, resource-efficient, competitive, resilient and future-proof economy where there are no net emissions of greenhouse gases in 2050 and where economic growth is decoupled from resource use. The Green Deal is a road map of all new (or revised) initiatives that will be on the European agenda in the coming months and years to meet Europe's ambitious climate and environment-related challenges. The Green Deal is a Communication and does not require the formal assent of the Council or Parliament. It is a work programme of the EC, announcing some fifty theme-based initiatives and strategies which will be further developed by the EC in the months and years to come.

As stated in the Vision Memorandum to the Government of Flanders of 21 February 2020, the Green Deal contains many positive elements, including the integrated road map, the emphases on innovation, circular economy, nature and forest policy, biodiversity, sustainable mobility and agriculture. Flanders will ensure that the further implementation of the Green Deal actually contributes to the realisation of the objectives and accelerates investments, innovation and technological advancements. It is essential for Flanders that the initiatives of the Green Deal do not increase the tax burden or energy bill in Flanders, but safeguard the competitive position of companies and the purchasing power of households in Flanders and take into account the principle of cost efficiency at European level.

Below (2.5.1. through 2.5.3.), a number of measures are discussed which Flanders is taking in response to the Green Deal. In addition, an indicative and non-exhaustive list is included of priority investment projects (2.5.4.) that respond to the EU sustainability objectives, including the Green Deal.

2.5.1. Investments in climate, energy and circular economy

Section 2.3.3. outlines Flanders' measures for bringing about an energy transition. The EC's Green Deal also attaches great importance to circular economy. Over the past 10 years, Flanders has become a **European reference in the field of sustainable materials management and circular economy**. It wants to cash in on this leading position, yet it still needs to make significant changes in order to accelerate the transition to a circular economy.

Over the past year, 320 organisations signed a '**Green Deal on Circular Construction**', with each organisation committing itself to work on at least 1 experimental project. A living lab 'Circular Construction' (Circular bouwen) was started, with €1,250,000 being earmarked for 4 years of research into urban mining and change-oriented construction. Flanders has the ambition to evolve into a leading recycling hub in Europe. To this end, investments will be made in the necessary sorting and recycling capacity that can also attract flows from neighbouring regions. An important focus will be on the plastics chain.

The Government of Flanders adopted the **Plastics Implementation Plan 2020-2025 (Uitvoeringsplan Kunststoffen)**, which offers an overarching framework for the efforts towards a circular plastics economy. In this context, the extension of the PMD collection is worth mentioning: By 1 January 2021, all plastic packaging will be collected in the blue bag in all Flemish cities and municipalities, which will simplify sorting for citizens and at the same time be a step towards a recycling solution for all packaging on the market. In addition, a new action plan 'Biomass and Food 2021-2025' (actieplan 'biomassa en voedsel') and a new plan for municipal waste, including an ambitious packaging policy, are under development: By 2025, all packaging will be reusable, recyclable or compostable.

In order to monitor all these efforts for the transition towards a circular economy, the Public Waste Agency of Flanders (Openbare Vlaamse Afvalstoffenmaatschappij/OVAM), together with the EWI Department, will annually invest €500,000 for the Circular Economy Policy Research Centre (CE Centre). In addition to the development of indicators, the policy research centre also conducts research into new business models and levers for the circular economy.

2.5.2. Investments in mobility and public works

The Government of Flanders is making substantial investments in transport infrastructure and sustainable mobility measures. In order to tackle the mobility challenges efficiently, the MOW policy area is drawing up an **Integrated Investment Programme (GIP)** with an overarching overview of all investments for freight and passenger traffic, public transport, cycling, inland navigation and water control (see also 2.3.2.).

The preparation of the GIP is based on a number of policy objectives. For example, work is being done on enabling a good flow of road and water traffic and good access to ports and airports (smoothness), on liveable traffic that takes maximum account of the surroundings and the environment (spatial aspects and quality of life) and on facilitating the switch from one mode of transport to another, for example from bicycle to tram (integration and connection). In addition, objectives are being pursued in terms of safety, robustness and accessibility.

The preparation of the GIP 2020 is currently in the final stage prior to the formal approval by the Flemish Minister for MOW. Total MOW investment in the draft GIP 2020 amounts to €1.854 billion across the different modes: collective transport, airports, waterways, roads and cycling infrastructure.⁷³

⁷³ The figures mentioned originate from the draft GIP 2020 and have not yet been finally adopted by the Flemish Minister for MOW. As a result, they can still (slightly) change.

Within the framework of the Coalition Agreement 2019-2024, the Government of Flanders compiled the following list of priority MOW investment projects.

Priority MOW investment projects.	
Large-scale projects (Flemish level)	R0 (including programme 'Ring Road Works' (Werken aan de ring)) R1 (implementation Toekomstverbond)
Large-scale projects for which spatial planning procedure or complex project procedure is ongoing	New Zeebrugge lock Extra container capacity Antwerp Toekomstverbond (A102, second Tijsman tunnel, Haventracé, Nx) KR8 (Kortrijk) Upgrade of Bossuit-Kortrijk Canal (Seine-Scheldt) Nx Zeebrugge North-South Limburg N60 (Ronse) Viaduct E17 Gentbrugge Coastal Vision (Kustvisie) project
Large-scale projects (other)	A8 (Halle) Conversion of A12 into motorway Tram line 7 (Ghent) Conversion of N49 into motorway R4 East-West (PPP + quick wins) Spartacus - line 1 Spartacus - line 2 Raising of the bridges over the Albert canal Ieper-Veurne connection New Steenbrugge bridge + Dampoort lock study
11 railway priorities for Flanders	

2.5.3. Investments in school infrastructure

The need for investment in school infrastructure remains high in Flanders, but major catch-up efforts to renew, modernise and expand school buildings under the School Construction Master Plan (Masterplan Scholenbouw) are sustained. Approximately €420 million in grants were appropriated in 2019.

With regard to the **renewal of the educational building stock**, the Board of Directors of the Agency for School Infrastructure (Agentschap voor Infrastructuur in het Onderwijs/AGION) approves each month new construction or renovation projects for schools from the subsidised network. Projects were approved for an amount in excess of €83 million in 2019. Community education (GO!) also committed a budget of €27.6 million between 1 January 2019 and 31 May 2019 to tackle the backlog in school construction in a sustainable way.

As far as **investment in education capacity** is concerned, the Government of Flanders is earmarking extra capacity funds for the construction of new schools and the expansion of existing school buildings. The second school infrastructure capacity monitor maps the needs up to the school year 2024-2025, and for the first time also takes a look at SE. In 2019, it was announced that 18,500 places would be created in 135 schools in Flanders and Brussels over the next 3 years. It concerns 16,200 places in SE and almost 2,300 places in primary education, for which €151 million will be invested. In addition, Flanders is investing another €50 million for additional places in schools in, inter alia, Aalst, Ghent, Antwerp, Brussels and the Vlaamse Rand. Investments will still be needed after 2021 as well.

For this reason, Flanders embarked on a large-scale catch-up operation for school infrastructure via **alternative financing**, better known as **DBFM**⁷⁴ (**Design, Build, Finance and Maintain**). In implementation of the DBFM operation 'Schools of Tomorrow' (Scholen van Morgen), 163 DBFM schools were already completed by the end of 2019. Eight schools are in the construction phase and 11 schools are in the licensing or tendering phase. On 5 March 2017, a new DBFM call was launched to school management teams for an initial investment value of €300 million. This investment volume was raised to €550 million by the Government of Flanders in 2017. In 2019, five tendering procedures, for each DBFM cluster, could be launched within the new project-specific school construction programme.

Apart from regular grants and DBFM projects the option of **rental subsidies** also exists. Following the success of the first two calls, a third and fourth call were organised in 2019 which granted a rental subsidy to 54 and 75 schools respectively for projects with an investment volume of almost €86.5 and nearly €167 million.

Maximum attention is paid to the **climate** when building new schools and renovating older buildings. Resources from the Climate Fund, the provision of energy loans and the promotion of energy performance contracts ensure additional focus on **energy sustainability**. From the Flemish Climate Fund €52 million was earmarked for direct energy-saving infrastructural investments in school buildings. An amount of €20 million was committed to realise climate-friendly investment projects in university college and university buildings, reducing CO₂ emissions by at least 15,000 tonnes per year. A total of €2 million was earmarked for educational and climate awareness-raising measures. In 2017 and 2018, €28 million was used for climate interventions in compulsory education and 2019 saw a similar trend. An additional €20.7 million was⁷⁵ added for 2019 and Flanders is investing another €1.5 million from the Flemish Climate Fund in 17 energy-saving projects in school buildings of part-time education in the arts (deeltijds kunstonderwijs/dko). These projects reduce CO₂ emissions by 575 tonnes per year. In addition, since 2017, AGION has offered an energy loan with an interest rate of 1% for investments in renewable energy, such as the installation of solar panels. These loans will be offered interest-free as from 2020. Their scope will also be extended to investments in renewable energy and energy efficiency. In this way, schools can save up to 3 times: on their loan, on their emissions and on their energy bill. The application procedure is made as low-threshold as possible for schools. It is advisable to seek professional advice beforehand. The cost of this advice, however, may also be covered by the loan. In addition, schools can make use of framework contracts. The pilot projects on energy performance contracts in school buildings will also be extended.

⁷⁴ 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 710,000m² for more than 133,000 pupils, across all the educational networks.

⁷⁵ €4 million for climate interventions in higher education buildings, €15.7 million for climate interventions in compulsory school buildings and €1 million for the connection of schools to a heat network.

2.5.4. List of priority investment projects responding to EU sustainability objectives

Project title and short description	Main strategic objectives (link with CSRs and EU sustainability objectives)	Total investment (in €)	Financing sources	Time window
Integrated Investment Programme (GIP) 2020. Overarching overview of all investments for the various modes of transport	Flanders - Commitment to smooth, safe and smart mobility. EU - CSR3 - European Green Deal	€1.854 billion, viz. investments in collective transport, airports, waterways, roads and cycling infrastructure ⁷⁶	Flanders	2020
Investments in energy efficiency and renewable energy	Flanders - Commitment to an energy transition in Flanders and support for climate objectives EU - CSR3 - European Green Deal	- Support mechanism for renewable energy production: operating aid through green energy certificates - Domestic and non-domestic energy premiums for RUE investments, including discount vouchers, energy scans and premiums for solar boilers and heat pumps: €89 million per year on average - The installation of noise barriers with integrated solar cells (€680,000) and projects with floating solar panels (€6.2 million) - In view of the further flexibilisation of the energy grid, 10 major pilot projects on batteries were launched at the end of 2018 (€1.2 million of support) - A new support mechanism for small and medium-sized wind turbines (up to and including 300 kW) was introduced - Cheap or interest-free energy loans for specified target group in need of financing support: €55 million/year - Demolition and reconstruction premium: €18 million (2020) - Annual call for green heat, heat networks, residual heat and biomethane: €20 million/year - Moonshot CO ₂ : support for innovations in the field of CO ₂ emission, capture and reuse: €20 million per year for 20 years.	Flanders	Annually

2.6. Flanders' response to the corona crisis

In March, the **National Security Council (Nationale Veiligheidsraad)** took several measures necessary to curb the spread of the coronavirus: citizens must stay home and must only travel to go to work, buy

⁷⁶ The figures mentioned originate from the draft GIP 2020 and have not yet been finally adopted by the Flemish Minister for MOW. As a result, they can still (slightly) change.

food, or go to the doctor, bank, post office or pharmacy; gatherings are prohibited; only food shops, supermarkets, pet food shops and newsagents are allowed to be open with a strict limitation of the number of people allowed in; weekly markets are suspended; all classes are suspended up to and including 19 April 2020 and companies must allow telework as much as possible. If they are unable to do so, they can only remain open if they can respect the social distancing requirements.

The economic impact is enormous, which is why the **Government of Flanders** has taken some important support measures in order to provide a vigorous response to the major challenges posed by the corona crisis⁷⁷.

At socio-economic level, an **Economy Task Force** has been established, chaired by the Minister-President of Flanders, and additional measures were taken to support businesses:

- €100 million is earmarked for **crisis guarantees**, so that companies and self-employed persons can also have a bridging loan guaranteed by PMV for existing debts during this crisis period. This is in addition to the existing guarantees for investment loans and working capital. As a result, Flanders can already guarantee 1,000 loans of €100,000, which can be placed under the 75% regional guarantee.
- The **nuisance premium** (hinderpremie) of the Flemish authorities is extended to include companies that are obliged to close because of the federal safety and security measures following the coronavirus. The premium amounts to €4,000 in the event of full closure during the first three weeks and to €160 per day from 6 April 2020 onwards. All businesses with at least one full income are eligible, including market traders. The nuisance premium applies to several establishments per company, with a maximum of 5. Hotels, restaurants and cafés that have to close a dining area are also entitled to the premium, even if they currently organise a takeaway service. People who are self-employed as secondary activity are also entitled to it, if they pay similar social security contributions as regular self-employed persons.
- A **one-off compensation premium** of €3,000 for companies and self-employed persons who are not obliged to close, but who see their turnover fall substantially (loss of turnover greater than 60% compared to the previous year - reference period 14 March - 30 April 2019). The premium also applies to those who are self-employed as secondary activity and pay social security contributions similar to someone who has a primary occupation. People who have a secondary occupation and pay contributions on an income between €6,996.89 and €13,993.78 can be granted a premium of €1,500, provided they also work as an employee for less than 80%.
- **Additional financial support for companies:**
 - €250 million for **subordinated loans** for active SMEs and for start-ups and scale-ups.
 - €100 million extra for **crisis guarantees**.
 - Guarantee capacity Gigarant up to €3 billion.
 - **Flexibility in conditions for support measures and grants:** Enterprises which, as a result of the crisis, find it difficult to meet the deadlines set for certain VLAIO grants may consult with VLAIO the possibility of extending these deadlines.

⁷⁷ <https://www.vlaanderen.be/gezondheid-en-welzijn/gezondheid/coronacrisis-door-uitbraak-van-covid-19>

Work and social economy

- **Extension of the incentive premium to work part-time** to companies whose production has fallen by at least 20%.
- The government also puts in place support measures and increased grants for **the service voucher sector**.
 - We extend the period of validity of service vouchers that are in danger of expiring during the crisis period (March, April) by 3 months, from 12 to 15 months. As a result, these vouchers can still be used.
 - For the companies that remain open, we provide for an increase by €8.64 in grants for service voucher services for the duration of one month. The grant will then temporarily increase from €14.36 to €23.

Due to the crisis, a lot of contracts of **individual vocational training (Individuele Beroepsopleiding/IBO)** are terminated. Consequently, many IBO course participants will lose their premium, and as a result their income. Therefore, they will be granted a temporary allowance amounting to 70% of their IBO premium to which they were entitled at the time of termination.

- Package of **additional employment measures** which, during the crisis period, allow for a little more flexibility with regard to the Flemish Support Premium (Vlaamse Ondersteuningspremium/VOP) for the self-employed, the recruitment incentive for long-term jobseekers, the transition premium for prospective entrepreneurs who want to start their own business, and the extension of the work permit for foreign employees.
- More **financial breathing space for companies active in the social economy**. In concrete terms:
 - Suspension of progression pathways and extension of integration pathways.
 - Suspension of the rule for employing a number of target group employees in supported employment companies.
 - More financial breathing space by not automatically collecting (reductions) monthly payment advances.
 - Guaranteed financing of employment care workers.
- **The bridging loan for existing debts** can be extended up to 12 months for companies in difficulty due to the corona crisis.

Taxation

- The collection of the **road tax** is postponed by 4 months for companies. This 4-month delay is in addition to the normal payment period of 2 months. **Property taxes** are not collected until September, giving companies extra breathing space in terms of cash of €1 billion.
- Various tax periods are extended by 2 months: submission of the inheritance tax return, deeds that cannot be filed for registration on time, and periods relating to certain favourable tax regimes.
- **Other measures** concern the elimination of possible fines/sanctions due to delays in public contracts.

Agriculture

- It is important that the agricultural sector can count on sufficient labour in the coming days, weeks and months. VDAB will fill vacancies in this sector to the largest extent possible and guide jobseekers and other people willing to work to these jobs more quickly.
- A package of measures is introduced to compensate **agricultural and horticultural businesses and ornamental plant growers** for the **damage suffered**. These measures include, inter alia:
 - Urging Europe to activate the necessary support measures targeted at the broad agricultural, horticultural and fisheries sectors, giving priority to perishable products that cannot be harvested, processed or sold on time. Existing European crisis measures should be activated in this context and ornamental plant products should also be eligible for this.
 - Providing accelerated payment of pending investment files, a guarantee scheme and flexibility in deadlines of administrative obligations.

The Government of Flanders also sets up **an emergency fund for subsidised sectors** (such as culture, youth, media, sports, school trips, etc.) **as well as specific sectors** (e.g. ornamental horticulture, segments of tourism, mobility & public works). We are monitoring the impact of the corona crisis on all these sectors and earmark a provision of €200 million in the budget, so that we can help the organisations and sectors concerned to a certain extent to absorb this impact as well as possible. Moreover, we guarantee that all regular grants will be paid out.

Culture

There is a ban on the organisation of any public activities, regardless of the number of participants and the target group. Museum and heritage institutions are closed to the public. Some flexibility will be allowed in terms of non-compliance with submission deadlines, dates, etc.

Sport

Sports events that have received a grant through the Sports Flanders Agency (Sport Vlaanderen) will be paid said grant in full, even if the event is cancelled because of corona. Provisional sport shooter's licences will be extended by the same number of calendar days during which the cancellation of the sports activities lasts. In this way, possible shooting rounds can take place at a later date and it is still possible to legally partake in the practical test for obtaining a sport shooter's licence later on. Sport shooter's licences that expire in the period in which the sports activities are cancelled or in the subsequent month are exceptionally declared valid or renewed without fulfilment of the usual condition of active membership. The condition, however, that the individual in question must not be convicted for any of the crimes mentioned in the Arms Act continues to apply in full and will be monitored.

Youth

In consultation with the youth sector, all youth organisations and movements are asked explicitly to cancel all activities and events. In concrete terms, this means that no weekly or weekend activities are organised by youth organisations, such as Scouts en Gidsen Vlaanderen, Chiro Jeugd Vlaanderen, KSA, youth clubs, etc.. All youth work activities and holiday camps during the Easter holidays are cancelled. Parents are urged, out of solidarity with youth organisations, not to request a full refund of the registration fees or to only request a partial refund.

Energy

The Government of Flanders will reimburse **the water and energy costs** of 1 average monthly equivalent to anyone who has ended up in a situation of compensated temporary unemployment due to force majeure or for economic reasons. For this purpose, €20 million has been earmarked per 100,000 employees. **No disconnections** will take place during this period.

Education

All classes are suspended up to and including 19 April. Schools provide **childcare** during school hours for children of parents with essential professions and with a vulnerable home situation. Children and young people in **special educational needs education, boarding schools, the medical pedagogical institutes of community education (Medisch Pedagogisch Instituut van het GO/MPIGO) and the boarding schools of community education that are permanently open (Internaat met Permanente Openstelling/IPO)** are looked after as well. In order to ensure that pupils do not regard the suspension of classes as a holiday, a special role has been assigned to the Flemish Public Broadcaster (Vlaamse Radio- en Televisieomroeporganisatie/VRT) to formulate a teaching offer. In addition, agreements were made with many partners to make materials available to pupils and teachers. In consultation with the youth sector, all youth organisations and movements are asked explicitly to cancel all activities and events.

Welfare

The Government of Flanders has also taken a number of measures regarding **health** in response to measures proposed by scientists to contain the coronavirus. For example, all residential care centres and local service centres are closed to visitors. This has freed up €7 million to order **extra face masks**. A **medical reserve** has also been established.

In the meantime, the Agency for Care and Health (Agentschap Zorg en Gezondheid) has put in place a road map for the **establishment of buffer care centres (schakelzorgcentra)**, i.e. emergency centres which can accommodate patients when hospitals are at risk of becoming overcrowded. Depending on the need, up to 30 centres can be set up in Flanders.

Through a special arrangement that intervenes in the payment system, parents who do not bring their child(ren) to childcare do not have to pay. For the organisers of **childcare**, the financial losses are bridged by offering them compensation. The Government of Flanders guarantees care. An arrangement is being worked out to ensure that welfare facilities do not end up in financial difficulty. Additional funds are also appropriated for the helplines WAT WAT, Awel, Tele-Onthaal and 1712 and for the Suicide Hotline (Zelfmoordlijn).

Environment

An emergency decree (nooddecreet) was introduced, as well as a civil emergency activation order, which should pave the way for flexible licencing conditions for temporary health infrastructure. An implementing order was also adopted that sets out a derogation from the integrated environment permit legislation (e.g. with regard to deadline extensions and additional flexibility) because hearings and public enquiries, for instance, cannot proceed as usual.

Critical **services** for citizens are guaranteed. E.g. the supply of drinking water, gas and electricity remains operational and household waste is still being collected. The recycling parks, however, will remain closed until 7 April.

Guidelines have been drawn up for walking in Flanders' nature and forest areas in a responsible manner. The foresters and nature inspectors of the Flemish public administration will strictly enforce the special coronavirus measures and address people if they do not follow the guidelines.

Within the framework of legal certainty and legal protection, the Government of Flanders also decides, in further implementation of the Emergency Decree, to amend the time limits for proceedings with the Council for Permit Disputes (Raad voor Vergunningsbetwistingen) and the Enforcement Board (Handhavingscollege). The same is done with the time limits and obligations in the context of spatial processes (spatial planning, complex projects, plan-EIRs and vacant and neglected business premises) and the Flemish materials and soil legislation.

Tourism

A budget of €5 million has been earmarked for youth and social tourism. This year, VISITFLANDERS will not collect rent from its youth hostels, a measure worth €1 million.

Home affairs and civic integration

The Flemish public administration puts every effort in enabling its employees to **work from home** (still essential services at counters) and calls on companies to do the same. Local authorities are asked to ensure that essential services are not jeopardised. It was decided to close all houses of prayer and to no longer allow civic integration pathways to take place in classroom settings, but to use digital alternatives. At the same time, the Government of Flanders is making a **free volunteer insurance** available for anyone who helps out during the crisis. Meanwhile, more than 9,000 people have registered on the website Vlaanderen Helpt (Flanders Helps)

(<https://www.vlaanderenwilligt.be/vlaanderen-helpt/>).

On the website <https://www.integratie-inburgering.be/corona-meertalige-info> the information about the coronavirus was translated into several languages so that everyone knows what they are expected to do and how they can protect themselves. The social interpretation and translation services of the Agencies for Integration and Civic Integration remain available at all times.

Mobility

De Lijn has switched to a **modified operating schedule** for trams and buses. The on-demand bus service has been discontinued. **Cash payments** are **no** longer allowed on public transport and people are asked to only travel when strictly necessary. The **ferries at the coast** (Nieuwpoort and Ostend), the St-Anna ferry in Antwerp and the Bazel-Hemiksem ferry service (East Flanders) have been completely suspended since 17 March. All **driving courses and driving exams** have been suspended. The **services of vehicle inspection centres** are limited to commercial and transport vehicles, buses, priority vehicles and technical reinspections.

Housing

Evictions are temporarily not allowed in both the social and private rental markets. Legal evictions, for instance, are temporarily suspended. Social landlords can conclude a six-month rental agreement with

a single person or a household who is in an emergency situation as a result of the coronavirus measures. If the rental agreement ends during the coronavirus measures, it will be extended by six months at the tenant's request. The maximum percentage of 1% for rentals outside the social rental system may be exceeded by those rentals. If a social tenant or one of the persons whose income is considered for the rent calculation is temporarily unemployed due to force majeure (reason 'coronavirus'), the social landlord must review the rent in function of the current reduced income. The Flemish Social Housing Company (Vlaamse Maatschappij voor Sociaal Wonen/VMSW) and the Flemish Housing Fund (Vlaams Woningfonds) can grant the borrower (the special social loan) free deferral of payment if the borrower demonstrates that their income has decreased as a result of the coronavirus measures. The borrower then receives a deferral of payment of maximum 6 months with no capital or interest having to be paid until 31 October 2020 at the latest. The Flemish Housing Fund must accept temporary unemployment resulting from the coronavirus outbreak as an exceptional case to allow a deferral of payment of the rent guarantee loan.

Digitalisation

Furthermore, the Government of Flanders has taken the initiative to set up a task force '**Vlaanderen Helemaal Digitaal**' (Flanders Completely Digital) with strategic support from the research centre Imec and the involvement of various business associations, academics and technologists. This task force provides a matching platform to bring digital solutions for problems and challenges that have arisen closer together. In this context, reference can be made, for instance, to telework opportunities, the use of video consultations in healthcare, distance learning and apps that monitor how busy shops are.

In addition, the Government of Flanders announced that a meeting will be organised with the banks with the aim of reaching a number of agreements with business organisations and the financial sector on the impact of the crisis on the liquidity and the repayment capacity of companies, private individuals and households.

Finally, an **awareness-raising campaign** (#IKREDLEVENS) has also been launched via various media channels.

PART 3. Progress towards Flanders' Europe 2020 targets and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

3.0. Introductory comments

Below, a state of play is given of the progress in Flanders' Europe 2020 targets (see 3.1. through 3.5.), and the Flemish Social Scoreboard (see 3.6.). The ES 2020 is also characterised by a number of new developments. For example, the new EC is committed to including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the ES⁷⁸ (see 3.7.).

⁷⁸Annual Sustainable Growth Strategy 2020 <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52019DC0650&from=EN>

3.1. Employment rate

3.1.1. State of play

Since 2017, the employment rate in Flanders has been rising steadily. In 2018, an employment rate of 74.6% was reached and in 2019 the **employment rate (20-64 age group)** already went up to 75.5%. It remains to be seen what the impact of the corona crisis will be on this indicator in 2020.

Key indicator	2008	2012	2015	2016	2017*	2018	2019	2020 target	Distance (+ position EU-28)
Employment rate (Age group 20-64) (%)	72.3	71.5	71.9	72.0	73.0	74.6	75.5	76.0	0.5 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 a 50% employment rate among 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 for three quarters.

In addition, the **employment rate of women** rose as well, which means Flanders for the first time exceeded 70% in 2018 (71.5% in 2019), which is well above the European average. A growth was also recorded among **non-EU-born people** in 2018 and 2019, which has caused the gap with the European average to narrow significantly. In 2019, the employment rate among **people with a work-limiting disability or long-term health problems** was 45.6%. The youth employment rate (15-64 age group) remains low compared to the rest of Europe, which is mainly due to the ever-increasing level of schooling.

Sub-indicators Employment rate	2008	2012	2015	2016	2017*	2018	2019	2020 target	Distance (+ position EU-28)
Age group 15-24⁷⁹ (%)	31.7	28.1	27.9	27.0	27.5	30.2	33.4	/	16 on 28 (in 2018)
Age group 50-54	49.1	54.6	58.1	59.1	60.8	63.5	64.8	60	Target achieved / 18 on 28 (in 2018)
Age group 55-59	34.3	40.5	45.6	46.7	49.5	52.5	54.9	50	Target achieved / 19 on 28 (in 2018)
Women (20-64 age group)	66.1	66.2	68.2	67.7	68.2	70.7	71.5	75	3.5 pp / 14 on 28 (in 2018)
Men (20-64 age group)	78.3	76.7	75.6	76.3	77.7	78.5	79.3	/	20 on 28 (in 2018)
Non-EU nationality	47.2	42.7	48.7	46.0	44.1	50.4	50.5	58	7.5 pp / 28 on 28 (in 2018)
Non-EU-born (20-64 age group)	56.3	51.8	53.7	53.0	56.0	61.2	61.9	64	2.1 pp / 23 on 28 (in 2018)
With work-limiting disability	-	38.7	43.1	41.0	43.3	45.8	45.6	43	Target achieved (no comparative data available)

*: Break in time series

** Is not a disadvantaged group. The employment rate among men was included because it offers additional understanding of the general employment rate (20-64 age group).

⁷⁹ When considering young people (15-24 age group), not including students, Flanders scores 72.6% in 2018, whereas the EU average is 65.6%.

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 the combination of four indicators: psychological fatigue (work stress), well-being at work (motivation), learning possibilities (opportunities to keep up to date and develop competencies) and work-life balance (the combination of work and family and social life). The results measured in 2019 show that the workability rate in Flanders has dropped. In concrete terms, the workability rate amounted to 49.6%, which means that approximately half of the employees and self-employed entrepreneurs in Flanders have 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), setting out 34 actions which intervene at the organisation level or which are to support and strengthen individuals.

In 2018, participation in **lifelong learning (LLL)** in Flanders - as measured in the 4 weeks prior to the survey - was 8.5%. This is a slight increase compared to the year before, but just below the European average. The Government of Flanders is therefore putting a lot of effort into stimulating LLL during this term of office (see also 2.2.3.).

3.1.2. Measures

The measures taken to increase the employment rate were explained earlier (see also 2.2.1. through 2.2.3.).

3.2. Education

3.2.1. State of play

The share of early school leavers in Flanders ended at 6.2% in 2019. Flanders is well below the EU target of 10%. As for the share of 30 to 34-year-olds with a higher education (HE) diploma, Flanders scores 48.5% in 2019. This means that both the European target of 40% and Flanders’ target of 47.8% have been achieved.

Key indicators	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	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	6.2	5.2	1.0 pp 9 on 28 (in 2018)
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	48.5	47.8	Target achieved 12 on 28 (in 2018)

3.2.2. Measures

Early school leaving

Various measures that will have a positive impact on reducing the number of early school leavers are being introduced at almost all levels of education. Most of these measures were included in response to CSR 2. Particular reference can be made to measures with a focus on compulsory education (see also 2.2.5., including the modernisation of SE and the reinforcement of pre-primary and primary education), measures with a focus on inclusiveness (see also 2.2.6., including the new guidance decree for children with care needs, extra measures for additional support to highly gifted pupils and their teachers, the assessment and further optimisation of measures to support ill children) and measures with a focus on equality (see 2.2.7., including a lower compulsory school age, language integration pathways for children with a limited knowledge of the Dutch language). In school year 2019-2020, dual learning will be fully rolled out in mainstream and special needs SE. The database of the education administration will be linked to the database of the Work policy area. Young people who leave school without qualifications are automatically registered with VDAB because of the real-time data exchange between Education and Work, in order to be guided directly to a job or an educational pathway.

Tertiary education attainment

Both access to and the quality of higher education remain priorities for the Flemish authorities. Again, most of these measures have been included in response to CSR 2 and ensure a better alignment between compulsory education and tertiary education. Particular reference can be made to the measures focussing on compulsory education (see also 2.2.5., including the modernisation of SE, the announced introduction of standardised tests and the new attainment targets). Study efficiency in higher education will be enhanced with good orientation and swift reorientation, thus avoiding disappointment and increasing students' chances of success. The orientation will be reinforced by taking into account the results of SE, the advice of the class council, the results of the Columbus exploration tool and the results of the mandatory but non-binding entry tests. Students will be reoriented more quickly if they fail after an initial assessment period. The approach to the non-binding entry tests for higher education as a whole will be generalised. Flanders will further democratise access to higher education. From 1 September 2019, graduate programmes can only be organised by university colleges (see also 2.2.7.). As regards the financing of university colleges, the OBEs will be reviewed and increased in a targeted and phased manner. In this context, special attention will be dedicated to STEM courses.

3.3. Research & development (R&D)

3.3.1. State of play

According to the latest figures (Eurostat), R&D intensity in Flanders (Flemish Region) is 2.89% (2017). This is the highest rate ever recorded in Flanders. In an EU comparison Flanders is only passed by Sweden, Austria, Denmark and Germany. Gross domestic expenditure on R&D (GERD) in Flanders amounted to €7.499 billion in 2017. The science and innovation budget for 2019 is €2.916 billion, of which €1.94 billion is earmarked for R&D.

Key indicator	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	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	2.76	2.89	3	0.11 pp 5 on 28 (in 2017)
In million €	4,149	4,641	5,088	5,676	5,827	6,073	6,469	6,905	7,499		

3.3.2. Measures

In 2019, the Flemish authorities spent an additional (one-off) budget of €120 million on R&D&I. The annual budget was raised by €280 million, €100 million of which is being invested in actions aimed at universities, €75 million in actions aimed at businesses and approximately €85 million in new policy priorities (Moonshot CO₂, Artificial Intelligence Policy Plan, Cybersecurity Policy Plan) (see also 2.3.1.).

3.4. Climate and energy

3.4.1. State of play

After a final Flemish Energy and Climate Plan with objectives and measures for 2030 (see CSR 3), the Government of Flanders adopted the Flemish **Climate Strategy 2050** on 20 December 2019. Flanders explained its projected contribution to European climate neutrality in 2050 in the Flemish Climate Strategy 2050, which was adopted in late 2019 and which was incorporated in Belgium's long-term strategy for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. We aim for an 85% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions in Flanders in non-ETS sectors by 2050 compared to 2005, with the ambition to evolve towards full climate neutrality. For ETS sectors we endorse the context set by Europe for sectors with a decreasing emission allocation under the EU ETS. We are also committed to supporting companies in making a drastic switch to climate-friendly production systems.

Key indicators	2005	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2020 target	Distance (+ position EU-28)
<u>Greenhouse gas emissions Non-ETS greenhouse gas emissions scope 13-20 (Mton)</u>	46.1	46.7	-	-	-	-	45.4	43.0	44.3	44.6	43.5	43.8	-15.7% greenhouse gas emissions compared to 2005	Cumulated over the period 2013-2018, 265 Mt of the emission allocation was used, which is within the emission allocation provided for
<u>Primary energy consumption, excl. non-energy (PJ)</u>		390	381	402	378	368	374	344	347	372	370	356	Annual energy saving of 1.5% in the period 2014-2020 (*)	
<u>Renewable energy (RE)</u>														
- 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	1.68	2.156 Mtoe	0.472 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	6.40	6.7	6.9		

* corresponds to a total saving of 172 PJ over the period 2014-2020

As far as the Europe 2020 targets for climate and energy are concerned, Flanders continues to be faced with great challenges:

Non-ETS greenhouse gas emissions

The EU has set greenhouse gas emission reduction targets for the period 2013-2020 for the EU as a whole, divided between ETS and non-ETS sectors, as well as for 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 CO₂-eq) for the period 2013-2020. Whether or not the greenhouse gas emission reduction target will be met is assessed cumulatively over the entire period (up to 2020), because annual greenhouse gas emissions can fluctuate significantly due to weather conditions. Cumulated over the period 2013-2018, 265 Mt of the emission allocation was used, which is within the emission allocation provided for the period 2013-2018.

For 2018, the provisional estimate of non-ETS emissions was included as reported in the provisional inventory of 31 July 2019. Meanwhile, this provisional estimate for 2018 has been adjusted in the inventory reporting of 15 January 2020. Still, it can only be finally established after, on the one hand, ongoing recalculations that were reported on 15 March 2020 and, on the other hand, the inventory review by the EC. Once the final figures have been established following this review, a more detailed state of play of non-ETS targets will be published in a progress report for Flanders.

Renewable energy

The total **share of renewable energy in gross final energy consumption more than doubled** between 2008 and 2018 to reach a share of 6.9% in 2018 or a production of 19,590 GWh. In 2018, green heat represented 39% of total renewable energy production, green electricity 44% and renewable energy in transport 17%.

On 4 December 2015, Flanders concluded a cooperation agreement with the other Regions and the federal government in the context of burden sharing within Belgium. This states that Flanders has a target of 2.156 Mtoe or 25,074 GWh of renewable energy by 2020.

GWh	2018 inventory	2018 sub-target	2019 sub-target	2020 sub-target	2020 target
Green electricity	8525	8649	9502	10519	
Green heat	7779	8473	8775	9197	
Renewable transport	3286	/	/	3940	
Total	19590			23656	25074

In 2018, the **production of green electricity** amounted to 8,525 GWh, which is just below the sub-target for green electricity. To meet the sub-target of 10,519 GWh in 2020, the production of green electricity still needs to increase by 23% in 2019-2020.

Solar should grow significantly to meet the sub-targets for solar energy by 2020. At the end of 2019 the installed power capacity amounted to almost 3,200 MWe. In 2020, a capacity of about 500 MWe will have to be added in order to reach a total installed power capacity of 3,700 MWe in 2020, as set out in the Energy Plan 2020 (Energieplan 2020).

To achieve the sub-target for **wind** by 2020, an installed power capacity of 1,490 MWe is required. At the end of 2019, the installed power capacity amounted to almost 1,300 MWe. In 2020, an additional wind capacity of nearly 200 MWe should be generated, which is about 60 extra turbines.

By 2020, the production of **green heat** should rise to 9,197 GWh, which corresponds to a share of 6.4% of final energy consumption for heating and cooling. In order to achieve this, the production of green heat from solar boilers, heat pumps, deep geothermal energy and especially biomass will have to increase. In this respect Flanders is lagging behind on the sub-targets.

If the renewable energy production realised by Flanders (and Belgium) remains below the set 2020 targets, European regulation offers **options to close this gap** in cooperation with other Member States. Flanders will examine this option in good time.

Energy efficiency

In implementation of the 2012 Energy Efficiency Directive, Belgium set an **indicative energy efficiency target** for 2020 in June 2013. The federal government and the Regions jointly committed, without sharing the burden, to save 18% of primary energy by 2020 compared to the BAU scenario. The target value of primary energy consumption (excl. final energy consumption for non-energy purposes) was set at maximum 43.7 Mtoe (or 508 TWh) in 2020, i.e. a saving of 9.6 Mtoe (or 112 TWh) compared to the expected energy consumption in the BAU scenario (53.3 Mtoe or 620 TWh).

In final terms, the commitment means achieving a target value of final energy consumption for energy purposes of 32.5 Mtoe (or 378 TWh) in 2020, i.e. a saving of 17.8% compared to energy consumption in the BAU scenario (39.6 Mtoe or 461 TWh). In 2017, primary energy consumption for energy purposes in Flanders amounted to 356 TWh. Final energy consumption for energy purposes was 268 TWh in 2017.

Under Article 7 of the Energy Efficiency Directive, Flanders must achieve a cumulative saving of 47.75 TWh by 2020. Efforts were made to implement the savings target with three measures: energy policy agreements (energiebeleidsovereenkomst/EBO) with industry, insulation premiums and the kilometre charge for heavy goods vehicles. On the basis of the figures validated up to 2017 and the forecasts for the period 2018-2020, it can currently be assumed that 96% of the target will be achieved. The limited gap is due to the decreasing number of energy premiums granted for roof insulation and glazing. EBO companies perform slightly above the estimates which were made when the Flemish Energy Efficiency Action Plan (Vlaams actieplan energie-efficiëntie) was drawn up. In order to close the limited gap, additional measures will be reported to the EC in the spring of 2020. These measures include premiums for solar boilers and heat pumps, the demolition and reconstruction premium and the reduction in property tax for energy-efficient new buildings.

3.4.2. Climate and energy measures

For climate and energy measures, reference can be made to Chapters 2.3.3. and 2.5.1.

3.5. Poverty and social exclusion

3.5.1. State of play

For 2018, it can be concluded that as far as the Europe 2020 indicator for people in poverty or social exclusion is concerned, the downward trend is persisting and Flanders' rate is the best ever since 2009,

which subsequently puts it in 2nd position within the EU-28. As for the child poverty rate, Flanders continues to rank in the top 5 in EU context.

For the 3 sub-indicators (at-risk-of-poverty rate, severe material deprivation and very low work intensity) of the composite indicator (EU-SILC 2018) the following observations can be made. In Flanders, 10.4% of people live in a household with an income below the at-risk-of-poverty threshold. Flanders performs much better than Wallonia (21.8%), the BCR (32.6%) and Belgium (16.4%). Within the EU-28 (16.9%) Flanders scores 2nd best⁸⁰. In terms of severe material deprivation, Flanders scores 2% and ranks 3rd in the EU-28 (5.8%). Again, Flanders performs much better than Wallonia (8.6%), the BCR (9.8%) and Belgium (4.9%).⁸¹ As far as the sub-indicator ‘very low work intensity’ (0-59 age group) is concerned, Flanders (6.8%) again performs better than Wallonia (17.6%), the BCR (23%), Belgium (12%) and the EU-28 (9%).⁸²

Key indicator		2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2020 target	Distance (+ position EU-28)
Composite indicator (persons in poverty or social exclusion)	%	14.5	14.7	15	16	15.4	15.3	15.0	14.5	13.5	12.9	10.5%	2.4 pp (2 on 28 in 2018)
	Number x 1,000	900	910	940	1,000	970	970	960	940	880	850	650 by 2020 (= decrease by 30% or - 280,000 persons compared to 2008)	200

Key indicator		2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2020 target	Distance (+ position EU-28)
Children with a standardised disposable household income below the at-risk-of-poverty threshold after social transfers %	%	9.8	11	10.4	11.2	12.1	13.6	11.7	11.7	10.3	12.3	5%	7.3 pp (5 on 28 in 2018)
	Number x 1,000	120	140	130	140	150	170	150	150	130	160	60 by 2020 (= decrease by 50% or 60,000 children compared to 2008)	100

3.5.2. Measures

All policy areas in Flanders must take structural measures to prevent and combat poverty, as laid down in the Flemish Coalition Agreement 2019-2024. To fight poverty, a new, more forceful approach to the transversal policy themes is chosen. At the initiative of the competent Minister, the Government of Flanders defines a limited number of priority, government-wide and integrated poverty reduction objectives and determines for each objective which policy areas and Ministers are involved. The Coalition Agreement sets out a number of guiding axes that should run as a connecting theme through the objectives: (1) targeted focus on child poverty, (2) the directing role of local authorities, (3) implementation of a participatory policy and (4) monitoring and science-based policy. These are the

⁸⁰ <https://www.statistiekvlaanderen.be/en/population-below-the-poverty-threshold-0>

⁸¹ <https://www.statistiekvlaanderen.be/nl/bevolking-in-ernstige-materi%C3%ABle-deprivatie-0>

⁸² <https://www.statistiekvlaanderen.be/nl/bevolking-in-een-huishouden-met-zeer-lage-werkintensiteit>

guiding principles of the **Flemish Poverty Reduction Action Plan (Vlaams Actieplan Armoedebestrijding/VAPA)**. On 20 March 2020, the Government of Flanders took note of the objectives framework of VAPA 2020-2024, which outlines 5 strategic objectives⁸³. The VAPA has the Decree of 21 March 2003 on poverty reduction and the BVR of 15 May 2009 on poverty reduction as legal basis. In concrete terms, the timing foreseen in the legislation means that the Government of Flanders must adopt VAPA 2020-2024 at the latest on 1 October 2020. In doing so, the Government of Flanders meets the Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations (see also 3.7.) with respect to the eradication of poverty. In the coming months, the various Ministers with functional responsibility will therefore set to work to fine-tune strong actions for combating poverty on the basis of a limited number of priority, government-wide and integrated objectives. The following paragraphs include important spearheads of Flanders' current and future poverty reduction policies.

Flanders' poverty reduction policy focuses primarily on a **proactive approach**. In other words, not only will poverty be combated, but people will also be prevented from ending up in poverty. Flanders has an extensive social safety net and a large provision of social assistance and services. However, some people, often the most vulnerable, do not succeed in realising their rights. The Government of Flanders is deploying measures that encourage and support all citizens in exercising their rights. Within all policy areas, attention is paid to reaching vulnerable groups. In order to tackle under-protection, Flanders will support local authorities to provide intensive, customised guidance through the principle of **one local family coach**, which will help households in all areas of life. A chain approach with all partners involved will be paramount in this context. The local authorities will be assigned a directing role for this purpose. Local family coaches are intended in the first place for the most vulnerable households facing various problems.

Wherever possible, the Flemish authorities will strive for automatic granting of rights. Within this framework, they continue their work on the Growth Package (Groeipakket). The **Growth Package** provides each child with a basic amount and a selective participation allowance, with a social allowance for low-income households. The wider use of social allowances and the enhanced use of selective participation allowances ensure that considerably more vulnerable households are reached in a targeted manner, with more than **40,000 additional participation allowances** being allocated thanks to automatic granting. The Growth Package, which is an important instrument in the fight against child poverty, was rewarded in 2019 with the prestigious European Public Sector Award (EPSA) as an innovative government project creating more efficient service provision.

In addition, maximum efforts are made to ensure clear language use, a transparent flow of information, proactive provision of information and administrative simplification. Especially in times of transition, having the right information and receiving tailored support are crucial. Within this framework, the Flemish authorities will concentrate in particular on the transition from home, neighbourhood and childcare to pre-primary school and on young people on their way to adulthood.

⁸³ (1) The Flemish authorities prevent and combat underprotection to prevent people from ending up in poverty and social exclusion, (2) the Flemish authorities set up targeted actions against child poverty, (3) the Flemish authorities are committed to activation, people empowerment and increased self-reliance, (4) the Flemish authorities support citizens in sudden changes in their lives so that the risk of ending up in poverty is reduced and (5) the Flemish authorities aim to create a quality, liveable and healthy environment for all.

It is important that people in poverty have access to affordable, quality housing in a liveable and development-friendly neighbourhood. Given the vulnerability and low financial capacity of the target group, it is crucial that the Flemish authorities, in cooperation with social housing companies, take additional initiatives to make **social housing climate-neutral**. If so desired, local authorities can decide to agree on a regional level on the realisation of an offering of sustainable housing solutions. The municipalities are partners in the realisation of social housing in Flanders. Each municipality is committed to the **Binding Social Objective (Bindend Sociaal Objectief)**. In the coming years, the Government of Flanders also wants to put in additional efforts to reduce energy poverty. That is why Flanders is continuing the **Energy Poverty Programme (Energiearmoedeprogramma)** in consultation with all parties involved in the field. Primary attention is paid to structurally improving the energy performance of dwellings. Targeted financial support for energy saving measures and intensive guidance and a tightening of norms remain crucial. In order to better reach the target group, we work together with the local partners. The **smart meter (digitale meter)** provides opportunities for detecting and addressing budgets that have gone off track in a timely manner. Energy savers (energiesnoeiers) will continue to be used to reduce energy poverty in vulnerable households. The policy of interest-free energy loans will be extended as well. In this context, specific attention is also devoted to the problem of homelessness. Addressing homelessness depends among other things on an integrated policy. The Flemish authorities are drawing up a **second plan on homelessness (plan dak- en thuisloosheid)**, focussing on the whole continuum from prevention through to intensive guidance, like in Housing First projects.

During this term of office, Flanders is also committed to building an **economy of well-being**. Investing in this will indirectly reduce spending on welfare and care and create extra employment in the quaternary sector in which Flanders can still grow. A job is not only an important lever in the fight against poverty, but also the key to personal and societal well-being. In this respect, Flanders endorses the OECD Jobs Strategy which indicates that well-regulated social security and assistance combined with active labour market policies and policy measures to promote labour demand can be very effective in protecting individuals while at the same time achieving better labour market outcomes. Efforts are being made to reinforce cooperation between VDAB and the local authorities in order to better activate people on income support and other groups that are not active on the labour market. Instruments that are being used include a compulsory customised pathway with an explicit test of the willingness to work and, where appropriate, community service (see also 2.2.2.), for example in the context of the Individualised Plan for Societal Integration (Geïndividualiseerd Plan voor Maatschappelijke Integratie), supported employment (individual and collective), and training. It is also made sure that the preconditions for filling jobs are met. More harmonisation with **quality childcare** and customised transport are provided for, among other things. Finally, the aim is to make maximum use of all talents on the labour market. Apart from diplomas, acquired skills are taken into consideration, with proven competencies being made visible and certified to the maximum extent. Attention is also paid to training; the development of competencies and talents and a good transition from education to employment are important building blocks within this framework. One of the major challenges in Flanders that is being addressed is a better match between education and the labour market. Workplace learning and dual learning (see also 2.2.8.) can play a role here, with young people who leave school early taking centre stage.

3.6. Flemish Social Scoreboard

The inclusion of a **Flemish Social Scoreboard** in the FRP allows the European Pillar of Social Rights to be followed. Within the 3 dimensions figures could be produced for Flanders for 12 of the 13 indicators⁸⁴. 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 scores better than the Belgian average.

FLEMISH SOCIAL SCOREBOARD (in Belgian and EU-28 perspective)	FLR	BE	EU-28
Dimension: Equal opportunities and access to the labour market			
Share of early school leavers in % population 18-24 age group (2019)	6.2	8.4	10.6 (2018)
Gender employment gap (2019)	7.8	8.0	11.5 (2018)
Income quintiles ratio (2018)	3.4	3.8	5.2
People at risk of poverty or social exclusion (2018)	12.9	19.8	21.9
Share of young people neither in employment nor in education and training (NEET) (2019)	7.5	9.3	10.5 (2018)
Dimension: Dynamic labour markets and fair working conditions			
Employment rate (20-64 age group) (2019)	75.5	70.5	73.1 (2018)
Unemployment rate (15-64 age group) (2019)	3.3	5.4	6.9 (2018)
Long-term unemployment rate (2018)	1.2	2.9	3.0
Gross disposable household income (index, 2008 = 100)	-	-	-
<i>Alternative: Gross disposable income per capita (euro) and index (2017)</i>	23,820 106.9	22,291 92.4	100
Dimension: Social protection and integration			
Impact of social transfers on poverty reduction (2018)	42.5	34.7	33.2
Children aged less than 3 years in formal childcare (2018)	54.6	54.0	35.1
Self-reported unmet need for medical care (2018)	0.9	1.8	2.0
Share of individuals with basic digital skills (2017)	65	61	57

3.7. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

In September 2015, the United Nations formally adopted the Agenda 2030 (A2030) for Sustainable Development (SD). The A2030 is a universal and transformative agenda for and by all countries of the world, centred on an integrated, indivisible and universal action plan for peace, people, planet, prosperity and partnership. This Agenda highlights 17 SDGs with a universal character. This universal character means that they are one and indivisible and stand for a broad integrated approach by all countries (global partnership). To make progress measurable, a set of sub-targets and indicators is linked to the SDGs. The A2030 calls on all countries to translate them into their own targets and to integrate them into policy and policy planning. The SDGs require a comprehensive, multidisciplinary approach and collaboration.

Flanders has established a **strong governance framework regarding the A2030 and the SDGs**. The Flemish Decree for the promotion of SD of 9 July 2008⁸⁵ constitutes the framework for Flanders'

⁸⁴ Figures provided by Statistics Flanders. For the indicator 'gross disposable household income', a Flemish indicator was used, which is fairly close to the European indicator.

⁸⁵ <https://do.vlaanderen.be/sites/default/files/Vlaams%20Decreet%20Duurzame%20Ontwikkeling.pdf>

coordinated SD policy and stipulates that SD is an inclusive, participatory and coordinated process. The previous Government of Flanders decided to integrate the third Flemish Sustainable Development Strategy (Vlaamse strategie duurzame ontwikkeling/VSDO) into a transversal policy memorandum 'Flanders 2050'. **Vision 2050 (Visie 2050)**, the long-term strategy for Flanders, adopted by the Government of Flanders in March 2016, contains the vision for the future of Flanders in 2050: a strong, social, open, resilient and international Flanders that creates prosperity and well-being in a smart, innovative and sustainable way and in which every individual counts. An analysis of the megatrends resulted in the identification of a series of challenges/opportunities for Flanders. With an innovative governance model based on the methodology of transition management, Flanders aims to accelerate profound and necessary changes (transitions). Vision 2050 is the third VSDO and the long-term strategy of the Government of Flanders for a strong, social, open, resilient and international Flanders that creates prosperity and well-being in a smart, innovative and sustainable way, and in which individual counts. Vision 2050 contains 7 transition priorities: Circular economy, Smart living and working, Industry 4.0., Lifelong learning, Living together in 2050, Mobility, and Energy transition.

With **Focus 2030 (Vizier 2030)**, which was adopted by the Government of Flanders on 5 April 2019, Flanders translated the SDGs into 2030 objectives for Flanders. The objectives framework for Flanders has been created and will be implemented with as many partners as possible within the Flemish public administration, but also with societal partners outside the administration. The 2030 objectives framework consists of 48 objectives based on the 17 SDGs, with 2030 as horizon and with a focus on Flanders. Several objectives from the A2030, however, are covered by Flanders' sectoral long-term policy plans which are under development, such as the Spatial Policy Plan Flanders (Beleidsplan Ruimte Vlaanderen) and the Mobility Plan (Mobiliteitsplan). These plans will follow their own creation process and, after approval, their 2030 objectives will become part of Focus 2030. Monitoring will put in place with a view to reporting annually within the framework of the September Declaration. A set of indicators has been defined and can be complemented and adjusted after integration of the (new) long-term policy plans and taking into account EU evolutions. Finally, it should be indicated that the measures included in Parts 2, 3, 4 and 5 of the FRP 2020 respond very closely to the SDGs.

PART 4. Use of structural funds

Four themes were specified 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, 92% (€163 million) of Flanders' available ERDF budget has been committed to 224 projects. This ERDF support constitutes the lever for an additional investment of €280 million. Support for innovation and research, low-carbon economy and sustainable urban development is very much concentrated on investment in, inter alia, infrastructure, whereas for entrepreneurship more attention is paid to operational activities. Examples of projects carried out with ERDF Flanders can be found at <https://www.vlaio.be/nl/media/1003>.

The operational **ESF 2014-2020** programme reinforces and reinvigorates Flanders' labour policy with a budget of approximately €1 billion, €398 million of which originate from the EU. The ESF programme wants to help around 250,000 people find a job or acquire new competencies. In **2019**, ESF projects reached approximately 87,000 participants. Just under 60,000 participants took part in projects for the guidance and training of jobseekers in cooperation with VDAB, in work experience pathways for young people or in one of the 80 projects for the guidance of vulnerable groups. About one quarter of participants reached are persons with a migrant background. In 2018, ESF continued to support efforts by the education sector to reduce early school leaving and to further develop dual learning. In 2019, ESF

training projects enabled more than 25,000 employees to strengthen their skills, with a focus on digital, transversal and basic skills. The ESF programme is also one of the main drivers of workable work in Flanders. In 2019, 13 new calls were realised and a total of 249 projects were approved. These projects involve 389 organisations. In 2020, ESF will continue to focus fully on outreach activities for economically inactive people, as well as on activation, social inclusion, LLL and workable work. New emphasis will be placed on the roll-out of the public contract 'Drive' with which ESF wants to help organisations create workable work tailored to the specific situation of the employees concerned. Another particular priority is the sustained effort to reach and motivate inactive people and guide them to the labour market. Constantly innovating and updating labour market instruments and policies is a point of focus. Validating developed products and disseminating acquired knowledge and skills constitute the final elements in this development, which means ESF responds to the very topical challenge of shortage on Flanders' labour market.

Flanders also continues to be strongly committed to **interregional cooperation** and is very actively involved in projects of various programmes in the cross-border EU Regional Policy, viz. ERDF Interreg V 2014-2020. The provinces and provincial development companies (provinciale ontwikkelingsmaatschappij/POM) (see also 5.4.) in Flanders are also involved, next to various public and private knowledge partners.

Preparations for **Flanders' future ERDF and ESF 2021-2027 programmes** have been ongoing for quite some time. A lot of informal preparatory meetings have already been held. In addition, ESF Flanders has, inter alia, drawn up its socio-economic analysis and held a first meeting with stakeholders to gauge their expectations for the next programming period. ERDF Flanders has, inter alia, set up theme-based working groups that have produced initiation memoranda on the policy objectives 'A Smart Europe' and 'A Green Europe'. In Belgium the various authorities are working together as well, e.g. with regard to the preconditions. As far as European territorial cooperation is concerned, Flanders is currently participating in 9 Interreg programmes. Each of these programmes is working on a successor programme for 2021-2027. Final decisions on programme content and budget will not be taken until the contours of the MFF are clear and all regulations have been approved.

PART 5. Institutional issues and stakeholder participation

5.1. Enhancing public support

The Government of Flanders attaches great weight to enhancing public support for the ES. Within the Flemish public administration the official working group 'ES' acts as the focal point for following progress in activities at Flemish, federal and European level.

As a result of the corona crisis, the involvement of key actors in the FRP 2020 was organised by written means.

5.2. Involvement of the Flemish Parliament

The draft FRP 2020 was submitted to the Committee for General Policy, Finance and Budget of the **Flemish Parliament**.

5.3. Involvement of social partners

By means of a written procedure within the framework of VESOC the **social partners** were involved in the formulation of the FRP 2020 and several elements were taken into account in the final FRP 2020.

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.

On 11 December 2019, the EC presented the Green Deal, the new growth strategy for the EU. This strategy focuses, inter alia, on digital transformation, circular economy and zero pollution. With its activities, the **Flanders Knowledge Centre Water (Vlaams Kenniscentrum Water)** is responding maximally to this growth strategy. For example, with the support of VLAIO, it was made possible to set up the 'Internet of Water Flanders' project in which a multitude of sensors are rolled out to map the water system and the water chain. This will allow us to further professionalise our approach to drought, flooding and water quality issues. With support from the Interreg programmes and Horizon 2020, several demonstration projects were created which allow alternative water sources to be used and water to be reused (as well as the raw materials and energy contained therein to be recovered) on different scales and between different actors (industry, cities, agriculture). New concepts are being developed to treat waste water in more remote areas in a cost-efficient way and to tackle diffuse pollution. In addition, together with other partners engaged in water policy we are investigating the possibilities of a nexus approach to achieve a robust water system in Flanders. These partners include the Flanders Environment Agency (Vlaamse Milieumaatschappij/VMM), Flemish Waterways plc (De Vlaamse Waterweg NV), Aquafin, the drinking water company 'De Watergroep' and VITO. Within this approach, maximum efforts are made to identify coupling opportunities with energy, mobility, nutrition and spatial planning, as was also proposed in the Flemish Coalition Agreement 2019-2024.

At the European level, **Flanders Make** participates in various programmes aimed at supporting SMEs and companies which are less innovation-oriented. Our projects COTEMACO (Interreg North-West Europe) and TRINITY (Horizon 2020, Digital Innovation Hub) offer open calls where companies - after registration - are supported with technological knowledge, access to existing demonstrators and financial resources. These projects give companies low-threshold access to unique knowledge at European level. At Flemish level, Flanders Make rolled out the Innovation Boosting initiative following its official launch in October 2018. This initiative as well assists companies from the same target group in assessing the feasibility of their innovation. Both the submission and approval procedures are very low-threshold and tailored to the needs of SMEs and less innovative companies. In the meantime, 8 projects are already underway and 32 potential follow-up projects are in the pipeline.

The European Regulation (EU 2018/1999) on the Governance of the Energy Union and Climate Action entered into force in late December 2018 to support the objectives of the 'Clean Energy for all Europeans' package. The integrated national energy and climate plans (NECPs) are a key component of the governance mechanism set up by this Regulation. **VITO** is a member of the consortium that assesses the integrated NECPs⁸⁶. Member States had to submit their draft plans in accordance with the

⁸⁶ <https://ec.europa.eu/energy/en/topics/energy-strategy/national-energy-climate-plans>

Regulation requirements by the end of 2018. These draft plans were assessed on the basis of a uniform and transparent method. The findings allowed the EC to formulate its recommendations to Member States and to draw up its analysis of the extent to which NECPs will further the ambitious 2030 targets. The analysis shows that there are still substantial gaps in the ambitions for renewable energy and energy efficiency. The EC calls on Member States to step up efforts to close this gap. By the end of 2019, Member States had to submit their final plans and these final plans will be reassessed by the same consortium, in particular in terms of compliance with the EC's recommendations. VITO supplied technical support for the substantiation of a number of specific elements of the Flemish Energy and Climate Plan.

North Sea Port wants to further develop the port in a sustainable way and is taking relevant measures⁸⁷ in the field of renewable energy, circular economy, mobility, etc.

The **provinces in Flanders** 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 practices are given which provincial authorities in Flanders implement to help realise CSRs 2 and 3:

CSR 2:

- **ZORO (Interreg Flanders-The Netherlands)**

Through the Governor Kinsbergen Centre (Gouverneur Kinsbergencentrum/GKC), the sustainable knowledge and expertise centre in care economy & innovation, the Province of Antwerp is trying to prepare current and future healthcare professionals for new challenges in healthcare and to remove a number of potential obstacles on the labour market. This is done, among others through the project 'Zorgroute Arbeidsmarkt' (Labour Market Care Pathway) (ZORO - Interreg Flanders-The Netherlands) in which they try to reduce the gap between healthcare education and the labour market by developing and testing 4 training modules: interprofessional collaboration, technological agility, proactive and innovative work behaviour (intrapreneurship) and ethics.

- **LES - Learning Euregio Scheldemond (ERDF Flanders)**

With this project, the project partners want to create more technical labour potential for companies and a larger labour market for recent graduates. They want to do so as much as possible from the perspective of one cross-border labour market 'Euregio Scheldemond'. To this end, the project partners want to achieve the following:

- ✓ Increase the attractiveness of technical and healthcare courses leading to shortage occupations
- ✓ Increase the quality of technical and healthcare courses by focusing on hybrid forms of learning
- ✓ Create a better match between education and the labour market through competence translation exercises, especially across borders
- ✓ Promote cross-border labour market and mobility by intensifying networking and information provision.

The partners will set up living labs on hybrid forms of learning for a number of courses within the technology and healthcare sectors, highlight educational institutions and their (hybrid) courses, draw up competence translations of diplomas so that they can be compared across borders and set

⁸⁷ <https://en.northseaport.com/sustainability>

up small-scale exchanges between schools and businesses across borders. Promotional campaigns will also be launched which will be targeted at shortage occupations.

- **Grenzeloos Competent (Borderlessly competent) (Interreg France-Wallonia-Flanders)**

The Grenzeloos Competent project aims to contribute to the further integration of a qualified labour market in the border region. It seeks to improve the match between supply and demand in the cross-border labour market, focusing on 3 spearhead sectors: agri-food, textiles/new materials and sustainable construction. The Provincial Development Company West Flanders (POM West-Vlaanderen) is the driving force behind this project, which mainly aims to provide an answer to labour demand in West-Flanders in the sectors mentioned. One of the realisations is the job lab around the food industry that was opened in Roeselare. A showcase on sustainable construction is also to be realised in Veurne.

CSR 3:

- **EnergyVille (ERDF Flanders)**

EnergyVille is a collaboration between the Belgian research partners VITO, Imec and UHasselt for research into sustainable energy and intelligent energy systems. EnergyVille develops technology and knowledge to support public and private stakeholders in their transition to an energy efficient, decarbonised and sustainable urban environment. Within the framework of the Strategic Action Plan for Limburg Squared (Strategisch Actieplan Limburg in het Kwadraat/SALK) €10 million of EU (ERDF) funds were made available for the expansion of EnergyVille with a centre of expertise on sustainable energy supply in cities (focus on electrical and thermal energy).

- **PRosPERoS (Interreg Flanders-The Netherlands)**

The main goal of the PRosPERoS (PRinting PERsonalized orthopaedic implantS) project is to develop new patient-specific implants that accelerate and improve the recovery process. The consortium wants to focus on implants in two joints in the body, namely the hip and the back. The project makes use of various highly specialised fields in which the current cross-border cooperation is particularly useful. Within the group no less than 5 universities and academic hospitals are participating which, together with the affiliated companies (Antleron, PCOTech), have the laboratories to carry out the pre-clinical research, but are also able to perform the clinical studies in the final stage of the project. In addition, the group has access to very good animal experimentation facilities (Medanex Clinic, UMC Utrecht, Maastricht UMC) as well as to parties for the design, production and commercialisation of implants and coating technologies (Xilloc, 2Move Implants, PCOTech, 4Web and 3D Systems/Layerwise).

The provinces in Flanders again made considerable investments in **low-emission transport**. Cycling mobility in particular remains an important spearhead in the policies of the provinces. This resulted, among other things, in investments in cycling infrastructure for the further connection via bicycle highways (Fiets-O-Strades), and in the supra-local functional cycling path network. Again, some components were co-financed with ERDF funds.

5.5. FRP in a federal and European perspective

Within the framework of ES 2020, Flanders again provided substantial input for the **fact finding mission** which took place between the EC services and Belgium on 25 October 2019 regarding the formulation of the draft Country Report Belgium 2020. In addition, during ES 2020, Flanders participated actively in the **bilateral meetings with the EC services** at political level. The first meeting

took place on 9 December 2019 and was, inter alia, dedicated to skills and LLL. During the meeting of 16 March 2020 (participation in writing) the Country Report Belgium 2020 and the CSRs 2019 were discussed, among other things. Moreover, numerous bilateral contacts are taking place between the EC services (including the ESOs) and the policy areas of the Flemish public administration during the ES process.

The FRP 2020 will again be appended to the **NRP** and the link with the **European institutions** will be guaranteed as well: 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). Through its initiatives within the framework of ES, Flanders also makes an important contribution to the operation of the Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform of the Committee of the Regions.

The FRP will also be published on the Semester website⁸⁸ of the **General Representation of the Government of Flanders to the EU** (Algemene Afvaardiging van de Vlaamse Regering bij de EU/AAVR EU) in order to increase its visibility. Flanders' ES governance framework was also clarified in June 2019 by the Department of Public Governance and the Chancellery (Departement Kanselarij en Bestuur) during a conference of the Regional Studies Association which featured as theme 'Pushing Regions beyond their borders'⁸⁹.

⁸⁸ <https://www.flandersineu.be/en/european-semester-0>

⁸⁹ <https://www.regionalstudies.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Conference-Programme-Final-23rd-May-V2-1.pdf>

Glossary

3D	Three-dimensional	CSR	Country-specific recommendation
A2030	Agenda 2030	DBFM	Design, Build, Finance and Maintain
AAVR EU	Algemene Vertegenwoordiging van Vlaanderen bij de EU (General Representation of Flanders to the EU)	Dko	Deeltijds Kunstonderwijs (part-time education in the arts)
Actiris	Brussels Regional Employment Service	DMOB	Diensten met onderwijsbehoeften (services with educational) needs
AGION	Agentschap voor Infrastructuur in het Onderwijs (Agency for Infrastructure in Education)	EBO	Energiebeleidsvereenkomst (energy policy agreement)
AI	Artificial Intelligence	EC	European Commission
Alexa	Google voice assistant	ECA	Extra Container Capacity Antwerp
Aso	Algemeen secundair onderwijs (general secondary education)	EESC	European Economic and Social Committee
BAU	Business as usual	EFSI	European Fund for Strategic Investments
BCR	Brussels-Capital Region	EIB	European Investment Bank
BENEFIC	Laad- en tankinfrastructuur voor alternatieve brandstoffen voor transport	EIF	European Investment Fund
Bso	Beroepssecundair onderwijs (vocational secondary education)	e-MOPOLI	Electro MOBility as driver to support POLicy
BuSO	Buitengewoon secundair onderwijs (special needs secondary education)	EOS vzw	Focuses on science and research in Flanders
BVR	Besluit van de Vlaamse Regering (Government of Flanders Order)	EPSA	European Public Sector Award
Cao	Collectieve arbeidsovereenkomst (collective labour agreement)	Eq	Equivalent
Catalisti	Spearhead cluster 'Sustainable Chemistry'	ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
CEF	Community Europe Facility	ES	European Semester
CO ₂	Carbon dioxide	ESF	European Social Fund
CO ₂ -eq	CO ₂ equivalent	ESO	European Semester Officer
CoR	Committee of the Regions	ETS	European Emissions Trading System
COTEMACO	Competitiveness thanks to more efficient cooperation between man and machine	EU	European Union
CPD	Continuing professional development	EU-15	the 15 EU Member States as at 1 January 1995
CPT	Clean Power for Transport	EU-28	the 28 EU Member States since 2014
CS	Cybersecurity	EUR-Lex	EU law
		Eurostat	Directorate-General of the European Commission, in charge of providing statistics for Europe
		EWI	Economie, Wetenschap en Innovatie (Economy, Science and Innovation)

FFM	Fact Finding Mission	IoT	Internet of Things
FIT	Flanders Investment & Trade	IPO	Internaat met Permanente Openstelling (boarding school of community education that is permanently open)
Flanders	Strategic Research Centre for the	IT	Information Technology
Make	manufacturing industry	ITE	Initial Teachers Education
FLR	Flemish Region	JTF	Just Transition Fund
Flux50	Flemish smart energy networks	Kso	Kunstsecundair onderwijs (art secondary education)
FPB	Federaal Planbureau (Federal Planning Bureau)	kW	kiloWatt
FTI vzw	Flanders Technology International	Le Forem	Le service public de l'emploi et de la formation professionnelle en Wallonie (Walloon Service for Employment and Vocational Training)
GDP	Gross Domestic Product	LES	Lerende Euregio Scheldemond (Learning Euregio Scheldemond)
GERD	Gross domestic expenditure on R&D	LFS	Labour Force Survey
GIP	Geïntegreerd Investeringsprogramma (Integrated Investment Programme)	LLL	Lifelong learning
GKC	Gouverneur Kinsbergencentrum (Governor Kinsbergen Centre)	M-decree	Decree containing measures for pupils with special educational needs
GLITCH	Glastuinbouw Innoveert door Co-creatie met koolstofarme Hightech (Greenhouse cultivation Innovates through Co-creation with low-carbon High-Tech)	MPFF	Multiannual Financial Framework
GO!	Gemeenschapsonderwijs (Community education)	MOW	Mobiliteit en Openbare Werken (Mobility and Public Works)
GWh	Gigawatt per hour	MPIGO	Medisch Pedagogisch Instituut van het GO (medical pedagogical institutes of community education)
HE	Higher education	Mtoe	Million tonnes of oil equivalent
HERMREG	Belgian econometric model for drawing up regional medium-term forecasts	Mton	Megaton
HFB	Het Facilitair Bedrijf (Agency for Facility Operations)	MWe	Megawatt electrical. Symbol of unit megawatt for electrical energy
IBO	Individuele beroepsopleiding (individual vocational training)	NARIC	National Academic Recognition Information Centre
ICT	Information and communications technology	NBB	National Bank of Belgium
IDACS	ID and Data Collection for Sustainable Fuels in Europe	NECP	National energy and climate plan
I-learn	Specific technology for personalised learning	NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
Imec	Interuniversity Micro-Electronics Centre	NMBS	Nationale Maatschappij der Belgische Spoorwegen (Belgian National Railways)
INR	Instituut voor de Nationale Rekeningen (Institute of National Accounts)		
Interreg	Interreg Community Initiative		
InvestEU	EU Investment Plan		

NPBI	National and regional promotional banks and institutions	RVO-society	Innovative knowledge in educational projects for young people and teachers
NRP	National Reform Programme	SALK	Strategisch Actieplan voor Limburg in het Kwadraat (Strategic Action Plan for Limburg Squared)
Nx	Connection road in Zeebrugge	SD	Sustainable development
OBE	Onderwijsbelastingseenheid (education tax unit)	SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development	SERV	Sociaal-Economische Raad van Vlaanderen (Social and Economic Council of Flanders)
OSLO	Open Standards for Linked Organisations	SE	Secondary education
OVAM	Openbare Vlaamse Afvalstoffenmaatschappij (Public Waste Agency of Flanders)	SES	Socio-economic status
PJ	Petajoule	SILC	Statistics on income and living conditions
PMD	Plastic, metaal en drankkarton (plastic, metal and beverage carton)	SIO	Synchroon internetonderwijs (synchronous Internet education)
PMV	Participatiemaatschappij Vlaanderen (Flanders Holding Company)	SIRI	Virtual assistant for mobile operating systems
POM	Provinciale Ontwikkelingsmaatschappij (Provincial Development Company)	SME	Small and medium-sized enterprise
Pp	Percentage point	SOC	Strategisch Onderzoekscentrum (strategic research centre)
PPP	Public-private partnership	SPARTACUS	Plan drawn up by De Lijn and NMBS to improve public transport in Belgian Limburg
PPS	Purchasing power standard	SRSP	Structural Reform Support Programme
PRosPERoS	PRinting PERsonalised orthopaedic implants	SRSS	Structural Reform Support Service (since 2020: DG Reform of the European Commission)
PV	Solar technology	Statbel	Algemene Directie Statistiek (Directorate General Statistics)
Technology		STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
R0	Brussels ring road	STORE	Steunpunt ondernemen en regionale economie (Research Centre on Entrepreneurship and Regional Economy)
R1	Ring around Antwerp	TABD	Tijdelijke aanstelling van bepaalde duur (temporary appointment for a specified period)
R4	Ring around Ghent	TADD	Tijdelijke aanstelling van doorlopende duur (temporary appointment of continuous duration)
R&D	Research and development	TEN-T	Trans-European Transport Network
R&D&I	Research, development and innovation	TOAH	Tijdelijk onderwijs aan huis (temporary education at home)
RE	Renewable energy	TRINITY	TRINITY aims to improve the agility and innovative capacity of European production companies
RIS	Regional Innovation Scoreboard		
RIZIV	(Rijksinstituut voor Ziekte- en Invaliditeitsverzekering (National Institute for Health and Disability Insurance/NIHDI)		
RUE	Rational use of energy		

Tso	Technisch secundair onderwijs (technical secondary education)	VVM	Vlaamse Vervoersmaatschappij De Lijn (Flemish Public Transport Company De Lijn)
TWh	Terawatt hour	WIJ	Werkinleving voor jongeren (work experience for young people)
UMC	Universitair Medisch Centrum (university medical centre)	WLTP	Worldwide harmonized Light vehicles Test Procedure
VAPA	Vlaams Actieplan Armoedebestrijding (Flemish Poverty Reduction Action Plan)	ZORO	Zorgroute Arbeidsmarkt (Labour Market Care Pathway)
VDAB	Vlaamse Dienst voor Arbeidsbemiddeling en Beroepsopleiding (Flemish Service for Employment and Vocational Training)		
VEB	Vlaams Energiebedrijf (Flemish Agency for Public Sector Energy Saving)		
VEKP	Vlaams Energie- en Klimaatplan 2021-2030 (Flemish Energy and Climate Plan 2021-2030)		
VESOC	Vlaams economisch en sociaal overlegcomité (Flemish Economic and Social Consultative Committee)		
VHP	Vlaams Hervormingsprogramma (Flemish Reform Programme/FRP)		
VITO	Vlaamse Instelling voor Technologisch Onderzoek (Flemish Institute for Technological Research)		
VLAIO	Agentschap Innoveren en Ondernemen (Flanders Innovation & Entrepreneurship)		
VLEVA	Vlaams-Europees Verbindingsagentschap (Liaison Agency Flanders-Europe)		
VLIF	Vlaams Landbouwinvesteringsfonds (Flemish Agricultural Investment Fund)		
VMM	Vlaamse Milieumaatschappij (Flanders Environment Agency)		
VMSW	Vlaamse Maatschappij voor Sociaal Wonen (Flemish Social Housing Company)		
VOP	Vlaamse Ondersteuningspremie (Flemish Support Premium)		
VRD II	Vlaanderen Radicaal Digitaal II 2019-2024 (Flanders Radical Digital II 2019-2024)		
VRT	Vlaamse Radio- en Televisieomroeporganisatie (Flemish Public Broadcaster)		
VSDO	Vlaamse Strategie Duurzame Ontwikkeling (Flemish Sustainable Development Strategy)		
VTTI	Verkeers- en tunneltechnische installaties (Traffic and Tunnel Technical Installations)		

Annex 2.2: Key socio-economic responses without budgetary implications to the COVID-19 pandemic in Flanders

In the course of March 2020 already, the Government of Flanders established a large number of measures during several (special) Councils of Ministers, which provide a vigorous response to the major challenges posed by the corona crisis. Many of these measures (with and without budgetary impact) were included in the Flemish Reform Programme 2020 (FRP 2020) which was adopted by the Government of Flanders on 3 April 2020. The table below lists the measures which do not have any budgetary impact. As the Government of Flanders acts in quick response to changed circumstances, said table also takes into account additional and updated measures that have been implemented since the adoption of the FRP 2020. The following table clearly shows that the measures adopted by the Government of Flanders cover the entire socio-economic spectrum.

Detailed tabel

Level of government	Short title of the measure	Description of the measure			Foreseen impact (qualitative description of foreseen impacts and their timing)
		Main policy objective and relevance to address the pandemic	Legal/administrative instruments	Adoption status and timetable on upcoming steps	
Flemish government	Establishment of Task Force 'Economic Impact Corona'	The idea is to analyse the economic consequences of coronavirus and to listen to the concerns and questions raised by companies in Flanders. The trade unions and the banking sector (Febelfin) also take part in this Flemish task force.		3 March	To clarify and publicise existing support measures. To answer questions and concerns.

Education					
Federal government	Suspension of classes	<p>Classes and activities in nursery, primary and secondary education, as well as in adult education and part-time education in the arts are suspended as one of the general measures to curtail the spread of coronavirus.</p> <p>University colleges and universities only teach through distance education.</p> <p><u>From May 15</u>, the schools can open the doors for a pilot phase, during the weekend adjustments can be made. On 18 May, the new phase will start. The principles of social distancing and the contact bubbles remain valid. In addition, students from 12 years and staff at school wear mouth and nose coverings and the precautions remain in effect.</p> <p><i>-Preschool:</i> classes are suspended (until at least the end of May).</p>	Ministerial Order containing urgent measures to curtail the spread of COVID-19	The Ministerial Order was adopted on 12 March and amended on 23 March.	This measure helps to slow the spread of coronavirus.
National Security Council					

		<p><i>-Primary and / or secondary schools: restart of classes at school (with a number of days to be determined) for a maximum of 3 years per education level. Classes are split into smaller groups and they take classes at school simultaneously or are split into small groups that get blended education.</i></p> <p><i>-Focus on graduation years, students with high learning needs (who can be individually invited to school) and professional directions. These groups can go back to school physically: 6th grade, 1st grade, 2nd grade, special primary education: max. 3 years / age cohorts, dbso (only work participation phase) and apprenticeship, buso OV4: like regular secondary education, buso OV3 (last year qualification phase + integration phase), HBO5 Nursing (last module). For the other students, pre-teaching through distance learning continues to apply. From that date, all travelling movements</i></p>			
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		that are necessary for education purposes, are to be seen as essential.			
Federal government National Security Council	Schools provide childcare	<p>Schools provide childcare during regular school hours (including childcare before and after school hours). For childcare during regular school hours schools cannot charge any fees. For childcare before and after school hours, the applicable agreements remain in force. There are 3 groups of healthy pupils for whom schools provide childcare:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Children whose parent(s) work in in a critical sector (<i>care, safety, food industry, etc.</i>). 2. Children in special educational needs education, boarding schools, the medical pedagogical institutes of community education (MPIGOs) and the boarding schools of community education that are permanently open (IPOs). 3. Children in a vulnerable home situation. 	Ministerial Order containing urgent measures to curtail the spread of COVID-19	The Ministerial Order was adopted on 12 March and amended on 23 March.	<p>This measure ensures that parents who work in a critical sector (care, safety, food industry, distribution, etc.) and cannot work from home can continue to do their job. This measure also protects children who are medically and/or socially vulnerable and children for whom childcare at home is not a safe option.</p> <p>This measure also ensures that the composition of so-called 'contactbubbles' (an existing group of people who already had contact before) also remains the same in childcare. This offers herd protection and creates herd immunity.</p>

		From May 18: Primary and secondary education will continue to provide for the reception of pupils at school and pre- and after-school care, for the same three groups as mentioned above, but now also for children whose parents goes to work and doesn't have other opportunities for childcare. In that shelter, the students are offered new material through 'preteaching', just like their classmates who are at home.			
Flemish government	Crisis communication to the education sector and to parents	To rapidly inform the education sector and the different target groups about the impact of the corona measures on the education sector.	The various communication channels of the education and training policy area.	The communication to the education sector on the impact of the corona measures is continued periodically following new decisions.	This accompanying measure is intended to prepare the education sector and the parents as optimally as possible for the different scenarios.
Vlaamse Rand					
Flemish government	Relaxation of subsidy regulation and communication	-To offer certainty to subsidised organisations.	General communication on government website.	-Communication was sent on 16 March.	- Organisations must not pay the costs of cancelled events themselves.

	n to target group of impetus grant 'Vlaamse Rand' (impulssubsidie Vlaamse Rand) and grants to municipalities with linguistic facilities	Relaxation of monitoring of grant conditions -To offer information to prospective grant applicants.	Targeted communication to organisations whose grant application has already been approved.	-Overview of costs incurred will be submitted by organisations that received a grant.	- No budgetary impact for government, because grants were already expected to have been paid.
Sport					
Federal government National Security Council	Discontinuation of sports activities	All sports activities (training sessions, competitions, events, etc.) are discontinued and sports infrastructure is closed as one of the measures to contain the spread of coronavirus. Only walking, running, activities with a 'cycle' and activities with non-motorised means of transportation are allowed: individually, with members of the household or each time with the same friend,	Ministerial Order containing urgent measures to curtail the spread of COVID-19.	The Ministerial Order was adopted on 12 March and amended on 23 March. Sports Flanders Agency (Sport Vlaanderen) is preparing a step-by-step plan together with the partners 'Vereniging sport- en keuringsartsen' and 'Gezond Sporten Vlaanderen' to be used in the event that the	This measure also helps contain the spread of coronavirus.

		<p>provided all hygienic measures are respected.</p> <p><u>From May 4:</u> Sports activities in the outside air and without contact allowed again with up to 2 people (or more if below same roof).</p>		current general measures are relaxed.	
Flemish government	Communication on sport restrictions to the sports sector and to sportspersons	To efficiently inform the sports sector on the impact of the corona measures on sport.	The communication channels of Sport Vlaanderen, as well as of the Flemish Sports Federation (Vlaamse Sportfederatie) and of 'Gezond Sporten Vlaanderen'.	The communication on the impact of the corona measures is continued periodically following new decisions.	This accompanying measure is intended to inform the sports sector and sportspersons as well as possible.
Flemish government	Communication on economic compensation	To efficiently inform the sports sector on already existing/decided economic compensation measures to dampen the impact of the corona crisis.	The communication channels of Sport Vlaanderen and of the Vlaamse Sportfederatie.	The communication on economic compensation measures is adjusted and continued following new decisions.	This accompanying measure is intended to inform the sports sector and sportspersons as well as possible.
Flemish government	Campaign 'Keep Exercising' (blijf sporten)	The campaign "blijf sporten" was set up between Sport Vlaanderen and the sports channel Sporza, amongst others, and wants to offer people accurate science-based	This measure does not come under a regulated framework. The campaign is inspiring and serves to ensure that when people exercise today, they do so in a healthy and responsible manner.	The campaign will run as long as necessary and useful.	The campaign is inspiring and serves to ensure that when people exercise today, they do so in a healthy and responsible manner.

		information on how to exercise in corona times.			
Flemish government	Shooting rounds for sports shooters	Provisional sports shooter's licences are extended by the same number of calendar days during which the cancellation of the sports activities lasts. Sports shooter's licences that expire in the period in which the sports activities are cancelled or in the subsequent month are exceptionally declared valid or renewed without fulfilment of the usual condition of active membership.	Government of Flanders Order of 27 March 2020	Until the sports shooting activities are restarted.	This measure is intended to guarantee the legal certainty of sports shooter's licences.
Animal welfare					
Flemish government	Deferral to recognised animal shelters of compliance with preconditions for obtaining financial support.	With the Ministerial Order of 16 December 2019, financial support was offered to recognised animal shelters which meet the preconditions laid down in the Order, with a view to increased professionalisation. However, due to the COVID-19 crisis, the preconditions from said Ministerial Order needed to be deferred because many animal	Ministerial Order modifying the Ministerial Order of 16 December 2019 on the allocation of a grant to recognised animal shelters to support their activities	The Ministerial Order was adopted on 2 April.	This measure ensures that information sessions which were planned in the various provinces (more specifically in Kortrijk, Sint-Niklaas, Geel, Leuven and Ghent) in order to comply with the preconditions of the Ministerial Order can take place at a later date.

		shelters could no longer comply with them in time.			
Flemish government	Communication on the impact of the coronavirus measures imposed by the Crisis Centre which relate to establishments recognised by the Animal Welfare Service (and more specifically animal shelters, kennels and pet shops, and breeding establishments) as well as to animal transportation companies.	To efficiently inform the animal welfare sector on the impact of the corona measures.	Newsletters from the Animal Welfare Service	The communication on the impact of the corona measures is continued periodically following new decisions.	This accompanying measure is intended to inform the animal welfare sector as well as possible and to guarantee animal welfare.

Culture					
Flemish government	Flexibility in administrative obligations and deadlines	Provide flexibility in terms of completeness, deadlines and requirements of project files by the Flemish Department of Culture, Youth and Media and Cultural Funds	Flemish government decision – emergency decree	Decision on 2 April 2020	Deadlines for submission of grant applications and reporting will be maintained, but the Department of Culture, Youth and Media is more flexible regarding the completeness of grant applications and/or reporting. Likewise, various Cultural Funds (Flanders Audiovisual Fund - VAF, Literatuur Vlaanderen) have introduced flexibility regarding the deadlines and requirements of grant application and/or reporting. (Website: https://www.vaf.be/corona & https://www.literatuurvlaanderen.be/nieuws/update-corona-en-auteurslezingen)
Flemish government	Advance payment of additional advances initially provided for later in the financial year	Prevent organisations from experiencing liquidity problems	Flemish government decision – emergency decree	Decision on 2 April 2020	Advance payment foreseen to be paid out later in the financial year, will be brought forward, in order to alleviate the financial burden upon the beneficiaries.
Flemish government	FAQ Cultural and Creative Sector and COVID-19	Inform individuals and organisations active in the CCS on socio-economic and legal issues connected to the impact of the current COVID-19 situation.	Website https://cjsm.be/sites/cjsm/files/faq-covid-19.pdf	Implemented, during the COVID-19 period	In close cooperation with Cultuurloket, the Department of Culture, Youth and Media created a periodically updated, online FAQ section on the impact of the COVID-19 situation on the CCS. In addition, a dedicated COVID-19 info line was set up, providing legal counsel to both individuals and organisations.

Agency for Facility Operations (Facilitair Bedrijf) and ICT					
Flemish government (also applies to public contracts of local authorities)	Circular on public contracts and corona	Flexibility in implementation of public contract regulations (in terms of sanctions and penalties) and increase in liquidity of successful tenderers of public contracts (inter alia, through accelerated payment and interim payments). Whenever possible, continuation/restart of activities, provided safety measures (e.g. social distancing) are complied with.	Circular	Communicated to the Government of Flanders on 10 April 2020. A second circular is being prepared on a uniform regulation regarding compensation.	To reduce liquidity problems of successful tenderers of public contracts. To avoid administrative and legal proceedings between public contract parties. To provide an incentive to a number of economic sectors (e.g. building sector).
Flemish government	Establishment of task force 'Vlaanderen Helemaal Digitaal' (Flanders Radical Digital)	Together with entrepreneurs' associations, academics and technologists, the Government of Flanders has set up the task force 'Vlaanderen Helemaal Digitaal'. The outbreak of COVID-19 forces us all to work and live more digitally. Via a matching platform the task force will bring issues and challenges that arise closer to a (digital) solution.	Taskforce		The outbreak of COVID-19 forces us all to work and live more digitally. Via a matching platform the task force will bring issues and challenges that arise closer to a (digital) solution. By focusing increasingly on digital technology we can enable society to continue to function with as much resilience as possible.

Foreign policy					
Flemish government	Continuation and intensification of the operation of Flanders' export promotion unit 'Flanders Investment & Trade' in 70 countries around the world	-To protect the foreign market share of our companies. -To examine how the market share can be increased.	Within the framework of the Decree establishing Flanders Investment & Trade	From the start of the measures on 13 March 2020	To preserve and protect and, where opportunities present themselves, increase the foreign market share for Flanders-based companies.
Flemish government	Central point of contact with Flanders' export promotion unit 'Flanders Investment & Trade' for questions about exports following the outbreak of COVID-19	-To inform companies in Flanders about the COVID-19 measures around the world, by country or global region, via the website www.exportadvies-corona@fitagency.be -To offer a central e-mail address exportadvies-corona@fitagency.be where companies can ask questions about the business impact on markets that are of relevance to them.	Within the framework of the Decree establishing Flanders Investment & Trade	From the start of the measures on 13 March 2020	To offer information and bespoke advice on export markets to preserve, protect and, where possible, increase the market share.

Taxation					
Flemish government	Deferral property tax payments (companies)	Deferral of property tax payments with 2 months for legal entities in order to support companies' liquidity positions.	Administrative instrument	Executed (tax year 2020)	1 billion EUR delayed tax receipts
Flemish government	Deferral road tax payments (companies)	Deferral of road tax payments with 4 months for legal entities in order to support companies liquidity positions (in particular transport, bus, car leasing companies).	Administrative instrument	Executed (tax year 2020)	200 million EUR delayed tax receipts
Flemish government	Deferral of inheritance and registration tax payments (households)	Deferral of inheritance and registration tax payments with 2 months for natural persons in order to be able to fulfill all formalities.	Administrative instrument	Executed (tax year 2020)	N/A
Immovable heritage					
Flemish government	Remediation of procedural deadlines and procedural requirements in immovable heritage legislation	Adoption of an implementing Order to the Decree of 20 March on measures in the event of a state of public health emergency to extend or suspend the procedural deadlines and procedural requirements set out in	Government of Flanders Order on the remediation of deadlines and procedural requirements during a state of civil emergency within the Immovable Heritage policy field	Entry into force on 24 March 2020	

		immovable heritage legislation in order to guarantee maximum legal certainty for citizens and recognised actors (including recognised immovable heritage municipalities, intermunicipal immovable heritage services, archaeologists).			
Housing					
Flemish government	Suspension of evictions	To prevent households or single persons from becoming homeless or having to go and live with other people (which will increase the risk of spread).	This measure comes under the regional competence regarding housing and the rental of residential property. If necessary, the police may intervene.	Effective immediately upon entry into force of state of civil emergency until 17 July 2020.	In this way it is prevented that evictions result in households or single persons becoming homeless or having to stay with family as a matter of urgency and as such live together with them in the same house.
Flemish government	Extension of lease due to exceptional circumstances	We allow tenants to request landlords to extend the lease due to exceptional circumstances (in this case corona measures) upon expiry of the lease. Deadlines and terms and conditions can be relaxed as well. In addition, non-urgent house moves must be avoided.	Article 24 of the Flemish Housing Rental Decree contains the possibility for tenants to request landlords to extend the lease due to exceptional circumstances upon expiry of the lease.	Effective immediately upon entry into force of the state of civil emergency for as long as said state of civil emergency lasts.	In this way it is prevented that households or single persons end up in a vulnerable situation in times of a health crisis, if no other housing option is available after expiry of the current lease.

Flemish government	Rental outside regular scheme	Due to the exceptional corona measures social rental agencies will be allowed to offer temporary housing to single persons or households outside of the social housing scheme either directly or via a public authority or welfare organisation. (This means that the 1% outside of the regular scheme may be exceeded.)	This scheme is laid down in the Flemish Housing Rental Decree and the Framework Order on Social Renting.	Effective immediately upon entry into force of the state of civil emergency. The concluded lease lasts 6 months. If the lease ends during the coronavirus measures the lease will be extended by 6 months at the tenant's request. Said extension is allowed as long as the coronavirus measures are in force.	In this way we offer the possibility to show flexibility in case of rentals outside the regular scheme and as such allow rentals to vulnerable single persons or households who would otherwise risk becoming homeless. E.g. offering housing to households who have to leave their house and do not yet have another house to go to.
Flemish government	Deferral of payment of rent guarantee loan to Flemish Housing Fund	In the event of temporary unemployment or reduced income due to corona measures a deferral of payment of the rent guarantee loan can be allowed, if it is difficult to repay this loan now.	Government of Flanders Order of 7 December 2018 establishing a rent guarantee loan.	The granted deferral of payment takes effect upon the entry into force of the state of civil emergency and lasts until after the coronavirus measures are lifted. Borrowers will resume repayment of the rent guarantee loan from the second month after the measures have been lifted.	In this way we give single persons and households who are already vulnerable and become temporarily unemployed as a result of the corona measures the possibility to defer the repayment of their rent guarantee loan.

Flemish government	Extension of applications for Flemish Renovation Premium	Due to the delay in planned renovations as a result of the corona measures, invoices will be submitted later than planned by applicants. For this reason, it is allowed for invoices to be older than two years on the date of application for the premium.	Government of Flanders Order of 21 December 2018 establishing a contribution to the costs for renovation or improvement of existing dwellings or for the construction of new dwellings	On the date of application for the premium the invoices may be older than two years, but must not date from before 15 March 2018. This possibility applies to applications for an overarching renovation premium submitted between 15 March and 31 December 2020 and to applications for the renovation premium (which is being phased out) submitted between 15 March and 31 January 2021.	This measure allows applicants who, due to delayed works and invoices as a result of the corona measures, would potentially no longer qualify for the renovation premium, to still be entitled to the Flemish renovation premium.
Economy, Research & Development					
Flanders	Reallocation of R&I budget	R&I on COVID-19 900 KEUR from Grand Challenges programme	VIB dotation; approved by Minister Crevits	Immediately	3 clinical studies - Analysis of inflammation reaction in COVID-19 patients; testing of candidate drugs led by Joost Wauters (UZLeuven) in collaboration with (Rega Institute) - Testing of immune status of COVID19 patients and testing of existing cytokine inhibitors to suppress the inflammation, led by Prof Bart Lambrechts (BIB-UGent and UZGent) in collaboration with KCE.

					- Strengthening the immune system by testing the potential of Leukine®, led by Prof Bart Lambrecht, in collaboration with AZ St-Jan Brugge and San Matteo Hospital (Pavia, IT)
Flanders	Reallocation of R&I budget	R&I on COVID-19 Reorientation of research programme	VIB dotation;	Immediate after publication of genome sequence	Prof Xavier Saelens on collaboration with Prof Nico Callewaerts (VIB-UGent) are developing a prophylactic vaccine, based on nanobody technology (small antibody) to interfere with virus infection. A team of 20 scientists developed in fast track a clinical lead candidate molecule for production and clinical application. A team of VIB business developers is additionally assigned to the task. Efforts are undertaken to raise a budget to develop the candidate drug to production phase.
Flemish government (FWO)	Fast-track COVID call	Fast-track call specific for COVID-19-related research with short-time challenges.	Approved by Board of FWO and by the Flemish Minister of Economy, Administrative	Decided, projects will start on June 1st and have a duration of 1 year.	Research on COVID-19 trying to tackle short-time challenges.
Flemish government (FWO)	Postponement deadline calls	The submission deadline for fundamental research projects is moved from April 1 to April 14. The deadline for projects in Applied Biomedical Research with a Primary Societal Finality (TBM) is moved from March 23 to April 14.	Approved by Board of FWO, Administrative	Decided	This postponement tries to ensure that there is no quality loss in the proposals due to the circumstances, by giving the researchers additional time to provide qualitative proposals.

Flemish government (FWO)	Adjustment of the evaluation process	No interviews or rebuttals in evaluation process.	Approved by Board of FWO, Administrative	Decided	The adjustment of the evaluation process guarantees the high quality of the evaluation of the proposals through the use of digital technology, respects the social distancing rules and offers the researches certainty about the start date of the funding.
Flemish government (FWO)	Extra time for COVID-19 research in the Flemish Supercomputer Centre (VSC)	Compute capacity on the Tier-1 system (BrENIAC) and Tier-2 infrastructure (if necessary) is reserved for a period of 8 weeks specific for research on COVID-19.	Approved by Board of FWO, Administrative	Decided, research projects are running on the supercomputer	High-performance computing can help researchers to fight the COVID-19 pandemic in different ways.
Flemish government	Reallocation of R&I budgets	Reorientation of research programme.	All academic and research institutions	The impact and budgetary allocations will only later become clear	Different clinical studies to test effect of government measures, test of therapies, test of vaccines, study epidemiology and immunology; development of novel diagnostics, protective masks and clothing, ventilators, etc.
Flanders (VLAIO)	Flexibility in deadlines of grants due to corona	Beneficiaries of grants who, as a result of the crisis, find it difficult to meet the deadlines agreed upon in one of the grants consult with VLAIO on the possibility of extending these deadlines.	/	Active	Preventing the fact that companies who cannot meet the deadlines agreed upon in the grants will have to repay (part of) the grant and face financial difficulties.
Flanders (VLAIO)	SME growth subsidy	Companies can receive a subsidy for the purchase of knowledge in the form of external advice or strategic recruitment to explore	/	Active	Support companies to stay active and help them to explore alternative supply channels.

		alternative supply routes made necessary by the coronavirus.			
Flanders (VLAIO)	Credit mediation	Mediation between bank and company in credit applications	/	Active	Helping companies that experience difficulties in applying for a new loan or have difficulty with the repayment of an existing loan.
Flanders (VLAIO)	Contact centre for companies	Central contact centre and information desk for entrepreneurs for any questions on the impact of corona & measures at different levels of government	/	Active	Providing information to companies on any questions related to the coronavirus and government measures.
Flemish government (PMV)	Payment delay	Payment delay granted to all companies with a PMV loan. The repayment of capital and interest is suspended for 3 months, but can be extended to 6 months. Individual measures are put in place for the companies in the portfolio of PMV.			
Flemish government (investment company LRM)	Payment delay	Payment delay granted to all companies with an LRM loan. The repayment of capital and interest is suspended for 6 months. Payment delay granted to all tenants of campuses and			

		incubators. The repayment is suspended for 1 month (April).			
Flemish government (investment company LRM)	Customised solution for companies in the portfolio of LRM	LRM advises companies in which it already has a capital participation or to which it has provided a loan. Tailored to the company, and taking into account the specific needs, our Investment Managers and financial specialists of LRM work with the relevant business leaders to develop solutions to guide companies through this crisis period.			
Flemish government	Analysis of coronavirus impact on Agencies and beneficiaries within the policy area	Stock-taking of the possible impact on general functioning, RDI programmes and attaining KPIs as foreseen in governing agreements with the Government of Flanders.		Ongoing	
Agriculture and Fisheries					
Flemish government	Agricultural Investment Fund (AIF) –	The temporary guarantee is designed to be deployed in times of agricultural or general crisis. The fund guarantees	Ministerial decree	Applications can be submitted via an electronic counter .	It is to be expected that, thanks to the loan, companies will have a greater chance of eventually raising their economic activities back to pre-crisis levels.

	temporary guarantee	<p>maximum 80% of the loan during the first three years.</p> <p>The loan amount is used for the operating assets of the company, which are under pressure due to the decreased turnover.</p>			
Flemish government	Accelerated payment of AIF investment files	The sectors with the greatest negative economic impact are favoured in the administrative processing of investment files. In the first place, this concerns the floriculture sector.	The general legal basis is the Decree of the Flemish Government of 19 December 2014 regarding aid for investments and takeover in agriculture. Accelerated payment does not require a change in Flemish legislation or the EAFRD programme document.		
Flemish government	Accelerated payment of files for drought 2018	Accelerated processing of the remaining files resulting in a faster payment for the farmers concerned.	Legal basis is the Decree of the Flemish Government of 26 October 2018 regarding the recognition of the drought between 2 June 2018 and 6 August 2018 as an agricultural disaster.		
Flemish government	Non-harvesting	As part of their operational programme producer organisations may apply for non-harvesting of agricultural products that are most affected by the crisis.	Regulation (EU) no. 1308/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 establishing a common organisation of the markets in agricultural products and		

			repealing Council Regulations (EEC) No 922/72, (EEC) No 234/79, (EC) No 1037/2001 and (EC) No 1234/2007		
Work and Social Economy					
Flemish government	Extension of work permit	Temporary extension of work permit for people who cannot return to their home country, on the basis of a temporary extension of residence. Simple work permit procedure (max. three months, renewable).	Decision of the Flemish government (27 March 2020)	Active	
Flemish government	Transition bonus for jobseekers to entrepreneurship	Extension of the period of validity of the prestarter trajectory and the submission period of the transition bonus. Prospective entrepreneurs are given the time to start their business after the corona crisis is over.	Decision of the Flemish government (27 March 2020 extension of the period) Ministerial Decree (27 March 2020)	Active	Supporting the start-up of prospective companies after the corona crisis.
Flemish government	ESF	Prolongation of ESF projects with the months of the corona crisis within existing budgets in order to allow the promoters	Administrative instrument	The procedure of prolongation will be launched after the crisis	The projects will still achieve the proposed actions and indicators.

		<p>to execute the proposed actions and to achieve the indicators.</p> <p>This concerns projects for the guidance and activation of jobseekers as well as projects to stimulate lifelong learning and workable work in organisations. It also concerns innovative and transnational projects who contribute to an improved service of organisations in the labor market.</p>		<p>measures come to an end.</p> <p>The duration of the prolongation will be the number of months of the corona crisis, but for individual files (such as innovation) that demonstrate that restarting requires more time, we will be flexible with the promoters.</p>	
Flemish Government	Support measures for the social economy	<p>Supporting companies active in the social economy in their business operations in absorbing the financial and economic consequences.</p> <p>In concrete terms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Temporary suspension of progression pathways and extension of integration pathways. -Temporary suspension of the rule to employ a number of target group employees in 	Decision of the Flemish government (20 March 2020)	Active	

		supported employment companies. -More financial breathing space by not automatically collecting (reductions) monthly payment advances (temporary). -Guaranteed financing of unpaid supported employment (temporary).			
Flemish Government	Recruitment incentive for long-term jobseekers	Employers have the option to request a recalculation of the incentive for the sake of temporary unemployment (taking into account the period before 13/3).	Decision of the Flemish government (27 March 2020)	Active	
Flemish Government	Flemish Support Premium (Vlaamse Ondersteuningspremium/VOP) for the self-employed	Adapting the subsidy condition for obtaining the VOP (pro-ratification of the minimum annual income).	Decision of the Flemish government (27 March 2020)	Active	
Flemish Government	Service vouchers	Extension of the period of validity of service vouchers that are in danger of expiring during the corona period (for March and April by 3 months,	Decision of the Flemish government (3 April 2020)	Active	The service vouchers can still be used.

		for May by 2 months and for June by 1 month).			
Flemish government (VDAB)	Continuation of skills development	The main objective is maximising learning possibilities and continuation of learning possibilities during corona measures.	<p>Firstly, VDAB transforms its own 'real life' to digital/remote training courses and monitors the development of the online training of partners regarding status of the digitalisation efforts and quality of training. Relaunch of suspended training courses is in preparation and enrolment of new students will be possible with the relaunch.</p> <p>Secondly, the already existing online learning possibilities of VDAB, accessible to all citizens, are being actively disseminated.</p> <p>All learning possibilities, VET and online courses, will be taken up in the communication campaign 'VDAB houdt werk in beweging (VDAB keeps work in motion), planned from 20 April 2020 onwards.</p>	<p>Ongoing and next steps are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -further transformation of VDAB-organised 'real life' courses into remote courses -continuously -monitoring the same transformation -relaunching courses-starting from - 20.4.2020 -communication campaign 'VDAB houdt werk in beweging (VDAB keeps work in motion) - starting 20.4.2020 	<p>Increased continuity for jobseekers to continue their training; thus developing their skills, to enter the labour market during the corona crises.</p> <p>Increased learning by citizens during the corona lockdown</p>
Flemish government (VDAB)	Matching COVID-19 vacancies	Identifying urgent 'corona' jobs in critical sectors and matching them quickly and efficiently	- Employers with urgent vacancies insert #covid19 in the title of the	Ongoing	- Identifying the most urgent vacancies and making quick and qualitative (skills + safety) matches

		<p>with jobseekers interested in these temporary jobs</p>	<p>vacancy through the website or the Serviceline (VDAB call centre)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - VDAB task force contacts these employers immediately to do a quality check + to offer personalised support. - Prioritised treatment of #covid19vacancies - Jobseekers who are interested can choose the option "I'm interested in these vacancies" online or through the Serviceline. - Matching happens by the employer himself by selecting on this # or through VDAB - Communication plan elaborated: special 'corona' pages on the website with clear information and Q&A, campaign on social media, campaign to and through organisations representing employers or employees, sectors, partners, etc. - New website www.helpdeooogst.be specifically developed to find seasonal workers in the agriculture and horticulture sectors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Monitoring: daily and weekly reporting on the number of COVID-19 vacancies, the number of jobseekers and analysis on sectors - Collaborations with partners to communicate on this platform and reach employers with urgent vacancies (webinars, social media, etc.) - Communication /awareness-raising to match temporary unemployed to COVID-19 vacancies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Offering temporary opportunities to all jobseekers: temporary unemployed, inactive citizens, newcomers, ... - Impact on skills development : many temporary opportunities to develop skills, try out new sectors, etc., often accessible to a large number of profiles
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Mobility and Public Works					
Flemish government	Deferral of driving tuition and tests, and remediation of other problems for citizens and companies	<p>Concerns:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) driving tuition, driving tests, professional competence tests and in-service training (2) driving schools (3) technical inspection of vehicles (4) access to the profession and access to the market of passenger transport and goods transport by road (5) individual remunerated passenger transport <p>These measures are taken, on the one hand to reduce the risk of coronavirus spread by postponing driving tuition and tests in the mobility and public works sector (inter alia, within the framework of driving tuition or the professional competence of bus and lorry drivers) until after the crisis, and on the other hand to remediate problems for citizens and companies due to the</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Government of Flanders Order of 13 March 2020 containing emergency measures regarding mobility and public works - Ministerial Order of 24 March 2020 containing emergency measures regarding mobility and public works 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Government of Flanders Order of 13 March 2020: adopted - Ministerial Order of 24 March 2020: adopted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To contain the spread of coronavirus. - To remediate problems which citizens and companies are faced with as a result of the corona crisis and as a result of which they cannot comply with mandatory requirements.

		corona crisis as a result of which they cannot comply with mandatory requirements (e.g. expiry of their certificate of competence at a time when they cannot take tests, or expiry of the validity of the inspection certificate of their vehicle at a time when they cannot have it inspected).			
Flemish government	Emergency measures within the framework of inland navigation	The emergency measures are intended to guarantee continuity of service in inland shipping by offering the competent authority, the competent waterway manager and the competent port authority the possibility to allow derogations from inland shipping regulations	Government of Flanders Order of 3 April 2020 on emergency measures for inland shipping	Government of Flanders Order of 3 April 2020: adopted	To guarantee continuity of service.
Flemish government	Emergency measures in the maritime sector	Suspension of tourist ferries and restriction of other ferries to essential travel.	N/A	N/A	With these measures it is tried to reduce the risk of coronavirus spread.
Flemish government	Miscellaneous measures within the framework of the operational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Modified operating schedule for trams and buses (2) Discontinuation of on-demand bus service (3) Ban on cash payments 	N/A	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - (1) To guarantee continuity of service. - (3) To contain spread of coronavirus.

	activities of public transport company De Lijn				
Youth and Media					
Federal	Youth welfare	Recognition of youth welfare workers as essential profession	Royal Decree	Adopted	- Broader, better and secured deployment of youth welfare workers
Flemish government	Care by youth workers	Cooperation with youth workers for care in schools		Ongoing	- Adjusted care during Easter holidays for young people who cannot be looked after at home
Flemish government	Guarantee of grants	Guarantees for the allocation of grants, accelerated payment and flexibility in administrative processing	Government of Flanders Order	Ongoing	- Guarantees for operating resources of youth organisations
Flemish government	Extra provision by public broadcaster VRT	-Adjusted educational programme provision by VRT for young people -Extra programme provision with past successful television series		Ongoing	- Alternative and additional knowledge transfer due to closed schools - Additional leisure for older people
Flemish government	Media and journalism	Recognition of media and journalists as essential professions	Royal Decree	Adopted	- To safeguard reliable and independent communication by recognised media and journalists.

Home Affairs, Governance, Civic Integration and Equal Opportunities					
Flemish government	Distance societal orientation within the civic integration pathway		Autonomous decision of agencies	In force as of 16 March	To allow civic integration pathways to continue instead of suspending them.
Flemish government	Digital intake of new people integrating		Autonomous decision of agencies	In force as of 14 April	To allow new civic integration pathways to start.
Flemish government	Info brochure on religious/philosophical services	Manual for local authorities with tips and actions within the framework of compliance with corona measures regarding social distancing during religious/philosophical services.	Autonomous decision of local authorities	From 9 April until undefined (lifting of corona measures)	To support local authorities.
Flemish government	Multilingual posters for local shops regarding social distancing	To raise awareness of compliance with social distancing rules among local shop owners and their customers. This is done by providing shop owners with posters in several languages (Dutch, French, English, Bosnian, Dari, Farsi, Pashto,	Distributed via local authorities or downloaded from website of Agency for Integration & Civic Integration	From 9 April until undefined (lifting of corona measures)	To raise awareness of compliance with social distancing rules among local shop owners and their customers and thus ensure that the information is disseminated on a large-scale.

		Albanian, Turkish and Arabic) to be put up.			
Flemish government	Guideline on repatriation of deceased individuals to foreign countries: “Provisional guidelines of 17 March 2020 for funeral directors on managing infection risks when handling deceased individuals with confirmed COVID-19 / 17.03.2020” and “Guidelines of 8 April 2020 for funeral directors and crematoria”	<p>For funeral directors and crematoria.</p> <p>Due to entry bans of various countries deceased individuals cannot be repatriated. The Government of Flanders recommends to proceed to burials in a Belgian cemetery.</p>		From 17 March until undefined	

Flemish government	Livestreaming from the houses of worship by the minister of religion	Due to the ban on the organisation of any activities of worship within the framework of the corona measures, a guideline was issued by the Coordination and Crisis Centre of the Flemish Public Administration (CCVO), allowing livestreaming of worship services by the minister of religion, who may receive assistance for the livestream by another individual. They shall take the necessary measures to respect social distancing rules, in particular keeping a 1.5 metre distance from each other.		From 6 April until undefined (lifting of corona measures)	
Volunteers					
Flemish government	Launch of website vlaanderenhelpt.be	The website www.vlaanderenhelpt.be wants to provide an overview of the different activities organised by volunteers in Flemish municipalities to help neighbors and vulnerable people. The website also gives tips in several languages on	Decision of the Government of Flanders, implemented by the Agency for Home Affairs (Agentschap Binnenlands Bestuur /ABB)	In force since 17 March	To exchange good practices and offer support to municipalities.

		how to stay safe, and contains a link to local authorities.			
Flemish government	Allocation of volunteer insurance to anyone offering help during the corona measures	To provide a legal framework to individuals offering support (shopping, taking out the dog for a walk, etc.)	Decided by Ministerial Order	From 15 March until end of May	
Welfare, Public Health, Family and Poverty Reduction					
Flemish government	10 point plan for residential care settings in Flanders, with focus on residential care centres	To roll out a 10 point plan for residential care centres and other residential settings. This plan contains the following elements. Because continuous monitoring of this plan is essential, a task force will be put in charge of said monitoring. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lockdown 2. Settings affected by a virus outbreak 3. Monitoring of pandemic and communication of data 4. Testing strategy 		10 April	Residential care centres and other residential settings offer care, support and accommodation to vulnerable people. The residents of these settings run a high risk of infection during the corona pandemic. The effects of the pandemic in these settings and especially in residential care centres are felt in several ways and pose huge challenges. A coherent approach needs to be further rolled out.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Personnel 6. Protective equipment 7. Cohort care in residential care centres and in home care 8. Assistance from hospitals 9. Financial impact 10. Psycho-social well-being of personnel and residents 			
Flemish Community	Contact tracing	To stop the further spread of the pandemic.	Patients who were infected with coronavirus were traced and isolated as soon as possible. Their contacts were traced and isolated as well, if needed, or they were advised to remain vigilant.	Contact tracing will be maintained until the critical threshold of infections has passed, but can be resumed later on in the pandemic.	To reduce the number of infections.
Flemish Community	Outbreak management	To support settings in managing the outbreak of the virus within their settings.	Support by experts of the administration; appointment of crisis manager is possible by Government of Flanders Order	Ongoing	To reduce the number of infections and to safeguard the organisation of quality care.
Flemish Community	Data monitoring	To monitor the outbreak across various sub-sectors: a lot of elements are being monitored, e.g. infections and deaths.	Permanent dashboard with data	In full roll-out for residential care centres. Under development for other settings	To reduce the number of infections.
Flemish Community	Development of testing strategy	Instrument to control the pandemic	The administration steers the testing strategy on the basis of said monitoring.	Ongoing	To reduce the number of infections and to safeguard the organisation of quality care.

Flemish Community	Instructions to care settings	<p>Two objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -To implement national agreements on spread of COVID-19 in care and welfare settings -To protect vulnerable target groups residing in these settings <p>The instructions include, inter alia, the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -adjust/stop visiting rights -use protective equipment -close daycare -apply social distancing wherever possible -organise cohort care for infected patients 	Guidelines sent to care settings by Flemish public administration	Guidelines have been sent, but are under permanent review on the basis of new developments	Infections and deaths are being monitored in the settings concerned, whenever possible. It is difficult to estimate what the effect would have been if the measure had not been implemented.
Flemish Community	Continuation of funding	<p>To keep all personnel active, despite more limited provision due to the measures taken.</p> <p>Objective:</p>	Government of Flanders Order for some sectors; administrative instruction for others	In some cases the Government of Flanders Orders to be adopted have already been published. Other Government of Flanders	<p>Impact should be felt in, inter alia, the following respects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To remedy absence of COVID-19 infected staff - To create temporary additional staff capacity in residential settings

		<p>-To remedy absence of COVID-19 infected staff</p> <p>-To create temporary additional staff capacity in residential settings</p> <p>-To offer more psycho-social support for additional challenges arising from COVID-19</p>		Orders are being drawn up, to be adopted in April 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To offer more psycho-social support for additional challenges arising from COVID-19
Tourism					
Flemish government	Extension of grant application submission deadline	Social tourism associations must normally submit their grant applications for holidays taking place before 15 September already before 1 May. This is not feasible now, which is why the submission deadline is extended to 1 July.		Implemented	Social tourism associations currently do not have any certainty as to whether summer holidays can be organised and can subsequently not start organising them. As a result, they are unable to submit applications before 1 May due to this uncertainty. Maintaining the submission deadline would mean that no summer holidays can be organised for people in poverty. By extending the submission deadline, social tourism organisations still have time to organise holidays until 1 July.
Flemish government	Emergency Decree for derogation from	Within the framework of said Decree the Government of Flanders has now decided to suspend the procedural	Emergency Decree of 20 March 2020	In force	The Government of Flanders is given the authority to extend or suspend mandatory deadlines or temporarily adjust procedural requirements in the event of a state of civil emergency in order to

	mandatory deadlines	requirements in the regulations on accommodation and Tourism for All for the duration of the state of civil emergency. This is a precautionary measure.			guarantee maximum legal certainty for citizens and entrepreneurs.
OVAM (Public Waste Agency of Flanders)					
Flemish government	Discontinuation of asbestos collection	To reserve protective equipment for care settings as much as possible	Circular of 31 March	The collection of asbestos at recycling parks has been discontinued until further notice.	To increase the availability of protective equipment for care settings.
Flemish government	Better sorting of hazardous and non-hazardous medical waste	By better sorting waste from hospitals as non-hazardous medical waste, the availability of recipients for hazardous medical waste can be kept to a maximum. This consideration was made together with virologists.	A guideline that was disseminated by OVAM in interpretation of VLAREMA. On the basis of advisory opinions from virologists and the umbrella organisation for hospitals.	The guideline was issued.	With this measure we hope to make the best possible use of the (limited) stock of recipients for hazardous medical waste.
Flemish government	Potentially more recipients for hazardous medical waste	Too few recipients are available specifically for hazardous medical waste. A derogation from VLAREMA allows for alternative recipients to be used which must meet a number of requirements.	The Government of Flanders Order to the Emergency Decree.	The legislation is currently in force.	More recipients will qualify for the storage of hazardous medical waste, as a result of which the stock will last longer.

Flemish government	Suspension of visual monitoring of industrial residual waste	The Decree on states of civil emergency states that a temporary derogation can be allowed from the obligation that each collector, trader and broker of industrial residual waste shall at least visually monitor the collection recipient in terms of the sorting obligation.	Decree on state of civil emergency.	The legislation is currently in force.	This will allow better compliance with the social distancing rules.
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Spatial Planning and Environment

<https://omgeving.vlaanderen.be/noodmaatregelen-coronavirus>

In order to be able to contain and remedy the consequences of the corona crisis as much as possible, the Government of Flanders adopted the **Emergency Decree** on 20 March 2020 and declared a state of public health emergency. It established the starting date on that same day, viz. 20 March 2020. **The derogation regulation** (which ensures that no permits or notifications are required, e.g. for the construction of temporary hospitals) applies for 120 consecutive days starting from 20 March 2020.

On 24 March 2020, the Government of Flanders adopted the **Order implementing Article 5 of the Emergency Decree regarding the integrated environment permit (omgevingsvergunning)**. Decision deadlines of ongoing and new applications are extended, but authorities are not blocked if they can take action. In short:

- ongoing public inquiries are suspended on 24 March and will be continued after 24 April 2020
- public inquiries that have not yet been initiated will not be started until after 24 April 2020
- the decision deadline in the simplified procedure is extended by 30 days (from 60 to 90 days)
- the decision deadline in the regular procedure is extended by 60 days (from 105 or 120 days to 165 or 180 days)
- the decision deadline for appeals is extended by 60 days
- the period during which an appeal can be lodged is also extended by 30 days, from 30 to 60

On 27 March 2020, the Government of Flanders adopted the **Order on spatial planning, complex projects, plan-EIRs and vacant and neglected business premises**. The measures developed are intended to guarantee participation by citizens and stakeholders, to avoid that long-term planning procedures have to be started over from the beginning and to facilitate the operation of committees.

Said Order contains measures regarding the extension of deadlines and/or participation procedures for:

- spatial policy plans

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - spatial implementation plans - town planning regulations - planning certificates - complex projects - plan-environmental impact reports (plan-EIRs) - vacant and neglected businesses premises - advice provision (committees, advisory councils and plenary/advisory meetings) <p>On 3 April 2020, the Government of Flanders adopted the Order granting temporary derogations from the general and sectoral environmental requirements in case of a state of civil emergency. This is not an implementing order to the Emergency Decree, but to Title V DABM (“Operation of establishments and activities and recognised persons”). It gives the competent Minister Demir the authority to allow in certain cases and under certain conditions temporary and limited derogations from the general and sectoral environmental requirements of VLAREM during the state of civil emergency.</p>					
Flemish government	Exemption from licensing and notification obligation for the construction and operation of additional hospital and other care facilities, additional production facilities for medicines and medical equipment	The Emergency Decree allows initiators, during the state of public health emergency declared by the Government of Flanders, to immediately remedy urgent needs for medicines and medical equipment, increased capacity of hospitals and other care settings or research institutions. No licensing or notification procedure needs to be implemented. A notification mentioning the initiatives and making them known suffices.	Emergency Decree of 20 March 2020 containing measures in the event of a state of public health emergency Order of 20 March 2020 establishing the state of public health emergency	In force since 20 March 2020 Temporarily for 120 days (up to and including 17 July 2020, renewable once by the Government of Flanders)	Meanwhile, 8 initiatives have been notified. They concern temporary structures for triage, extra emergency services and the production of hand gel. Whether other notifications are to be expected, is difficult to assess and depends on the evolution of the crisis.

	and research institutions with regard to the coronavirus outbreak	<p>The general and sectoral requirements of VLAREM continue to apply.</p> <p>A second part was added which gives the Government of Flanders the authority to derogate from procedural deadlines and procedural or administrative requirements in various decrees and their implementing orders.</p>			
Flemish government	Suspension and extension of deadlines in spatial planning dossiers	<p>Suspension</p> <p>The suspension is executed within the framework of participation moments (public inquiries, public consultations, etc.). Organising a fully-fledged public inquiry is very difficult or even impossible due to the federal restrictive measures regarding essential travel and the social distancing rules. Given the great importance jurisprudence attaches to the right to participation, it was necessary to suspend the deadlines for participation moments so that</p>	<p>Government of Flanders Order of 27 March 2020 implementing Article 5 of the Decree of 20 March 2020 containing measures in the event of a state of public health emergency with regard to spatial planning, complex projects, plan-environmental impact reports and vacant and neglected business premises (in force on 27 March 2020).</p>	<p>In force until 24 April 2020</p> <p>Extension possible by Ministerial Order</p> <p>Further steps depend on decisions of Crisis Committee</p> <p>The date of 24 April is not extended.</p>	<p>To reduce delays (through extension to avoid that procedures have to be started over from the beginning, and digitally whenever possible).</p> <p>Proper conduct of participation procedures</p>

		<p>citizens are actually given the opportunity to peruse the dossiers.</p> <p>-> within the framework of spatial policy plans, spatial implementation plans, town planning regulations, planning certificates, complex projects and plan-environmental impact reporting</p> <p>Extension</p> <p>Decision deadlines for the final establishment can, either following suspension or not, be extended to prevent long-term planning processes from having to be started over from the beginning.</p> <p>Additionally:</p> <p>Possibility to hold certain committees and councils in writing, via teleconference or via videoconference.</p>		<p>Certain measures regarding the digital organization of consultations, etc., will remain in force.</p>	
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		Regulation on grants/inventory of vacant businesses premises			
Flemish government	Suspension and extension of deadlines regarding integrated environment permit	<p>Suspension</p> <p>Ongoing public inquiries are suspended (see above reasons)</p> <p>Continuation after 24 April</p> <p>Extension</p> <p>Extension of decision deadlines (if not, tacit refusal / decision in first instance is made valid again)</p> <p>Deadline for lodging appeal is also extended</p> <p>(perusal of dossier difficult/impossible due to measures)</p> <p>Additionally:</p> <p>The absence of an advisory opinion is no longer automatically regarded as tacitly favourable during the period in which the measures are in force.</p>	Government of Flanders Order of 24 March 2020 implementing Article 5 of the Decree of 20 March 2020 containing measures in the event of a state of public health emergency with regard to the integrated environment permit	<p>In force until 24 April 2020</p> <p>Extension possible by Ministerial Order</p> <p>Further steps depend on decisions of Crisis Committee.</p> <p>The date of 24/4 is not extended.</p> <p>Certain measures regarding the digital organization of consultations, etc., will remain in force.</p>	<p>It is best to continue to process dossiers for which no public inquiry is required or for which the public inquiry has already been completed. This is necessary in order to avoid a large backlog when the state of emergency is lifted and new dossiers have to be started and there is only limited time to catch up.</p> <p>It should be stressed that deadlines were extended to avoid that a temporary problem of certain actors would result in tacit opinions or decisions. The idea is to only use the extended deadlines if there is no other solution. Guidelines were also given to that effect.</p>

		<p>However, if no opinion is given, the requirement of advisory opinion may be ignored.</p> <p>Possibility for committees for integrated environment permit to hold meetings via teleconference or videoconference.</p> <p>Hearings can also held in writing</p>			
Flemish government	Derogation from general and sectoral environmental requirements during the state of public health emergency	The emergency measures often have a great impact and in certain cases either directly or indirectly lead to some companies no longer being able to comply with general or sectoral environmental requirements. It should be avoided that the implementation of necessary measures would be made difficult or impossible by the obligation to comply with general and sectoral environmental requirements and the sanctions attached to such infringements.	Government of Flanders Order of 3 April 2020 allowing temporary derogations from the general and sectoral environmental requirements of VLAREM II in the event of a state of public health emergency.	<p>Temporary derogation in effect during Civil Emergency</p> <p>Determination that runs until July 16</p> <p>Adopted. Entered into force on 3 April 2020 and was published in Belgian Official Gazette on 9 April 2020</p>	<p>This concerns special derogations which can only be applied in exceptional circumstances outside of the available generic derogation possibilities.</p> <p>The Order mentions the considerations to be made when a derogation is approved, as well as the reasons for which a derogation is allowed and the applicable restrictions.</p>

		<p>In addition, the state of civil emergency has a great impact on all companies. Many companies have had to drastically reduce or even discontinue their activities. Others have to increase their production in the short term to cater for urgent needs arising from the crisis. This may result in general and sectoral environmental requirements no longer being complied with, or companies having to pay an unproportionally high price as a result of that.</p> <p>To remedy the aforementioned situations it was decided to give the competent Minister for Spatial Planning and Environment the authority to temporarily allow derogations from the general and sectoral environmental requirements during the state of public health emergency.</p>			
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Energy					
Flemish government	Temporary shift of the EPC obligation	The EPC obligation temporarily shifts to the moment the notarial deed is executed or the lease is signed. The goal of shifting the EPC obligation (on sale and rental) is a health and safety measure for energy experts and citizens in the context of avoiding non-essential travel and gatherings during this COVID-19 health crisis.	Government Decision	Adopted 3 April 2020	During the period of the COVID-19 health crisis it will not be possible to make a building performance certificate (EPC) for most of the buildings. As a result, the workload of the energy experts will drop drastically during the health crisis but will rise drastically after it has ended.
Flemish government	Temporary ban on disconnections of electricity and natural gas	During the COVID-19 health crisis, except in the case of an immediate security threat and only as long as that threat persists, distribution system operators must not shut down the supply of electricity or natural gas for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) any customers connected to low voltage or to a low pressure pipe; b) residential customers connected to medium voltage or to a medium pressure pipe. 	Decree	Enacted by the Flemish Parliament on 1 April 2020 and promulgated by the Government on 3 April 2020	Due to the fact that according to this socio-economic measure they are not to be disconnected from their energy supply, the debts of the social customers of the distribution system operators may grow. These debts will have to be cleared after the end of the COVID-19 health crisis.

Flemish government	Temporary shift of the obligation with regard to the EPB declaration	<p>In the context of the energy performance of buildings, an EPB declaration must be submitted within a period determined by decree after the building has been taken into use.</p> <p>During the COVID-19 health crisis, the submission deadlines stated in Article 11.1.8 of the Energy Decree of 8 May 2009 are suspended.</p>	Decree	Enacted by the Flemish Parliament on 1 April 2020 and promulgated by the Government on 3 April 2020	During the period of the COVID-19 health crisis it will not be possible to make an EPB declaration for most of the buildings. As a result, the workload of the energy experts will drop drastically during the health crisis but will rise drastically after the end of it.
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1. Introduction

The **Regional Policy Declaration 2019-2024**⁹⁰ presented in September 2019 sets out the priorities for the legislature. These are based around a three-pronged ambition: a social ambition, an ecological ambition and an economic ambition.

The Government has set itself the following objectives:

- Drastically reduce poverty and offer every Walloon citizen a decent life;
- Make Wallonia an exemplary region in the fight against global warming;
- Allow the Region to become one of the most successful regions in Europe in terms of industrial redevelopment.

All of the policies to be implemented during the legislature will help make Wallonia a model of sustainable development at the heart of Europe, and will form part of a transition strategy with a view to achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

During the first half of 2020, the Government plans to adopt a **Transition Plan** which will be structured around regional priorities, in particular research and innovation, digitisation, housing and insulation, renewable energies, soft and collective mobility, training, health and protection of biodiversity. A budget of around €4 billion is envisaged, depending on the budgetary margins and possible flexibility. Agile management will underpin its implementation. A High Strategic Council (HSC), which is interdisciplinary and made up of independent scientific experts, will guide the Government in achieving its fundamental objectives:

- A 55% reduction in GHGs by 2030 compared to 1990 levels;
- An improvement of the employment rate by 5% by 2025;
- A reduction of the poverty rate.

The following chapters 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. It goes without saying that the content of the Walloon contribution is likely to evolve as a result of the ongoing COVID-19 epidemic and possible new recommendations and priorities of the European Union.

⁹⁰ https://www.wallonie.be/sites/default/files/2019-09/declaration_politique_regionale_2019-2024.pdf

2. Response to the Country Specific Recommendations

2.1. Recommendation 1: Consolidation and sustainability of public finances, improving the composition and efficiency of public expenditure

Budgetary consolidation

The budget for 2020 was adopted by Parliament in December 2019. A new conclave will be scheduled in May 2020 to refine the budget year and set a budgetary path for the 2019-2024 legislature.

The budget deficit for the year 2020 is estimated at €435 million, with a return to balance by 2024, according to the following path:

2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
€-435 million	€-346 million	€-207 million	€-274 million	0

In addition to the traditional appropriations, already included in the budget, which will be part of the Transition Plan, the Government has made a point of providing for a series of strategic investments for the duration of the legislature, which are outside the budget path. In this context, budget year 2020 sets a number of priorities, including €350 million of investment dedicated to the climate transition and the technology transition. An increase in financial resources is planned in several areas, including:

- **Research, innovation and digitisation:** support for research infrastructure, investment by innovation and development centres, support for the technological ecosystem, funding for experimental projects, support for artificial intelligence, industry 4.0 and the regional digital strategy;
- **The economy:** support for local businesses and the vitality of city centres;
- **Energy and climate:** the KYOTO Fund will be used in particular for the energy transition of businesses, international climate financing and the roll-out of electricity terminals (€111 million);
- **Mobility:** measures to encourage alternatives to cars (€80 million), increasing bus services and the greening of the bus fleet;
- **Employment:** reform of FOREM support for jobseekers, with a focus on the most vulnerable groups, and implementation of the non-profit agreement;
- **Social action:** residential care, rest and care homes, accommodation for people with disabilities, combating homelessness;
- **Housing:** renovation of public housing, creation of new housing, support for social housing agencies, neighbourhood associations, housing promotion association.

On the subject of **debt**, the creation of the debt unit and greater professionalism within the department have significantly improved the Region's borrowing conditions. Wallonia currently borrows at an OLO rate of +26 basis points (bp), whereas it was still borrowing at OLO +45bp in 2018. This is a sign of confidence on the part of the financial markets. The new unit will continue to grow and gradually centralise all direct and indirect debt management. Given that around 50% of the Region's debt is in PAU, this is a major challenge. In the same spirit, the Government will enhance the initiatives to optimise treasury management.

Wallonia's objective is also to enhance the value of all its assets. In effect, the Court of Auditors has highlighted the fact that only a small percentage of the shareholdings currently appear in the Region's accounts. The Government will implement a comprehensive plan to ensure that all of its shareholdings can be valued in its balance sheet.

In its Regional Policy Declaration, the Walloon Government decided to put a strong emphasis on energy saving in buildings. As regards the **fiscal aspect** of property, this will primarily take the form of an adaptation of the 'chèque-habitat', a Walloon mechanism that makes it possible to benefit from a significant tax reduction in personal income tax for 20 consecutive years following the acquisition of one's own and sole home and depending on the level of the purchaser's income. The scheme will therefore be geared towards granting an advantage in the event of acquisition coupled with the implementation of energy-saving works.

An analysis of the possible modernisation of the various property taxes is currently being carried out by the Walloon high council for tax expertise, the Wallonia Tax and Finance Council. This council will report back to the new Walloon Government with its conclusions in the course of 2020. The possible evolutions of these taxes and the adequate timing for implementing these possible reforms will then be analysed.

Efficacy of public expenditure

The principle of efficiency in public expenditure already guides the work of the Government. As such, savings measures have already been introduced in all Walloon public services (SPW) in recent years.

In order to achieve the objective of achieving a balanced budget by 2024, the Walloon Government has decided to introduce a new budgetary methodology for the future, the **zero-based budget**. This technique, a first for Wallonia, differs from the traditional budgetary procedure, which consists of drawing up a budget based on the previous year's budget. Conversely, zero-based budgeting includes a complete verification and justification of all expenditure, budget article by budget article. A meeting was held between the services of the Commission and members of the Government on this subject in February 2020.

In view of the significant budget that this will represent, strict phasing will be necessary in order to achieve a zero-based budget. In addition, in 2020, Wallonia will initiate a **spending review** to facilitate the procedure.

Furthermore, the Walloon Government intends to continue and broaden its approach to **evaluating the policies** implemented. As such, several priority projects were evaluated by IWEPS during the previous legislature⁹¹, in particular recruitment aids, the policy of competitiveness clusters, raising awareness of entrepreneurship, the digitisation of public services, and the development of industrial sites.

The Regional Policy Declaration envisages the evaluation of various policies: aid for RDI, financial support for companies, employment aid measures, sectoral agreements, etc.

Moreover, in the context of the implementation of its Transition Plan, in order to effectively tackle the challenges facing Wallonia, the Government intends to apply **agile management**, which will include indicators that will make it possible to measure the impact of the Government's actions at regular intervals (particularly in social, environmental and economic terms) and the prospective needs in the medium and long term. The Government will continue to develop indicators that can be used alongside GDP to measure human development and the ecological footprint in order to guide its actions. It will

⁹¹ https://www.iweps.be/projets/?fwp_proj_categories=evaluation

be supported in particular by a High Strategic Council (HSC), which is interdisciplinary and composed of independent scientific experts.

Sustainability of public finances and extended care

In 2019, Wallonia issued **Green Bonds and Sustainable Bonds** for the first time. Green bonds are bonds whose proceeds are intended to finance or refinance a combination of specific projects in favour of the climate and the energy transition in Wallonia. The funds collected are used to implement various social projects and/or projects with a positive environmental impact. The issue was a great success on the financial markets, raising the targeted financing of €1 billion. The Government's objective is to continue to finance itself using this method, and to dedicate the funds to projects with the greatest return on investment in terms of improving socio-environmental indicators.

In the area of **extended care**, within the AVIQ, a Financial and Budgetary Monitoring Council is responsible for monitoring the implementation of expenditure; it has prepared partial budgetary targets that ensure short-term budgetary supervision and sustainability, in addition to monitoring medium- and long-term objectives, and taking the necessary corrective action. In addition, the emphasis is placed on prevention on the one hand and home care on the other. As such, the decree on prevention and health promotion was adopted by Parliament in May 2019. It constitutes the regulatory basis for the implementation of the 1st Walloon Prevention and Health Promotion Plan (adopted in 2018), which is intended to guide the actors in the field in their approach. Four types of actors are recognised in this framework by the new system: local health promotion centres, centres of expertise in promotion, centres for the operationalisation of preventive medicine and health promotion operators. Their approvals will now be granted for an indefinite period and no longer on an annual basis.

In addition, the Government has earmarked a further €1 million for this year to encourage more participation in cancer screening.

The decree on the organisation of palliative care at home was passed by Parliament in May. This sets out the role and missions of the three Walloon structures specialising in end-of-life care. It also provides for the introduction of multi-annual financing for operators.

In April 2019, the Government also decided to refinance the home care and home help coordination centres, to the tune of €4 million.

Finally, in February 2020, the Walloon Government adopted the decree on the hospital approval procedure. This was the final legislative act adopted by the Government to lay the foundations for the reform of hospital networks in Wallonia.

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

Increasing the participation rate of Walloon citizens in the labour market is a priority for the Walloon Government. In this context, it has set itself the objective of achieving an employment rate of 68.7% by 2025.

Active labour market policies

Training, skills development and support for jobseekers remain a fundamental pillar of government action. FOREM will prioritise its resources on counselling, training and support for jobseekers.

To enhance the integration of unemployed jobseekers into the labour market, a new model of **adapted support for jobseekers** is currently being developed. More calibrated to the profile and level of autonomy of individuals, this new support should allow better overall provision for the most vulnerable groups, in particular the long-term unemployed with low skills, older workers and people from a migrant background. A virtual single file for all jobseekers will be set up. This will include all the steps taken by jobseekers (training courses, internships, skills validation, job applications among employers, work experience, sending CVs and letters of application, obtaining diplomas and certificates, etc.), and will facilitate appropriate guidance for jobseekers in their search for employment. Thanks to the time saved by the current digitisation of support services for more autonomous individuals, more time and intensive local support will be devoted to the most vulnerable groups. A new decree is being drafted to formalise and secure the system for jobseekers, FOREM and its partners. Support will no longer be limited to a maximum of one year and will be subject to dynamic and high-quality monitoring by FOREM, which will also be reinforced by the implementation of the multi-partner lifelong orientation system, which enshrines the principle of a single gateway designed to make the orientation landscape more accessible, based on the network of 'Cités des Métiers' (Professions Centres) and their relocation within labour market areas (ex-CEFO).

More specifically concerning the target groups, the Government plans to place a particular focus on NEETs. The **Youth Guarantee Scheme** will be strengthened and will aim to offer every young person a proposal for an internship and/or training and/or employment within four months of completing their studies. Opportunities for internships will be developed and in-company training for the least qualified young people (PFI (Training Integration Plan), 'helping hand' measure for professions with labour shortages, sandwich training, etc.) will be prioritised.

In addition, in order to enhance **the existing range of services for newcomers**, the Walloon Government has designated a series of training and integration operators, namely the CISPs (Socio-professional Integration Centres), the MIREs (Regional Missions for Employment), the CPASs (Public Centres for Social Welfare) and the SAACEs (Support structures for the self-creation of jobs) and has given them specific subsidies to handle this influx of people in addition. A public cooperation agreement was therefore proposed to operators wishing to welcome this target group; 45 agreements have been signed in order to meet the specific needs of the public as effectively as possible. 19 of them generated effective services for the beneficiaries in 2018 and were maintained in 2019. As not all operators are involved in these agreements, in 2017 it was decided to launch a call for projects aimed at diversifying the offering and supporting specific modules for the target groups. 45 projects were selected out of the 91 applications submitted, created by 43 different operators and offering 610 training places to newcomers (e.g. a "truck driver" training course, training for a profession with labour shortages). In October 2018, the job integration rate was 28.5% (average rate for the various measures of the call for projects). Of the 45 projects developed in 2018, 42 were renewed to develop actions in 2019.

In order to combat **discrimination in recruitment** more effectively, the Government plans to introduce a legal framework governing the mechanisms for situational testing. These mechanisms will make it possible to verify reported cases of discrimination by posing as candidates applying for jobs with the suspected employer or for a discriminating customer (temporary employment, service vouchers).

In order to continuously improve the effectiveness of active labour market policies, FOREM has started a process of evaluation of recently reformed employment aids ('Impulsions' (Stimulus), SESAM (Job support in the for-profit sectors), PFI (Training Integration Plan)). Despite the novelty of the reforms and the unavailability of certain longitudinal monitoring data, the evaluation that has been initiated will make it possible to identify whether certain desired outcomes and objectives are being met, but above all it will make it possible to propose a series of improvements to the processes and to initiate a regular monitoring process, in terms of integrating the target groups into the labour market.

More specifically, with regard to 'Impulsion 55+', the analysis has already produced some initial results. Between the beginning of July 2017, coinciding with the operational launch of the reform, and the end of September 2018, just over 56,000 people benefited from this stimulus (including the transitional measure for older workers, which reached 3,400 people). The evaluation and the subsequent reform will aim to objectivise the actual impact of the scheme beyond possible deadweight effects.

Concerning the long-term unemployed, a framework agreement was signed in May 2019 between Wallonia, FOREM and the federation of CPAS. The objective of the enhanced collaboration between FOREM and the CPAS is to offer jobseekers a more coherent path to professional reintegration. The agreement will also make it possible to create local partnerships between FOREM, the CPAS, but also the ADL (Local development agencies), 'Maisons de l'emploi' (Job Centres), ALE (Local employment agencies), Municipal Administrations, MIRE, IFAPME in order to implement veritable local dynamics of collaboration for a more coherent, more efficient and more fulfilling return to employment of the most vulnerable people.

The Government is also working on the implementation of a new "stepping stone" employment incentive for the long-term unemployed (more than 24 months of inactivity) who do not appear to benefit much from the "Impulsion" stimulus packages, including the "Impulsion 12+" stimulus. The idea is to draw inspiration from well-known 'stepping stone' incentives, such as articles 60 and 61 of the CPAS or the PTP system (Professional transition programme), aimed at developing skills and acquiring professional experience through professional activities subsidised by the public authorities.

The Regional Policy Declaration also provides for the launch of a **pilot experiment of territories with zero long-term unemployment**. Wallonia will set out the legal framework to develop the approach on voluntary territories and, on the basis of a voluntary approach by jobseekers. This will enable pilot experiments to be set up in specific labour market areas, based on work with actors in the field, notably with the support of social economy schemes, by mobilising the existing tools (incubators, support by the CISPs, etc.).

Training systems

The Walloon Government has envisaged making training and skills development a fundamental pillar of its action. **The skills strategy** for Wallonia will be bolstered by various actions. In order to optimise the match between the supply and the demand for skills, and to provide efficient responses to needs that are not met, or insufficiently met, a multi-partner platform "Wallonia Compétences d'Avenir" (Wallonia Future Skills), organised by strategic area of activity, will be set up. This platform will also aim to anticipate new skills needs and the necessary evolution of skills in line with the digital transition, in particular by promoting and stimulating educational and productive innovation (bench testing, new prototypes, etc.), through project incubation. In addition to improving the anticipation of needs in the growth sectors and mobilising all actors to optimise the training offering, the Walloon Government has planned to strengthen the effectiveness of the skills centres, which play a key role in the continuous training and retraining of workers, and to reform, after the current evaluation, the financial incentives for the training of workers so that they provide greater support for the continuous training for the groups that are currently least represented in continuous training, namely women, the low skilled, etc. Personalised schemes to support the continuous training of workers will be adapted and upskilling schemes to support companies and employees will be deployed for workers in companies significantly affected by change (digital transformation, circular economy, ecological transition). The acquired skills of workers will be valorised by the introduction of a system of certificates and by the creation of an individual right of the worker to the validation of skills acquired at work. The language learning scheme will also be evaluated. The 'Wallangues' platform will be optimised and further integrated into the 'Plan Langues' (Language Plan), coordinated by FOREM.

Wallonia has various **vocational training** systems and actors, the main ones being FOREM, the Skills Centres, IFAPME, CISP, MIREs and sectoral funds. Their potential must be optimised, in particular through better collaboration. In order to broaden the training offering, a concerted action plan between the Walloon Government, the Government of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation and the actors in the field will be set up in a participatory rationale.

Wallonia is currently faced with a significant labour shortage, and more particularly a shortage of qualified labour adapted to the needs to be met in a rapidly changing world. Too few young people and jobseekers are trained in occupations for which there is a labour shortage and certain training courses do not bring learners up to the level of skills required by the technical and technological developments taking place in certain sectors. These shortages currently constitute a major obstacle to the development of businesses in Wallonia. As a result, companies are forced to slow down their expansion or give up certain markets, among other things.

To address these issues, various actions have been developed in recent months. **Campaigns to promote the professions with labour shortages and professions of the future** ("Mardis d'avenir" (Tuesdays of the Future)) are being conducted to attract more candidates to training courses that offer promising opportunities on the labour market. Training courses featuring longer in-company training periods ("helping hand for labour shortages") have also been launched in partnership with sectors and companies faced with recruitment difficulties. These pilot experiments will be evaluated and will serve as a basis for the implementation of a new workplace learning scheme targeting jobseekers.

In the **chemical, pharmaceutical and biotech sector**, a 1st virtual job fair was organised in March 2020, in partnership between the sector and FOREM. The objective was to respond to the growth and demographic challenge of the sector. In effect, every year, this sector has to recruit an average of 1,500 people to consolidate its growth. It is also confronted with an ageing workforce, with 5,500 natural exits from the labour force expected over the coming 10 years. This fair is organised on the basis of an innovative concept combining virtual and face-to-face meetings, which will allow candidates to apply online and request a remote interview, but also to meet recruiters. Future editions are being considered. In order to support the link between job offer and job search, the dynamics of the jobdays, organised by FOREM and integrating a preparation phase and assistance in the active search for a job, will be significantly enhanced.

All the texts relating to the **reform of the Training and Integration Plan** were published in the first half of 2019. This has been in force since 1 May 2019 and places the emphasis on administrative simplification, the principle of trust and the valorisation of skills acquired by learners. The scheme is now open to public employers. The new scheme is currently being evaluated in order to remedy the "teething problems" and to meet the objective of increasing the number of PFIs, as a veritable lever towards employment, for thousands of jobseekers.

In 2019, FOREM also made it a priority to shorten its training entry deadlines in order to avoid applications drying up if the time between an interest in following a qualifying training course is shown and the entry into training is too long.

In addition, during the 2019-2024 legislative period, the Walloon Government intends to strengthen the training of workers through a new scheme inspired by the Flemish model, "**career training vouchers**" (support and guidance for workers wishing to improve their skills or reorient their careers, primarily towards professions with a labour shortage). Benchmarking with the other regions will be undertaken, as well as a focus on older workers and workers who have lost their jobs. Upskilling schemes will also be developed for workers in companies that are significantly affected by change (the digital transformation, circular economy, ecological transition, etc.). The valorisation of skills acquired at work (certification system for any skills acquired formally or non-formally and the individual right of the

worker to validation) and skills assessments will be strengthened and promoted with the support of the sectoral funds.

In terms of digital skills, the Walloon Government plans to continue implementing the 'Digital Wallonia' strategy, which includes a section dedicated to **digital skills** learning from an early age and then for life, alongside other important measures, including support for the digital transition of businesses. The transformation of professions will be analysed and digital skills programmes for jobseekers and workers undergoing vocational retraining will be put in place. The 'Cités des métiers' will be entrusted with a monitoring mission focused on the professions transformed by digital technologies. The Walloon Government has also planned several actions aimed at reducing the digital divide, ranging from awareness-raising to training and developing, in particular, digital public spaces (EPN in French).

In addition, Wallonia (winner of the EaSI call for projects to implement the European recommendation on the skills enhancement pathway) started the "**Start Digital**" project in March 2020. This aims to implement an integrated strategy for training in basic digital skills for low-skilled adults. The project is coordinated by the SPW and the Agence du Numérique (Agency for Digitisation). All French-speaking public/publicly-funded training operators are partners in the project (FOREM, IFAPME, Interfédéré, InterMire, Bruxelles-Formation, SFPME, EFP, Febisp, Enseignement de Promotion sociale, Consortium de validation des Compétences and Formaform). The project is built around 3 methodological pillars: the use of a single reference system (DigComp), the pooling of tools and the provision/recruitment of institutional digital mediators to support trainers in integrating digital technology into their practices (cross-cutting digital skills applied to the professions). This project aims to develop more appropriate training on a broad scale, to enhance the skills of jobseekers.

This project will be conducted in close consultation with the new "**Upskills Wallonia**" strategy currently being drafted to strengthen/develop the basic digital skills of workers. This strategy is being drafted in partnership with business actors (UWE, Agoria) and training operators.

Finally, Wallonia is also involved in an Interreg Europe project aimed at improving public policies on **the training of workers in Industry 4.0** (project 4.0 Ready), which started on 1 August 2019.

Moreover, it can be seen that there is disenchantment with the vocational strands at the level of secondary education or sandwich courses, as well as at the level of higher education. One of the reasons behind this is the negative image of the professions and companies that continues to be conveyed to young people and their close circles (families, teachers).

This is why Wallonia has developed a regional strategy for the **promotion of technical and technological professions** which falls within the lifelong guidance system, which the Government is currently implementing by relying on the network of the 3 Walloon 'Cités des Métiers' and their decentralisation in labour market areas. Various measures have been launched in recent years. In order to enhance their impact, the Walloon Government has planned to improve the visibility and attractiveness of professions in the field of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and digital technology by setting up an awareness-raising plan in conjunction with the Wallonia-Brussels Federation, and coordinated throughout the territory. Emphasis will be placed on attractive information to support the positive orientation towards training in the fields of STEM, in consultation with training and education actors and stakeholders from interested sectors (SMEs, Industry Council, Digital Council, etc.). In this context, the Walloon Government intends to organise a major event to disseminate and raise awareness of science and technology, by 2020. The aim of this event will be to bring together in one place all the actors involved in the dissemination and awareness of technical and scientific professions and to organise various thematic workshops for primary and secondary school pupils.

In April 2019, an agreement was concluded between the **Maison des Maths et du Numérique**, Wallonia and the Wallonia Brussels Federation). In this context, the Walloon Government has earmarked €2 million over the period 2019 to 2021 to provide the resources needed to implement the activities of the Maison des Maths et du Numérique. This initiative develops activities to allow young French-speaking Belgians to approach mathematics and digital technology in a fun way.

For **vulnerable groups that are far from the labour market**, a training offering financed or provided by the public authorities enables them to access training. The methodology of training through work has been supported by the Government in order to get a specific target group "hooked" onto training, groups which are often scarred and let down by an school system to which they are unsuited.

A project is underway, with the support of PARS, to develop systems to assess and recognise learning outcomes of the Socio-professional Integration Centres (CISP) by mid-2021. The outcome should, in the longer term, contribute to improving the quality and relevance of non-formal learning and facilitating access to further training pathways in Wallonia for low-skilled individuals. The CISPs train around 16,000 people per year (51% women, 49% men). This action is part of the dynamic, developed in Wallonia, of validation, visibility and valorisation of lifelong learning skills (Consortium for the Validation of Skills and the new "certificate of professional skills", currently being tested, relating to the mastery of all the skills linked to a profession).

During Phase 1 of the project (Sept 2019-Dec 2019), a review was conducted of the existing initiatives among the CISPs and internationally for the assessment, recognition and certification of learning by low-skilled individuals. In the next phases, it is planned to develop/enhance the systems to assess, recognise and certify the technical skills acquired through the training courses of the CISPs, and formulate proposals for a quality assurance system that could improve the recognition of CISP's training courses in the Walloon training system (to be finalised in April 2021).

Finally, the **Service Francophone des Métiers et Qualifications** (French-speaking Service for Professions and Qualifications) is responsible for generating job and training profiles for training operators in French-speaking Belgium. A strategic guidance note was adopted in April 2019 by the Governments concerned, setting out, inter alia, new working methods.

In 2019, the SFMQ therefore produced preliminary studies on the fields of computer science, personal assistance, personal care and paid driving on the road. According to studies by the Public Employment Services, many professions in these areas of activity suffer from labour or skills shortages. These preliminary study reports have made it possible to identify the professions and group them into clusters of trades in a vision of career and training paths.

The Job Profiles for paid driving on the road and personal assistance clusters were drafted in collaboration with the social partners to identify skills needs based on a new methodology. The description of the professions as presented in these new profiles aims to facilitate their understanding by the people in charge of advice and guidance and by citizens wishing to better understand the professional expectations before committing themselves to training.

The SFMQ is currently working to produce the Training Profiles, associated with these Professions Profiles, in collaboration with all the public operators for education, training and skills validation. The objective of the combined drafting of Professions Profiles and Training Profiles is to improve the match between the skills of workers and their acquired knowledge at the end of their training/education and the start of their professional activities.

The SFMQ is also working on adapting existing SFMQ Profiles and CCPQ benchmarks that existed prior to the creation of the Service in order to adapt them to the new professional realities.

Finally, it should be noted that the Walloon Government adopted an amending decree at the third reading in May 2019 that will make it possible to recognise professional certifications in the context of recruitment for jobs in the regional civil service. Specifically, this recognition will allow people with a professional certification issued by IFAPME, FOREM or the Consortium de Validation des Compétences (CVDC), to be recruited in the regional public service. Access has hitherto been restricted to persons with a teaching qualification. This measure will put an end to discrimination in recruitment with the public service, and will increase the diversity of profiles there. This measure will also encourage professional mobility as it also applies to European public operators.

Moreover, the dynamic of validating skills in companies will be boosted from the first half of 2020 (the social economy sector will play a pilot role in this regard), with the aim of supporting the enhancement of the skills levels of workers and their professional mobility, and even their reintegration and/or retention on the labour market in the event of restructuring.

2.3. Recommendation 3: Investment and mobility

The Government will adopt a **Social, Environmental and Economic Transition Plan** in the first half of the year. This is currently being drafted.

The transition plan will be structured around a limited number of key priority projects and changeover reforms, divided into three components;

- Ecological transition: energy renovation (insulation), mobility, renewable energy, biodiversity, agriculture and food;
- Transition of knowledge and know-how: training, internships, literacy, skills development, orientation towards science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), etc.;
- Economic and industrial transition: transition towards a circular, regenerative and zero waste economy; development of economic sectors of the future such as the digital, biotechnologies, bio-economy, silver economy, artificial intelligence, modernisation of industry; consideration of new economic models and new ways of organising work that are democratic (such as cooperatives), respectful of workers, consumer rights and the planet; support for the self-creation of employment (enhancing local economic anchoring).

The Government will also support research and innovation with the aim of amplifying and accelerating the social, ecological and economic transition. An important focus will be placed on experimentation, making it possible to conduct innovative projects.

The Government will ensure that all investment plans are assessed and coordinated, in order to have a comprehensive view of the needs and challenges in terms of investment. Wallonia also intends to encourage constructive exchanges with the other Regions and the federal authority in order to implement a coherent and ambitious investment policy.

In terms of stimulating local investment, the Walloon Government has adopted a decree on **Urban Policy**. This will now set out a framework for the award and use of the grants they receive (€13 million per year). Cities will have to devote at least 50% of these resources to investment. Since 2019, the funding of this Urban Policy has been conditional on the adoption of a new tool called the "Urban Development Perspective", which enables urban municipalities to plan and manage all the actions that contribute to their dynamism more effectively, and their reach as a structural cluster. In December 2019, the Government approved the first decree fixing the breakdown of the amount allocated, in the form of drawing rights, to the seven major cities for the multi-annual planning 2019-2024.

The Government has continued its investment policy in the priority areas of mobility, energy, innovation and digital technology.

In terms of the **circular economy**, following the call for projects launched in 2019 for the creation of a **plastic recycling sector in Wallonia**, the project selection process was completed in May 2019. 6 projects were selected, representing an investment of €120 million, including €47 million financed by Wallonia. These will lead to the creation, in 2021, of industrial processing units with a capacity of 156,000 T of plastic waste; 350 jobs are expected to be created.

The Government has also planned to adopt an **Integrated Waste Management Infrastructure Plan**. This tool will make it possible to plan Wallonia's needs in terms of waste management infrastructure, all management methods combined (collection, sorting, transfer, valorisation of materials, incineration, disposal, etc.), including the environmental impacts, the associated costs and the investments to be made between 2025 and 2050.

In terms of **energy**, as part of the Walloon Investment Plan (PWI in French), in May 2019 the Government released an additional €12.5 million to improve the energy performance of public housing.

The Walloon Government, while increasing the public resources invested in **support for innovation**, plans to reform aid with an emphasis on simplification and its impact on the regional economy. A systematic evaluation of the policies pursued will be carried out and coherence between the tools will be enhanced. The process of renewing Wallonia's **regional smart specialisation strategy (S3)** has been launched, with the aim of completing it by the end of 2020. The aim is to redefine the priority areas of the S3, the associated policy mix and the terms for the governance of the strategy, with a view to increasing efficiency and improving the policy mix. This renewed strategic framework should make it possible to stimulate investment in innovation, entrepreneurship and the creation of activity in the priority themes that will be identified.

In the context of the PWI, in April 2019 the Government approved the financing of **three collective research infrastructure projects** for a budget of €9 million. These are 3 interdisciplinary and collaborative projects in the field of animal welfare (Plateforme Aqua, which will make it possible to study animal rearing conditions in aquaculture under optimal conditions of animal welfare, the virtual and inter-university platform for alternative methods to experiments on animals, and the Tox4Wal project, a (pre)toxicological study platform, which will make it possible to help Walloon companies develop their therapeutic projects and, at the same time, develop alternative methods to testing on mammals). It should also be noted that Wallonia has confirmed its participation in **Euro HPC** to the tune of €5 million.

The 3rd call for projects of the **COOPILOT scheme**, with a budget of €25 million, was opened in September 2019. The aim of the programme, co-financed by the ERDF, is to co-finance pilot units or demonstrators and to deploy their technology on an industrial production scale, via experimental development projects conducted in collaboration by several firms (including at least one SME). 10 projects have been financed to the tune of €23.4 million, for a total investment of €48.4 million.

In terms of **digitisation**, in July 2019 the Government adopted the **Digitalwallonia4.IA programme** (Budget of €900,000) **which aims to include Wallonia in the national and European initiatives on artificial intelligence in order to build a foundation of trust around a transparent, ethical and responsible AI, synonymous with increased performance for companies and a significant improvement in the quality of life for citizens. Digitalwallonia4.IA falls within a rationale of initiating future investments that will be necessary to support a regional dynamic around AI.** It is based on 4 structural strands: society, business, training and partnerships. Two main actions have already been launched in this context: **Start AI** (support by an AI expert for 35 companies in their take-

up of AI by June 2020) and **Stepping Stone AI** (intended to set up Proof of Concepts on AI in different sectors). The training actions will be launched in 2020.

Several Walloon actors are involved in **INNOSUP** (Horizon 2020) projects: MECATECH in the IoT4Industry project, the ICT cluster in the Digi-B-Cube project (IT for health) and Wagraim (S3Food on smart sensors). In the context of the IoT4Industry project, Walloon companies are involved in 7 selected projects, for a support of €515,000. This project will make it possible to finance and implement full-scale prototypes and demonstrators that integrate IoT, Big Data, Artificial Intelligence and Cybersecurity into the tools and means of production of industrial companies. Based on the success of IoT4Industry, MECATECH and SOWALFIN have launched an **Easy'Up4Process** call for the financing of 'proofs of concept' for Industry 4.0 (closing February 2020). The scheme will support investment projects relating to the integration of innovation in a production or distribution process with the aim of enhancing the company's added value and competitiveness (operational optimisation). The support will combine financing (subordinated loan of max. €500,000) and support.

In addition, a new call for projects "**Digital School 2020**" was launched in early 2020, with a budget of €9 million, to continue the roll-out of digital equipment in schools. This budget will enable 500 recipients to implement an educational project directly linked to digital technology. Since 2012, €25 million has been invested and more than 1,700 teaching teams have been equipped.

Finally, following the signing of an agreement between the Government and the three telecommunications operators at the end of 2016 on the abolition of regional taxes on masts and pylons, in return for a commitment by each operator to invest €20 million over three years to improve **mobile coverage in Wallonia** (3G/4G), the state of play in mid-2019 shows that €45 million has already been invested and that Wallonia no longer has any municipalities in white zones. 39 municipalities are now no longer in white zones and the average coverage of the population in 4G outdoor is now 98.35%.

Mobility will be one of the Walloon Government's priorities under its Transition Plan. The Government will ensure that its decisions contribute to a reduction in greenhouse gases by 2030, in line with the Walloon objective of -55% and a sharp reduction in the impact of the transport system on health. The Walloon policy will be based on the FAST 2030 vision and the regional mobility strategy adopted on 9 May 2019, which will be strengthened in line with Wallonia's objectives.

The Government will invest massively in public transport, both through conventional lines and innovative solutions. The aim will be to increase the supply and quality of service. The network will be extended where necessary, in particular via express and feeder lines, to connect business parks, neighbourhoods, housing estates and villages.

The Government will provide significant support to soft and active mobility (walking, cycling, soft micro-mobility, etc.) and will roll out adapted infrastructure. It will put in place a strategy to develop the use of cycles as a utilitarian means of travel, in order to double its use by 2024 and increase it fivefold by 2030. This strategy will be based in particular on a "Wallonie Cyclable 2030" plan, the full implementation of regional cycle routes and the drafting of an express network, in connection with the feeder networks and local routes which will be enhanced.

The Government will take the necessary measures to ensure an efficient and safe road transport network. It will therefore continue the preventive and curative maintenance and securing of existing infrastructure and will develop smart roads.

A Mobility and Infrastructure Plan 2019-2024 was adopted in April 2019 with a budget of €1.6 billion. In order to help accelerate the climate transition, the new Government will adopt an adjusted '**Mobility and Infrastructure**' plan until 2025. The overall budget will be €2 billion.

As regards the projects drawn up by the Walloon Public Service, the Government intends to:

- Take note of the projects already awarded (for an amount of €71.4 million);
- Confirm the projects relating to hydraulic works (€309.4 million);
- Also confirm the projects that primarily concern soft mobility and/or public transport, for an amount of €392.7 million.

In this 'Mobility and Infrastructure' plan, the Government will set aside an amount of €80 million per year from 2021, to be used exclusively for the implementation of additional projects focusing on soft and collective mobility.

In terms of roads, the emphasis will be on maintaining and securing existing infrastructure and developing smart solutions, etc.

Beyond the 2019-2025 plan, with the exception of road safety works and connections to the existing network of essential infrastructure (stations, hospitals and ZAE (economic activity zones)) and security works, the Government will not start the study and will not carry out new roads and road extensions.

To convince citizens to make greater use of alternatives to cars, the Government will provide significant support to connections between the various means of transport and coordination between transport operators. This is clearly part of the promotion of intermodal and multimodal mobility.

Road taxes and vehicle registration taxes will be reviewed, with overall taxation unchanged, to adjust them according to CO₂ emissions and mass / power. The aim in particular is to encourage the purchase of cars that are less powerful and lighter, and therefore less polluting.

The Government will analyse the possibility of extending the road network in specific situations, that are subject to the kilometre charge for heavy goods vehicles to roads connected to the network already paid for, in order to respond to the difficulties created by the inappropriate switching of traffic to other roads. Adjusting the rate of the charge will also be considered to encourage better mobility management.

More broadly, Wallonia will integrate the process of gradually phasing out internal combustion vehicles, which has already started. In a transitional phase, the Government will support an ambitious plan for the balanced **roll-out of electricity terminals and compressed natural gas (CNG) and liquefied natural gas (LNG) stations** on Walloon territory. It will promote vehicles powered by natural gas, electricity, hydrogen and hybrid vehicles.

The Government will finalise a multimodal goods transport and logistics plan, included in the regional mobility strategy, coordinated between all the actors, and in line with the regional climate and energy objectives, and which contributes to the economic development of Wallonia, in order to significantly reduce the number of kilometres travelled.

To this end, the Government plans in particular to complete the backbone of waterways in Wallonia by upgrading, maintaining and cleaning up waterways and locks. Wallonia will continue to be involved in the Seine-Scheldt liaison project, which aims to create a new 4,500 tonne gauge navigation route linking Paris, Antwerp and Rotterdam.

In addition, the new **PEREX centre** was inaugurated in April 2019. This will provide Wallonia with high-tech management of its road and inland waterway infrastructure (investment of €30 million). It will make it possible to manage, control and secure the networks in real time.

In December 2019, the framework agreement between Wallonia and the **Centrale Régionale de Mobilité** (Regional Mobility Centre) was signed. The objective is to promote alternative mobility solutions. The Local Mobility Centres (CLM in French) provide information on the best available transport options (public transport, social taxis, car-sharing, etc.) and organise, with partners,

alternative formulas when necessary. Various CLM were already active, but there was no regional coordination, which will eventually make it possible to standardise this type of service and cover the whole Walloon territory.

2.4. Recommendation 4: Reduce the administrative and regulatory burden to boost entrepreneurship, increase competition in service sectors

Administrative simplification for entrepreneurs and SMEs

In its Regional Policy Declaration, the Government placed particular emphasis on developing businesses and the self-employed. In particular, the administrations and support structures are expected to adopt a business-friendly philosophy by facilitating procedures and reducing the administrative burden (SME test, "only once" principle, electronic invoicing, harmonisation of documents, the digitisation of procedures, etc.).

Various projects are already underway in this respect and measures have recently been adopted. For example, the forms for the **environmental permit and the single permit** have been simplified. They are planned to be made digital by mid-2020.

Measures to **simplify and speed up the permit procedures** envisaged in the CoDT (Territorial Development Code) were also adopted in May 2019. A series of minor and energy-related works are now exempted from permits or the intervention of an architect. These came into force on 1 September.

The '**chèques-entreprises**' (business cheques) scheme has been simplified at various levels. The number of cheques has been reduced, and they are now grouped into 7 themes (start-up, development, transmission, internationalisation, sustainable development, innovation and digital). 2 new cheques are available (energy and circular economy). The intervention percentages have been harmonised at 50% with the exception of the so-called priority themes such as Innovation and Digital (75%) and the Start-up Cheques for the most vulnerable groups (80%). The eligible groups have been redefined: 3 groups are eligible for the scheme, namely project leaders, businesses and starters. The digital platforms have been improved and a new website has been launched: www.cheques-entreprises.be. The labelling of service providers is also simplified, and will now be carried out by the services of the SPW.

Public procurement procedures have been completely digitised since 1 January 2020.

There has also been an improvement in the situation regarding **payment terms**. The report for the year 2018 shows that the recorded developments are largely positive for commercial invoices settled by ordinance. Gradually, and on average, the 30-day reference threshold for processing in the strict sense is being reached, despite the increase in the number of invoices processed. At the end of 2018, it appears that 72.5% of invoices were settled within 30 days maximum (from the date of receipt recorded by the officials). This is the best score observed since 2013. Average payment terms for commercial invoices have been falling almost steadily since 2013 (41.98 days) and were very close to the target values (30.83 days) by the end of 2018.

Retail trade and services

In terms of **retail**, the Government is pursuing the objectives of revitalising urban centres, promoting diversity and developing local shops. The Regional Policy Declaration provides that the Regional Commercial Development Scheme (SRDC in French) will be coordinated and, where appropriate, integrated into the Territorial Development Scheme, so as to move towards a single indicative reference

document for the whole of the regional territory. The commercial premises permit system and the integrated permit will be coordinated and, where appropriate, merged with the single permit system.

In order to combat the phenomenon of the loss of craftsmanship and to stimulate interest in crafts-related professions, the Walloon Government has decided to **revitalise the training pathways leading to crafts professions** organised in the IFAPME Network. As such, it has introduced a comprehensive measure to revalorise training in the crafts-related professions. This measurement consists of four strands:

- The granting of a specific bursary to craftsmen and women, worth €260 per month. This amount is intended to compensate for the additional training burden borne by craftsmen and women on whom all vocational training falls, given the specific nature of craftsmanship (no training partly provided by IFAPME as opposed to other professions).
- The implementation of a specific core curriculum for crafts, training in management, creativity, innovation, e-marketing, e-commerce, etc. All apprentices who embark on these pathways will be grouped together in the courses in a common core.
- The implementation of a campaign to promote crafts-related professions.
- The development of synergies with the representatives of craftsmen and women (Union des artisans, SNI, UCM, etc.)

In addition, following the implementation in 2017 of the first "CREASHOP-VILLES" project to assist shops, aimed at cities considered as major urban centres by the ERDF and/or having a non-profit association for city centre management, the **CREASHOP PLUS** project aims to extend the scheme to cities and municipalities considered as "centres of the (sub)areas of consumption of current and food purchases" defined in the SRDC, i.e. 41 additional municipalities. The municipalities were invited to submit an application during the second half of 2019 with a view to organising support for future shop owners wishing to develop a new commercial activity in an empty commercial unit. The projects will have to include both a start-up support component and a financial support component. An amount of €1.5 million has been earmarked for the implementation of this measure for a period of 3 years.

Wallonia has also set up a system of **compensatory indemnities for shop owners, self-employed persons or entrepreneurs** (< 10 workers) whose activity is hindered by works, in order to compensate for the loss of turnover. The scheme works via a smartphone app that is easy to use. When their activity is disrupted by a building site that prevents customers from accessing the site for at least 20 consecutive days, the shop owner benefits from an indemnity of €100 per day's hindrance, capped at €6,000 (i.e. 60 days of hindrance) per building site.

An evaluation process of the law on **access to professions** had been initiated under the previous legislature. The revision of this subject, which was transferred in the context of the 6th State reform, is essential, in particular to simplify and adapt implementation to the realities on the ground (relevance of content, cost reduction, etc.). A consultation of professional federations was carried out in the first half of 2019, including basic management knowledge. The various proposals identified are currently being analysed in order to identify guidelines and proposals for adjustments.

3. Thematic objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy

3.1. 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 achieving a work-life balance.

The Regional Policy Declaration envisages strengthening the **collaboration between FOREM and the VDAB** in order to further mobilise jobseekers towards Flanders. In addition, the language learning scheme in Wallonia will be evaluated and improved on the basis of this evaluation within the framework of a new language plan which, in the interests of coherence, efficiency and complementarity, will link together the various schemes (training plan, bursaries and immersion courses, IBO-Taal, language level objectification tests, Wallangues Platform, etc.).

The Regional Policy Declaration envisages various measures to **help achieve a work-life balance**, in particular improving the integration of single parents, especially young women, into the labour market through accessible and adapted training and apprenticeship reform, support for businesses which are committed to implementing a "parent-friendly" policy, and support for the care and transport of children aged between 3 and 11, including, if appropriate, the extension of the service cheques scheme.

In order to strengthen the attractiveness of the early childhood sector, Wallonia and the ONE launched an information campaign in 2019 on the **new child minder status**, created in 2018. This allows beneficiaries to enjoy the benefits of an employment contract: full social protection, paid holidays, holiday pay, income and employment stability. Following an initial pilot experiment, 200 positions were created. Collaboration between FOREM and the ONE, in terms of awareness and recruitment of new employees, will be further enhanced.

In December 2019, the Government made €4.5 million available to boost the **social economy** sector. The aim in particular is to develop and customise 'food belts', Creative Resource Centres, and increase higher education programmes in the social economy and make Wallonia an experimental laboratory, an area of innovation in this field. Via a budget of €3 million also made available, SOWECSOM will also support the emergence and professionalisation of new business cooperatives in the social economy, with a particular focus on the social and transitional housing sector (victims of domestic violence and the fight against homelessness).

The Regional Policy Declaration envisages the implementation of extensive support, including diagnosis, skills enhancement and legal and accounting aspects, accessible to starters who launch their activity as self-employed persons or business creators. We also refer to sections 2.4 and 4 concerning the measures adopted in **support of entrepreneurship**, including women's entrepreneurship, in particular through the actions of the SAACEs.

3.2. Research, Development and Innovation

As indicated in Chapter 2, the Regional Policy Declaration envisages **increased public investment in support of innovation**, in order to achieve the European targets of 3% of GDP invested in R&D, and to raise this target to 4% by 2035 and 5% by 2050, of which one third should come from the public sector. In this regard, the budget funds allocated to R&D were stable in 2019 compared to 2018: €284 million versus €287 million in 2018.

The Government also plans to step up efforts to improve the policy mix and coordination of actors with a view to improving the effectiveness of the policies implemented and increasing the value of the projects supported in economic terms. A reform of aid for innovation will be implemented, with priority being given to simplification and feedback effects for the Walloon economy.

Wallonia has started work on **renewing its smart specialisation strategy (S3)**, which should be completed by the end of 2020. An update of the Region's strategic areas of innovation is planned. This will capitalise in particular on identifying regional priorities in the field of R&D which was adopted in May 2019. This has been implemented taking into account the priorities of the future Horizon Europe programme, in order to strengthen the link between regional and European policies. The process should also lead to the establishment of clear governance arrangements, an effective policy mix, and a better definition of the missions and interactions between each actor in RDI. The S3 should make it possible to develop and strengthen innovation niches, strategic sectors and priority value chains.

The Regional Policy Declaration also envisages the development of synergies and economies of scale between accredited research centres and the promotion of inter-regional and international research collaborations. In this respect, a new **BEL-SME 2020 call** was launched in December 2019, aiming to support collaborations between SMEs from the 3 Belgian regions for R&D projects.

In collaboration with the Wallonia-Brussels Federation, there are also plans to develop a programme to raise awareness of the gender aspect and promote women in scientific careers in RDI, and to support Walloon innovation through innovative public procurement.

The roll-out of the Walloon network of **creativity hubs** is continuing, with the support of the ERDF. An evaluation of this policy is underway.

In terms of **digital innovation**, in addition to the initiatives already detailed in section 2.3, the INFOPOLE ICT cluster launched the '**Digital Innovation**' programme in 2019. The objective is to accentuate the digital dimension in the calls for projects of the Competitiveness Clusters in a cross-cutting way via the animation of ecosystems around strong digital themes and an innovation support programme for IT companies and companies of the Clusters. The scope of the programme acts in support of the Competitiveness Clusters upstream of the calls for projects, at the conception, awareness raising and networking stage, and also downstream via project valorisation activities.

In addition, Wallonia is organising the selection procedure for **Digital Innovation Hubs (DIH)** within the regional territory; this will take place in two stages with the launch of the call in April, a pre-selection of the most promising projects in July and the definitive nomination of the Walloon DIHs in October. The DIH will make it possible to provide the expertise and support needed by Walloon companies for their digital transformation, based on analyses of their needs, both in technological terms and specific to their sector of activity.

Following the '**Intelligent Territories**' call, 43 projects were selected for a total estimated budget of €8 million, of which Wallonia will contribute €4 million. Innovative digital projects will be supported in areas identified as priorities, including energy and the environment, mobility and logistics, and governance and citizenship.

The Government also plans to develop open data and make this policy systematic in public administrations. With this in mind, the 1st **Geochallenge** was launched in February 2020. The aim of this project is to facilitate the development of concrete solutions that meet citizens' expectations and/or the needs of the administration by exploiting the geographical information from the 'Géoportail de la Wallonie' (Geoportal of Wallonia). Various issues are proposed, relating to mobility, the environment and the discovery of natural heritage, business location and quality of life.

The **assessment of the Made Different Digital Wallonia** programme, a programme to support Walloon industrial companies in accelerating their digital transformation, is as follows:

- The programme has made it possible to coordinate the action of 35 partners (professional and sectoral federations, research centres, clusters, etc.) to ensure the digital transformation of Wallonia's industrial sector;
- **4 Factories of The Future, 3 Industry 4.0 demonstrators;**
- **11 advanced digital technologies for Industry 4.0 in Wallonia. 4 areas of specialisation;**
- **1,102 different manufacturing companies made aware of Industry 4.0;**
- **184 different manufacturing companies diagnosed for Industry 4.0;**
- **A label as a European DIH (Digital Innovation Hub);**
- **A brand with an international presence**, notably at Hanover Messe and Global Industry;
- **An ecosystem of 239 Walloon actors** offering solutions to transition to Industry 4.0.

3.3. 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, implementation of a single, multi-partner, lifelong guidance system, based on the network of Cités des Métiers and their relocation in the labour market areas (ex-CEFO), integrating, in particular 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.

3.4. Energy-Climate

Reducing greenhouse gas emissions

In the context of the cooperation agreement of 12 February 2018 between the Federal State, the Flemish Region, the Walloon Region and the Brussels-Capital Region on effort sharing as regards the Belgian climate and energy objectives for the **period 2013-2020**, the Walloon objective for 2020 is - 14.7% compared to 2005 emissions for the ESD sectors (Effort Sharing Decision CE/406/2009). The annual targets for 2013-2020 are calculated according to a progressive reduction pathway, starting in 2013 according to the average emission value 2008-2010 and decreasing linearly to the 2020 target value. This only concerns the ESD sectors, as the ETS objective is directly managed at European level, with no objective defined at national or regional level.

Wallonia (kt CO ₂ -eq.)	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017 ¹
ESD objective	26,029	25,624	25,219	24,813	25,223
ESD Emissions	24,283	23,207	23,889	24,146	23,564
ESD balance (surplus)	1,747	2,417	1,329	667	1,659

Balance of Walloon ESD emissions, 2013-2017 (kt CO₂-eq.), *validated data*

¹ The 2017 target is slightly higher than the 2016 target. This is due to a correction applied to all Member States according to Article 27(2) of Regulation 525/2013, which reflects the application of the new IPCC guidelines for inventories and new global warming potential for gases other than CO₂. This correction relates to the trajectories for the years 2017 to 2020.

ESD emissions in 2013-2017 are below the reduction pathway. The cumulative surplus for the years 2013-2017 is 7.8 million tonnes.

The final balance for 2018 cannot be established until the end of 2020, after verification of the emissions inventory by the European Commission and validation of the regional balances by the National Climate Commission. According to current data (provisional inventory of 15 January 2020), Wallonia appeared to meet its ESD target in 2018, but this data will have to be confirmed in the submission of 15 March and then during the verification.

Concerning the **period 2021-2030**, the draft Walloon contribution to the National Energy-Climate Plan 2030 had been approved on 18 December 2018 by the Walloon Government, and transmitted to the Commission within the draft Belgian Plan at the end of 2018. This draft contribution has been updated on the basis of the Commission's recommendations received in June 2019 and the results of the various consultation processes (primarily the results of the public enquiry conducted in Wallonia on the Air-Climate Energy Plan (PACE)). The **definitive Walloon contribution to Belgium's National Energy-Climate Plan** was approved by the Walloon Government on 28 November 2019 and sets out a Walloon reduction target of -37% compared to 2005 for the ESR sectors (Effort Sharing Regulation EC/842/2018). To achieve this, the main measures planned are: renovation and insulation of buildings ('A' label on average for the entire housing stock and neutrality of tertiary buildings by 2050), increasing the share of renewable energies (23.5% by 2030), the rationalisation of mobility needs, a modal shift and greening of the vehicle fleet, research and innovation, and new sectoral agreements.

On the other hand, the Region is aiming for **carbon neutrality by 2050 at the latest** (including a 95% reduction in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions compared to 1990 levels), based on a progressive trajectory of GHG emissions reduction, and the Regional Policy Declaration envisages an intermediate stage of GHG emissions reduction of 55% compared to 1990 levels by 2030. The aim is thus to contribute to the global effort to keep the average global temperature increase well below 2°C compared to the pre-industrial era and to continue efforts to limit warming to 1.5°C, in accordance with the Paris Climate Agreement. In order to achieve the 55% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 compared to 1990 levels, Wallonia will be able to emit a maximum of 25.198 million tonnes of CO₂ equivalent in 2030, to be distributed according to the mechanisms of the climate decree. This objective covers both sectors covered by the European Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) and those that are not (non-ETS). All sectors must contribute jointly and equitably to achieve Wallonia's climate objectives.

In order to determine the distribution of GHG reductions between the different sectors and the means necessary to achieve them, the Government will use the methodology and proposals of the Walloon Air and Climate Agency (Awac) and will organise wide-ranging consultation with all the sectors concerned. Some sectors will need to meet proportionally more important objectives, and others proportionally less important objectives, depending on the technical and economic capacity of each sector, socio-economic impacts and interactions between sectors, among other things. In any case, the overall target of 25.198 million tonnes of CO₂ equivalent will have to be met.

A broad consultation process will be implemented from spring 2020 onwards. The second phase of this climate plan will be elaborated with a participatory and concerted approach, both with the public and all the sectors concerned. This consultation will be as broad as possible in a process of co-construction of all the significant measures to be decided on, to achieve complete decarbonisation by 2050.

The final targets per sector will be reflected in the emission budgets, within the meaning of the climate decree of 20 February 2014, for the periods 2023-2027 and 2028-2032. These budgets will be adopted by the Government in the context of the PACE 2030 finalisation process (for which the draft was approved in April 2019).

Furthermore, in early December 2019, the Government adopted its **Long-Term Strategy 2050**, which presents a decarbonised vision of the Walloon energy system and greenhouse gas emission sectors by 2050. This strategy aims to lay down guidelines for all sectors concerned (agriculture, transport, industry, construction, energy, and waste). The document is in line with the Regional Policy Declaration 2019-2024 which aims to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050 through a 95% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, supplemented by carbon capture measures.

In order to ensure consistency between the various decisions of the Government and the climate objectives of the Paris Agreement (which are reflected in the Cooperation Agreement on burden-sharing and in other European Directives) and to make the analysis of the impacts of decisions on greenhouse gas emissions systematic, the Walloon Government has decided to impose **a climate point in each note to the Government**.

With regard to the recently adopted concrete measures, it should be noted that in May 2019 the Walloon Government approved the launch of a call for candidates for the establishment of two **hydrogen production and distribution stations** using electricity produced in Wallonia to supply captive bus fleets. To this end, the Government has made provision for recoverable advances of an estimated €8 million for the two projects as well as subsidies in the order of €8.7 million.

Within the Civil Service, the Government adopted its first **social responsibility report** in October 2019, highlighting the approach to promoting sustainable development within the Walloon Public Service, centred on training provision, the provision of tools and an advisory and support mission. The Regional Policy Declaration envisages the strategic committee will propose, in its draft administration contract with the Government, strategic objectives accompanied by operational measures in the area of climate and development.

Given its economic weight (12% of Belgian GDP), public procurement represents an important lever for sustainable development. To this end, Wallonia adopted the decree of 30 April 2019 on the incorporation of environmental, social and ethical clauses in subsidised **public contracts** with a view to adopting efficient management of resources in the context of public procurement.

The Walloon and Flemish Governments have also jointly undertaken to encourage **CO₂ reduction in the construction sector through their public procurement**. The two regions have reached an agreement to launch some 20 pilot projects between 2019 and 2022. These pilot contracts will introduce CO₂ performance criteria, which will reward the best performing companies in this area.

Renewable energies

The Regional Policy Declaration envisages that the Government will set out an energy vision which takes into account the phasing out of nuclear energy by 2025, the elimination of fossil fuels in favour of 100% renewable energy by 2050 and the intention to intensively develop energy efficiency, in accordance with the energy-climate pact. An adapted trajectory setting out precise targets for energy efficiency and the roll-out of renewable energy, sector by sector, will be developed in the context of the adoption of the PACE measures which aim to achieve a 55% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. The energy vision will cover electricity, heating and transport and will take into account cost, technical potential and the acceptability of the technologies. The energy vision will focus on a transition to a decentralised and decarbonised energy system in cooperation with the federal authority, the other Regions and the European Union and taking into account security of supply, stability and cost optimisation and the reduction of emissions of greenhouse gases and other air pollutants.

The Walloon contribution to the **National Energy-Climate Plan** sets a target for renewable energy in gross final consumption of around 23.5% in 2030 (all uses combined: electricity, heating, transport), and details this target sector by sector.

The Government has envisaged developing an "**Employment-Environment-Renewable Energy**" alliance to create a virtuous cycle. Starting by identifying the Walloon actors in the various renewable sectors and their needs, the Government will assess the manpower requirements for the coming years in accordance with the pathways decided upon, and will adapt the training, qualification and employment support sectors accordingly.

Moreover, the Government will encourage cooperatives which are active in energy saving, shared renewable production and collective storage or energy management at the level of a territorial community or neighbourhood, bringing together local public actors, SMEs and citizens, so that the community can take back control of energy. In this regard, in May 2019 Parliament adopted a decree promoting the development of **renewable energy communities**. As such, while mobilising the public network, various entities (natural or legal persons) within a perimeter may agree to pool and synchronise their electricity generation and consumption.

Resource efficiency

The Government is committed to **making building renovation and energy efficiency** a major regional priority. By 1 April 2020 at the latest, it will review, in consultation with the sectors concerned, the objectives and the pace of implementation of the strategy for the renovation of the Walloon building stock to make them consistent with the revised climate target for 2030. The final objective is to aim for carbon neutrality for the entire building stock by 2050, with an intermediate target for 2030 revised upwards. In the context of this strategy, the Government will gradually strengthen the criteria for the energy performance of buildings (EPB). In consultation with the sector, the Government will implement a project to insulate and renovate 250,000 housing units and 2,500 public buildings and schools, in particular through a third-party investor mechanism and soft loans.

An "**Employment-Environment-Renovation**" alliance will be drawn up by the Government. It will aim to stimulate demand for renovating the building stock, build capacity and develop the necessary skills in the sectors of renovation, sustainable construction, eco-construction, natural insulation and renewable energy generation.

The reformed **housing and energy bonuses** (Primes Habitation) came into effect on 1 June 2019. The aim of the reform is to simplify procedures for more accessible bonuses. Any applicant will have to solicit a housing auditor to list all the work to be carried out in terms of energy and hygiene, 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, which 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. Previously excluded from the scheme, income of more than €97,700 (indexed amounts) will now be able to apply for bonuses with amounts adapted to their category. Landlords will also be able to make use of the scheme, provided that they comply with the indicative rent scale. In the context of the Walloon Investment Plan, in May 2019 the Government released an additional €12.5 million to improve the **energy performance of public housing**.

In addition, in the context of the reform of 'chèques-entreprises' (business cheques), a new **energy cheque** has been created. This facilitates access to energy audit subsidies for SMEs. At the same time, the Government has decided to include in the AMURE⁹² programme specific subsidies for SMEs in the catering, wholesale trade and retail sectors that invest in the insulation, ventilation, and LED lighting of their buildings or the insulation of their cold rooms.

⁹² Subsidies to companies for carrying out audits and studies aimed at energy efficiency, more rational use of energy and the use of renewable energy sources.

In terms of environmental and energy policy with industry, the Walloon Government has started discussions to prepare a 3rd generation of **sectoral agreements** with the industry federations. In the meantime, a decision has been taken to extend the 2014-2020 phase until 2023 (signature of the amendments to the agreement in May 2019), with objectives adapted accordingly.

3.5. 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.

We refer to section 2.2. concerning the actions carried out in the field of socio-professional integration.

Social inclusion and poverty reduction

The RPD provides for the adoption of a new **cross-cutting poverty reduction plan** with the objective of a sustainable exit from poverty. In particular, this plan will need to ensure that the impact of policies is assessed to address the root causes of child poverty and take measures to support people in precarious situations, including single parent families. An evaluation of the previous plan was conducted in 2019. The fight against child poverty has also been at the heart of **the action plan on the rights of the child** for the period 2016-2019. In view of the concluding observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child issued in February 2019, Wallonia will further strengthen its projects to combat child poverty when it adopts its next plan for 2020-2024.

In order to ensure a new, more egalitarian model of **family allowance**, the Walloon Government initiated a reform in 2019, the main objectives of which are modernity - in the sense of taking account of contemporary family structures (blended families or single-parent families) - accessibility and transparency, which allow citizens better control over the exercise of their rights and greater predictability, and support for parenthood rather than births. The right to family allowance as a right of the child aims to contribute to the costs of the maintenance and upbringing of children. Moreover, the automation of the law supported by the reform is considered a tool for combating child poverty under the Walloon Plan.

Family allowance in Wallonia is now based on a basic principle: one child equals one child. In concrete terms, this means that every child born on or after 1 January 2020 is entitled to the same basic amount. This will be €155 per month from 0 to 17 years old and €165 per month from 18 to 24 years old. Supplements may be added to this basic amount to take into account the family situation or the situation of the child. These supplements are designed to protect the most vulnerable families. Bonuses have also been envisaged at the time of the birth or adoption of a child or at the start of the school year.

The Walloon Government has validated 196 **Social Cohesion Plans** (PCS in French) submitted by 205 local authorities (municipalities and CPAS) in Wallonia for 2020-2025. These are broken down into coordinated actions aimed at promoting effective access to fundamental rights (socio-professional integration, training, access to decent housing, access to health, treatment of addiction, mobility, rebuilding social, intergenerational and intercultural connections, etc.) and contributing to the construction of a society based on solidarity and co-responsibility for the well-being of all. The annual budget is €24.5 million.

Housing

The Regional Policy Declaration sets the medium-term objective of aiming for **10% public housing** in Wallonia and its living areas. On the basis of the latest statistical information available, it is estimated that 36,298 public housing units need to be created in order to achieve this objective.

To this end, the Government will draw on various levers, including the establishment of a drawing right for investments within a public housing investment fund, both for new housing and for renovations, guaranteeing budgetary predictability and administrative simplification for operators, and the use of proportionate urban planning charges for the creation of public housing and subsidised housing. The Government will adopt a rent allowance for households with precarious incomes that have been validly registered on the waiting list for social housing for a given period of time, based on specific criteria.

The Regional Policy Declaration 2019-2024 also aims to be ambitious for the Social Housing Agencies sector (AIS in French). In effect, 6,000 new homes must be taken under management by these agencies during the current legislature. Consequently, there is a need for a wide range of actions to be taken to achieve this objective. As of 18 December 2019, the Government had already laid the first stone in bolstering the sector by officially recognising the Walloon Union of AIS, a non-profit associations active since 2014 and grouping together the directors of the structure, as a representative federation of the sector. In order to optimise territorial coverage, the Region has called on the municipalities not currently served by an AIS to encourage them to either join a neighbouring AIS or to set up a new AIS when several adjoining municipalities do not have one. Other measures are being considered, whether fiscal measures to encourage private owners to put their property(ies) under management via an AIS or measures aimed at the sustainability and promotion of the sector.

In April 2019, the Walloon Government approved a **new mechanism at the first reading for renting with an option to buy in public housing**. The sales price of the property is determined at the time the tenancy agreement is concluded. The rent paid by the tenant consists of the usual rental fee in the public sector and automatic savings, the amount of which is agreed between the tenant and the public service housing agency. These savings will be available to the tenant at the time of sale, plus interest.

As mentioned above, the new **housing and energy bonus system** (Primes Habitation) came into effect on 1 June 2019. The amount of the energy and hygiene bonuses is linked to 5 income categories; the basic amounts are multiplied by 6 for low-income households. The amount of the insulation bonuses also increases on the basis of the energy savings achieved. This bonus scheme provides for a simplification of the procedures and feedback from an auditor within the scheme to ensure the effectiveness of the works carried out.

With regard to the reception of dependent persons, in May 2019 the Walloon Government approved a decree organising the **reform of assistance to the elderly** at the final reading. It has implemented the decree from February that will allow the creation of more than 11,000 new places in rest homes by 2030. The Government has also laid down new rules to ensure better financial accessibility, promote well-being and ensure permanent striving towards quality of life for senior citizens in institutions.

The Government has also decided to convert 2,266 **Rest home (MR in French) beds into Rest and Care Home (MRS in French) beds** throughout Wallonia. €22 million has been made available in the 2020 budget to implement this operation. This measure is intended to improve care for many residents without any increase in cost on their part.

In early 2020, the Government decided to enhance the "**Housing First**" scheme to support and rehouse people who have been without a roof over their heads for a short period of time, given that the eradication of homelessness is a priority for the Government. Following a call for applications, an

additional €350,000 has been earmarked to recruit a person specifically dedicated to this task in each social relay. With this additional amount, the annual budget for the scheme is now close to €1 million.

Furthermore, in February 2020, the Government adopted the 2020 programme for **shelters, community life and night shelters**. 26 new places and an additional budget of €503,000 will now be structurally awarded to this sector of social action. Shelters provide temporary accommodation for people in social difficulties. Night shelters, on the other hand, provide emergency collective accommodation for the night, particularly for people in need.

In May 2019, Parliament adopted the decree on the **reception of Travellers**, which provides, inter alia, for the creation of ten new reception sites. A call for projects was launched in 2019 to finance municipalities wishing to develop a reception site; 9 applications were validated, the projects must be submitted by 30 June 2020. The total budget is €5 million, with a maximum of €500,000 per project.

4. Supplementary reform measures: Industrial policy, circular economy and support for SMEs

The Walloon Government has continued the implementation of the 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 smart specialisation strategy.

4.1. Support for SMEs

In order to strengthen the effectiveness of its policy of support for the self-employed, cooperatives, VSEs and SMEs, and social entrepreneurs, the Government has planned to strengthen the steering role of the Walloon support and assistance structures played by SOWALFIN and to reform the Walloon assistance landscape for greater coherence, efficiency and evaluation. Work is under way to **redefine the priorities of regional SME policy**. This will include strengthening the growth and competitiveness of SMEs, developing entrepreneurial skills and fostering the dynamics of the circular economy and sustainable energy use by businesses.

In the area of entrepreneurship, the "**entrepreneurial generations**" programme, which raises awareness of entrepreneurship among young people, is being continued. The aim is to reach 100,000 young people per year by the end of the legislature. In 2019, 30,000 young people were provided with information in schools. From infant school onwards, for example, children are introduced to a range of skills such as taking initiative, having a sense of responsibility, team spirit and self-confidence. The tools used range from storytelling for infants, project management, visits by an entrepreneur, to setting up higher education students' own veritable business.

A plan to support **female entrepreneurship** was also adopted in May 2019. The programme focuses on 3 strands: training (with support from the ESF), managerial support during pregnancy/maternity leave (budget €450,000), and awareness-raising activities.

In 2019, SOWALFIN launched a **growth accelerator for SMEs**, in partnership with the Walloon Union of Enterprises. The main objective of this partnership is to foster the emergence of the future champions of the Walloon economy. This pilot project brings together 17 companies selected from the databases of the 'Invests wallons' and the SRIW (Wallonia regional investment company) according to a series of criteria such as turnover, employment, profitability or financial capacity. The project targets medium-sized SMEs that have growth potential, with managers who are looking for a challenge. For 18 months, 17 managers will follow different modules each month on a different theme (governance, human resources management, management of financial relations with banks, etc.).

In addition, in December 2019 the Government decided to extend the tax incentive through the '**Coup de Pouce**' loan (helping hand) until 31 December 2021. This scheme allows private individuals to lend money to Walloon companies and self-employed people to finance their activities. In return, they receive a tax benefit in the form of an annual tax credit amounting to 4% for the first four years and 2.5% for the subsequent four years, if this is the case. As of 30 June 2019, there were 574 loans registered for an amount of €10,744,234. The average loan is €18,718.

Still on the subject of financial tools, three new products aimed at supporting Wallonia's **international development** were launched by SOFINEX in January 2020:

- The direct granting of a guarantee to SMEs wishing to expand internationally by setting up a subsidiary. The maximum percentage of cover is 50% of the amount invested, up to a maximum of €250,000;
- The refinancing of a leasing or supplier credit granted by an SME to its foreign customers. The ceiling of the intervention is 75% of the amount of the contract with a maximum coverage of €500,000 per project;
- The direct granting of a guarantee to foreign SMEs in the context of an investment in Wallonia.

It should also be noted that in order to **respond to the difficulties created by the COVID-19 crisis for SMEs**, the Government has set up a taskforce to inform, assist and support Walloon companies. Requests for information from companies will be handled via a single number, 1890. Furthermore, SOWALFIN, SOGEPA and the SRIW will provide a solution to companies with cash flow difficulties, in the form of a bank guarantee or loan, in consultation with the banking sector. More specific support for certain companies may also be provided. Lastly, the SPW Economy will make the deadlines for firms subject to a commitment vis-à-vis the Walloon Region more flexible (target in terms of jobs, deadline for repayment of aid, etc.). In addition, the Government has decided to set up an extraordinary crisis fund of €350 million to support sectors that are suffering economic damage from the coronavirus.

4.2. Industrial policy

As indicated above, the Government has started work on renewing its **Smart specialisation strategy (S3)**, which should be completed by the end of 2020. This will constitute the strategic reference framework for regional industrial policy. It will include the enhancement and development of strategic sectors and priority value chains, aiming at international integration. In this respect, Wallonia has been part of the dynamic development of **strategic value chains** defined at European level. In particular, it is involved in the IPCEI Batteries project in which several Walloon companies are participating.

At the level of the **Competitiveness Clusters** Policy, implementation of this policy continues, in particular through regular calls for projects. As such, in March 2020, a budget of €20 million was allocated to various research and innovation projects and investments in research facilities, particularly in the fields of health, the environment and food. This policy was independently evaluated as part of the evaluation works of the Marshall Plan 4.0. The new Government plans to continue this policy of

competitiveness clusters by incorporating them into the social, ecological and economic transition. The main orientations outlined at this stage are:

- To specialise the action according to the strengths that the Competitiveness Clusters have each developed and the assets that they represent for Wallonia, and to encourage synergies with economic actors;
- To reinforce the accessibility of SMEs to competitiveness clusters and research centres;
- To ensure more effective internationalisation of the members of the Clusters and support participation in European calls for projects;
- To promote and extend the collaborations between Clusters in inter-sectoral fields or on the basis of social problems.
- The Competitiveness Clusters will coordinate their actions with the training actors in their application domains through their ability to identify training needs related to industrial innovation. The links between the Clusters and training structures (training centres and competence centres) will be structured and strengthened. The digital professions will receive particular attention.

The Government will draw up a contract of objectives and resources specific to each of the Competitiveness Clusters, in consultation with them, for the duration of the legislature. In line with the strategy of smart specialisation, this contract will set out the objectives (common and specific), performance indicators, the main tools, the evaluation processes, the financial resources, the modalities of collaboration with public bodies and regional administrations, the rules of governance, the arrangements for ensuring transparency of decisions, and the reporting obligations.

As detailed in section 2.3, several Walloon Poles or clusters are involved in **INNOSUP** (Horizon 2020) projects related to digital issues. Several clusters are also involved in inter-cluster collaboration projects at the European level, in particular via the S3 platform (WAGRALIM on nutrition and smart sensors, BIOWIN and MÉCATECH on Medtech) or the COSME programme (COSME cluster Go international projects, ESCP.S3 on Medtech, etc.).

The Clusters are also partners in the 'Made Different' programme to support the digitisation of companies, and in the '**Digital Innovation**' programme launched in 2019 by the INFOPOLE ICT cluster, which aims to strengthen the digital dimension in the calls for projects of the clusters. MECATECH and SOWALFIN have also launched an **Easy'Up4Process** call for the financing of 'proofs of concept' for Industry 4.0 (closing February 2020).

It should also be noted that the Walloon Government plans to **overhaul the various aid schemes for businesses** to ensure rational use of public funds: investment aid, top-tier aid to businesses, investment financing mechanisms (second-tier aid for tangible and intangible investments, including R&D). One objective will be to redirect resources towards transition issues.

Wallonia will adopt a decree on the organisation of orientation, awareness-raising and support for businesses in the **ecological, social and economic transition**. This decree will lay down a transparent framework for the functioning of the various operators and will set up a clear and precise mechanism to organise the regular evaluation of the performance of these operators.

4.3. Circular economy

The Regional Policy Declaration is extremely proactive regarding the development of the circular economy, since it aims to ensure that all economic activities in Wallonia fall within a circular economy approach. A series of measures are envisaged, including the promotion of low-carbon production

methods, a zero waste policy, short circuits, the end of planned obsolescence, the clean-up of industrial brownfield sites, the planned reduction in the use of plastics (the aim is to phase out Wallonia's use of plastics by 2030), the development of recycling and reuse channels.

Wallonia will encourage project managers and entrepreneurs who implement their activities within the framework of the energy transition and the circular economy. Wallonia also intends to integrate the circular economy into all public tools and services, in policies for aid, support, financing and business support, and to make it a development opportunity for the Walloon economy. It will promote the financing of circular economy projects and in particular R&D. Walloon zoning will be gradually transformed into eco-zoning. The Government will also give maximum support to circularity through all public contracts and procurement in Wallonia.

With this in mind, in January 2020 the Walloon Government validated the introduction of tools designed to develop a new **strategy for the circular economy**. To develop this strategy, three governance bodies will be set up: a Steering Committee, an Intra-Administration Platform and a Guidance Committee. The strategy will propose strategic and operational objectives and cross-cutting facilitation measures. In addition, a public consultation will also be held during the year. The aim is to adopt the Circular Economy Strategy by the end of the year at the latest.

Several concrete initiatives have also been launched. As such, in the context of the reform of 'chèques-entreprises' (business cheques), a new '**circular economy**' **cheque** has been created. It aims to provide support for the implementation of actions in businesses aimed at optimising the use of tangible and intangible resources with a view to a sustainable transition of activities towards a more circular economy. Two types of services are proposed, studies of the economic feasibility of the circular economy project and/or the evolution of activities towards more circularity and studies of the technical feasibility of the project.

In addition to the call for projects aimed at creating a **plastic recycling industry in Wallonia** (cf. section 2.3), Wallonia is preparing the launch of a **pilot project to support innovation projects on the circularity of plastics**. This is part of the pilot project on the industrial transition supported by the European Commission. A subsidy agreement was signed in October 2019 with the Commission. A budget of €300,000 has been allocated by the Commission to launch this project. It aims to test a new approach to support innovation projects implemented by SMEs or start-ups, based on a challenge-based approach. The action is under preparation and will be launched in 2020. 10 SMEs will be supported. The project is implemented in collaboration between the administration and the PEPIT platform, which includes 3 clusters/Poles and several research centres.

A '**Green deal**' for **circular procurement** was launched at the end of November 2019; 110 companies and public organisations have signed up. The signatories have undertaken to implement at least two circular pilot projects in procurement or support, within 3 years of the Green Deal. The participants in the Green Deal will together form a learning network involving producers and suppliers. This network of buyers and facilitators will meet approximately four times a year to inspire and support the participants.

Finally, 58 Walloon municipalities have undertaken to move towards sustainable and responsible procurement within their administration and on their territory, by signing up to a **charter**.

5. European Structural and Investment Funds

With 95% decided by the end of September 2019, the **2014-2020 programming** of the Structural and Investment Funds (ERDF and ESF) now focuses on project implementation. 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 brownfield sites, but also the development of training and major infrastructures, for example in connection with intermodality. More than 30% of the budgets have been spent. Recent initiatives include the launch of a call for COOPILOT projects to support the development of collaborative industrial demonstration projects, the inauguration of several spaces dedicated to Creative Hubs, research infrastructures and the deployment of 'smart cities' projects. These projects are part of the Regional Smart specialisation strategy (S3). 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 subsidy agreement with the Commission was signed in October 2019 to implement a pilot action in support of innovative SMEs in the area of plastics.

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.

The priorities developed as part of the ESF are fully 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 and the expenditure rate is 40%.

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 80% of the funds, and 61% have been spent. 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.

The regional authorities have started preparatory work for the **2021-2027 programming**, in particular on the basis of the guidelines provided by the European Commission in the context of the European semester: consultation of partners, compliance with the favourable conditions, including the launch of the process of renewing the S3, and identifying regional priorities.

6. Governance to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

On 27 June 2013, Wallonia adopted a **decree on the Walloon sustainable development strategy**. This decree provides for the adoption of such a strategy by the Walloon Government no later than twelve months after it is sworn in. As such, each Walloon sustainable development strategy, in particular its action plan, has a life span in tandem with the legislature and must be monitored every two years.

It should be noted that this decree relating to the Walloon sustainable development strategy was amended on 30 April 2019 to include the 'Manger Demain' (Eat Tomorrow) strategy (on the subject of sustainable food) as one of the thematic transitions necessary to achieve sustainable development, and to envisage the setting out of other thematic transitions to be included in the Walloon sustainable development strategy in the future. The decree is now called "Decree of 27 June 2013 on the Walloon sustainable development strategy and the transition issues arising therefrom".

By virtue of this decree, on 7 July 2016 Wallonia adopted the **second Walloon Sustainable Development Strategy** (SWDD in French), which is part of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and contains an action plan targeted at changing consumption and production patterns, particularly in the areas of food, energy and natural resources.

A second monitoring report on the progress of Wallonia towards the SDGs was adopted by the Government in March 2020⁹³, with recommendations.

⁹³ <http://developpementdurable.wallonie.be/bilan-des-progres>

Annex 4: Reform programme of the French Community

Introduction

The strategic guidelines of the Government of the French Community for the period 2019-2024 are set out in detail in the Community Policy Statement (CPS).

The priorities for this period continue to be the Pact for Excellence in Education which presents the following measures:

- Bolster the basic knowledge and ensure a higher level of knowledge for all pupils, in particular by increasing investment in pre-school education and by establishing and implementing a multidisciplinary and polytechnic “common core curriculum” for all pupils up to the age of 15;
- Improve governance (in particular through the governance plan of schools) and provide better guidance and support for education stakeholders;
- Turn the vocational path into a stream of excellence that makes the best of each and every pupil and enables them to join society and the world successfully while strengthening the management and simplifying the organization of that process;
- Improve the role of education as a source of social emancipation, focus on excellence for all, and promote diversity and inclusiveness in the entire education system while developing strategies to combat school failure, dropping out and repetition;
- Ensure that every child has a place in a quality school and hone school organization to make school more accessible, more open to its environment and better adapted to the conditions of the child’s wellbeing.

A policy of investment in school buildings and other facilities is also put in place to improve energy efficiency.

For other sectors, it is a matter in particular of:

- Strengthening guidance and assessment tools to reduce failure in higher education and increase the number of graduates;
- Investing in basic research.

These different priorities will moreover be supported through the programmes of the Structural Investment Funds for 2014-2020 which were approved by the European Commission in December 2014.

As set out in the regulatory framework for the Cohesion Policy, the Structural and Investment Funds for the period 2014-2020 will provide priority support for the policies charted in response to country-specific recommendations and will contribute to the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy.

1. Response to the country-specific recommendations

Recommendation 2: Remove disincentives to work and strengthen the effectiveness of active labour market policies, notably for the low-skilled, older workers and people with a migrant background. Improve the performance and inclusiveness of the education and training systems and address skills mismatches.

Several measures have been adopted since April 2019:

Improving performance

The aim of the Pact for Excellence in Education is to make the school system more efficient and more equitable through the implementation of a systemic reform devised jointly by all stakeholders in education, based on a multiyear budget and a specific monitoring and assessment system.

The aim of the **reform of the monitoring of schools and the school system** which entered into force in **September 2018** is to improve performance in terms of efficiency and equity. It is based on the following main features:

- A new compulsory school governance plan for all schools;
- A “school objectives contract” by and between each school and the regulatory authority setting out the specific objectives of the school that contribute to the attainment of the system’s objectives;
- An annual self-assessment of the school’s contract of objectives, and an assessment by the regulatory authority every three years;
- An adapted monitoring process in the event of refusal to contribute to the process or if the indicators show too great a discrepancy from the average.

By providing a new regulatory framework, the monitoring mechanism makes it possible to mobilize all stakeholders in education so as to attain the general objectives set by the Government while respecting the autonomy of the schools. The new monitoring system is geared to improving the results and performance of all schools and pupils as well as to tackling the root causes of inequity in schools in the French Community and the phenomenon of relegating disadvantaged groups between schools.

Since September 2019, 730 schools have been bound to the regulatory authority by a contract of objectives, and 820 schools are in the process of preparing their Governance plan in 2020.

The new School governance plan is accompanied by **measures that aim to make the school a learning organization:**

- Thus, the decree on the **organization of the work of teachers**, adopted on 13 March 2019, introduces a number of periods of **compulsory collaborate work** in each teacher’s timetable and defines all the missions of teachers (including missions in addition to classroom activities). In force since September 2013, this reform moreover increases the number of days of in-service training.
- The degree on **strengthening the pedagogical leadership of Directorates**, adopted on 13 March 2019, optimizes the process for selecting and recruiting principals and reinforces their initial training. In order to support the pedagogical leadership of Directorates, the third phase of

strengthening the administrative assistance granted to departments entered into force in September 2019.

The **reform of the common curriculum** which consists of reviewing the learning areas of pupils aged 3 to 15 is a key component of the Pact geared to improving the efficiency and equity of the system.

The decree on the strengthening of the common core curriculum, adopted on 2 May 2019, consists of an in-depth review of the curriculum to bring it in line with the society of the 21st century and to hone the basic skills of all pupils. In pursuit of greater equity in the system, the reform does away with early selection mechanisms and the relegation of the most socio-economically underprivileged pupils. It also provides for the implementation of **personalized support through additional means of remediation**. Two pilot experiments for primary and secondary education have been under way since January and September 2019 respectively.

A decree that provides for a harmonized and reinforced system to support language skills from a very early age has been enacted to **strengthen the learning of French** for newly arrived pupils and vulnerable French speaking pupils. Adopted in February 2019, this decree entered into force in September 2019.

With a view to strengthening the quality of **pre-primary education** as an important means for reducing inequalities, the third phase of the deployment of complementary management was rolled out in September 2019. The Pact is based on an integrated (quantitative and qualitative) approach to improving the quality of pre-primary education. The first reference framework for pre-primary education is currently being adopted by the Government and will be implemented in September 2020 in the three years of that level. It is intended to ensure that all children have the same basic skills framework. The reinforcement of free schooling in the first year of pre-primary education (prohibition to charge fees and a specific subsidy to provide pupils with school materials free of charge) entered into force in September 2019.

Improving inclusion in the education system

In an effort to make the school more inclusive and regarding the increase number of pupils enrolled in special needs education, a decree was adopted in 2019 to promote the opening of “inclusive sites”, i.e. special needs education classes located physically in ordinary schools.

The reform aimed at decompartmentalizing ordinary and special needs education and at reforming the integration mechanism is currently under preparation.

The fight against repetition and dropping out is also a major challenge when it comes to making the school inclusive. Under the “school governance plan” reform (see above), the French Community has set two objectives to improve the system so as to reduce the repetition and drop-out rate by 50% by the year 2030. In addition to measures taken to help pupils succeed and to fight against repetition (personalized support, learning the language of schooling), the Pact provides for adopting a comprehensive plan to fight against dropout (see below).

Addressing skill mismatches

With a view to **strengthening STEM and the digital transition in compulsory education**, the reform of the reinforced common (core) curriculum under preparation includes new learning areas: **“Math, Science, Technical, Technological and Digital Skills” for the entire curriculum** of pupils aged 3 to 15. The specific reference frameworks for these learning areas are being finalized and will be presented to the Government by July 2020 in order to come into force as of 2021 for the first two years of primary school and then for the rest.

The strengthening of digital skills is the subject of a specific approach through a Digital Strategy For Education adopted by the Government of the French Community on 10 October 2018 [http://enseignement.be/download.php?do_id=14908]. The Strategy is aimed at making up for the lag in digital education in the French Community by: (1) bolstering the digital skills of pupils; (2) stepping up the training and support for teachers; (3) defining a coherent approach with the Regions in terms of digital equipment for the classroom; (4) capitalizing on digital technology to exchange and share resources and tools; (5) developing digital administration at system and school level.

In implementing the Strategy, the French Community opened the “**e-classroom**” **educational resources platform** for all teachers in April 2019. The Ministry of the French Community also obtained support from the European Commission’s Structural Reform Support Programme (SRSP) to implement a specific programme for the digital transition in schools. Two European expert seminars on digital equipment were organized with all the stakeholders in education, the General Education Administration, as well as regional digital equipment departments and agencies.

Finally, a major **reform of the governance of the vocational education offer** provided by the Pact is being prepared and discussed with the trade unions and school boards to address the skills mismatch. It aims to enhance the value of this education and provide an offer to keep pace with structural socio-economic transformations. The guidelines currently under discussion with stakeholders in the education sector are intended to:

- review the mechanisms for regulating the vocational education offer so as to address the needs of (new) skills in the basins (regional economic development strategies, skill shortages, anticipation of new skills: new professions);
- integrate a mechanism for rationalizing the offer in order to reorganize a specific number of options that do not lead to employment.

2. Thematic objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy

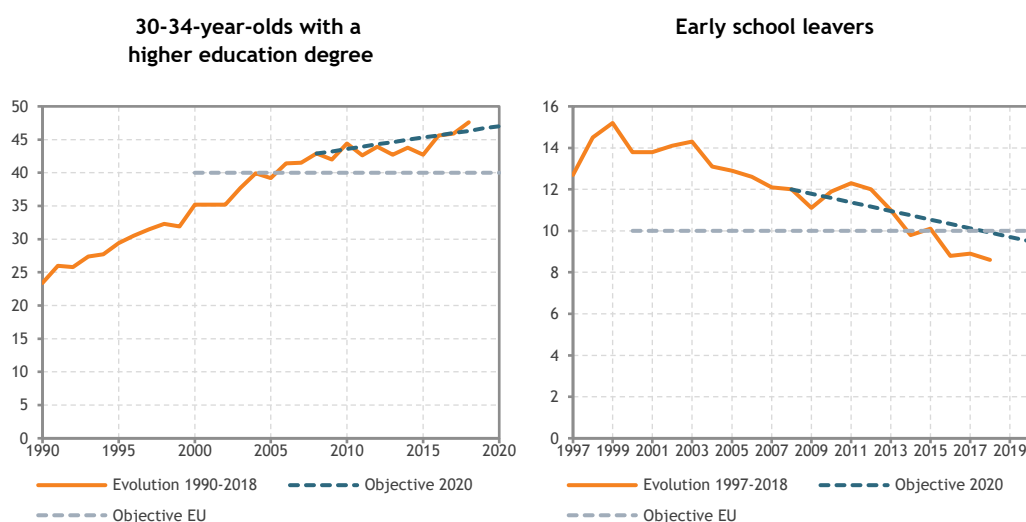
Table: Educational targets

In %	BE2017	BE2018	EU2018	Target BE2020	Required change 2018-2020
30-34-year-olds with a higher education degree	45.9	47.6	40.7	47.0	-
Early school leavers	8.9	8.6	10.6	9.5	-

Source: Eurostat

Graph 4: Education and training indicators

In %



Source: Eurostat

Editorial committee indications:

Only a selection of the main measures is examined and, in principle, only measures taken after April 2019. These include measures under preparation that can be reasonably expected to materialize before the end of April 2020. Important measures adopted previously may be recalled, but the focus will be on new aspects (implementation, impact).

2.1. Higher education

Belgium had undertaken a commitment to raise the percentage of 30-34 year olds with a higher education degree to 47% by the year 2020. This target is more ambitious than the rest at EU level as a whole (40%). With a percentage of 47.6% in 2018, Belgium ranks eighth in the EU.

Given the late formation of the government of the French Community and the assumption of her office by the new Minister for Higher Education, Adult Education, Centres for Justice, Youth, Sports and the Promotion of Brussels in September 2019, few consequential legislative measures were taken between April 2019 and February 2020.

Against this background, here are some elements that have an impact on higher education which were **adopted during the last or current legislation as well as some commitments put forward in the Policy Statement of the French Community.**

a) **Legislative commitments:**

- **Reform of Initial Teacher Training:**

Initially slated for the 2020-2021 academic year, **the implementation of the Decree defining initial teacher training was postponed for one year** (beginning of 2021-2022 academic year) through the programme decree of 18 December 2019 on various measures relating to School infrastructures, Budgetary Funds, Health, Higher Education, Research, Sport, University Hospital, Teaching Staff, Education and the Public education (Wallonie-Bruxelles Enseignement). The reason it was postponed was to examine the operational capacity by higher education institutions to implement the reform; to adapt its procedures as and where necessary, and to assess the cost of organizing the reform.

By way of reminder, the reform is part of a vast programme to improve the education system of the French Community under the Pact for Excellence in Education, the aim being to make compulsory education more effective and more equitable through appropriate teacher training (pre-primary, ordinary and special needs primary and secondary education on a full-time basis, secondary education for adults, secondary part-time education in arts and dual learning programmes). It aims in particular to strengthen the skills of teachers by opening up new areas of expertise such as guidance, media education or gender diversity and multiculturalism. It will also enable a better transition between the different levels of education.

Two types of support are planned to facilitate its implementation: the financing of initial teacher training advisors attached to higher education institutions that have been organizing such initial teacher training for years, and the organization of a support unit within ARES [Academy of Research and Higher Education] tasked with preparing and supporting the work carried out in the field by such advisers.

- **Refinancing of higher education**

As regards instruction in University Colleges, the Decree of the French Community of **21 February 2019** provides for an **increase in social subsidies** as of 2019 (annual allocations to institutions of higher education) calculated according to the number of students, by gradually aligning the amount of social subsidies for students in non-university higher education with the subsidies/university students. The social subsidies support in particular student councils, direct or indirect social aid to students, social services, guidance services, restaurants, student residences, etc. These subsidies also contribute towards an **inclusive higher education**. Similar provisions are made for the Arts Colleges.

Furthermore, the programme decree on various measures relating to the organization of the Budget and Accounting, Budgetary Funds, Higher Education and Research, Childhood, Compulsory Education and Adult Education, School Buildings, the financing of facilities intended to accommodate the Cité des métiers de Charleroi [Charleroi Trades Training Centre], the implementation of the initial teacher training reform of 12 December 2018, provided for granting "**stimulus credits**" **in 2018, 2019 and 2020 to promote access to first study cycle of higher education in geographical areas** with a deficit in terms of participation by first-generation university students.

Finally, the programme decree of 18 December 2019 provides for **an increase in the overall funding of University Colleges** (Article 38) amending the Decree of 09/09/1996 on the funding of University Colleges organized or subsidised by the French Community.

- **Inclusive higher education**

The Decree of the French Community of 3 May 2019 on various measures relating to Higher Education and Research provides for the allocation of an annual grant of **€200,000 to ARES to cover all or part of inclusive education projects in higher education institutions**. The projects are approved by the ARES Commission for Inclusive Higher Education.

- **Higher education committed to sustainable development**

Higher education in the French Community is concerned by the challenges of sustainable development. Universities integrate these dimensions into their teaching, impart rationality, critical thinking and analytical capacity to students and act at the level of their management to reduce their carbon footprint.

In addition, in **May 2019, the French Community granted an annual subsidy of €200,000 to ARES** (decree of 3 May 2019 on various measures relating to higher education and research) in order to organize a call for projects addressed to institutions of higher education geared to promoting sustainable development within them. These projects should bring together the whole community, i.e. students, professors and administrative staff for actions to promote sustainable development. The activities may entail awareness-raising, information and networking. They are to strengthen the capacity of students to get involved in sustainable development, directly on campus, as an extension of the institutions' mission to guide and support students in their role as citizens.

- **Adult Education**

In February 2020, the Government of the French Community was to approve funding to the tune of €1,446 million euros for **63 positive discrimination projects in favour of adult education institutions**. The target group for these projects consists mainly of job-seekers and people on integration income benefit, i.e. vulnerable individuals the majority of whom have little education or qualifications. The aim of the projects supported is to promote cultural, educational and socio-economic reintegration. Dropping out of school, misfortunes and personal difficulties are obstacles to integration in society and the world of work. These projects serve as real learning levers that are conducive to the integration of vulnerable groups through training courses, particularly in French, computer and communication technologies or in vocational paths.

The effects of reinforced supervision have a real impact on the perseverance of learners, which can be seen in a clear decrease in the number of school dropouts, but above all in a growing success rate.

b) Commitments drawn from the Policy Statement of the French Community

During this legislature, particular attention will be paid to the appeal of STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) courses in higher education, especially among women (making STEM more accessible and attractive). Against this background, the Minister for Higher Education has instructed ARES to prepare concrete proposals to make the sciences more concrete and more attractive to pupils and students in higher education.

Particular attention will also be paid to the **progressive** refinancing of higher education so as to offer better support to students, strengthen the administrative services of institutions of higher education, help institutions to renovate their buildings, guide and support them in their digital development and enable higher education to be more inclusive. Part of the additional funding will be allocated to strengthen supervision and support for success and R&D. Furthermore, the government intends to

support higher education that is accessible to all, in particular by taking measures to increase the number of students from less favoured socio-economic backgrounds. Finally, the government intends to facilitate **lifelong learning** by strengthening, in particular, the mechanisms for enhancing the value of work experience.

2.2. Basic research

The Government of the French Community is continuing its efforts to refinance research, including research subsidies granted directly to universities (in particular the special research funds) so as to help achieve the European objective of 3% of GDP, 1% of which is financed by the public authorities.

An initial budget for the French Community has been voted for 2020 and an adjustment is being prepared for June 2020.

Compared to the NRP for 2019 (addition of €6 million indexed to the €8 million budget in 2018), an additional €662,000 have been allocated to upgrade doctoral grants.

2.3. Compulsory education

Belgium had to reduce its school drop-out rate to 9.5% by 2020. This target too is more ambitious than the EU target of 10%. In 2017, the rate was 8.9% in Belgium, compared to 8.8% in 2016 and 10.1% in 2015.

Under the Pact for Excellence in Education, the French Community has adopted a systemic objective of reducing the repetition and drop-out rates by 50% by 2030 (Pilot Decree, September 2018). Each institution is required to set specific objectives and pursue actions to help achieve the system's objectives (see also the description of the Governance Plan reform). The French Community is concurrently developing a comprehensive plan to combat dropping out (a measure of the Pact for Excellence in Education) through effective data collection and information-gathering systems for monitoring specific objectives; to redefine the roles and missions of intervention mechanisms; and to define a strengthened framework for coordinating stakeholders.

In line with the approach advocated by the Commission and the EU Council, the Global Plan to combat dropping out of school will be based on three lines of action: prevention, intervention and compensation measures. The aim will be to distinguish between first, second and third line and to specify the timing of the interventions of each:

- Line 1: Under the contracts of objectives, schools will have to see to all measures, mechanisms and partnerships to combat dropping out of school; preventing students from dropping out will have to combine early identification of behaviour conducive to dropping out and rapid support for pupils; better prevention of dropping out in schools should be based on an internal school support system. The role of the Psycho-Medical-Social Centres as front-line actors will be specified when defining the missions of these centres.
- Line 2: The missions of the School Mediation Services and the Mobile Teams of the education administration will be specified as second-line operatives (once dropping out has been reported). The School Mediation and Mobile Teams services will be reorganized into a single service dedicated to supporting schools.

- Line 3: School Reintegration Services (Service d'accrochage scolaire) will play a major role in third-line services. The nature of the activities carried out in these services, and the way in which they work with schools and Psycho-Medico-Social Centres are to be reviewed in relation to Youth Welfare. The question of additional places available, the number of School Reintegration Services and their geographical distribution will be studied.

The Global Plan is currently being drawn up and should be in force by September 2021. It is intended to strengthen the support measures for reintegration in school currently being put in place with the support of the ESF (72 joint Education and Youth Support projects from 2015 to 2018).

Regular attendance at pre-primary education is also an important issue in the fight against absenteeism and dropping out. Attendance at the third year of pre-primary education is to be compulsory as of September 2020 and this level of education will be subject to the measures to combat absenteeism and dropping out that are in force in primary education.

Learning support measures such as personalized guidance and support also help prevent dropping out. Two "pilot" schemes (for primary and secondary education) were launched in 2019 to provide support for educational innovation and for the educational teams (budget: €9.5 million).

2.4. Social inclusion

The Government of the French Community will adopt its 1st anti-poverty plan in the first half of 2020 and will put in place a global and coordinated strategy to combat poverty in general and child poverty in particular and to reduce social inequalities in all policies carried out by the French Community. The Government clearly intends to take several actions to eliminate the risk of precariousness proliferating. These include supporting parents in performing their multiple roles, and strengthening prevention among children, young people and families by taking a close look at the causes of poverty and exclusion. Recent policy measures that have helped to reduce the cost of schooling for families include the pilot project for free schooling in kindergarten, canteens with differentiated supervision in underprivileged socio-economic environments and the decree requiring free schooling in pre-primary education.

This five-year plan, which will concern all the competences of the French Community, will be coordinated by the "*Council for the Fight against Poverty and for the Reduction of Inequalities*", a think-tank composed of university experts, the Children's Rights Officer, the representatives of the Public Social Welfare Centres of Wallonia and Brussels, the National Office for Children, and members of the administrative authorities.

3. Strategic investments

The French Community must develop a new energy efficiency programme, as the CPD 2019-2024 now has a reduction target of 55% by 2030 and 100% by 2050.

An energy monitoring software will be available in 2020. This tool will make it possible to identify drifts in consumption and generate savings of several hundred thousand euros at no great expense.

Two pilot projects concerning the installation of photovoltaic panels on the roofs of twelve upper secondary schools, 8 ADEPS (athletic) centres and 2 cultural facilities were carried out in 2019 via a third party investor. A second phase to equip some thirty roofs is under study. A third phase will cover all usable surfaces.

The Energy Unit (DGI), in cooperation with the Department for Heritage and Property Management of the Directorate General for Infrastructure and Facilities, has carried out 5 projects to replace lighting fixtures in administrative buildings of the French Community for a total of €250,000. The same type of work is currently under way in 7 other buildings, representing an investment of €365,000 euros. These 12 projects will result in estimated savings of €200,000 per year. Based on this experience, the Energy Unit is now working on the drafting of a new set of specifications that includes third-party financing mechanisms (leasing) for the replacement / upgrading of lighting. It is helped in this task by specialist consultants, who are responsible for training staff and conducting the necessary studies. The first service contract would cover the re-lamping of several school sites and could be published in September 2020.

In 2019, the Energy Unit hired consultants specializing in energy performance contracts, an operational tool and third-party financing. The aim is to entrust a company with the task of carrying out energy saving measures with a guarantee of results over several years. The pilot project concerns a multi-technical energy performance contract for 16 schools, i.e. 4% of the school buildings in the French Community. Work to bring the buildings up to standard may be included.

Another pilot project is under way in schools of the French Community: pupils, accompanied by their teachers, are helping to identify measures to reduce their school's energy consumption. Given the interest of young people in the environment, as evidenced from their involvement in the weekly climate events, they were bound to respond favourably when asked to help achieve climate targets. A workgroup was set up with representatives of the Energy Unit, Bruxelles-Environnement, Coren and Apere associations and "energy education" facilitators from the Walloon Region. A process of cooperation by and between the different participants emerged and a first pilot project on the lighting of a school was launched in January 2020.

As to Building Energy Performance certification, four additional people are being hired to bolster the team for this specific task.

Annex 5: Reform programme of the German-speaking Community

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1. Emploi – Marché du travail

1.1. Marché du Travail : Situation actuelle

En Communauté germanophone, une moyenne de 2.283 demandeurs d'emploi (= chômeurs complets) ont été enregistrés en 2019. Le taux de chômage en Communauté germanophone s'élevait à 6,2 % et a donc baissé de 0,8 points de pourcentage par rapport à l'année passée (7,0 %). Le nombre annuel moyen de chômeurs a diminué de 77 personnes, ce qui en fait la quatrième 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 2019 : 49%). Néanmoins le taux de chômage des femmes (6,6%) reste plus élevé que celui des hommes (5,9%).

La répartition des chômeurs par tranche d'âge montre que 38% 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 règlementaires (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 38% entre 2001 et 2019. En ce qui concerne les jeunes, leur part dans le chômage a diminué légèrement ces dernières années (pour atteindre 15%). Le taux de chômage des jeunes (8,6%) est plus élevé que le taux de chômage des 25-49 ans (5,3%) et des plus âgés (7,0%).

En ce qui concerne la durée au chômage, 35% 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 7% en 2019 par rapport à l'année précédente. Cependant, le nombre de personnes au chômage depuis plus de 5 ans n'a cessé d'augmenter, atteignant 455, le nombre le plus élevé jamais enregistré. La part des chômeurs de longue durée (> 1 ans) est de 50%. 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 43,3%.

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 2.283 citoyens de la Communauté germanophone étaient à la recherche d'un emploi en 2019. 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.

Concept de développement régionale de la Communauté germanophone (CDR) 2019 - 2024

http://www.ostbelgienlive.be/desktopdefault.aspx/tabid-258/624_read-57432/

Projet « Apprendre en entreprise »

Qualification et formation continue sont essentielles à une intégration durable sur le marché du travail. Le taux de chômage a constamment diminué ces dernières années, alors que la part de chômeurs peu qualifiés n'a pas évolué. Le projet ambitionne notamment de rapprocher à nouveau ces personnes du marché du travail. Les personnes de retour sur le marché du travail, celles qui viennent d'autres milieux professionnels et souhaitent se réorienter doivent bénéficier d'un accès simplifié à la formation et à la formation continue et se voir offrir de nouvelles perspectives d'emploi grâce à des formations sur mesure.

Projet « Vermittlung aus einer Hand »

Dans leur travail quotidien, le Service pour une vie autonome (DSL), les CPAS et l'Arbeitsamt (Service de l'emploi) sont confrontés à des enjeux similaires. Les thèmes importants abordés sont par exemple la participation à des stages et programmes de formation adéquats, l'amélioration des chances sur le marché du travail au terme de la formation ou l'intégration des personnes souffrant de troubles psychiques ou handicapées physiques. Il reste à clarifier les questions juridiques relatives à l'utilisation d'offres indépendantes d'une autorité particulière, en cas de transfert de compétences ou de compétences parallèles. L'absence de méthodes/standards communes pour l'évaluation des possibilités et des obstacles rencontrés par les demandeurs d'emploi (« screenings ») ne facilite pas la collaboration. L'échange de données de base concernant chaque demandeur d'emploi est lui aussi compliqué. Le demandeur d'emploi est-il déjà accompagné par une autre institution ? Des demandes sont-elles en cours ? Souvent, même les informations sur le curriculum vitae doivent être à nouveau recueillies.

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.

28 MAI 2018. - Décret relatif aux mesures AktiF et AktiF PLUS destinées à promouvoir l'emploi

A partir du 1 janvier 2019, les employeurs qui embauchent des personnes défavorisées sur le marché du travail de la Communauté germanophone sont soutenus financièrement par les subventions AktiF ou AktiF Plus.

Les employeurs commerciaux et non commerciaux et 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 octroyée 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.

Arrêté du Gouvernement du 13 décembre 2018 relatif aux formations professionnelles destinées aux demandeurs d'emploi

L'arrêté relatif aux formations professionnelles destinées aux demandeurs d'emploi réorganise le système de formations pour demandeur d'emploi. L'accompagnement individuel du demandeur d'emploi est 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 remplace 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 peu qualifiés.

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 de 25 ans qui est sous-qualifié (ni CESS, ni d'apprentissage) ou un demandeur d'emploi de moins de 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 d'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.

2.4. Mesures dans le cadre du Concept de Développement Régional (« REK »)

Dans le cadre du Concept de développement régional (*REK*), toute une série de projets sont prévus tels que : la promotion de l'éveil continu au langage, du multilinguisme, de l'éducation à la citoyenneté, de l'éducation aux médias, de l'intégration des personnes à besoins spécifiques et des personnes issues de l'immigration, de la formation technique et professionnelle, le soutien aux enseignants ainsi que la conception d'environnements d'apprentissage modernes.

À cela viennent s'ajouter une multitude de projets dans le cadre de programmes de travail en cours tels que la création d'un institut pour le développement scolaire en Communauté germanophone, l'évaluation des cours de langues dans la formation des adultes et de la promotion sociale, l'optimisation du plan d'activités pour l'école maternelle et des référentiels de compétences pour l'école primaire, l'intervention de crise dans les écoles de la Communauté germanophone, la réforme de l'indemnité de déplacement, la réforme de la législation sur le capital horaire dans le système des écoles spéciales, la réforme du transport scolaire, la réforme des jurys d'examen externe, les frais de scolarité, l'analyse de la structure de soutien actuelle dans l'éducation communautaire, la réforme des instruments de soutien à l'enseignement et à la formation professionnels, la réforme structurelle de la formation technique et professionnelle.

2.5 Décrochage scolaire

La CG ne dispose pas de données au sujet du décrochage scolaire, cependant bien concernant le retard scolaire en Communauté germanophone.

D'après les données des élèves de la 6^e année du secondaire (données de septembre 2018), 242 élèves sur 670 sont en retard scolaire, soit 36,12 %. Parmi ceux-ci, 153 élèves (22,85 %) ont un an de retard, 67 élèves (10 %) ont deux ans de retard et 22 (3,28 %) ont plus de deux ans de retard.

Comme le montrent les enquêtes PISA en Communauté germanophone, on observe une tendance à la baisse du nombre d'élèves en retard scolaire en Communauté germanophone : en 2003, 46 % des élèves étaient en retard scolaire, 42 % en 2006, 40,9 % en 2009, 38,5 % en 2012, 36,6 % en 2015 et 33 % en 2018.

En 2018, la politique d'éducation a créé un décret mettant la Communauté germanophone sur le chemin vers une école inclusive. Par le décret du 20 juin 2016 portant des mesures dans l'enseignement, un système de « compensation des désavantages » et de « protection de notes » à la demande motivée des parents a été mis en place pour compenser temporairement certains déficits. Le système de compensation des désavantages est en vigueur depuis le 1er septembre 2017. La protection des notes a suivi le 1er septembre 2018 et a connu très peu de demandes.

Grâce au décret du 26 juin 2017 relatif à la scolarisation d'élèves primo-arrivants, des systèmes ont été mis en place pour les élèves primo-arrivants qui présentent des lacunes temporaires dans l'apprentissage de la langue de l'enseignement. Toutes les écoles fondamentales et secondaires ont à présent pour mission au quotidien d'intégrer des élèves issus de l'immigration ou des élèves primo-arrivants. Le décret susmentionné vise à accroître les moyens humains et financiers pour la scolarisation et l'intégration des élèves primo-arrivants en renforçant l'apprentissage de la langue de l'enseignement. Afin de garantir un enseignement de qualité aux primo-arrivants, une formation universitaire a été mise en place à l'intention des enseignants travaillant dans les classes de primo-arrivants. Une réédition est prévue pour fin 2020.

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 assuré par le décret du 18 juin 2018 portant mesures en matière d'enseignement et de formation. Tout au long de l'année scolaire, les élèves peuvent être accueillis temporairement dans ce dispositif qui vise à offrir aux élèves une structure d'accueil adaptée à leurs besoins spécifiques.

Le projet « BIDA » (Berufliche Integration durch Ausbildungsbegleitung in der dualen Ausbildung) est un projet du FSE portant le titre suivant : « Intégration professionnelle par soutien aux apprentis dans la formation en alternance ». Dans le cadre de ce projet, les jeunes qui n'ont pas encore de compétences suffisantes pour commencer un apprentissage normal sont préparés à l'apprentissage pendant un an. Un des accents est mis sur les compétences personnelles et sociales des jeunes afin d'avoir des compétences nécessaires pour réussir l'apprentissage et éviter un renvoi du système en alternance, généralement liés à différents facteurs. C'est pourquoi le projet BIDA se concentre sur le suivi étroit des jeunes inscrits et à la détection précoce de tout risque d'abandon afin d'y remédier. En effet, ce « pré-apprentissage » prévoit 3 jours de formation en entreprise et 2 jours de formation au centre par semaine.

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 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 jeunesse⁹⁴ 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

⁹⁴ Organisations de jeunesse, Centre d'information jeunesse, Bureau jeunesse, Travail de jeunesse ouvert

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 1er 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 1er 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.

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. Allocations familiales

Le Parlement de la Communauté germanophone de Belgique a adopté en avril 2018 le décret relatif aux allocations 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^{ème} 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^{ème} 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 6ème 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 maisons de repos et de soins (MRS-MR), la revalidation long-term 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 initiatives 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 (coûts des services 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 Communauté 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 des politiques de santé)

3. structuration de l'offre et du suivi des personnes avec une maladie psychiatrique
4. concrétisation de la planification sanitaire

6. Digitalisation

La digitalisation en tant que processus global concerne désormais presque tous les domaines de vie et, de sorte, un bon nombre de compétences politiques, notamment communautaires. Le gouvernement de la Communauté germanophone, afin de saisir les chances liées à la digitalisation et de faire face aux défis y afférents, a choisi de consacrer à la matière un chapitre propre dans son concept de développement régional 2019-2024 (REK III).

Un poste central d'information et de coordination est mis en place en vue d'inventorier les initiatives réalisées ou prévues par les services publics en Communauté germanophone et d'en relever les principaux défis. Des projets-pilotes sont réalisés en matière d'e-health, de patrimoine culturel et de travail de jeunesse. En coopération avec la Région wallonne, un espace citoyen digital pluri-institutionnel est instauré. De même, des travaux préparatoires sont menés en matière d'« administration digitale proactive », visant à communiquer sur mesure avec le citoyen selon ses besoins probables.

7. Réforme profonde de l'administration

La Communauté germanophone met en œuvre une vaste réforme de l'administration pour assurer la viabilité des institutions, ouvrir la voie aux synergies et renforcer davantage l'efficacité. Par exemple, nous chercherons aussi le dialogue avec les « DGG » (services à gestion séparée) et les institutions paracomunautaires (OIP) de notre Communauté pour vérifier si le cadre juridique actuel est encore adapté à notre époque et à quel niveau il peut être optimisé. Le Gouvernement est disposé à mettre en place des réformes fondamentales dans son champ d'action direct, bien évidemment en dialogue avec les partenaires sociaux.

8. Energie et climat

Avec un plan énergétique et climatique "intégré" à plusieurs niveaux pour la Communauté germanophone, le gouvernement et les autorités locales ont posé ensemble la première pierre pour réduire à long terme les émissions de CO2 dans notre région grâce à une utilisation efficace des ressources.

Le plan pour l'énergie et le climat concerne les champs d'action très limités dont nous disposons dans le cadre de nos responsabilités pour contribuer concrètement à la protection du climat.

A ce stade, il convient de rappeler, d'une part, la petite taille de la Communauté germanophone et, d'autre part, la répartition des compétences en Belgique fédérale et en Europe.

Au 1er janvier 2020, la Communauté germanophone a repris les compétences de l'aménagement du territoire, de la politique du logement et (d'une partie) de l'énergie de la Région wallonne. Grâce à la reprise de ces nouvelles compétences, elle a désormais en main des clés importantes pour faire face à ces enjeux. La Communauté germanophone sera en mesure de définir ses propres orientations dans ces domaines. Elle va utiliser ces nouvelles compétences pour créer de la valeur ajoutée pour sa population.

9. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Intégration des SDG's dans le Concept de développement régional « Ostbelgien leben 2025 » « REK III »

En 2009, le gouvernement de la Communauté germanophone initia le « Concept de développement régional » à long terme et à l'horizon 2025. Sur base d'une minutieuse analyse SWOT et d'objectifs stratégiques conséquents, une vision « Ostbelgien leben 2025 » fut formulée en vue de sa mise en œuvre participative et outre-législatures.

Après la réalisation des objectifs opérationnels prévus dans les phases de mise en œuvre REK I (2009-2014) et REK II (2014-2019), le gouvernement publia le REK III (2019-2024) comme dernière phase clôturant le processus à long terme. Dans ce cadre, le gouvernement entreprit avec l'expertise du bureau LAG21 NRW (D) d'associer tous les 31 projets d'avenir formulés aux objectifs de développement durable des Nations Unies (SDGs).

10. Fonds structurels 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.

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 mln. national currency) Contribution of EU funds (source and amounts) (11)	Qualitative description of foreseen impacts and their timing (12)
CSR 1: Fed.	Taxation	Jobsdeal	Improvement of work incentives		Law of 23 March 2019	Implemented		Increase in labour supply and in the employment rate		Budgetary neutral including second round effects	

CSR 1: Fed.	Taxation	Corporate income tax reform	Competitiveness . Implementation of ATAD. Improving the efficiency of CIT	Base broadening and CUT in the CIT rate from 29,58 % to 25 %	Law of 25 December 2017	Implemented		Competitiveness. Implementation of ATAD		Budgetary neutral	
CSR 1: Wallonia	Sustainability	Budget Base 0	Improve the composition and efficiency of public spending	The budget will be elaborated on the basis of a systematic review and justification of all budget lines	Budgetary process Budget adopted through a decree	Agreement by the Government on the principle and the approach Start of a spending review approach to feed in the process Meeting with the EC in February 2020	The approach will be progressively implemented, starting with the budget 2021		New methodology to be tested	Objective to reach the budget equilibrium in 2024	
CSR 1: Wallonia	Sustainability	Green bonds	Sound management of public finances. Improve the composition of public spending	Emission of green bonds to finance or refinance a combination of concrete projects in favor of the climate and the energy transition of Wallonia.	Emission of Bonds	Funding round closed in May 2019		Contribution to green objectives		Objective of raising 1 billion euros reached	Increasing the funding towards green objectives Improvement of debt funding conditions for Wallonia

CSR 1 : Brussels	Sustainability	Reduction of the debt in general, decrease of the debt burden and interest rates on debt.	Reduction of the debt in general, decrease of the debt burden and interest rates on debt.	During the previous legislature, the Brussels-Capital Region was able to actually amortize its direct debt, decreasing the outstanding amount from 3 146 billion euros on 31 December 2012 to 2 688 billion euros on 31 December 2016, representing a decrease of 542 million euros.		As of 31 October 2019, the outstanding direct debt amounted to 4 020 029 205 euros. The outstanding direct debt amounted to 3 809 480 111 euros on 31 December 2019, compared to 3 364 487 472 euros on 31 December 2018, representing an increase of 444 792 639 euros. The outstanding direct debt as of 31 December 2019 fully incorporates the realization of the 2019 strategic investments, representing 460 million euros.			Reconciling the need for an ambitious growth-enhancing investment policy with prudent and responsible debt management remains a challenge for the coming years.		
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CSR 1: Brussels	Composition and efficiency	Spending review	<p>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 public growth-enhancing investments.</p>	<p>Brussels has requested technical assistance from DG REFORM for the design and implementation of two pilot projects in the field of mobility and social housing. It has requested additional assistance to conduct a gap analysis of its public financial management, in order to improve the budget formulation and execution, to introduce a strategic and multi-annual approach to managing increasingly scarce public resources and to increase the link between budget, policy and results.</p>			<p>The pilot projects and the PEFA review should be completed by spring 2021 at the latest.</p>				
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CSR 1: Flanders	Composition and efficiency	Improving the composition of public spending to create room for public investment	Improving the composition of public spending to create room for public investment	Through a combination of budgetary measures, the Flemish government aims to create room for additional investment of 1 650 million euros in the period 2019-2024.		The translation of the investment ambition of the Flemish government has been included in the <u>coalition agreement</u> .	The translation of the investment ambition has been implemented in the 2020 budget and will also be elaborated upon in the multi-annual budget this year.			Additional commitments of 1 650 million euros in the period 2019-2024. With a focus on mobility, school infrastructure and R&D investment. Commitments of additional investments of 100 million euros in 2020.	
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CSR 1: Flanders	Debt reduction	Optimisation the management of the financial assets of the Flemish government.	Keep debt under control	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 invest their surplus liquidity in the Flemish Community or a government entity with a certain rating.	Decree and decision of the Flemish government (18 May 2018) regarding the optimization of the management of financial assets Decree on the Flemish codex public finances (29 March 2019)	The decree has entered into force on 1 October 2018 and will be lifted from 1 January 2020 by the decree on the Flemish codex public finances.				According to the first forecasts this decree will lead to a reduction of the consolidated debt by approximately 1 250 million euros in 2019.	
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CSR 2: Flanders	Incentives to work	Tackling unemployment and inactivity traps	Introduction of job bonus (in-work-benefit) & making access to social services dependent on income rather than socio-economic position	<p>A job bonus of (net) 50 euros per month will be awarded to people with (gross) wages below 1 700 euros per month, tapering off as wages increase and disappearing altogether for wages of 2 500 euros and up.</p> <p>Access to (reduced tariffs for) social services like child care, public transport and schools, will be made income dependent.</p>		New coalition agreement on 2 October 2019.	Job bonus starts in 2021.	Boost transitions from non-work to work, especially for disadvantaged groups		Budget job bonus: 350 million euros	With these measure, Flanders broadens its activation efforts significantly, no longer giving priority to jobseekers on benefits, but actively reaching out to all people out of work. Complementary to this approach, Flanders actively aims to remove all barriers to employment.
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CSR 2: Flanders	Education	Language integration trajectories	<p>Pre-school education lays the foundation for a good command of Dutch and ensures that as many children as possible start their school career with equal opportunities.</p> <p>Dutch language skills are key to a strong educational performance, to full integration, but also to good communication in the classroom.</p>	<p>Organization of language integration trajectories for children who have limited Dutch language skills. A language screening will be organised for all 5 to 6-year-olds. Based on these results pupils who do not have sufficient Dutch language skills, must participate in a Dutch language integration programme.</p>	Coalition agreement and policy note education	This is a new measure that was introduced with the publication of the education policy note of the new Flemish Minister of Education, no previous steps to be reported.	The aim is to introduce language screening in the third (and last) pre-primary year from school year 2021-2022. This measure is currently being regulated. Language integration pathways for primary education would therefore also be implemented from school year 2021-2022 onwards.	This measure will specifically add to reducing the number of 15-year-olds that are under-skilled in reading, mathematics and science. By investing in pupils' knowledge of Dutch, children who are more fluent in other languages are given the tools to ensure they do not underperform.	Evidence-informed and well targeted tests need to be developed.		
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CSR 2: Brussels	Incentives to work	Redeployment of the Anti-Discrimination Desk	Promote the employment of people who are victims of discrimination in recruitment	<p>The Anti-Discrimination Desk is the first point of contact for jobseekers who are victims of discrimination in their job search. For cases that could be followed by legal action, Actiris refers the jobseekers in question to the independent equal-opportunity bodies.</p> <p>The desk consists of a front-line service but also a network of anti-discrimination focal points in the branches and beyond.</p>	<p>The redeployment is part of the Action Plan – of the Minister of Employment – to Promote Diversity and Combat Discrimination.</p> <p>This action plan is part of the implementation of the fourth point of the 10-point action plan to promote diversity and combat discrimination in employment. It stems from the objectives of the Strategy 2025, (and is extended under the Go4Brussels 2030 Strategy) which was approved by the government.</p>	Working internally to organise redeployment and recruitment of new staff. Update the brochure for job seekers.	Official launch of the anti-discrimination service on 4 December 2019	Improve the integration into the labour market of job seekers who are victims of discrimination in recruitment. Increasing the employment rate.	/	Actiris' regular budget, no co-financing.	
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CSR 2: Brussels	Education	'Pôles Formation Emploi' (Job Training Poles)	The aim of a Job Training Pole (PFE) is to improve the economic situation of a sector by meeting the skilled labour needs of companies, by training jobseekers, workers and students in the latest technologies in the sector and by anticipating the needs of the sector.	A PFE brings together all the public and private players concerned around a shared vision, common projects and concrete actions. The aim of a PFE is to improve the economic situation of a sector by meeting the needs of companies for skilled labour, by training job seekers, workers and students in the latest technologies in the sector and by anticipating the needs of the sector. It is composed of 3 pillars: Employment - Training Sector.	The Job-Training Poles project was developed within the framework of the Strategy 2025 and is extended under the Go4Brussels 2030 Strategy. The PFEs are linked to the conclusion of sectoral framework agreements.	Technicity for industry-related jobs.	In 2020, opening of the PFE Digital City: for information, communication and new technology (ICT) professions, supporting Technicity.brussels for industrial professions.	Develop a concerted, sector-based approach to the support, training and matching of job seekers. Increase the skills and qualifications of job seekers and workers according to the needs of the labour market. Increase the employment rate.	/		
CSR 2:	Active policies	Adapted support framework for job seekers	Improve the effectiveness of individualised support to job seekers	Tailor the individual support to the specific need of jobseekers, beyond broad categories of profiles	New decree will be adopted	New decree in preparation	Reform to be decided in 2020	Increase the employment rate			Improve the insertion rate on the labor market.

CSR 2: Wallonia	Inclusiveness of training policies	Recognition of the learning outcomes of CISP programmes	Improve low-skilled integration on the labor market	The aim is to develop systems to assess and recognise learning outcomes of CISP programmes by mid-2021.	Project supported by the SSRP	Sept-Dec 2019: taking stock of existing initiatives	Jan-Sept 2020: developing/strengthening systems to assess, recognise and certify the technical skills Oct 2020 - April 2021 : proposals for a quality assurance system	Increase the employment rate			Expected outcome (LT): to improve the quality and relevance of non-formal learning and increase access to upskilling and reskilling for the low skilled. The CISPs train around 16 000 persons/year
CSR 2: French Community	Performance of education and training	Reform of the initial teacher training	Strengthen the skills of teachers	Equip teachers to cope with the increasing complexity of the profession, to give them the ability to help each student succeed and to upgrade the profession to encourage more motivated people to become teachers	Decree reforming the initial teacher education, 6 February 2019, adopted by the Parliament of the French Community	Initially planned for the academic year 2020-2021, the implementation of the decree was postponed by one year (re-entry 2021-2022; via the programme decree of 18 December 2019)	The financing of ITE advisers, attached to higher education institutions organizing initial teacher education, The organization of a support unit within ARES to prepare and accompany the work carried out in the field by ITE advisers.	Improve performances and equity of the education system	Financial impact of the reform, rebalancing of funding between universities and higher education institutions organizing initial teacher training;	According to the former Cabinet of the Minister of Higher Education, the budgetary impact of the planned reform (in terms of the wage bill, via the introduction of an intermediate scale) by 2060 is 340 million euros. This is to be confirmed by the new Cabinet	

CSR 2: French Community	Performance and inclusiveness of education and training	Adopting and implementing the new school and system governance, and defining teachers working time and organization (part of the Pact for Excellence in Education)	<p>The new school governance aims at <u>steering schools and the system</u> 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 wellbeing at school.</p> <p>The new school governance also relies on measures to reevaluating and <u>modernizing teachers' work</u>.</p>	<p><u>School governance:</u> 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 so called School Contract); preparing and upskilling the administration services (DCO).</p> <p><u>Teachers:</u> Setting five key missions as part of the working time and organization of teachers, including collaborative work (2 h per week).</p>	<p>Decree of 13 September 2018, defining the priority missions of basic and secondary education, and setting up structures to carry them out in order to deploy a new steering framework.</p> <p>Decree of 13 March 2019, on the educational staff members' organisation of work.</p>	<p><u>School governance:</u> Since September 2019: 850 schools have adopted their plan and objectives; and 900 additional schools are in the process of drafting their action plan. Additional DCO (50) have been appointed by GVT and are in service.</p> <p><u>Teachers:</u> Effective implementation of teachers' collaborative work (2 h per week) since September 2019.</p>	<p><u>School governance:</u> The new school governance should be fully implemented by September 2021 (approximately 800 schools should submit their draft plan by September 2020; by September 2021, all schools should be involved in the new governance plan).</p> <p><u>Teachers:</u> Decree on in-service teacher appraisal to be negotiated in summer 2020 and adopted in autumn; Decree on PCD to be adopted in autumn 2020.</p>	<p><u>School governance:</u> By improving performances and reducing grade repetition, drop out, and school segregation, the new school governance set of measures contributes to Europe 2020 objectives (early school leaving and tertiary education attainment)</p> <p><u>Teachers:</u> By fostering better teaching, the measure will contribute to improving pupils' performances, reducing grade repetition and school drop out.</p>	No specific risk, since the reform is now well supported by the unions and most of the stakeholders.	Budget foreseen for the Pact for Excellence in Education	<u>School governance:</u> the reforms have been so far very well implemented by schools; high majority of schools has target learning outcomes, as well as well-being - school climate as main objectives; baseline evaluation report to be published in November 2020.
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CSR 3: Wallonia	Foster Investment, focus on RDI, green transition, sustainable transport, ...	Transition Plan	Foster transition through investment. 3 priorities: Ecological transition (building renovation, mobility, renewable energy), Knowledge (training, dual learning, developing skills, STEM,...), Economic and industrial transition (circular economy, future oriented sectors, new business models)	Integrated action and investment plan	Gouvernement decision – budget allocations		Adoption foreseen at the 1st semester 2020	Expected impact on employment rate, GHG emissions, renewables, education objectives, social inclusion,...	Request of fiscal flexibility in applying EU rules	Expected 4 billion euros of investment over 5 years	The targets sets by the government are the following: Reduction of GHG emissions of 55% in 2030 (compared to 1990) Increase in employment rate of 5% by 2025 Reduction of the poverty rate
CSR 3: Wallonia	Investment in mobility	Mobility and infrastructure plan 2019-2024	Increasing mobility and modal shift	Investment in mobility infrastructure Cycle path, collective transport, water transport, increasing quality and security of the existing road network	Investment plan – gouvernement decision – budget allocation	1st version Adopted in April 2019 May 2019: decisions about the gentle and active mobility	Update of the 2019 plan expected in 2020			2 billion euros of investment planned by 2025	Reducing of the share of road transport Doubling the bicycle use by 2024 Increasing road safety

CSR 3: Brussels	Investment in sustainable transport	Multi-year public transport investment plan.	Multi-year public transport investment plan.	Urban rail infrastructure is to be greatly improved through expansion of the network and renewal of existing infrastructure	The Government has approved a large investment scheme in the region's public transport network in 2015. An updated version was approved in 2019.	2 new tram line projects have been officially launched. 6 more new tramlines are in development. 1 existing tram line is being developed into a metro line and at the same time extended. A bus plan is increasing the capacity of the bus network by 30% in the next three years.				The initial budget for the 2015-2025 period was 5.2 billion euros. The update in 2019 increased the total budget of the scheme to over 6 billion euros, for the 2015-2028 period.	The program contributes to CO ₂ emission reductions.
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CSR 3: Brussels	Investment in low carbon and energy transition	Brussels long-term renovation strategy	<p>The long-term renovation strategy aims at upgrading buildings to be highly energy efficient by 2050.</p> <p>The objective for the residential sector is to achieve an average level of primary energy consumption of 100 kWh/m² per year. Housing will gradually be improved and made more efficient through 5 phases of renovation from 2030 onwards, for buildings to be certified EPB. The objective in the office sector is to move towards energy-neutral buildings.</p>	The current financial support mechanisms to promote energy-efficiency renovation will be adapted to these new goals.	One key element (residential): obligation to retrofit with 5 mandatory steps.	The long-term renovation strategy has been adopted in April 2019. It will be progressively implemented from 2020 onwards.	<p>The coordinator of the strategy will soon be recruited.</p> <p>There is currently a study running regarding financial tools for renovation. This study will be delivered in 2021.</p> <p>A Mapping of Financing Mechanisms for the Energy Transition is in progress within this framework. It takes over previously identified mechanisms and presents a series of new mechanisms.</p>	No estimates			The long-term renovation strategy aims at upgrading buildings to be highly energy efficient by 2050.
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CSR 3: Flanders	Investment in sustainable transport	Integrated Investment Programme (Geïntegreerd Investeringsprogramma – GIP) 2020	The Flemish transport administration will continue to improve the yearly GIP, a new approach to the investment challenges in the transport sector. The aim is to provide a yearly integrated (across different transport modes) and plan-based (PCDA cycle) investment programme in the field of mobility and public works. Within the GIP 2020, important investments in sustainable and collective transport are foreseen.	Commitments in the GIP 2020 foresee to invest over 1.854 billion euros, divided over the different transport modes (collective transport, regional airports, inland waterways, roads, bicycle infrastructure)		The GIP is updated annually. The internal process of updating the GIP starts in February and lasts a year. The GIP has been updated for 2020. We are currently in the process of checking the quality of the input, after which the GIP will be sent to the Flemish Minister for Mobility and Public Works and her cabinet for formal approval.	The GIP 2020 is expected to be formally approved by the Flemish Minister for Mobility and Public Works in April 2020. In the year 2020, there will be three moments of evaluation (probably end of June, end of September and end of December) to make sure we are still on track to execute the GIP 2020 as planned.			Investments in digital infrastructure , smart and connected traffic light systems and enhanced qualitative and sustainable data resources (Mobili-data programme): 29 million euros. Cycling infrastructure : investments expected amount to 176 million euros in 2020. Investments in waterborne transport projects. Collective transport: investments of 179 million euros.	
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CSR 3: Flanders	Tackle mobility challenges	Promotion of zero-emission vehicles and charging infrastructure	The main objective of this measure is to increase the proportion of zero-emission vehicles and to extend the charging and refuelling infrastructure for these vehicles	<p>This measure consists of the following elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The roll-out of the basic charging infrastructure; - The funding of Clean Power for Transport (CPT) projects with the main theme: charging infrastructure at companies; <p>In addition, Flanders is running a European-funded CEF project BENEFIG. Two calls have already been launched together with the Netherlands and the Brussels Capital Region.</p>		The roll-out of the basic charging infrastructure is proceeding as planned. As part of the CPT call, 30 projects are already running; 16 more have now been selected, representing an investment of 840 000 euros. Under BENEFIG, 33 projects are underway investing in infrastructure, mainly along the TEN-T network.					
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CSR 4: Flanders	Remove barriers to competition	Evaluation of the legislation on business establishments (the decree on integrated business establishment policy).	The policy priorities are described in the Policy Note Economy, Science Policy and Innovation 2019-2024 : Enabling local entrepreneurship to flourish in thriving centres and allowing traders to compete with e-commerce players thanks to digital tools.	Evaluation of the current policy	Decree on integrated retail establishment						
CSR 4: Flanders	Reduce the administrative burden	Website www.vlaanderenonderneemt.be	Reducing administrative burden for entrepreneurs by following the principle 'digital first' in all communications	Development of a portal site for entrepreneurs where they can apply for subsidies, permits, recognitions... and follow up on their applications.							

CSR 4: Brussels	Incentivise entrepreneurship	SME toolkit	Reduce any possible negative impact on SMEs caused by regulations	Implementation of a system (SME toolkit) that identifies, measures and minimizes, where appropriate, any potential negative impact on SMEs resulting from regulations.	The regional law on this system (Analysis of the impact of regional policies on SMEs) is expected to be presented to the regional parliament in the near future.	In-depth study carried out on the design of the most appropriate mechanism for the institutional and economic context in the Brussels-Capital Region, as well as the approval of the regional law on this system by the previous government.	Ongoing drafting of the regulations on the practical aspects of the system and practical implementation of the system. The SME toolkit is expected to be effective from June 2020.		Find the best-balanced mechanism to reach the objective of reducing any possible negative impact on SMEs caused by regulations.	The annual budget estimated for tools (30%) and management of the system (70%) amounts to 242 000 euros. No request for an EU contribution.	Positive impact on regulatory and administrative burdens for SMEs. First results expected in 2021.
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CSR 4: Brussels	Reduce the administrative burden	Reform of the Brussels Code on land use (referred to as CoBAT)	Reform of the Brussels Code on land use (referred to as CoBAT) to reduce the regulatory and administrative burdens	Far-reaching reform process in order to meet the need for greater transparency and administrative simplification.	Ordinance of 30 November 2017 Ordinance of 5 June 1997 on environmental permits and amending certain related legislation	Into effect on 1 September 2019. Reorganization of the urban department, which analysed the processes. Public information sessions in June 2019. Training sessions regional and local authorities, throughout the whole year of 2019.					Replace the former indicative deadlines with strict deadlines, i.e. mandatory deadlines. Improve the business environment and stimulate entrepreneurship.
CSR 4: Wallonia	Reduce the administrative	Dematerialisation of permits	Reduce the administrative burden for environment permits and single permit	Simplify and dematerialise the procedures for obtaining permits	New forms, new single website	New simplified version of forms available since September 2020	By mid-2020 : dematerialised permits will be available (pilot phase to start in February)				

CSR 4: Wallonia	Incentivise entrepreneurship	Simplification of the vouchers schemes	Simplification of the system by reducing the number of themes, harmonisation of support condition, new website, 2 new vouchers for circular economy and energy	Implementing act, new website	In force since April 2019						
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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)	
	National Europe 2020 targets		SDG
Employment (see also CSR 2)	<p>Flanders An engagement between the government of Flanders and the social partners was reached on 21 February 2020. That objective of the Strategy 120 000 is intended by means of a three-pronged approach:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. keeping people at work; 2. strengthening the role of the Flemish public employment service (VDAB). Access to PES services will no longer be determined by one's legal position (benefit recipient, social assistance etc.). All jobseekers will be screened within 2 months from their registration with the PES, to determine their needs; 3. attracting people who are currently not participating in the labor market. Within the latter group, priority is given to four categories: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - people in long term illness; - people in social welfare schemes; - NEET-youngsters who are not in employment, education or training; - people who have temporarily left the labor market. to take care tasks. 	<p>Flemish Europe 2020 target: 76 %. Flemish employment rate 2019: 75.5 %.</p> <p>The government of Flanders will do everything in its power to raise the employment rate to 80 % and in this way ensure that Flanders rises to the top in Europe. Over the next few years, Flanders want to help an additional 120 000 Flemish people find a job.</p>	1 5 8 10 16 17
	<p>Wallonia The government is working on the implementation of a new 'springboard job incentive for the long-term unemployed (more than 24 months of inactivity) aimed at developing skills and acquiring professional experience, through the exercise of professional activities subsidized by public powers.</p> <p>The government will also launch a pilot experience of zero long-term unemployed territories.</p>	Reducing long term unemployment	1 8 10
	<p>Brussels Cf. annex 6 on CSR 2</p>	The measures presented in response to CSR 2 are aimed at increasing labour market participation, i.a. with particular attention to the most remote/fragile groups. Ultimately, these measures aim to increase the employment rate.	8

		While it is possible to calculate exit rates to employment of beneficiaries at the end of the measure, it is not possible to estimate a net impact on the employment rate.	
R&D and innovation	<p>Wallonia</p> <p>The renewal process of the regional smart specialization strategy (S3) is ongoing, with the objective to finalise by the end of 2020. New innovation priorities will be selected. The Walloon government plans, while increasing the public resources invested in support for innovation, to reform aid by emphasizing simplification and its impact on the regional economy. A systematic evaluation of the policy tools will be carried out and the consistency between the tools will be reinforced.</p>	Improving the efficiency of RDI policies, while increasing the means devoted to RDI.	9
	<p>Flanders</p> <p>The new coalition agreement foresees a further 250 million euro increase in the annual R&I-budget by 2024 and 195 million euros in one-off investments in research infrastructures in the period 2019-2024.</p>	<p>Flemish Europe 2020-target: 3 %.</p> <p>Flemish R&D-intensity (2017): 2.89 % .</p> <p>In 2017, the R&D-intensity in Flanders reached 2,89 %. In 2019, additional one-off investments of 120 million euros were made. More importantly, there was an increase in the annual R&I-budget of 280 million euros. Hence, the budget (across all policy domains) for science and innovation policy of the Flemish government reaches 2.916 billion euros, of which 1.94 billion euros for R&D in the strict definition.</p>	8 9 16 17

	<p>Brussels To reinforce R&D expenditure in the Brussels-Capital Region, Innoviris has implemented several measures that were included in its regional innovation plan (PRI, 2016-2020). These measures do not only aim at strengthening public funding for R&D but also at strengthening the RDI ecosystem, improving the innovation cycle, and, more generally, fostering a culture of RDI. In doing so, they create a climate favourable to R&D and R&D expenditure.</p> <p>In 2019, the adoption of new implementing regulations enabled Innoviris to launch its reformed system of innovation vouchers (formerly known as Boost). The new system makes it easier for research centres to participate in the programme. This means that an SME will have access to a much larger number of research centres when it wishes to validate an idea or request an expert assessment.</p> <p>To further strengthen the innovation chain – and to help increase R&D expenditures – Innoviris has prepared two new programmes: a corporate spin-off programme and a programme focused on the secondment of researchers to SMEs. Both programmes are linked to the PRI and will contribute to stimulating R&D expenditures. The former programme has already been launched (2019), whereas the latter is ready to be launched.</p> <p>Within existing programmes, several new thematic calls have been launched that aim at tackling a variety of societal challenges: ‘governance of the future’ and ‘tourism and liveability’, ‘from therapeutic medicine to predictive medicine’, ‘green chemistry’, ‘smart mobility challenge’. The Brussels Region is also active in the Urban Europe JPI, which aims at tackling urban challenges in a sustainable manner. Finally, the programme on CoCreation is also dedicated to the development of a sustainable future for Brussels and gives a financial support to the experimentation of innovative solutions to make the city more resilient in the face of today’s societal challenges.</p> <p>Regarding the investments made in R&D, the most recent data points at a positive evolution. Whereas the R&D intensity was 1.81% in 2015, preliminary CFS-STAT data on the website of Belspo indicates that the intensity has risen to 2.16% in 2017 (i.e. 1 681,489 million euros divided by a GDP of 77 694,47 million euros).</p>	<p>We estimate that the reform of the innovation vouchers system will make it easier for companies to quickly test/validate an initial idea. As a result, companies will be able to swiftly proceed to next steps and go through the innovation cycle more quickly. Logically, this should stimulate R&D and increase private R&D expenditures. The estimated impact is, however, difficult to quantify.</p> <p>The corporate spin-off and secondment of researchers programmes are expected to fill gaps in the innovation chain and, as such, strengthen R&D expenditures. It is difficult to quantify the estimated impact, though.</p> <p>In general, it is difficult to estimate the exact impact of these measures. An important reason is that these programmes do not function in isolation from other funding and support programmes and initiatives. Research does, however, go some way in suggesting that regional subsidies for R&D spur private R&D investments (e.g. M. Dumont in Research Policy 2017). The magnitude of the effects depends on a host of contextual factors.</p>	8 9 11 12 13
GHG emission reduction	<p>Federal The federal government will continue to use the so-called Green OLOs instrument (put in place in 2018) to finance energy</p>	<p>The impact of the measure in 2018 is provided in the following report: https://www.climat.be/files/1715/7605/2353/Green_OLO_Impact_Report_2018.pdf</p>	7 9 11 12 13 14 15

	efficiency, public transport and renewable energy, the circular economy and biodiversity.		
	<p>Wallonia</p> <p>The definitive Walloon contribution to the national climate and energy plan of Belgium was approved by the Walloon government on November 28, 2019. The main measures that are planned are: renovation and insulation of buildings (label A on average for the entire housing stock and neutrality of tertiary buildings by 2050), strengthening of share of renewable energies (23.5% in 2030), rationalization of mobility needs, modal shift and greening of the vehicle fleet, research and innovation or even new branch agreements.</p>	Walloon reduction target of -37% compared to 2005 for the ESR sectors (Effort Sharing Regulation EC/842/2018)	11 12 13
	<p>Flanders</p> <p>On 9 December 2019, the Flemish government approved the Flemish energy and climate plan 2021-2030 (VEKP). With this plan, Flanders engages itself to significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the non-ETS sectors by 2030. The Flemish Climate Fund was used to finance measures in the non-ETS sectors.</p>	<p>Flemish Europe 2020-target: Reduction of GHG emissions by 15.7 % in 2020 (compared to 2005). Non-ETS GHG emissions: 43.8 Mton CO₂-eq (2018)</p> <p>Reduction target 2030: -35 % compared to 2005</p>	7 13
	<p>Brussels</p> <p>Brussels has adopted a new climate and energy 2030 plan (NECP) in October 2019.</p> <p>The construction sector accounts for 60% of the region's direct CO₂ emissions. Considerable progress has already been made in new construction, putting our region at the forefront in this sector. The challenge now is to tackle the issue of renovating existing buildings and of implementing a strategy to reduce their environmental impact. The aim of such a strategy is to upgrade buildings to be highly energy efficient by 2050. The objective for the residential sector is to achieve an average level of primary energy consumption of 100 kWh/m² per year. Housing will gradually be improved and be made more efficient through 5 phases of renovation from 2030 onwards, for buildings to be certified EPB. The objective in the office sector is to move towards energy-neutral buildings.</p> <p>Decarbonization of heating and domestic hot water solutions is one of the major challenges. The next decade will see an end to coal-fired (2021) and oil-fired (2025) heating installations. The Brussels plan also includes determining the future of natural gas installations after 2030.</p> <p>In order to reduce the region's overall carbon footprint, the government has decided to integrate a framework to reduce indirect emissions into regional climate policy. This will ensure coherence in the fight against climate change, as well as showing</p>	<p>By combining the effects of these various actions, the region hopes to make the following changes by 2030: a reduction of more than 40 % in direct greenhouse gas emissions compared to 2005 and get on track to achieving carbon neutrality by 2050.</p> <p>Fully committed to a long-term vision, the Brussels Region is also committed to pursuing the following objectives by 2050:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reducing its indirect greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and achieve the same level of ambition as for direct emissions by 2050; - Moving towards the EU objective of carbon neutrality by 2050. This concerns both direct and indirect emissions from our Region; - Launching a public debate starting in 2020, bringing together Brussels citizens, economic, social and institutional actors, transition initiatives and local authorities around a low-carbon vision for Brussels. 	7 11 12 13

	<p>solidarity with the other regions and territories on which we depend.</p> <p>If the region is to achieve its climate objectives, it must reduce emissions from the main emitting sectors, especially in transport. Road transport is the second-largest emitting sector, responsible for more than 26 % of regional greenhouse gas emissions. The regional climate target implies the progressive decarbonization of the transport sector through the following two types of measures: reducing the requirements for transport facilities that emit greenhouse gases and are energy-intensive. Above all, this objective is based on the adoption and implementation of the regional transport plan Good Move (Towards a more energy-efficient city).</p> <p>The region intends to set clear objectives for these two major economic and metropolitan challenges. It aims to reduce the use of private cars to a quarter of journeys in 2030 and to halve the number of 'shuttle' (and solo) trips made by private cars by 2030 through cooperation with other entities. Across four action areas, the Good Move plan will contribute to a 21 % reduction in vehicle kilometers in the Brussels Region by 2030 compared to 2018.</p>		
Renewable energy	<p>Flanders</p> <p>Flanders is opting for increased use of the potential for green heat for the different heat technologies. Therefore, additional financing is planned for the project calls on green heat, residual heat and sustainable heating networks (10.5 million euros per year). In addition, the minimum share of renewable energy for buildings is increased. The wind potential is maximized for port and large industrial areas and for well-located project zones. Premiums for solar boilers (about 4 million euros per year), for heat pumps and heat pump boilers (about 3 and 1.8 million euros per year, respectively) are foreseen. A Wind Plan 2025, a Solar Plan 2025 and a Heat Plan 2025, all with a view to 2030, will be elaborated in order to increase the various forms of renewable energy and to further concretize measures.</p>	<p>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 of renewable energy in 2020.</p> <p>Share of renewable energy in gross final energy consumption: 6,9 % (2018).</p>	7 8
	<p>Wallonia</p> <p>The decree promoting the development of renewable energy communities was adopted in May 2019 by Parliament. Thus, while mobilizing the public network, several entities (natural or legal persons), within a perimeter, will be able to agree to pool and synchronize their electricity production and consumption.</p>	<p>The region has set a renewable energy target in gross final consumption of around 23.5% in 2030 (all uses combined: electricity, heat, transport), and details this objective sector by sector.</p>	7 11 12 13

	<p>Brussels In the national energy and climate plan, emphasis is placed on strengthening support for renewable energies in the urban context. By continuing and expanding the efforts undertaken to stimulate solar photovoltaic, thermal and heat pump energy, the government hopes that production of electricity in the E-SER and C&F-SER heat sectors will attain 470 GWh by 2030.</p> <p>The effort made by Brussels is significant, given that the potential for such production in urban areas is limited. Furthermore, the development of an investment strategy outside the region is also on the agenda. The region thus plans to invest in projects outside its territory in order to achieve 700 GWh of additional renewable production by the end of the decade to 2030.</p>	By combining the effects of these various actions, the region hopes to make the following change by 2030: 1 170 GWh of energy produced from renewable sources.	7 11 13
Energy efficiency	<p>Brussels Brussels has adopted a new climate and energy 2030 plan (NECP) in October 2019. See above sections.</p>	By combining the effects of these various actions, the region hopes to make the following change by 2030: a 28.5 % reduction in final energy consumption (compared to 2005).	7 11 13
	<p>Wallonia The reformed housing (energy and housing) premiums came into force on June 1, 2019. The reform aims to simplify procedures for more accessible premiums. Formerly excluded from the scheme, income of more than 97 700 euros (indexed amounts) will now be able to request premiums with amounts adapted to their category. Landlords can also use the system, provided that they comply with the indicative rental grid.</p>	Accelerate renovation of private buildings.	7 11 12 13
	<p>Flanders Under Article 7 of the Energy Efficiency Directive, Flanders must achieve a cumulative saving of 47.75 TWh by 2020. Three measures have been taken in order to achieve this objective: energy policy agreements (EPA) with industry, insulation premiums and the kilometre charge for lorries.</p>	<p>To contribute to the national target (508 TWh 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> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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 47.75 TWh between 2014 and 2020. <p>Prognosis for the period 2014-2020: on the basis of currently validated figures up to 2017 and projections for the period 2018-2020, it is currently possible to assume that 96 % of the target will be met. The limited gap is due to the decrease in the number of energy premiums granted for roof insulation and glazing. The EPA companies perform slightly above the estimates made when the Flemish energy efficiency action Plan was drawn up. In order to close this gap, additional measures will be notified to the European Commission in the spring of 2020. These are premiums for solar boilers and heat pumps, the demolition and reconstruction premium and the real estate tax rebate for energy-efficient new buildings.</p>	7

Early school leaving	<p>French Community New school governance: Decree of 13 September 2018, defining the priority missions of basic and secondary education, and setting up structures to carry them out in order to deploy a new steering framework Implementation in 2/3 of schools.</p>	Systemic objective set by the pact: Reduction by 50 % of the drop-out rate by 2030 for pupils in upper secondary school, i.e. from 5.4 % in 2016 to 2.7 % in 2030	4
	<p>French Community Teachers: Decree of 13 March 2019, on the educational staff members' organisation of work. Implementation for all teachers since September 2019.</p>	Systemic objective set by the pact: reduction by 50 % of the drop-out rate by 2030 for pupils in upper secondary school, i.e. from 5.4 % in 2016 to 2.7 % in 2030.	4
	<p>Brussels Investing in the quality of school establishments with an image problem through the school contract (Contrat école). The aim of the school contract is threefold: - to improve the urban integration of school establishments; - to increase the supply of community facilities to the inhabitants of the district by opening schools outside school hours: access to sports facilities, refectory, opening of school yards, etc.; - to encourage the opening of schools to the neighbourhood through socio-economic actions and operations for the requalification of public space.</p> <p>The Brussels Region spends 5 million euros per year to the SchoolContracts policy. - fight against school drop-outs by financially supporting schools, non-profit associations and local authorities (municipalities) in activities to combat school drop-outs.</p> <p>The Brussels Region allocates a multiannual budget of 12 750 000 euros to combat early school leaving via 3 subsidy programmes: the 'Dispositif d'accrochage scolaire' (DAS), the 'Dispositif de soutien aux activités d'accompagnement à la scolarité et à la citoyenneté des enfants et des jeunes (DASC), and the 'Axe décrochage scolaire des plans locaux de prévention et de proximité' (PLPP).</p> <p>Identifying the need for the creation of places by monitoring school supply and demand through the School Service (Service école) and issuing recommendations on the quality of school facilities.</p>	<p>The school contract programme is divided into two phases over a period of 5 years: 1 year for diagnosis and 4 years for the implementation of actions and investments. Currently, the region is supporting 4 school contracts for the period 2017-2021 and 6 school contracts for the period 2020-2025. A total of 13 schools in vulnerable areas benefit from the policy.</p> <p>With regard to the fight against school drop-outs: currently, more than 575 projects encouraging students to continue attending school are financed by the region.</p> <p>The monitoring of school supply and demand takes into account the school population, existing schools and projects for the creation of places in order to determine the priority areas for intervention to offer all pupils a quality place in education.</p>	4
	<p>Flanders Dual learning means that young people from the age of 15 combine learning in the workplace with learning at school, achieving a professional or educational qualification, and preparing them for the labour market. It is a fully-fledged learning path alongside full-time secondary education. During school year 2019-2020, dual learning is being rolled out fully. As of 1 September 2019, a total of 186 schools will offer 79 different</p>	Flemish Europe 2020 target: 5.2 %. Early school leaving (2019): 6.2 %.	4 8 10 16

	<p>courses of study. Additionally, the Flemish Parliament approved the decree that makes dual learning possible within the special needs secondary education (BuSO) on 21 November 2018. The dual offer is also further expanded in secondary education to more courses of study, especially to those with a double end (access to tertiary education and labour market), a labour market end, or an end aimed specifically at accessing tertiary education. Side entrants (e.g. employees or jobseekers) can make use of dual learning pathways to work while getting the maximum out of their possibilities in higher education. Finally, the modalities, possibilities, and preconditions of dual learning in adult education are explored through 14 pilot projects.</p>		
Tertiary education	<p>Flanders Both access to and quality of higher education remain priorities for the Flemish government. Various measures ensure a better link between compulsory education and tertiary education (e.g. the development of new attainment levels in the context of the modernisation of secondary education). Study efficiency in higher education is enhanced by a good orientation and a rapid reorientation in order to avoid disappointments and increase the chances of success for students. The orientation is reinforced by taking into account the results of their secondary education, the advice of the class council, the results of the Columbus exploration tool, and the results of the compulsory but non-binding admission tests. Students are more quickly reoriented if they fail after an initial evaluation period. The approach of the non-binding admission tests for higher education as a whole is generalised. Flanders further democratises access to higher education.</p>	<p>Flemish Europe 2020 target: 47.8 %. Tertiary education (2019): 48.5 %. Flanders has achieved its objective</p>	4 8 16
Poverty	<p>Flanders The Flemish poverty reduction action plan (VAPA) 2020-2024 is currently being written and in October 2020 the plan will be presented. The action plan runs over a five-year period and is established with the participation of the target groups in partnership with the Anti-Poverty Network, and defines the planning of short and long-term policy measures, as well as the modalities for evaluating policies. The guidelines for the Flemish poverty reduction action plan are prescribed by the coalition agreement and the policy memorandum from the Minister of Welfare, Public Health, Family and Poverty Reduction. The focus in this regard is once again on preventing and combating poverty among families with young children. The documents also state that social inequality and poverty are not situated in one domain of life. To break the vicious circle and fight poverty, the Flemish government takes measures in each policy area, each of which has an impact on poverty itself. Flanders pursues a structural, participatory policy of 'poverty reduction in all policies' that focuses on making people self-reliant and tackling the structural</p>	<p>Flemish Europe 2020 poverty or social exclusion target: 10.5 %. Flemish score (2018): 12.9 %</p> <p>Composite indicator:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Poverty risk: 10.4% of the Flemish live in a family with an income below the poverty risk threshold. The proportion of people below the poverty threshold has remained fairly stable in Flanders in recent years and has fluctuated since 2004 between 10 % and 11 % of the population. The fluctuations over the years are not statistically significant. - 6,8% of the Flemish people aged <60 years lived in a household with very low work intensity. This represents about 300 000 persons. It concerns households where adult people are not working or only to a very limited extent. The 2018 figure is the lowest since 2004. Between 2014 and 2018 the share of Flemish people in a household with very low work intensity decreased from 10 % to 6.8 %, which is statistically significant. - 2 % of Flemish people lived in a household with severe material deprivation. This is about 130 000 persons. It concerns households who lack basic items or who cannot do certain things because of insufficient financial means. 	1 16

	causes of poverty. Each minister formulates targeted, structural measures that have an impact on poverty for his domain. These measures are currently in full development.		
	<p>Wallonia</p> <p>A new transversal plan to fight poverty will be adopted, the objective of which is a sustainable exit from poverty. In particular, the latter must take care to assess the impact of policies to track down the root causes of poverty and take measures to support disadvantaged people, including single parents families. An evaluation of the previous plan was carried out in 2019.</p>	Reducing the poverty rate is one of the main goals of the government	1 10
	<p>Brussels</p> <p>The budget for the fight against homelessness will be increased with almost 15 million euros in 2020. Furthermore, the overall homelessness policy is undergoing a transition where the focus is shifted from emergency shelter to reintegration and structural solutions. Housing First projects, whose capacity will be doubled in 2020, play an important role in this transition.</p> <p>A new integrated wellbeing and health plan (Plan social-santé) will be created. The plan aims at implementing a coherent social and health policy among all relevant regional authorities in Brussels and eliminating existing social health inequalities.</p> <p>With the sixth state reform, Brussels became competent for child allowances. In 2020, its new system, including an important budget increase, has entered into force. The system aims at reducing on average the poverty intensity of families with children in a comprehensive manner.</p>	Precise impact estimations are not available.	1
Other relevant measures			
Digitisation	<p>Flanders</p> <p>The government of Flanders launched the Flanders 'radically digital' investment programme in 2015-2017 and will launch a new phase of this investment programme in 2021-2023 (with an investment of 5 million euros in 2021, 10 million euros in 2022 and 15 million euros in 2023). The goal of this programme is to support innovative and focused digitalisation projects across the different policy areas and the different levels of government in Flanders.</p> <p>Flanders will also develop an agenda for digital entrepreneurship and innovation that will boost the digitisation of the Flemish economy. The purpose is to integrate the different policy actions into one strategic plan, comprising breakthrough R&D, network infrastructures, entrepreneurship, digital platforms, digital competences, knowledge diffusion and legal and ethical issues.</p>		All (indirectly)

Circular Economy	<p>Wallonia A process to develop a new circular economy strategy has started in 2020 (expected by the end of the year). Wallonia has also launched in Nov. 2019 a Green Deal for circular purchases; 110 companies and public organizations are signatories. The signatories agree to implement at least two pilot circular projects, for purchase or support, within 3 years of the Green Deal.</p>		9 12 17
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Annex 8: List of cooperation agreements

579

14 NOVEMBRE 2019. - Accord de coopération entre la Région wallonne et la Communauté germanophone relatif à l'exercice des compétences en matière d'aménagement du territoire et de certaines matières connexes

MB: 13-01-2020

Bron : COMMUNAUTE GERMANOPHONE.SERVICE PUBLIC DE WALLONIE

578

22 JUILLET 2019. - Accord de coopération d'exécution entre l'Etat fédéral et la Région wallonne relatif à la réalisation de projets ferroviaires prioritaires qui bénéficient d'un financement additionnel de la Région wallonne conformément à l'article 92 bis, § 4onies, de la Loi spéciale du 8 août 1980 de réformes institutionnelles

MB: 12-12-2019

Bron : MOBILITE ET TRANSPORTS

577

1 JUILLET 2019. - Accord de coopération d'exécution entre l'Etat fédéral et la Région wallonne relatif à la fixation et au financement des projets ferroviaires stratégiques eu égard aux priorités sur le territoire de la Région wallonne

MB: 05-11-2019

Bron : MOBILITE ET TRANSPORTS

576

28 MAI 2019. - Accord de coopération entre l'Etat fédéral, la Région wallonne, la Région flamande, la Région de Bruxelles-Capitale et la Communauté germanophone modifiant l'accord de coopération du 6 décembre 2018 entre l'Etat fédéral, la Région wallonne, la Région flamande, la Région de Bruxelles-Capitale et la Communauté germanophone portant exécution à l'accord de coopération du 2 février 2018 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: 18-07-2019

Bron: INTERIEUR

575

27 MAI 2019. - Protocole de coopération entre l'Autorité fédérale et la Région flamande relatif à la coordination de la rétro-imputation des pertes en compensation de dommage causé aux cultures agricoles, provoqué par des conditions météorologiques défavorables.

MB: 11-06-2019
Bron: FINANCES

574

24 MAI 2019. - Accord de coopération d'exécution entre l'Etat fédéral et la Région de Bruxelles-Capitale relatif à la fixation et au financement des projets ferroviaires stratégiques eu égard aux priorités sur le territoire de la Région de Bruxelles-Capitale

MB: 12-12-2019
Bron : MOBILITE ET TRANSPORTS

573

22 MAI 2019. - Protocole d'accord portant sur la répartition entre entités fédérées de la programmation de 18 appareils RMN supplémentaires prévus par l'avenant au protocole d'accord du 24 février 2014 relatif à l'imagerie médicale du 5 novembre 2018.

MB: 24-06-2019
Bron: SANTE PUBLIQUE, SECURITE DE LA CHAINE ALIMENTAIRE ET ENVIRONNEMENT

572

26 AVRIL 2019. - Accord de coopération conclu entre la Communauté flamande, la Commission communautaire française et la Commission communautaire commune relatif au parcours d'accueil obligatoire des primo-arrivants à Bruxelles-Capitale

MB: 17-06-2019
Bron: COMMISSION COMMUNAUTAIRE FRANCAISE

571

25 MARS 2019. - Protocole d'accord portant sur la répartition entre entités fédérées de la programmation des programmes de soins spécialisés " soins de l'accident vasculaire cérébral aigu impliquant des procédures invasives "

MB: 24-06-2019
Bron: SANTE PUBLIQUE, SECURITE DE LA CHAINE ALIMENTAIRE ET ENVIRONNEMENT

570

25 MARS 2019. - Protocole d'accord entre l'autorité fédérale et les autorités visées aux articles 128, 130, 135 et 138 de la constitution portant sur le cofinancement d'un centre de tests pour les softwares dans le cadre de l'environnement e-Santé

MB: 24-06-2019
Bron: SANTE PUBLIQUE, SECURITE DE LA CHAINE ALIMENTAIRE ET ENVIRONNEMENT

569

25 MARS 2019. - Protocole d'accord entre le Gouvernement fédéral et les autorités visées aux articles 128, 130, 135 et 138 de la Constitution en matière d'application des Règlements (CE) 883/2004 et 987/2009 portant sur la coordination des systèmes de sécurité sociale en ce qui concerne les prestations en nature en cas de maladie

MB: 25-06-2019
Bron: SANTE PUBLIQUE, SECURITE DE LA CHAINE ALIMENTAIRE ET ENVIRONNEMENT

568

21 MARS 2019. - Accord de coopération conclu entre la Communauté française, la Région wallonne et la Commission communautaire française relatif à la validation des compétences

MB: 09-05-2019
Bron: COMMISSION COMMUNAUTAIRE FRANCAISE, COMMUNAUTE FRANCAISE

567

21 MARS 2019. - Accord de coopération du 21 mars 2019 entre la Région de Bruxelles-Capitale et la Commission communautaire commune mettant en oeuvre une coopération renforcée en matière statistique et portant désignation de l'autorité statistique régionale comme autorité statistique de la Commission communautaire commune

MB: 11-06-2019
Bron: REGION DE BRUXELLES-CAPITALE

566

28 FEVRIER 2019. - Accord de coopération du 28 février 2019 entre la Région de Bruxelles-Capitale et la Commission communautaire commune portant sur la désignation d'un intégrateur de services commun pour l'échange électronique de données

MB: 17-06-2019
Bron: COMMISSION COMMUNAUTAIRE COMMUNE

565

15 FEVRIER 2019. - Accord de coopération du 15 février 2019 conclu entre la Communauté française, la Communauté flamande, la Communauté germanophone et la Commission communautaire commune de Bruxelles-Capitale relatif à la classification des films diffusés dans les salles de cinéma belges.

MB: 04-06-2019
Bron: COMMISSION COMMUNAUTAIRE FRANCAISE, COMMUNAUTE FRANCAISE

564

1 FEVRIER 2019. - Accord de coopération d'exécution complémentaire entre l'Etat fédéral et la Région wallonne adaptant l'accord de coopération d'exécution du 5 octobre 2018 entre l'Etat fédéral, la Région flamande, la Région wallonne et la Région de Bruxelles-Capitale concernant la finalisation des travaux RER.

BS:

03-07-2019

Bron: MOBILITE ET TRANSPORTS

Annex 9: Opinion of the Central Economic Council and the National Labour Council

Avis

Remarques préliminaires

Dans le Programme national de réforme (PNR), les différents gouvernements du pays font rapport sur les réformes structurelles entreprises depuis la formulation l'an dernier des recommandations par pays et précisent quelles mesures sont attendues dans les prochains mois.

Le PNR doit répondre aux constats formulés dans le rapport sur la Belgique, aux priorités de l'examen annuel de la croissance, à la trajectoire pour atteindre les objectifs de la stratégie Europe 2020, et en quoi les mesures des différentes autorités publiques contribuent à la réalisation du Pilier européen pour les droits sociaux. Le PNR s'articule aussi avec les programmes de stabilité et de convergence.

La Cellule stratégique du Premier Ministre assure la direction du Comité de rédaction du PNR. Le document de planification montre qu'un premier draft du PNR sera disponible le 6 mars 2020 et l'avis des Conseils est demandé pour le 8 mars 2020.

Au comité de rédaction du PNR sont représentés : le SPF Chancellerie, le SPF Finances, le Bureau fédéral du plan, le SPF Affaires sociales, le SPF Emploi, le SPF Stratégie et Appui 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.

La lecture des indications données au Comité de rédaction du PNR montre que d'importants domaines qui seront repris dans le PNR recourent largement les domaines qui sont traditionnellement au cœur du dialogue social développé au niveau national, sectoriel et régional. Les deux 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 deux Conseils rejoignent l'opinion du Conseil économique et social européen (CESE) formalisée dans son avis d'octobre 2019 qui recommande l'introduction de normes minimales relatives à la consultation des partenaires sociaux nationaux par les gouvernements nationaux à différents stades du processus du Semestre européen. Il conviendrait notamment d'indiquer si les gouvernements se sont écartés des propositions des partenaires sociaux, et d'expliquer pourquoi. Il y a lieu de garantir également la participation des partenaires sociaux à toute action de suivi évaluant la mise en œuvre des propositions ⁹⁵.

⁹⁵ ECO/498, Avis, Examen annuel de la croissance 2019 (supplément d'avis)

Le moment venu, ils 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).

Ils souhaitent qu'une présentation du projet de PNR soit faite aux interlocuteurs sociaux au moment le plus opportun.

1. Dialogue avec le gouvernement

La rédaction du PNR est réalisée sous l'autorité de la Cellule stratégique du Premier Ministre. En conséquence, l'implication des interlocuteurs sociaux dans la préparation de ce document est mise en oeuvre en premier lieu via les contacts établis depuis un certain nombre d'années par le Conseil national du Travail (CNT) et le Conseil central de l'Economie (CCE) avec la Cellule stratégique du Premier Ministre.

De manière récurrente, dans la foulée de la publication par la Commission européenne du paquet d'automne des contacts et auditions sont organisés au niveau des Conseils avec les représentants belges auprès des comités européens. Au travers des activités du CNT, les interlocuteurs sociaux sont étroitement associés aux travaux du Comité de Protection sociale et du Comité de l'emploi, via des contacts réguliers avec les représentants belges auprès de ces comités et du COREPER ainsi qu'avec les représentants des cabinets ministériels concernés.

Du document sur la planification du PNR, il apparaît que le chapitre 3 de la structure de texte du PNR concerne l'approche de notre pays face aux principaux défis socio-économiques. Ceux-ci concernent le budget et la dette publique ; le marché du travail et l'enseignement ; l'investissement et la mobilité ; l'entrepreneuriat et la concurrence. Un volet particulier devrait traiter de l'économie circulaire, de la politique industrielle ainsi que de l'utilisation des fonds structurels et de la participation des stakeholders.

La section investissement doit comprendre un tableau listant les projets d'investissement, notamment ceux en lien avec les objectifs de durabilité de l'UE.

Le chapitre 4 concerne les Objectifs Europe 2020 et les objectifs de développement durable des Nations unies.

Plusieurs de ces défis repris dans le document sur la planification du PNR présentent des liens étroits avec certains points des accords conclus par les interlocuteurs sociaux interprofessionnels au sein du Conseil national du Travail le 1er avril 2019 et rejoignent les priorités identifiées par les interlocuteurs sociaux dans le Rapport Emploi-Compétitivité du CCE, publié le 25 octobre 2019.

C'est dans la perspective du nouvel accord gouvernemental fédéral que le Conseil central de l'économie a publié ce rapport. Centré sur les défis socio-économiques à relever par notre pays, ce document est issu d'un dialogue poursuivi depuis plusieurs années entre ses membres en matière d'analyse des politiques socio-économiques ; il reflète le consensus au sein de l'institution.

Dans le cadre de l'élaboration du PNR 2020, les interlocuteurs sociaux demandent au gouvernement que leurs travaux puissent trouver un écho dans le corps même du PNR. Ces références dans le PNR constitueraient une plus-value dans la mesure où elles indiqueraient que certaines actions du gouvernement reprises dans le PNR sont des réponses aux préoccupations communes des interlocuteurs sociaux sur les enjeux de politique socio-économique. Ces références seraient une

réponse au travail d'implication souhaité par les instances européennes au niveau national pour un dialogue effectif entre les forces sociales représentatives et les différentes instances impliquées dans le processus d'élaboration de la politique socio-économique. Le gouvernement peut s'appuyer sur l'analyse commune des membres des Conseils quant aux objectifs de politique socio-économique et aux défis pour répondre aux recommandations de la Commission européenne.

Le deux Conseils rejoignent la Commission européenne qui de manière récurrente souligne les problèmes de coordination inhérents à la structure fortement régionalisée de la Belgique, qui rendent nécessaire une organisation efficiente de la gestion publique étant donné l'existence de multiples niveaux de pouvoir. Pour ce qui concerne les interlocuteurs sociaux, des initiatives communes initiées depuis plusieurs années ont été intensifiées ces derniers mois. Des exemples concrets sont repris dans la rubrique des activités du CNT et du CCE. D'autre part, le Conseil central de l'Economie, le Conseil national du Travail et les Conseils économiques et sociaux régionaux se sont engagés dans un processus pour examiner conjointement des problématiques partagées et développer des initiatives communes ; à titre d'exemple la Déclaration commune en faveur d'une meilleure réglementation, l'avis commun sur le projet de Plan National Energie Climat; la Déclaration commune sur la mobilité; l'appel commun pour accélérer la transition vers l'économie circulaire ; ou encore l'avis récent sur le Permis unique : pour une plateforme électronique centrale pour les employeurs et les travailleurs étrangers.

2. Dialogue avec la Commission européenne

Depuis quelques années, à l'occasion de la publication du « Rapport pays – Belgique » par la Commission européenne, des rencontres à des moments clés du Semestre européen se déroulent entre les membres du CCE et du CNT avec le Desk Belgique de la Commission. En préparation du Rapport pays, les interlocuteurs sociaux sont entendus par la Commission sous la forme de rencontres bilatérales. Dans la foulée de la publication du paquet de printemps du Semestre européen, les experts de la Commission européenne ont l'occasion d'entrer en dialogue avec les deux Conseils pour connaître la réaction des interlocuteurs sociaux sur les priorités et propositions de la Commission européenne et s'informer des résultats du dialogue social en Belgique.

Ce dialogue avec la Commission européenne est apprécié fortement par les membres des deux Conseils car il apparaît comme une clarification nécessaire du cadre analytique et des évaluations de la Commission européenne de la politique socio-économique du pays, des défis sous-jacents de ces évaluations mais aussi des intentions des autorités politiques du pays dans la perspective de la coordination des politiques socio-économiques au niveau européen ainsi que leurs articulations à tous les niveaux de pouvoir avec les autres objectifs de l'action des autorités publiques et des interlocuteurs sociaux.

Fin novembre 2019, une rencontre s'est également tenue au CCE avec les experts de la Commission européenne autour de quatre thématiques qui ont fait l'objet d'un focus dans le REC 2018-2019: la mobilité; l'énergie; la bonne réglementation et la formation/ «skills». Durant cette rencontre, la Commission européenne a fait part de questions spécifiques en lien avec ces problématiques qui seraient, pour elle, des éléments intéressants pour ses prochains travaux. Les questions spécifiques ont été transmises aux commissions ad hoc du CCE afin qu'elles puissent les approfondir. L'objectif est de revenir vers la Commission européenne avec les éléments de réponse proposés afin d'alimenter le débat avec les instances européennes. Ce débat doit permettre à la Commission européenne d'enrichir ses analyses concernant la Belgique.

A l'initiative de la nouvelle Commission européenne, le « *Green deal* » européen sera au cœur de la nouvelle stratégie de croissance durable de l'UE qui vise à faire de l'Europe le premier continent climatiquement neutre d'ici à 2050.

Dans la perspective des discussions dans les différentes enceintes européennes au sujet du « *Green deal* », les deux Conseils considèrent qu'il est fondamental pour la Belgique de se doter d'une vision stratégique partagée en matière socio-économique qui donne du sens à l'action des autorités publiques et une perspective aux citoyens et aux entreprises dans un contexte de développements majeurs, tels que les changements climatiques et la décarbonisation nécessaire de l'économie mais aussi des évolutions technologiques (incluant la numérisation de l'économie), la montée de nouveaux concurrents au niveau mondial et les changements démographiques. Une telle vision doit se concevoir à travers la coordination des niveaux politiques de notre pays et le respect des spécificités socio-économiques de chaque région. Les différents niveaux de pouvoir doivent mieux utiliser les organes de coordination et s'appuyer sur le dialogue social.

Les deux Conseils soulignent l'importance de l'engagement de la Commission européenne concernant les actions publiques à mener dans le cadre du « *Green deal* ». Ces actions doivent reposer sur une approche scientifique, être fondées sur des analyses d'impact globales et respecter le dialogue social à tous les niveaux et dans tous les secteurs, afin de garantir que les politiques environnementales, économiques et sociales soient élaborées de manière à assurer une transition juste et équitable.

Le set d'indicateurs de suivi des objectifs de développement durable. La Commission européenne a annoncé qu'elle recentrera le processus de coordination macroéconomique du Semestre européen en vue d'intégrer les objectifs de développement durable des Nations unies afin de placer ces objectifs au cœur de l'élaboration des politiques et de l'action de l'UE. Elle utilisera le Semestre européen pour le suivi et l'adaptation des plans nationaux en matière d'énergie et de climat aux objectifs poursuivis.

Le 19 février 2020, le Conseil central de l'Economie et le Conseil national du Travail ont émis un avis sur les objectifs mondiaux de développement durable (ODD ou Sustainable Development Goals en anglais – SDG) qui relèvent de leurs compétences, à savoir la lutte contre la pauvreté, l'égalité entre les sexes, l'énergie, le travail décent, la lutte contre les inégalités, la mobilité, la consommation et la production durables, le climat, ainsi qu'une croissance suffisamment soutenue, inclusive et durable.

Dans cet avis, qui constitue une étape intermédiaire dans leurs travaux, les Conseils soulignent l'importance des SDG et se réjouissent de l'intégration progressive du Programme de développement durable des Nations unies à l'horizon 2030 (Agenda 2030) au sein des politiques mondiales (Déclaration du centenaire de l'OIT sur l'avenir du travail du 21 juin 2019), des politiques européennes (Green Deal, Semestre européen et rapports pays) et nationales (Vision à long terme, Plans et Rapports fédéraux, PNR). La mise en œuvre de ce programme à travers la réalisation des ODD offre en effet la possibilité de relever les défis économiques, environnementaux et sociaux actuels et de converger vers une société prospère, inclusive et durable.

Au niveau belge, les Conseils souhaitent soutenir la mise en œuvre de l'Agenda 2030, encore actuellement trop limitée dans les politiques belges, notamment en l'absence de Plan fédéral de développement durable depuis 2009, ainsi qu'en raison d'un processus de monitoring encore balbutiant et du manque de cibles chiffrées.

Dans le but de contribuer aux futurs rapports fédéraux sur le développement durable, ainsi qu'au futur Plan fédéral de développement durable, le CCE et le CNT, revêtant ainsi un rôle de pionnier, proposent, dans cet avis, des indicateurs de suivi et définissent un niveau d'ambition pour une série d'ODD. En faisant cela, les Conseils définissent de façon précise le contenu qu'ils veulent donner aux politiques mises en œuvre en Belgique en vue de réaliser les ODD de l'ONU et fournissent une base à l'élaboration

d'un nouveau Plan fédéral de développement durable. En identifiant des indicateurs supplémentaires à suivre, les Conseils définissent les problématiques qui doivent selon eux recevoir davantage d'attention de la part des différents gouvernements. Les Conseils se situent de la sorte dans la droite ligne des engagements pris au niveau international et notamment au niveau de l'OIT.

Aux yeux des Conseils, le monitoring des politiques mises en œuvre au moyen d'un set d'indicateurs complet et de cibles concrètes et mesurables est capital en vue d'identifier les écarts entre les objectifs à réaliser et la situation à politique inchangée. L'identification des domaines dans lesquels les progrès de la Belgique ne sont pas conformes à ses engagements est nécessaire pour réajuster les politiques en cours et faire avancer la mise en œuvre de l'Agenda 2030.

Dans les prochains mois, les Conseils poursuivront leurs travaux à ce sujet avec un triple objectif : - étendre les travaux à l'ODD 4, et plus particulièrement à l'apprentissage tout au long de la vie ; - continuer d'affiner et de compléter le set d'indicateurs ; - là où c'est possible, traduire chaque sous-objectif en objectifs chiffrés.

3. La contribution du Conseil central de l'économie

3.1. Le rapport du Conseil central de l'économie (2018-2019) : lignes directrices pour faire face aux défis socio-économiques de la Belgique

Le point de départ des travaux du CCE est l'identification des principaux objectifs politiques que sont la cohésion sociale, la création de richesse, la soutenabilité environnementale, la soutenabilité des finances publiques et l'équilibre de la balance des opérations courantes, conditions sine qua non pour créer une société prospère et durable.

Sur la base d'une évaluation des performances de la Belgique au regard de ces objectifs et en tenant compte des évolutions sociétales et technologiques auxquelles le pays - à l'instar du reste du monde - est confronté, le CCE a identifié un certain nombre de défis socio-économiques importants pour l'économie belge qui doivent être traités en priorité, selon lui, par les autorités fédérales et régionales.

En février 2020, les messages clés du rapport emploi-compétitivité a été présenté lors d'une audition de la commission de l'économie de la Chambre.

Les principaux défis pour l'économie belge, sont les suivants :

- Vers **une économie plus innovante** (tant en termes de processus et de produits que de modèles d'affaires) grâce à une meilleure valorisation de la R&D et à une diffusion plus grande des technologies existantes. Dans un environnement socio-économique et technologique changeant, et face aux défis environnementaux 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 dont l'environnement. Ceci recouvre tant l'innovation 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, 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 aux défis, économiques, environnementaux et 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.
- Une **sécurité sociale soutenable sur le plan social et financier**. Une protection adéquate contre la perte de revenu et la pauvreté, des opportunités plus larges pour chacun sur le marché du travail et un régime de sécurité sociale développé mais soutenable sont des éléments fondamentaux 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 lourdes ont actuellement un impact sur la soutenabilité financière et sociale de la sécurité sociale. L'évolution de la base de financement et l'impact du vieillissement de la population sur les dépenses de pensions et soins de santé sont parmi les plus importants. Les développements technologiques créent des possibilités de création d'emplois et de croissance mais modifient les compétences requises et affectent l'adéquation entre l'offre et la demande sur le marché du travail. La digitalisation et l'économie collaborative sont sources de nouvelles formes de travail. Le développement de ces 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.
- Une **meilleure adéquation de l'offre et de la demande sur le marché du travail**. 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. De l'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. Le problème d'inadéquation sur le marché du travail reflète un dysfonctionnement de ce marché et des institutions qui l'encadrent (comme le système d'enseignement et de formation, les transports, les organismes de placement etc.), dysfonctionnement qui risque de s'approfondir en raison du contexte technologique, social et démographique changeant et qui constitue une barrière à l'emploi non négligeable pour certains groupes de la population. Relever le défi de l'inadéquation sur le marché du travail implique donc de travailler sur plusieurs domaines, y compris en dehors de ce marché même, en mobilisant tous les acteurs concernés : employeurs, travailleurs, monde associatif et pouvoirs publics. L'objectif visé étant de garantir un développement économique inclusif où la création d'emplois et de valeur bénéficie à toutes et à tous de manière juste.
- Une **évolution des prix à la consommation et des prix business-to-business en phase avec les trois principaux pays voisins**. Les prix à la consommation et des prix business-to-business en phase avec les trois principaux pays voisins sont fondamentaux. 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. Il faut veiller à ce que les gains de productivité futurs dans le secteur des services bénéficient à l'ensemble des acteurs économiques grâce à un meilleur fonctionnement des marchés. Au mois de février 2020, le secrétariat du CCE a présenté ce défi prix à l'Autorité belge de la concurrence.

- 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 et les choix du gouvernement sur le mix énergétique doivent garantir la sécurité d'approvisionnement. C'est à ces conditions que la transition énergétique 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. Dans leur contribution au Plan national Energie climat 2021-2030, les interlocuteurs sociaux balisent les recommandations relatives aux différentes dimensions concernées : la sécurité d'approvisionnement ; un marché européen de l'énergie entièrement intégré ; l'efficacité énergétique et la gestion de la demande ; la décarbonisation ; et la recherche et le développement. Les messages communs peuvent contribuer à répondre directement aux recommandations en matière d'énergie et de climat adressées, par la Commission européenne, à la Belgique.

Lors d'une audition à la Chambre des représentants le 22 janvier 2020, le CCE a présenté à la Commission Energie, Climat et Environnement les éléments clés pour une transition vers une économie bas carbone. Il s'agit des lignes de force des volets énergie, climat, mobilité et économie circulaire de son Rapport Emploi-Compétitivité 2018-2019, et des derniers travaux du CCE en ces matières. Etant donné les efforts accrus nécessaires pour que la Belgique devienne une économie bas carbone, et l'urgence en la matière, le CCE a particulièrement souligné le besoin d'une vision interfédérale dans ces domaines, la coordination et collaboration entre tous les niveaux de pouvoir (intra-fédéraux et internationaux), l'importance de la concertation sociale et de la consultation des organes d'avis du pays et la nécessité de dégager des moyens suffisants pour financer la transition. Il a par ailleurs insisté sur des mesures concrètes prioritaires auxquelles le premier rapport d'évaluation du Plan national intégré Energie-Climat devrait, en 2021, porter attention.

En matière de gouvernance, les sept conseils consultatifs fédéraux et régionaux ont prouvé qu'une meilleure collaboration structurelle en matière de politique énergétique et climatique est possible entre les différents niveaux de pouvoir. Ils ont émis ensemble [un avis sur différents aspects transversaux du PNEC](#) : coopération, gouvernance, statut, révision, structure et équilibre du PNEC, ainsi que leviers, politiques et mesures. Le CCE et les conseils consultatifs régionaux ont également appelé tous les gouvernements du pays, dans [une déclaration commune](#), à se concerter et à articuler leurs actions pour garantir la cohérence de la politique de mobilité.

- Vers **une mobilité plus durable et plus fluide**. La Belgique est confrontée à un défi majeur en termes de mobilité plus durable et fluide. L'accessibilité (durable) des zones économiques et résidentielles ne s'améliore pas, en grande partie à cause de l'augmentation constante de la congestion du trafic et d'une offre d'alternatives encore limitée. 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. Il y a nécessité pour le pays d'élaborer une vision interfédérale de la mobilité comportant des domaines d'actions concrets

et bénéficiant d'un large soutien sociétal. L'absence d'une vision interfédérale de la mobilité engendre en effet une politique de mobilité incohérente et inefficace et freine les investissements nécessaires dans l'infrastructure de transport et le développement de l'offre de mobilité. La politique de mobilité durable, doit « poursuivre simultanément les objectifs suivants : donner aux citoyens un accès abordable, sûr et efficace aux biens et services, aux lieux de travail et à la vie sociale; permettre aux entreprises d'accéder de manière concurrentielle, sûre et efficace à leurs matières premières et de fournir leurs biens et services de la même façon et de minimiser l'impact de la mobilité sur l'environnement et la santé publique » (REC 2018-2019). Les autres domaines d'action concernent entre autres : une réflexion sur le système de mobilité actuelle et l'intégration des différents modes dans une perspective de développement de la multimodalité, le renforcement de l'attractivité du transport de personnes et de marchandises par voie ferrée, le renforcement du régulateur ferroviaire, le renouvellement des flottes publiques, une plus grande attention pour la mobilité douce, la nécessité d'investissements pour optimiser l'infrastructure de transport ; la mise en œuvre des technologies au service d'une gestion flexible/modulable du trafic et une révision de la fiscalité de la mobilité ⁹⁶.

Poursuivant son analyse, le Conseil s'est également attaché à approfondir différents facteurs à mobiliser pour relever lesdits défis. Pour chaque facteur, un « focus » propose des mesures concrètes de politique socio-économique à mettre en œuvre et/ou les principes qui devraient guider cette mise en œuvre. L'objectif est bien ici d'identifier des mesures et/ou principes devant guider les mesures qui pourraient être repris par le prochain gouvernement (fédéral en particulier) dans sa future déclaration. Ces focus concernent la bonne réglementation ; la formation continue ; le développement de la multimodalité ; l'énergie et le climat ; le développement des entreprises à forte croissance ; l'e-gouvernement.

3.2. L'apport du CCE au Conseil national de la productivité

En décembre 2019, le CCE a adopté son avis portant sur le premier rapport annuel du Conseil national de la productivité (CNP)⁹⁷. Cet avis est joint au rapport du CNP et les deux documents ont été notifiés au gouvernement, au Parlement ainsi qu'à la Commission européenne. L'objectif du rapport annuel du CNP est d'en apprendre davantage sur les sources de la croissance de la productivité et identifier les causes de son ralentissement. En effet, la Belgique, comme l'ensemble des économies avancées, a enregistré un ralentissement généralisé de la croissance de la productivité, et ce dès le début des années 2000. Il a cependant été plus prononcé en Belgique que dans l'UE.

Le rapport du CNP est en ligne avec le CCE lorsqu'il considère que la croissance de la productivité est une condition nécessaire à la fois (1) pour que les travailleurs et les investisseurs profitent des avantages de la croissance économique et (2) pour être en mesure de dégager les marges budgétaires permettant d'élargir la palette des choix politiques possibles et ainsi relever les grands défis de notre temps, tels que le vieillissement de la population et le réchauffement climatique.

⁹⁶ Si un système de redevance kilométrique intelligente est instauré pour tous les véhicules, il doit déplacer la fiscalité de la possession vers l'utilisation d'un véhicule. Plusieurs conditions devront être remplies : le système doit être harmonisé pour l'ensemble du territoire belge sans empêcher les régions d'appliquer des tarifs différenciés ; la redevance doit être fixée en fonction de la congestion, de la pollution atmosphérique et de l'utilisation de l'infrastructure ; il convient d'effectuer une analyse des conséquences sociales d'une telle redevance et des mesures adéquates qui doivent être prises dans ce cadre ; il faut continuer à investir dans les transports publics avec une excellente couverture et une infrastructure adaptée, afin d'offrir une alternative fiable à la voiture individuelle (Avis PNEC, 2019).

⁹⁷ Le Conseil national de la productivité résulte d'une initiative européenne. Une recommandation du Conseil de l'Union européenne (recommandation du Conseil du 20 septembre 2016 sur la création de conseils nationaux de la productivité (2016/C 349/01)) invite les Etats membres de la zone euro à créer un Conseil national de la productivité afin de favoriser une croissance économique soutenue et la convergence. En Belgique, cette recommandation européenne a été mise en œuvre par la loi du 25 novembre 2018 portant création d'un Conseil national de la productivité (Moniteur du 7 décembre 2018).

Pour les analyses ultérieures, le CCE demande au CNP de mettre en évidence les leviers institutionnels et politiques qui orientent les gains de productivité vers une logique d'économie compétitive telle qu'elle est définie par celui-ci, c'est-à-dire dans une logique d'inclusion sociale, de respect de l'environnement et de viabilité financière. Ces leviers portent notamment sur la gouvernance, le rôle du secteur public dans le fonctionnement du marché, les défis de la transition énergétique et de la mobilité, les investissements stratégiques, l'éducation et la formation continue, le dynamisme entrepreneurial, l'innovation et sa diffusion, le rôle de certains services dans le processus de division internationale de la chaîne de création de valeur, ...

3.3. Les finances publiques

Un chantier européen important porte sur la **gouvernance économique européenne**. La Commission européenne a présenté, au début du mois de février 2020, une série de documents portant sur un réexamen de l'efficacité du cadre de surveillance économique. Elle initie aussi un débat public sur l'avenir de la gouvernance économique européenne. Les résultats du débat serviront de point de départ pour toutes les étapes ultérieures, y compris pour ce qui est de la manière de traiter les investissements dans le cadre des règles budgétaires de l'UE, tout en préservant les garanties contre les risques pesant sur la viabilité de la dette. Le CCE demande à être associé aux initiatives qui seront prises par le gouvernement pour l'organisation au niveau belge d'un débat public sur les améliorations souhaitables de la gouvernance budgétaire actuel de l'UE.

Dans plusieurs avis récents, le CCE a souligné 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. La Belgique fait face à un risque sérieux en raison de son déficit budgétaire croissant et de son haut taux d'endettement, ainsi qu'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. Il est nécessaire 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.

L'investissement – dans les infrastructures, la recherche, l'éducation, la santé – est un puissant levier ainsi qu'un pilier du progrès économique et social. Il permet non seulement d'accroître la demande et de créer des emplois aujourd'hui, mais aussi, en catalysant l'activité privée, de soutenir l'innovation et d'améliorer les compétences, d'augmenter la capacité de croissance à long terme de l'économie et de répondre aux besoins des citoyens.

Le CCE rappelle sa demande adressée au gouvernement belge et à la Commission européenne, d'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 durable et de l'emploi mais aussi de la cohésion sociale. Une hausse des investissements, et en particulier des investissements publics, 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 et du défi climatique, dans le prolongement des priorités énoncées dans le *Green deal* européen.

4. La contribution du Conseil national du travail

4.1. Introduction

En Belgique, les priorités des partenaires sociaux sont largement déterminées par la conclusion et le contenu des accords interprofessionnels négociés tous les 2 ans par les plus hauts représentants des partenaires sociaux du secteur privé au niveau du «Groupe des 10». Lors de sa précédente contribution au PNR 2019, le Conseil avait fait part de consultations alors en cours concernant un avant-projet d'accord interprofessionnel pour les années 2019-2020. A l'issue de ces consultations, les partenaires sociaux ne sont pas parvenus à conclure un accord interprofessionnel en tant que tel. Toutefois, les négociations se sont poursuivies entre les organisations au niveau du groupe des 10 et au sein du Conseil national du Travail afin de reprendre, dans un programme de travail commun, un certain nombre de points figurant dans cet avant-projet d'accord interprofessionnel. Ces négociations ont permis d'aboutir à un ensemble d'accords conclus le 1er avril 2019 entre interlocuteurs sociaux au sein du Conseil national du Travail, accords qui prévoient un certain nombre d'engagements et de priorités communes pour la période 2019-2020.

Ces accords du 1^{er} avril 2019 couvrent de nombreux domaines en matières socio-économiques qui sont étroitement liés au programme national de réformes. La présente contribution se propose d'exposer les principaux points de ces accords et de leur mise en oeuvre ainsi que les autres travaux menés par les partenaires sociaux au niveau interprofessionnel qui sont en lien avec les dernières recommandations adressées à la Belgique en juillet 2019 ou, plus largement, qui sont en lien avec le semestre européen. La présente contribution se concentrera sur les éléments d'informations qui n'ont pas déjà été transmis par le Conseil dans son précédent avis n° 2.124 relatif au PNR 2019.

4.2. Travaux en lien avec les recommandations n° 2, 3 et 4 adressées à la Belgique

Recommandation 2 : supprimer les freins à l'emploi et à renforcer l'efficacité des politiques actives du marché du travail, en particulier pour les personnes peu qualifiées, les travailleurs âgés et les personnes issues de l'immigration; à améliorer les performances et l'inclusivité des systèmes d'éducation et de formation et à remédier à l'inadéquation des compétences;

4.2.1. Travailleurs âgés

4.2.1.1. Régime de chômage avec complément d'entreprise et emplois de fin de carrière

En exécution des accords susmentionnés du 1er avril 2019, le Conseil a procédé, le 23 avril 2019, au renouvellement pour la période 2019-2020 des conventions collectives de travail concernant les régimes spécifiques de chômage avec complément d'entreprise (RCC). Concomitamment, les partenaires sociaux se sont engagés sur une trajectoire de relèvement de l'âge d'accès à ces dispositifs de RCC à partir de 2021. Les modalités de ce dispositif ont été fixées par un certain nombre de CCT conclues également le 23 avril 2019, dans le cadre d'un consensus qui intègre certaines possibilités d'accès dérogatoires à ces régimes pour certains régimes spécifiques (carrières longues, pénibilité, entreprises en difficulté, etc.).

Toujours en exécution des accords du 1er avril, le Conseil a conclu le 23 avril 2019, la convention collective de travail n° 137, qui porte sur la période 2019-2020, et qui se situe dans le prolongement des conventions collectives de travail antérieures établissant un cadre interprofessionnel en vue de

L'abaissement de la limite d'âge d'accès au droit aux allocations pour un emploi de fin de carrière, pour les travailleurs se trouvant dans certaines situations de carrière particulières (carrière longue, métier lourd ou les travailleurs qui sont occupés dans une entreprise en difficultés ou en restructuration). L'objectif des partenaires sociaux étant de rendre la fin de carrière plus "faisable" pour certaines situations de carrière particulières. La nouvelle CCT fixe désormais à 57 ans l'âge d'accès à une réduction de temps de travail à mi-temps et porte à 55 ans l'âge d'accès à une réduction de travail d'un cinquième.

4.2.1.2. Accord cadre européen sur le vieillissement actif adopté en mars 2017

Pour rappel, les partenaires sociaux européens ont conclu, en mars 2017, un accord cadre européen sur le vieillissement actif en exécution duquel un rapport des mesures prises dans les différents pays de l'Union européenne pour favoriser l'emploi des travailleurs âgés est sollicité chaque année pendant une période de trois ans. Afin de répondre à cette demande, le Conseil national du Travail a endossé un rôle de coordination des informations disponibles aux différents niveaux pertinents et, en particulier, au niveau des Comités économiques et sociaux des entités fédérées et au niveau des secteurs.

Suivant le calendrier de mise en œuvre de cet accord cadre européen, un second rapport (rapport n° 113), a été adopté le 28 mai 2019 par le Conseil, qui dresse à présent une cartographie actualisée des actions mises en place et/ou soutenues par les partenaires sociaux en faveur des travailleurs âgés afin de les encourager à rester ou à revenir sur le marché du travail. Ces actions, prises tant au niveau fédéral qu'au niveau régional et communautaire, intersectoriel et sectoriel, peuvent consister en des incitants financiers et/ou porter sur différents domaines tels que la formation, le tutorat, une organisation du travail adaptée. 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.

4.2.2. Retour volontaire à l'emploi 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 des partenaires sociaux. Pour rappel, le suivi, sur une base régulière, de la mise en œuvre du dispositif légal et réglementaire mis en place par le Gouvernement est organisé au sein d'une plateforme réunissant autour du CNT tous les acteurs institutionnels et de terrain pertinents pour cette problématique (fédéral et régional). Les travaux se poursuivent actuellement sur ce point en se concentrant sur le thème de la prévention, en vue de dégager des bonnes pratiques et d'examiner les aspects préventifs. Des auditions ont été organisées, dans ce cadre, dans le courant du mois de février 2020, l'objectif étant de parvenir à proposer prochainement un certain nombre de mesures concrètes pour améliorer le dispositif actuel, en s'inspirant de l'approche prônée par le Conseil national du Travail dans ses différents avis.

4.2.3. Politique de diversité

Les travaux 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 se sont poursuivis et sont en cours de finalisation. L'objectif de cette brochure est de fournir aux secteurs et aux entreprises un certain nombre d'informations, de grilles d'analyse, d'outils et d'exemples concrets pour les aider à inscrire leur politique de recrutement dans le cadre fixé par la législation anti-discrimination et, au-delà, à adopter des pratiques de recrutement objectives conduisant à davantage de diversité.

Recommandation 3 : axer la politique économique liée aux investissements sur les transports durables, y compris l'amélioration de l'infrastructure ferroviaire, sur la transition énergétique et vers une

économie à faible intensité de carbone, ainsi que sur la recherche et l'innovation, en particulier dans le domaine de la numérisation, en tenant compte des disparités régionales; à s'attaquer aux problèmes croissants de mobilité en renforçant les mesures incitatives et en supprimant les entraves à l'augmentation de l'offre et de la demande de transports collectifs et à faibles émissions;

Recommandation 4 : réduire la charge administrative et réglementaire afin de favoriser l'esprit d'entreprise et de supprimer les obstacles à la concurrence dans le secteur des services, en particulier les télécommunications, le commerce de détail et les services professionnels.

4.2.4. Politique de mobilité

En exécution des accords intervenus en son sein le 1^{er} avril 2019, le Conseil national du Travail a conclu une nouvelle convention collective de travail n° 19/9 concernant l'intervention financière de l'employeur dans le prix des transports en commun publics des travailleurs. Cette convention collective de travail vise à porter à 70% l'intervention de l'employeur dans le prix des abonnements pour les transports en commun publics organisés par la SNCB au 1^{er} juillet 2019 et à supprimer, à partir du 1^{er} juillet 2020, la limite minimale de 5 km calculés à partir de la halte de départ, en ce qui concerne l'intervention de l'employeur dans le prix de l'abonnement pour les transports en commun publics autres que les chemins de fer (tram, métro, bus ou waterbus).

Dans le cadre de la recommandation du 23 avril 2019 adressée aux commissions paritaires et aux entreprises à l'occasion des accords du 1^{er} avril 2019 conclus au sein du Conseil national du Travail, les secteurs et les entreprises ont été invités à miser sur un transfert modal en encourageant le choix des transports en commun et des modes de transport alternatifs. Les partenaires sociaux ont recommandé d'utiliser le budget mobilité, tel qu'instauré par la loi du 17 mars 2019 et ont également recommandé d'utiliser l'indemnité vélo. Les travaux sont actuellement en cours pour exécuter ce point des accords susmentionnés du 1^{er} avril 2019 en vue de développer, à moyen terme, au sein d'une Commission mixte CNT-CCE, un nouveau système misant sur l'utilisation des modes de mobilité durables et la simplification des régimes existants.

4.2.5. Eco-chèques

Suite à l'instauration d'un budget mobilité au 1^{er} mars 2019, le Conseil a décidé de modifier la liste des produits et services pouvant être acquis avec des éco-chèques pour tenir compte des évolutions récentes en matière de mobilité douce (steps, monoroues et hoverboards, qu'ils soient sans moteur ou pourvus d'un moteur électrique). Cette nouvelle liste est entrée en vigueur le 1^{er} septembre 2019.

Une réflexion est également menée concernant le « circuit court » pour envisager son inclusion éventuelle dans la liste des produits et services pouvant être acquis avec des éco-chèques. Ces travaux devraient tenir compte des initiatives annoncées au plan européen et, plus particulièrement, du nouveau plan d'action de l'Union européenne en faveur de l'économie circulaire qui sera élaboré pour définir la nouvelle stratégie sur ce point, en exécution du Green Deal de la Commission européenne.

A cet égard, les éco-chèques ont été reconnus au niveau européen comme étant une bonne pratique en ce qui concerne l'économie circulaire. Voir le lien suivant : <https://circulareconomy.europa.eu/platform/en/good-practices/eco-vouchers-encourage-sustainable-consumption-including-second-hand-and-refurbished-goods>

Enfin, les travaux du Conseil national du Travail se poursuivent concernant le monitoring de la transition vers les éco-chèques électroniques. Le Conseil s'est déjà prononcé de nombreuses fois en faveur d'un passage total et définitif vers les éco-chèques électroniques. En se basant sur l'analyse actualisée fin 2018 de l'Agence de simplification administrative (ASA), la généralisation des éco-

chèques électroniques pourrait engendrer une économie supplémentaire en charges administratives de quelque 13 millions d'euros, outre les 28 millions déjà engrangés depuis 2015.

4.3. Travaux du Conseil National du Travail en lien avec le Semestre européen

4.3.1. Burn out

Pour rappel, en exécution de l'accord interprofessionnel 2017-2018, 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 (avis n° 2.080 du 27 février 2018). Le premier cycle de projets a démarré le 15 décembre 2018. Au terme d'une période de mise en œuvre d'un an, les projets de ce premier cycle en sont désormais au stade de l'évaluation finale. Une évaluation globale de ce premier cycle devrait être réalisée par le Conseil national du Travail, assisté d'un collègue d'experts, dans le courant de l'année 2020. Cette évaluation devrait permettre aux partenaires sociaux d'affiner leur approche de la prévention du burn-out et de tirer de ce premier retour d'expérience du terrain un certain nombre de conclusions et de recommandations opérationnelles à destination des secteurs et des entreprises.

Un deuxième cycle de projets a par ailleurs été lancé le 1^{er} juin 2019. Au terme d'un examen approfondi des demandes de subventions introduites, 37 projets d'entreprises et trois projets sectoriels ont été sélectionnés en décembre 2019 par le Ministre de l'Emploi, sur base de l'avis émis en septembre 2019 par le Conseil national du Travail, assisté par un collègue d'experts.

4.3.2. Organisation du travail tournée vers l'avenir

Outre les projets-pilotes en matière de burn-out, l'intention des partenaires sociaux est de stimuler, en lançant un appel à projet, les initiatives développant des modes d'organisation du travail tournés vers l'avenir. Les discussions sont en cours pour concrétiser ce point de l'accord interprofessionnel 2017-2018.

4.3.3. Restructurations

Les travaux menés en exécution de l'accord interprofessionnel 2017-2018 par le Conseil national du Travail sur la problématique des restructurations ont abouti, le 17 décembre 2019, à l'adoption d'un certain nombre de recommandations adressées aux commissions paritaires et aux entreprises, qui figurent dans la recommandation n°28. Ces recommandations visent à améliorer la qualité des discussions entre l'employeur et les représentants des travailleurs lorsqu'une entreprise est en restructuration, et ce, dans l'intérêt de toutes les parties concernées. L'avis n° 2.149 donne un aperçu des résultats de ces travaux et fait part de la volonté du Conseil de poursuivre ses travaux afin de formuler des propositions par souci de simplicité et de sécurité juridique. Ces travaux ont débuté au sein du Conseil.

4.3.4. Heures supplémentaires

Dans le cadre des accords du 1er avril 2019, le Conseil a conclu le 23 avril 2019 la convention collective de travail n° 129 concernant les heures supplémentaires volontaires. Cette convention a pour objet d'augmenter le quota maximum d'heures supplémentaires volontaires par année civile de maximum 100 heures à maximum 120 heures. Ceci ne porte pas préjudice à la possibilité offerte par la loi du 16 mars 1971 sur le travail d'augmenter, par année civile, le nombre maximum d'heures supplémentaires volontaires à 360 heures par convention collective de travail rendue obligatoire par le Roi.

4.3.5. Détachement de travailleurs

Dans son avis n° 2.147 du 26 novembre 2019, le Conseil s'est prononcé sur un avant-projet de loi qui vise à transposer en droit du travail belge la dernière directive 2018/957 concernant le détachement de travailleurs. Il y propose qu'un certain nombre de changements soient apportés dans le dispositif de l'avant-projet de loi et y insiste tout particulièrement sur l'importance de la prévention, en fournissant aux entreprises étrangères et aux travailleurs détachés une information complète (exacte et à jour) transparente et accessible sur la réglementation sociale applicable dans le cadre du détachement en Belgique, tout en soulignant que le suivi, le contrôle et l'exécution des dispositions relatives au détachement revêtent une importance capitale.

Le Conseil y fait également part de son intention d'examiner les possibilités de dérogation reprises dans la directive 96/71/CE ainsi que de se pencher sur les problèmes rencontrés pour rendre effective sur le terrain la transposition de la directive 2014/67/UE relative à l'exécution de la directive 96/71/CE concernant le détachement de travailleurs. Ces travaux seront menés dans le cadre d'une plateforme d'information sur la fraude sociale créée en son sein en application de dispositions introduites dans le code pénal social. Un protocole de collaboration a été conclu début 2020 entre le Conseil national du Travail et le Service d'Information et de Recherche Sociale (SIRS) pour organiser le fonctionnement de cette plateforme. Celle-ci est destinée à stimuler le dialogue entre, d'une part, le Gouvernement et le SIRS et d'autre part, les partenaires sociaux, en matière de lutte contre la fraude sociale.

4.3.6. Pensions complémentaires

Dans le cadre des travaux du groupe de travail réunissant les partenaires sociaux au sein de la cellule stratégique Pensions, le Conseil s'est penché de manière plus approfondie, dans son avis n° 2.155, sur un certain nombre de problèmes d'interprétation qui se posent concernant l'application de la législation devant aboutir, à terme, à la disparition de toute différence de traitement qui repose sur la distinction entre ouvriers et employés en matière de pensions complémentaires. L'avis n° 2.155 apporte des réponses à ces questions pratiques, de sorte que l'ensemble des acteurs concernés puissent progresser dans leurs travaux en vue de la suppression des différences de traitement entre les ouvriers et les employés en matière de pensions complémentaires.

Par ailleurs, dans sa recommandation du 23 avril 2019 adressée aux commissions paritaires et aux entreprises à l'occasion des accords du 1er avril, le Conseil national du Travail a invité les négociateurs au niveau des secteurs et des entreprises à fournir des efforts afin de supprimer la différence de traitement qui repose sur la distinction entre ouvriers et employés en matière de pensions complémentaires, particulièrement dans les secteurs et entreprises où la différence est encore très importante. Le Conseil a enfin demandé que tous les secteurs lui remettent, d'ici le 1^{er} septembre 2019, un rapport motivé sur les progrès réalisés. Le Conseil rédigera ensuite un rapport global de monitoring à l'intention du Groupe des 10, qui en tirera les conclusions appropriées.

4.3.7. Liaison au bien-être

Le Conseil national du travail et le Conseil central de l'économie ont rendu le 29 avril 2019, conjointement avec le Comité général de gestion pour le statut social des travailleurs indépendants (sur le volet des travailleurs indépendants), un avis dans lequel ils se sont prononcés à l'unanimité sur la détermination et la répartition de l'enveloppe bien-être disponible pour les prestations de sécurité sociale et d'assistance sociale pour la période 2019-2020. L'exécution de cet avis fait partie intégrante des accords du 1^{er} avril 2019.

Dans leur avis, les Conseils et le CGG se sont efforcés de garantir la liaison des allocations au bien-être en tenant compte du principe d'assurance et de solidarité. Ils ont souhaité également poursuivre la

réduction de l'écart de pauvreté et proposer des solutions pour des situations problématiques spécifiques, en particulier la situation des familles monoparentales, sans créer de nouveaux pièges à l'emploi et à l'inactivité et en veillant également à ne pas créer, par leurs mesures, de nouvelles différences entre le régime des travailleurs indépendants et le régime des travailleurs salariés.

Annex 10 : Opinion of the National High Council for Persons with disabilities

Opinion n° 2020-03 of the National High Council for Persons with Disabilities (NHCPD) on the National Reform Programme 2020, delivered in plenary session on 17/02/2020.

Opinion given at the request of Ms Sophie Wilmès, Prime Minister, on 29/01/2020

1. Subject

As part of the Europe 2020 Strategy, which aims at balancing the improvement of sustainable development indicators for growth, employment and environmental protection while increasing Europe's competitiveness at the global level, each Member State submits to the European Commission an articulated programme with national objectives set at European level. This is the National Reform Programme (NRP).

The Prime Minister has asked an opinion from the NHCPD to prepare the NRP 2020.

2. Analysis

On 27 February 2019, in the [evaluation report of Belgium in the framework of the European semester](#), the European Commission points out that

- a) the inactivity rate is among the highest in the European Union and, compared to other countries, people with disabilities are at greater risk of poverty or social exclusion (p.4) persons with disabilities face considerable difficulties in accessing health care (p.6).
- b) The inactivity rate is among the highest in the EU and an increasing share of the inactive are sick or disabled. In 2017, the inactivity rate (25-64 years) was 23.4%, well above the EU average (20.4%). While the inactivity rate has remained stable over time, the reasons for inactivity have changed considerably. The inactive population between 25 and 64 years that self-report being sick or having disabilities increased from 16% in 2007 to 30% in 2017 (p. 37).
- c) People with disabilities face particularly strong challenges regarding poverty, educational attainment and employment. The employment rate for people with disabilities is much lower than the EU average (40.5 % vs. 48.1 %). The transition from the traditional disability-welfare approach towards a rights-based approach (considering persons with disabilities as active citizens needing access to all community services) is slow. Considering the diversity of fields to address (work, education, services, social benefits, etc.), the lack of a de-institutionalisation strategy concerted between federal and federated entities (in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities) makes the situation more difficult to tackle. (p.49).
- d) Strong investment are also required in social inclusion, in particular so as to ensure equal and inclusive access to services (including healthcare and long term care), full participation of the persons with disabilities in society (p.49).

On 5 June 2019, the European Council made [a set of recommendations](#) to Belgium on its National Reform Programme for 2020:

“1. Ensure that the nominal growth rate of net primary government expenditure does not exceed 1.6% in 2020, corresponding to an annual structural adjustment of 0.6% of GDP. Use windfall gains to accelerate the reduction of the general government debt ratio. Continue reforms to ensure the fiscal sustainability of the long-term care and pension systems, including by limiting early exit possibilities from the labour market. Improve the composition and efficiency of public spending, notably through spending reviews, and the coordination of fiscal policies by all levels of government to create room for public investment.

2. Remove disincentives to work and strengthen the effectiveness of active labour market policies, in particular for the low skilled, older workers and people with a migrant background. Improve the performance and inclusiveness of the education and training systems and address skills mismatches.

3. Focus investment-related economic policy on sustainable transport, including upgrading rail infrastructure, the low carbon and energy transition and research and innovation, in particular in digitalisation, taking into account regional disparities. Tackle the growing mobility challenges, by reinforcing incentives and removing barriers to increase the supply and demand of collective and low emission transport

4. Reduce the regulatory and administrative burden to incentivise entrepreneurship and remove barriers to competition in services, particularly telecommunication, retail and professional services.”

3. OPINION

In the light of the Commission's findings, the European Council's recommendations and the deterioration in the living conditions of people with disabilities observed by associations in the field (see details below), the NHCPD would like to see the following points included as priorities in the body of the NRP 2020:

a) **Effectively increasing the employment rate of persons with disabilities and sick people.**

The “Back to work” measure, due to a lack of accompanying measures, did not lead to the expected increase in people returning to work. Human resources must be made available to support sick and disabled workers at work ([Opinion 2015-32](#)).

More fundamentally, there is an urgent need for the government to establish, in a concrete way, a **social responsibility of private sector employers**. The NHCPD takes note of the entry into force of the new [Royal Decree laying down the conditions for positive action concerning reasonable accommodation for people with disabilities](#). It is waiting for its concrete assessment.

As the largest employer in the country, the **state** must set an example by hiring people with disabilities. The [latest report of the CARPH \(advisory committee on hiring people with disabilities in the federal public service\) published in 2018](#) mentions an average employment rate in the **federal public service** of **less than 2%**. In its opinion [2017-01](#), the

NHCPD recommends a number of ways to support the employment of disabled and sick persons in the public service.

b) **Reforming the regulatory framework.**

The system of allowances for persons with disabilities - **Act of 27 February 1987** - no longer meets the needs of disabled persons at all: replacement allowance 20% below the poverty line, taking into account the income of the year -2/-1, long processing time for files, no concrete measures nor bridging to support a return to work... are all situations that fuel the poverty of disabled persons. The in-depth reform of an act which, as of 1 February 2020, concerns 201,192 beneficiaries is urgent and necessary ([memorandum 2019](#)).

Under **Article 100 of the coordinated law of 14 July 1994** (INAMI-RIZIV regime), the concept of "previous status" excludes people who got their disability at a very young age from being accompanied (back) to work. The NHCPD insists on the anachronism of such a measure and on the need to rewrite this text in such a way as to allow full and lasting social protection for disabled workers, whatever the origin of their disability.

- c) **Training must be more accessible and of higher quality.** The considerations of recent years regarding dropping out of school and the inadequacy of **non-qualifying or low-skill training and study programs** in relation to market needs are even more relevant for students with disabilities. The NHCPD also reiterates its call for more inclusive education, which should also help limiting the number of school dropouts. This does not mean abolishing special education, but adapting mainstream education to the needs of children with disabilities, through differentiated pedagogies based on the children's needs and not on their disability. In 2019, the UN experts sent a clear question to Belgium in this regard ([recommendations of the experts](#), page 5 point 22).
- d) **In the field of mobility**, priority must be given to **transport that is accessible to all** and to **inter-modality: being able to take a train or bus autonomously** is a necessity to enable disabled adults and children to access employment and training. It is important to plan on the long term. The current purchases of rolling stock by the SNCB-NMBS will make it impossible for disabled persons and persons with reduced mobility (i.e. 1 in 3 people in Belgium) to access the trains for the next 30 years ([NHCPD press release of 23/12/2019](#)). Moreover, this measure is in total opposition to the Sustainable Development Goals to which Belgium has subscribed.
- e) **In the field of health care:** it is necessary to improve access to care for patients who currently forego health care due to lack of money or information. It is also necessary to improve the accessibility of hospitals, access to information and training for professionals. The framework of collective care needs to be accessible to people with disabilities; specific care must be developed where necessary. More about this in the [NHCPD position paper](#).
- f) As regards **access to pensions**, the NHCPD points out that it is difficult for many **people with disabilities and their informal carers** to extend their careers; on the contrary, it should be possible to adjust the end of their career and assimilate periods of interruption during their careers. Disabled people and/or their informal carers

have often seen their work and career prospects reduced, without their consent, with all the situations of social exclusion and poverty induced in the long term (more details in the [study by the King Baudouin Foundation](#)).

For people with disabilities, reaching pension often means a second descent into hell, as the costs associated with ageing and their state of health inevitably increase. The government should also study the establishment of another mechanism, i.e. a more advantageous taking into account of the career years of persons with disabilities in order to encourage employment. The NHCPD believes, on the contrary, that early access to the retirement pension (while maintaining one's rights) should be considered for people with disabilities. This would encourage people with disabilities to work and at the same time take into account how painful it is for them.

- g) As regards the use of the **Structural Funds**, the NHCPD calls for these funds to be devoted to policies that genuinely support people with disabilities and their families in the development of independent living and their inclusion in community life. These funds must be primarily dedicated to the [institutional transition](#) of people with disabilities: housing, collective aid in particular.
- h) In the field of the **fight against poverty**, the NHCPD once again recalls the pillar of the 2020 Strategy relating to the fight against poverty and in particular the objective of reducing the number of people living in precarious conditions in Belgium. For years, [poverty figures](#) have been rising (2,250,000 people are at serious risk of poverty) and the increase in employment in Belgium has not benefited the poorest people: the living situations of disabled people in Belgium are among [the worst in Europe](#). There is an urgent need for governments to work in coherence and complementarity around an **inter-federal strategy to combat poverty and social exclusion** of all vulnerable groups: it must start from the needs of the different groups and integrate policies at all levels. This plan must be seen as an **indispensable contribution to the economic, social and political stability of the country**. Furthermore, the Belgian [Court of Audit in its Audit of the Second Federal Plan for Combating Poverty](#) (pages 1 and 16) had deplored the under-utilisation since 2013 of the Inter-ministerial Conference on Integration into Society, which has not met nor has it organised any substantial work since then.

The NHCPD calls for a **quick reactivation of the Inter-ministerial Conference** in order to plan vigorous and concerted measures in the fight against poverty.

The [Disability-Poverty Compendium](#) (December 2019) lists several [key recommendations](#) for reducing disability-related poverty, including in particular:

1. Better income protection: increase in the income replacement benefit, reduction in the "price of love", administrative simplification of the granting procedure, in-depth examination of the evaluation criteria and their application.
2. Full citizenship: monitoring social participation: more handistreaming, "handicap" indicator, inter-federal approach.
3. Labour market participation as a positive measure: eliminate/avoid employment traps, adapted work for people with disabilities.

4. Reducing non-take-up: a more proactive approach and greater proximity (outreach) of front-line services, reflection on the use of digital technologies, specific attention to people with an immigration background.

These considerations and positions are reminiscent of those of the [Belgian Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion EU2020](#) issued on 31 January:

- [increase benefits above the poverty line and ensure full social protection of the population](#) ,
- [provide free childcare, schooling, health care and decent housing and food for children](#),
- [active and social inclusion of people whose jobs no longer exist and who are far away from the labour market](#),
- [preventing and combating homelessness](#)
- and lastly, [designing and implementing policies aimed at a better integration of migrants \(language courses, recognition of diplomas and skills, support for social services, etc.\)](#).

The NHCPD fully supports these recommendations as the situation of chronic illness or disability further increases the risks mentioned above. Therefore, the NHCPD supports the approach of the Belgian Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion EU2020, that asks that its [opinion of 31/01/2020](#) be attached to the NRP2020.

The NHCPD also wishes to remind the many conclusions and recommendations of the [biennial Sustainability-Poverty Report 2018-2019](#) and the consequences of the challenges of global warming in terms of poverty. It is crucial to integrate the poverty dimension in the development of environmental policies, otherwise poor people will be excluded even more. The NHCPD reminds the remarkable intervention of [Wim Van Lancker, KU Leuven](#), who pointed out that

- the redistributive function of the allowances decreased by 13% between 2005 (48%) and 2018 (35%);
- poverty reached its highest level during the same period: 16.4% versus 14.8%.

This combination is the worst there is, resulting in Belgium having a very high poverty rate compared to other countries and people who enter poverty rarely escaping it.

We need a long-term plan with a clear vision of "which model of society do we want?", otherwise we will have to acknowledge the same failure in 25 years! The objectives must be broken down at the

- local level: direct assistance to persons, services accessible to all and prevention, identification of persons and needs (outreaching) recognition of rights
- regional level: housing, employment, care, education, childcare
- federal level: social security, taxation, health care

Consultation between all levels is the key to success.

- i) **In the field of statistics**, there is no single definition of disability and no connection between the various recognition regimes. As a result, disabled people recognised by DG People with a disability (DG HAN) are not necessarily recognised by the regional agencies (AVIQ, Phare, VDAB, etc.) and therefore fall off the radar screen as regards employment and training. Future governments need to integrate their databases and work together to develop policies that truly meet people's needs in the fields mentioned above.
- j) **In terms of political functioning**, it is becoming really necessary and urgent that the different levels of power talk to each other and work together to provide comprehensive and integrated responses to people's needs. All Inter-Ministerial Conferences should be reactivated.
- k) **Promoting** the use of easy to read and understand language (ER), generalising sign language and recreating proactive and competent social counters are essential tools in the fight against poverty in everyday life.
- l) Finally, in the context of drafting the NRPs and the proper feeding of the European semester, it becomes essential to **actively and permanently involve all civil society actors close to poverty and disadvantaged groups in our society**. Belgium is often cited as an example in the field of consultation. There are many places for reflection, many of which involve those directly concerned. There is an urgent need for political decision making to be based on daily needs. The NHCPD hopes that the next NRP will be the result of a truly participatory and inclusive exercise of the needs of all.

Annex 11 : Opinion of the Federal Council for Sustainable Development

Contexte

- a) Le Programme national de réforme (PNR) s'inscrit dans le cadre du « Semestre européen », un cycle de coordination des politiques économique et budgétaire dans l'UE. Le PNR définit les mesures adoptées par l'État membre concerné en réponse aux recommandations nationales spécifiques du Conseil européen et aux objectifs de la Stratégie européenne 2020.
- b) Le PNR de notre pays est élaboré en coordination entre le gouvernement fédéral et les gouvernements des régions ainsi que des communautés. Pour ce faire, il existe un comité d'orientation politique et un comité de concertation qui réunit les différentes autorités. Le programme est rédigé par un comité de rédaction dirigé par la Chancellerie du Premier Ministre. Le comité de rédaction se compose du SPF Finances, du Bureau fédéral du Plan (en collaboration avec le SPF Économie), du SPF Sécurité sociale, du SPF Emploi et des régions ainsi que des communautés.
- c) Pour l'élaboration du PNR, une consultation est également organisée avec les partenaires sociaux et la société civile. Chaque année, le Conseil Central de l'Économie, le Conseil National du Travail et le CFDD sont invités à conseiller le comité de rédaction dans l'élaboration du programme. Cette contribution est publiée en annexe du PNR. Par courrier du 29 janvier 2020, le Premier ministre a ainsi demandé au CFDD de contribuer au PNR 2020 de notre pays. L'avis du CFDD est demandé pour le 8 mars 2020. Le PNR 2020 sera soumis à la Commission européenne à la fin du mois d'avril. Pour préparer son avis, le CFDD a organisé le 17 février 2020 une audition dans son groupe de travail « Stratégies ». Veerle Nuyts, European Semester Officer pour notre pays, a expliqué la nouvelle approche de l'UE en matière de Semestre européen. Cette approche est basée sur des priorités modifiées en matière de croissance, comme définies dans la « Stratégie annuelle 2020 pour une croissance durable » et dans d'autres documents⁹⁸. « L'UE veut parvenir à un nouveau modèle de croissance qui respectera les restrictions d'utilisation de nos ressources naturelles et garantira la création d'emplois et une prospérité durable pour l'avenir ». Une stratégie de croissance durable doit faire de l'UE « le premier continent au monde climatiquement neutre, économe en ressources et ayant su s'adapter à l'ère numérique, tout en garantissant l'équité sociale.»
- d) Le pacte vert «fait partie intégrante de la stratégie de cette Commission visant à mettre en œuvre le programme des Nations unies à l'horizon 2030 et ses objectifs de développement durable³, ainsi que les autres priorités annoncées dans les orientations politiques de la présidente von der Leyen⁴. Dans le cadre du pacte vert, la Commission recentrera le processus

⁹⁸ COM(2019)650 du 17/12/2019. Voir aussi COM(2019)640 du 11/12/2019 (Le Green Deal européen), COM(2020)14 du 14/01/2020 (Une Europe sociale forte pour des transitions justes) et COM(2020)55 du 05/02/2020 (Évaluation de la gouvernance économique).

de coordination macroéconomique du Semestre européen en vue d'intégrer les objectifs de développement durable des Nations unies afin de placer la durabilité et le bien-être des citoyens au cœur de la politique économique et les objectifs de développement durable au centre de l'élaboration des politiques et de l'action de l'UE.»⁹⁹ Concrètement, le Semestre européen intégrera désormais ces SDG en suivant les progrès accomplis dans la réalisation de ces objectifs, en coordonnant les efforts fournis en la matière par les États membres et en recommandant des politiques dans les domaines des réformes structurelles, des investissements et de la politique fiscale. Les Programmes nationaux de Réforme des États membres devront tenir compte de cette nouvelle approche.

- e) Les conséquences actuelles pour le PNR 2020 de la Belgique ont été expliquées lors de l'audition par Pierre Vanheuverzwijn de la Chancellerie. Notre pays intégrera les SDG dans son PNR 2020 en incluant une colonne supplémentaire pour les SDG dans le tableau de rapportage, en établissant un lien avec les SDG dans les différentes sections (également lorsqu'il est question d'investissements) et en reprenant une page consacrée à la gouvernance des SDG dans notre pays. M. Vanheuverzwijn a déclaré que ces adaptations restent relativement limitées, mais qu'il s'agit d'une année de transition : le PNR de l'année prochaine pourra aborder les SDG plus en profondeur, surtout si la Commission européenne venait à formuler des recommandations en ce sens.

2. Contribution du CFDD au Programme national de réforme 2020

1. Le CFDD considère qu'il est important, en tant qu'organisation de parties prenantes, de formuler une contribution au PNR. Le Conseil souligne toutefois que le délai accordé pour cette contribution (à savoir 5 semaines) est très limité et demande donc une révision du timing lors de l'élaboration du prochain PNR. Il doit être possible d'impliquer le Conseil à un stade plus précoce du processus, par exemple sur la base d'un projet ou de ses lignes directrices, pour pouvoir disposer de plus de temps pour élaborer un avis.
2. En tant que Conseil du développement durable, le CFDD se félicite de la nouvelle orientation du Semestre européen qui vise à mettre la durabilité au cœur de ce cycle politique de l'Union et de ses États membres. En effet, le CFDD a toujours demandé ces dernières années dans ses avis sur le PNR que la politique soit placée « dans un cadre de développement durable pour pouvoir parvenir de ce point de vue à une intégration de différents domaines politiques (économie, affaires sociales, fiscalité, éducation, énergie, budget, mobilité, climat, etc.) »¹⁰⁰.

⁹⁹ https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/european-green-deal-communication_fr.pdf §7

¹⁰⁰ Avis sur le PNR 2019 (15 mars 2019)

3. Le CFDD comprend que le PNR 2020 est un rapport de transition qui ne peut pas encore exploiter tout le potentiel des SDG. Néanmoins, le Conseil estime que le PNR 2020 pourrait aller plus loin que la brève description prévue de la gouvernance dans le domaine des SDG en Belgique. Le CFDD demande que cette page formelle soit complétée par un état des lieux substantiel et politique du développement durable en Belgique qui peut s’inspirer notamment du Rapport fédéral sur le développement durable 2019 (qui évalue, sur la base de 51 indicateurs de suivi, la situation en termes de réalisation des SDG dans notre pays¹⁰¹), des avis du CCE et du CNT sur les indicateurs de développement durable¹⁰² et de l’annexe E du « country report Belgium 2020 » publié le 26 février 2020 par la Commission¹⁰³, qui enferme également une évaluation de la mise en œuvre des SDG en Belgique sur la base des indicateurs Eurostat.¹⁰⁴ De cette façon, il est possible d’évaluer les domaines dans lesquels notre pays obtient de bons ou de mauvais résultats en termes d’exécution des SDG et d’adopter les mesures politiques appropriées pour parvenir à une mise en œuvre cohérente des SDG.

4. Par ailleurs, le CFDD demande que la politique dans les différentes sections du PNR soit réellement évaluée au regard des objectifs de développement durable dans leur ensemble et de ne pas se limiter à une simple mention du numéro de SDG auquel une action ou une mesure peut être associée. En effet, les SDG ne sont pas autonomes mais sont interconnectés. Pour cette raison, chaque section du PNR 2020 devrait idéalement indiquer non seulement si une mesure s’inscrit dans un objectif, mais aussi si cette mesure peut exercer un impact négatif sur d’autres objectifs (avec les pondérations qui ont été attribuées) ou si des synergies sont possibles avec d’autres objectifs. Le Rapport fédéral sur le développement durable 2017 a déjà souligné en ce sens les liens réciproques entre les SDG autour de trois thèmes : la pauvreté et l’inégalité des revenus, l’énergie et le climat ainsi que les transports. De cette façon, les SDG constituent un instrument d’intégration politique horizontale qui est essentiel pour parvenir à un développement durable.

5. En plus d’une intégration politique horizontale (entre domaines), le CFDD préconise également dans ses avis une véritable intégration politique verticale (entre niveaux de pouvoir). Ces dernières années, le Conseil a constaté à plusieurs reprises que cette intégration verticale est problématique dans notre pays et que cette situation pèse sur l’efficacité de la politique dans divers domaines. Dans cette optique, le CFDD a soutenu un certain nombre d’initiatives interfédérales ou nationales comme la Stratégie nationale

¹⁰¹ <https://www.frdo-cfdd.be/fr/publications/advice/avis-concernant-le-rapport-federal-sur-le-developpement-durable-2019>

¹⁰² <https://www.ccecrb.fgov.be/p/fr/731/cce-et-cnt-se-prononcent-sur-les-objectifs-de-developpement-durable-de-l-onu>

¹⁰³ https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/2020-european-semester-country-report-belgium_en.pdf

¹⁰⁴ La mention de ces sources potentielles d’information ne signifie pas que le CFDD soit d’accord avec tous les indicateurs mentionnés ou avec toutes les conclusions qui en sont tirées

de Développement durable (SNDD), le Plan national Énergie-Climat 2030¹⁰⁵, la Plateforme intra-belge de l'Économie circulaire, un pacte interfédéral pour la qualité de l'air, une vision stratégique interfédérale sur la mobilité et une plateforme nationale transversale pour la transition vers un système alimentaire durable¹⁰⁶.

Le « country report Belgium 2020 » mentionné souligne également que « *The fragmentation of policy action is not offset by effective coordination, seeking out synergies, which makes the business environment more complex* ». ¹⁰⁷ Ce problème se pose aussi au niveau budgétaire : « *Budgetary coordination is not sufficiently effective yet, as the 2013 cooperation agreement has not been fully implemented.* » ¹⁰⁸

6. Le CFDD regrette que les initiatives interfédérales ne décollent en général pas, ne sont pas suffisamment soutenues, sont trop limitées dans leur ambition ou ne font pas preuve d'une vision systémique intégrée. Par exemple, le Plan national Énergie-Climat 2030, adopté à la fin de l'année dernière, ne répond en aucune façon aux recommandations formulées par le CFDD en collaboration avec six autres conseils consultatifs. ¹⁰⁹

Il en va de même pour la Stratégie nationale de Développement durable (SNDD) en tant qu'instrument de mise en œuvre de l'Agenda 2030 en Belgique. La SNDD adoptée en mai 2017 est un texte cadre peu ambitieux qui ne tient pas assez compte de la demande faite par neuf conseils consultatifs (dont le CFDD)¹¹⁰ aux différentes autorités de coordonner autant que possible (méthodologie, calendrier, suivi, indicateurs, etc.) les travaux autour de leurs stratégies de développement durable respectives (y compris les stratégies climatiques) afin de travailler aussi efficacement que possible pour la SNDD, la stratégie européenne de réalisation du 2030 ASD et le processus des Nations unies.

7. Dans le même ordre d'idées, le CFDD regrette que le PNR, en tant que mécanisme national, ne soit à de nombreux égards qu'un « *inventaire de ce qui se passe aux différents niveaux de pouvoir* » ¹¹¹ et demande que le PNR 2020, pour répondre aux recommandations de la Commission, accorde plus d'attention dans divers domaines à des initiatives possibles pour parvenir à un fédéralisme coopératif, « *afin de pouvoir ainsi opter entièrement pour une meilleure collaboration entre les niveaux de pouvoir qui leur permette de se renforcer mutuellement* ». ¹¹²

¹⁰⁵ <https://www.frdo-cfdd.be/sites/default/files/content/download/files/2018a06f.pdf>

¹⁰⁶ <https://www.frdo-cfdd.be/sites/default/files/content/download/files/2018a06f.pdf>

¹⁰⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/2020-european-semester-country-report-belgium_en.pdf p 62

¹⁰⁸ https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/2020-european-semester-country-report-belgium_en.pdf p 22

¹⁰⁹ <https://www.frdo-cfdd.be/sites/default/files/content/download/files/2019a03f.pdf>

¹¹⁰ <https://www.frdo-cfdd.be/sites/default/files/content/download/files/2016a07f.pdf>

¹¹¹ http://www.frdo-cfdd.be/sites/default/files/content/download/files/2014a02f_0.pdf

¹¹² https://www.frdo-cfdd.be/sites/default/files/content/download/files/2018a11f_0.pdf

Les SDG peuvent servir de levier à cet effet, sur la base d'une analyse des éventuelles lacunes et des « chaînons manquants » de la coopération entre les niveaux de pouvoir qui pourraient entraver une mise en œuvre intégrée des SDG. Cette analyse devrait ensuite déboucher sur des accords supplémentaires ou renouvelés entre les niveaux de pouvoir pour répondre aux recommandations et aux objectifs de l'UE.

Dans son récent country report pour notre pays (3.4.4), la Commission souligne en effet des lacunes dans la politique en raison d'un manque de coordination entre les niveaux de pouvoir dans divers domaines comme les investissements publics, la santé, la numérisation, le marché du travail, la politique climatique, la mobilité et le verdissement de la fiscalité. Et ce, alors que sous certaines conditions, une politique climatique efficace peut avoir un impact positif notamment sur le marché du travail dans notre pays, selon des études utilisées par la Commission: « *The employment impact of the Paris Climate Agreement is positive and among the highest in the EU. A study that investigates employment impacts in the EU of the policies necessary to meet the 2°C limit by 2050 shows a 1% increase in employment in Belgium or an additional 60,000 jobs as compared to the baseline scenario (European Commission, 2019d).* »¹¹³

8. En ce qui concerne la fiscalité, la Commission affirme que « *In budgetary terms, Belgium is among the countries that could benefit the most from introducing an ambitious carbon and energy taxation.* »¹¹⁴ Le défi, tant au niveau européen qu'au niveau national, consistera à concrétiser, après une analyse d'impact, ce signal de prix pour les secteurs ETS et non-ETS d'une telle façon que dans le cadre de la transition bas carbone (où des coûts externes sont en majeure partie internalisés) il ne nuise pas à la compétitivité de notre économie mais, au contraire, qu'il la renforce en tenant compte d'un éventuel impact sur les consommateurs et les travailleurs vulnérables.

Un « just transition fund » est prévu à cet effet dans le Green Deal de la Commission, « *designed to ensure that the transition towards EU climate neutrality is fair by helping the most affected regions in Belgium to address the social and economic consequences.* »¹¹⁵ Vu que l'UE soutiendra aussi financièrement par d'autres moyens la transition vers une neutralité climatique, notamment par l'intermédiaire de la Banque européenne d'investissement, le CFDD estime que le PNR 2020 doit mentionner des initiatives possibles de notre pays pour mobiliser des fonds européens en vue de mettre en œuvre la transition bas carbone d'une manière socialement équitable.

9. Dans ce contexte, en ce qui concerne le volet « investissements » du PNR, le Conseil souligne également la nécessité de réorienter des flux financiers vers le financement de la

¹¹³ https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/2020-european_semester_country-report-belgium_en.pdf p 66

¹¹⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/2020-european_semester_country-report-belgium_en.pdf p 70

¹¹⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/2020-european_semester_country-report-belgium_en.pdf p 7

transition bas carbone. Le Conseil a accordé une attention particulière à cette question l'année dernière et a formulé des propositions en la matière dans son avis « sur le Pacte national d'investissements stratégiques et le financement de la transition vers une économie décarbonée. »¹¹⁶ Il est question notamment des règles budgétaires européennes qui peuvent actuellement entraver des investissements dans la transition bas carbone (point 1.2). La Commission européenne a rouvert elle-même le débat sur cette question dans une récente communication.¹¹⁷ Le CFDD est d'avis que notre pays doit alors reformuler sa position sur cette question et la clarifier dans le PNR 2020.

Dans ce contexte, le Conseil demande également que le PNR précise la façon dont le Pacte national d'investissements stratégiques sera effectivement mis en œuvre : un an et demi après son lancement, personne ne sait encore comment les besoins d'investissement identifiés vont être concrètement satisfaits.

10. Pour la transition, des modèles économiques innovants comme l'économie circulaire et l'économie collaborative peuvent constituer une grande opportunité. La transition vers une économie circulaire fait partie du Green Deal européen et la Commission présentera le 10 mars 2020 son nouveau plan d'action pour une économie circulaire qui comprendra une politique en faveur de produits durables. Il est important de stimuler cette transition dans notre pays également. Pour ce faire, le CFDD a récemment publié un certain nombre de recommandations dans un avis conjoint avec le CCE¹¹⁸. Les conseils demandent notamment que des mesures soient adoptées pour rendre les marchés publics plus circulaires et que la fiscalité soit étudiée comme un levier de l'économie circulaire.

¹¹⁶ <https://www.frdo-cfdd.be/sites/default/files/content/download/files/2018a07f.pdf>

¹¹⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/economy-finance/com_2020_55_en.pdf

¹¹⁸ <https://www.frdo-cfdd.be/sites/default/files/content/download/files/2020a03f.pdf>

Annex 12 : Opinion of the Belgian platform against poverty and social exclusion 2020

La Plateforme belge contre la pauvreté et l'exclusion sociale UE2020 a été créée en 2011 dans le cadre de la stratégie Europe 2020, sous le mandat de la Conférence interministérielle « Intégration dans la société ». Ce, par analogie avec la Plateforme européenne contre la pauvreté et l'exclusion sociale.

La Plateforme belge contre la pauvreté et l'exclusion sociale UE2020 représente l'organe de concertation central pour la préparation et le suivi de la politique belge et européenne dans le domaine de la lutte contre la pauvreté et l'exclusion sociale en fonction de l'élaboration et du suivi du Plan National de Réforme et du rapportage stratégique dans le cadre de la Méthode Ouverte de Coordination renforcée (volet inclusion sociale). La Plateforme belge se réunit au moins quatre fois par an.

Tous les deux ans, la Plateforme belge organise en outre une réunion ouverte afin que toutes les parties prenantes aient l'occasion de participer au maximum aux processus politiques.

La cinquième journée portes ouvertes de la Plateforme a eu lieu le 31 janvier 2020. Au total, il y avait 80 personnes présentes qui constituaient un large éventail de parties prenantes : autorités fédérales, régionales et locales, administrations, institutions et conseils consultatifs, organisations d'aide, partenaires sociaux, organisations de la société civile, instituts de recherche et universités, personnes vivant dans la pauvreté et représentées par leurs associations où les pauvres ont la parole. Cette grande diversité impliquant tous les niveaux politiques garantit une approche du phénomène complexe de la pauvreté et de l'exclusion sociale depuis divers points de vue et positions.

La Journée Portes ouvertes avait un objectif double :

- La constitution d'une opinion de la Plateforme belge au sujet de la récente politique relative à la lutte contre la pauvreté en Belgique en fonction de l'élaboration et du suivi du Programme National de Réforme
- Le développement et le lancement d'un processus afin d'évaluer la politique belge de lutte contre la pauvreté qui a été développée dans le cadre de la stratégie UE2020.

Cette opinion est basée sur 5 notes thématiques d'experts, divisées selon les priorités stratégiques du chapitre Inclusion sociale du Programme National de Réforme 2019 et la table ronde à ce sujet avec des experts et l'interaction avec les participants à la Journée Portes ouvertes. Ces recommandations s'adressent aux parties prenantes, en particulier aux entités fédérales et fédérées.

Conclusions - Recommandations :

1. Généralités

- La politique actuelle de lutte contre la pauvreté n'est pas dans les temps pour atteindre l'objectif et l'engagement pris dans le Plan National de Réforme 2011, à savoir sortir 380.000 personnes de la pauvreté d'ici 2020. Le nombre de personnes en situation de pauvreté ou d'exclusion sociale (objectif Europe 2020) est en légère baisse depuis 2016 et se retrouve en 2018, après les légères augmentations précédentes, plus ou moins au niveau de départ de 2008 (2.250.000 par rapport à 2.194.000 en 2008).

- Le PNR 2019 énumère principalement diverses mesures sans vision ni stratégie sur la façon de lutter de manière structurelle contre la pauvreté. Le lien entre les mesures prises et l'atteinte de « l'objectif pauvreté » n'est pas décrit. Les mesures politiques ne sont souvent pas assez ambitieuses, n'ont pas d'impact sur la pauvreté et accroissent parfois même plutôt la pauvreté.

- Les conclusions et recommandations de l'évaluation du Plan fédéral de lutte contre la pauvreté 2016-2019 doivent être reprises comme points de départ pour l'élaboration du Plan fédéral suivant.

- La lutte contre la pauvreté et l'exclusion sociale doit être une priorité réelle et commune pour tous les niveaux de pouvoir belges, dans un souci de cohérence maximale, d'harmonisation et de complémentarité. On déplore donc également qu'au cours de la dernière période de gouvernement aucune réunion de la Conférence interministérielle Intégration dans la Société n'a eu lieu. L'accord de coopération entre l'état fédéral, les communautés et les régions concernant la stabilité de la politique de la pauvreté (1998) stipule que cette Conférence interministérielle doit se réunir deux fois par an afin de garantir la concertation entre les différents gouvernements.

- Cette priorité doit être traduite dans un Plan national de lutte contre la pauvreté intégré et cohérent, dans lequel les points suivants sont centraux :

- Une vision et une stratégie afin de lutter contre les causes structurelles de la pauvreté.
 - La participation des personnes en situation de pauvreté pendant l'établissement, l'implémentation et l'évaluation du plan. Le renforcement des capacités en soutenant les organisations qui facilitent cette participation est nécessaire.
- Réalisation d'engagements internationaux pris par la Belgique dans le cadre des objectifs du Développement Durable des NU et du Socle européen des droits sociaux.
 - Suivi par la Conférence interministérielle (CIM) et la Plateforme belge contre la pauvreté et l'exclusion sociale.

- Il faut éviter une mauvaise politique. Le test de pauvreté doit être ancré légalement à tous les niveaux politiques et sa qualité doit être garantie.

2. Travailler avec des indicateurs, des objectifs et des sous-objectifs

- Un travail considérable est déjà entrepris en ce qui concerne le suivi quantitatif de la pauvreté en Belgique, et ce à pratiquement tous les niveaux politiques. Les indicateurs permettent de traduire des faits et des tendances en chiffres. Ces données ne garantissent toutefois aucune action (politique). La description de la situation à l'aide de données chiffrées et d'indicateurs est une première étape, mais il faut ensuite s'en servir. Il est très important d'assurer une liaison entre les indicateurs et le suivi d'une part et la politique d'autre part. Les deux doivent faire partie d'une stratégie intégrée qui soutient une politique orientée résultats et basée sur des preuves.
- Les informations pertinentes d'un point de vue politique peuvent être de nature quantitative (chiffrée) ou qualitative. Les deux types d'information sont nécessaires pour soutenir la politique. Elles se complètent. Si nous nous concentrons sur les indicateurs et les objectifs,

nous traitons des informations quantitatives. Le fait que toutes les informations importantes ne puissent pas être traduites en chiffres pose toutefois problème. De plus, un certain nombre de groupes cibles clés dans la lutte contre la pauvreté ne sont pas repris dans les chiffres, à l'image des sans-abris ou des personnes qui ont encouru une sanction dans le cadre d'une réglementation de protection sociale, par exemple. L'utilisation d'information qualitative est nécessaire pour interpréter le résultat des indicateurs quantitatifs, comme le rapport bisannuel du Service de lutte contre la pauvreté.

- Dans le contexte actuel de la gouvernance multiniveaux, il existe un risque que différents ensembles d'indicateurs soient créés les uns à côté des autres. Cela implique différentes exigences de rapportage et une charge de travail accrue pour les concepteurs d'indicateurs, ce qui n'est pas bénéfique pour la qualité des données rassemblées. La cohérence entre les différents niveaux politiques et les exigences de rapportage est donc souhaitable.
- Les objectifs démontrent leur utilité pour la réalisation et le suivi de la politique. Ils aident à lancer le processus d'action et à en assurer le bon déroulement. Il est important de continuer à formuler des objectifs (chiffrés) et des ambitions afin de continuer à stimuler et orienter les efforts politiques nécessaires.
- Suivi, Indicateurs et données chiffrées augmentent la visibilité du problème de la pauvreté, mais ils ne constituent pas en soi des instruments pour faire baisser la pauvreté. Il faut veiller à ce qu'on n'abuse pas des changements statistiques et de l'innovation pour faire baisser artificiellement la pauvreté.

3. Assurer la protection sociale de la population

Avec 16,4 %, le risque de pauvreté (AROP) est significativement plus élevé qu'au début de la période d'observation (14,8 % en 2005). Le risque de pauvreté atteint ici son niveau le plus élevé depuis le début du suivi systématique. Les indicateurs montrent également que l'efficacité de la protection sociale s'effrite, en particulier pour les personnes en âge actif et les enfants.

En 2018, grâce aux transferts sociaux, le chiffre du risque de pauvreté est passé de 25,1 % à 16,4 %, soit une baisse de 34,7 %. Entre 2005 et 2016, l'efficacité des missions sociales pour la population totale est passée lentement de 47,7 % à 44,2 %. Cette baisse s'est déroulée beaucoup plus rapidement au cours des 3 dernières années.

Le fait que les allocations ont suivi l'évolution de la prospérité est positif, mais de nombreuses personnes se situent encore toujours sous le seuil de pauvreté européen. L'engagement d'augmenter les allocations jusqu'au seuil européen est pourtant repris dans l'accord gouvernemental fédéral.

La politique menée ces dernières années laisse de plus en plus entrevoir l'esprit du modèle de culpabilité individuelle. Ce mode de pensée rend généralement l'accès aux droits sociaux et à la protection sociale plus ardu et met en péril les libertés et les droits fondamentaux de chacun. Il y a ainsi eu des réformes qui limitent l'accès aux droits sociaux ou qui excluent même totalement des personnes, comme la procédure de contrôle renforcée pour la garantie des revenus pour les plus âgés, les conditions renforcées pour les allocations d'insertion et la généralisation du projet intégré pour l'intégration sociale.

Le Programme National de Réforme ne comprend également aucune référence à l'actualisation nécessaire des formes de cohabitation dans la réglementation du droit à l'intégration sociale, comme

convenu dans l'accord gouvernemental. La problématique ici est le statut des cohabitants qui réduit fortement l'allocation des cohabitants d'une manière non proportionnelle à ce que les gens économisent en vivant ensemble. Le statut implique une limitation sérieuse des droits et libertés des personnes qui tombent sous ce statut.

Le lancement de l'app MyBenefits est une étape positive, mais insuffisante pour contrer le non-recours aux droits sociaux.

Recommandations

- Les revenus minimums doivent passer au-dessus du seuil de pauvreté européen, y compris une feuille de route élaborée et un budget adéquat pour mettre réellement cette mesure en pratique. Des revenus suffisants et accessibles doivent être une priorité absolue pour pouvoir réaliser une réduction effective de la pauvreté en Belgique.
- La liaison des revenus de remplacement et d'intégration à la situation familiale des ayants droit doit être revue. La suppression pure et simple du statut de cohabitant doit en outre être considérée le plus vite possible en vue d'une individualisation des droits et de la liberté de donner soi-même forme à sa propre vie de famille.
- Les réformes qui compliquent ou qui privent même totalement les personnes de l'accès aux droits sociaux doivent être annulées.
- Plutôt que l'élargissement des conditions de la sécurité sociale, il faut privilégier l'universalisme afin d'augmenter le soutien social. En outre, une prestation de services publique de qualité doit être fournie, où l'attention passe du contrôle à l'accompagnement afin de réaliser le droit à une vie digne pour tous.
- L'approche du non-recours au droit social doit être une priorité où les expériences des personnes en situation de pauvreté et les rapports existants à ce sujet doivent être repris comme maîtres mots.

4. Réduire la pauvreté infantile

En Belgique, la pauvreté des enfants est restée relativement stable au cours de la dernière décennie, mais elle a de nouveau augmenté ces dernières années pour atteindre 23,2 %, se rapprochant ainsi de la moyenne européenne. Le risque de pauvreté est extrêmement élevé parmi les enfants de familles monoparentales (50 %), de familles à faible intensité de travail (83 %) et des enfants d'origine non européenne (54,3 %). Dans ce dernier groupe, les barrières administratives, linguistiques et culturelles, ainsi que la discrimination, jouent un rôle qu'il ne faut pas sous-estimer. Un groupe d'attention spécifique est celui du groupe croissant des enfants Roms, qui rencontrent des problèmes extrêmes liés au logement, à la mauvaise nutrition et aux soins de santé, à la mendicité et à l'abandon scolaire. Nous mentionnerons ici également les demandeurs d'asile mineurs, qui représentent 30 % de tous les

demandeurs d'asile. Un de ces enfants sur six est un mineur non accompagné. En plus des problèmes liés à la migration, les traumatismes psychologiques jouent également un rôle ici. Pour un autre groupe d'attention, celui des enfants placés en institution, même les statistiques élémentaires font défaut. Le principal problème de ce groupe est celui du décalage au niveau de l'accueil (placements résidentiels trop longs et placement dans des établissements inappropriés comme les internats scolaires). Dans le cas des enfants handicapés, les principaux goulets d'étranglement sont les longs délais d'attente pour l'octroi d'un budget d'assistance personnelle et le manque de services de garde et d'enseignement inclusifs.

L'initiative du Parlement européen en matière de « garantie des enfants » offre donc un moyen bienvenu de retrouver le soutien politique nécessaire dans le cadre de l'éradication de la pauvreté et de l'insécurité des enfants. Il est également important de noter que la recommandation de la Commission européenne du 20 février 2013 « Investir dans l'enfance pour briser le cercle vicieux de l'inégalité » met en avant trois piliers : accès à des ressources adéquates via les parents, accès à des services de qualité abordables et le droit des enfants à participer. Les recommandations ci-dessous se concentrent sur le deuxième pilier de la recommandation, mais ne peuvent pas être considérées indépendamment des autres dimensions de la lutte contre la pauvreté infantile.

1. Garantir une alimentation adéquate.

Outre la proportion limitée d'enfants qui ont un accès insuffisant aux fruits, légumes et protéines frais (2-3 %), on constate une augmentation de l'obésité (20 %) en Belgique, ce qui indique également une alimentation déséquilibrée.

Nous recommandons d'investir dans des repas scolaires bon marché et des repas fournis par des partenaires locaux (comme les restaurants sociaux ou les épiceries sociales). Le soutien aux écoles peut être lié à une augmentation des prestations sociales et à une réglementation plus contraignante concernant la qualité et le prix des repas scolaires. En même temps, cela permet aux écoles ayant un public cible défavorisé d'utiliser leurs ressources de travail pour un soutien pédagogique au lieu d'une aide alimentaire.

2. Soins de santé gratuits

En Belgique, il existe de nombreuses prestations sociales qui rendent les soins de santé moins chers pour les groupes à faibles revenus, ainsi qu'un nombre limité de services gratuits pour les enfants. Mais il y a de nombreuses lacunes dans l'application, et nous constatons de facto que l'accès aux soins de santé pour les enfants est encore fortement lié au revenu et au statut de résidence (citoyen national ou européen, migrant « légal », demandeur d'asile ou migrant sans papiers). L'écart entre les riches et les pauvres en matière d'accès aux soins de santé s'est également considérablement creusé pendant les années de crise, en partie à cause des diminutions du financement public et de l'augmentation des tickets modérateurs.

Jusqu'à présent, le soutien sélectif n'a donc pas été très efficace pour garantir l'accès aux soins de santé (préventifs) aux groupes les plus défavorisés. Par exemple, les enfants des demandeurs d'asile ont théoriquement un accès gratuit aux soins de santé, mais dans la pratique, les familles se retrouvent prises dans les dédales de l'administration ou coincées sur des listes d'attente (par exemple pour les soins de santé mentale).

Le soutien de l'UE pourrait encourager des mesures de financement innovantes en faveur des enfants en situation de pauvreté - en particulier dans le domaine de la prévention et des soins de santé mentale

ainsi que des programmes de proximité. Au niveau belge, on devrait évoluer vers une réglementation qui dissocie complètement le droit aux soins de santé gratuits pour les enfants (défavorisés) du statut de résident.

3. La gratuité de l'enseignement et l'égalité des chances dans l'enseignement

Malgré les récentes réformes, les systèmes éducatifs belges restent relativement coûteux et très inégalitaires. À l'âge de 15 ans, les élèves issus des 10 % des familles les plus riches de Belgique ont en fait environ 4 ans d'avance sur les élèves issus des 10 % de la population la plus pauvre. L'écart entre les élèves autochtones et les élèves d'origine immigré est d'environ 1,5 année scolaire.

« La garantie enfant » pourrait contribuer à alléger les frais de scolarité pour les groupes défavorisés, par exemple par le biais de bourses d'études supérieures pour les élèves ou d'un financement prioritaire accru pour les écoles comptant une forte proportion d'élèves issus de groupes défavorisés. Mais, tout aussi important, elle encourage les réformes structurelles visant la déségrégation de l'enseignement et la suppression de la discrimination sociale (par exemple, promotion active de la mixité sociale et ethnique dans les écoles, enseignement inclusif, réduction des taux d'abandon et report de l'orientation des études). Cela exige un investissement supplémentaire dans l'orientation pédagogique et l'orientation des élèves. Les compétences sociales et interculturelles des enseignants devraient également être continuellement renforcées par la formation initiale et continue. Enfin, des efforts supplémentaires sont encore nécessaires pour prévenir et combattre l'abandon scolaire précoce.

4. Un logement décent

4,8 % des enfants belges vivent dans une maison mal chauffée ; 7,5 % vivent dans un ménage qui a des problèmes de coûts de logement. Ce sont bien sûr principalement les ménages pauvres qui souffrent de ces problèmes.

En Belgique, en raison de l'absence d'un système complet d'allocations de logement et de la part marginale du logement social sur le marché du logement, l'inégalité d'accès au logement est criante. La garantie enfant pourrait donc se concentrer sur des investissements supplémentaires dans le logement social et en particulier dans les agences de location sociale, tandis que les autorités belges devraient, en plus, travailler sur un système d'allocations de logement pour le marché privé afin de couvrir les besoins.

Afin de mieux protéger les enfants contre les risques de sans-abrisme et de logement inadéquat, la situation des enfants devrait être utilisée comme critère dans la détection active des logements inadéquats, la construction et l'attribution de logements sociaux et la protection contre l'expulsion. En outre, sur le marché du logement privé, il est également nécessaire de mettre en place une politique anti-discrimination forte (comprenant, entre autres, des contrôles réguliers sur le terrain).

5. Principes généraux d'une stratégie efficace

La Belgique jouit d'une certaine expérience des plans intégrés dans le domaine de la pauvreté des enfants et des droits de l'enfant. Mais le patchwork institutionnel semble rendre de plus en plus difficile l'élaboration de plans complets de ce type ; et aucun des plans précédents n'a jamais été accompagné d'engagements budgétaires. La conditionnalité de l'aide par la présentation de tels plans complets et budgétisés peut constituer un grand pas en avant dans l'octroi de l'aide de l'UE.

D'autre part, la Belgique jouit aussi d'une grande expérience du dialogue avec les associations où les pauvres prennent la parole : leur participation à la négociation des programmes de soutien peut s'avérer très utile pour stimuler l'innovation sociale dans l'octroi des aides de l'UE.

Idéalement, la garantie enfant devrait également encourager les réformes systémiques en faveur des familles en situation de pauvreté. Elle devrait éviter la stigmatisation des groupes cibles et la substitution des politiques sociales nationales par des financements européens.

5. Garantir l'inclusion active des personnes éloignées du marché du travail

La lutte contre la pauvreté ne peut pas être réduite à une politique d'activation. Une politique de lutte contre la pauvreté où la réalisation de tous les droits fondamentaux est centrale et nécessaire. Le droit au travail en fait partie, mais n'est absolument pas le seul. Les stratégies et les objectifs pour les professionnels et l'intégration sociale doivent être basés sur une approche plus large. Le marché du travail doit être davantage inclusif et investir plus dans les personnes qui ne sont pas actives sur le marché du travail.

- Il faut veiller à ce que la prestation de services publique qui est actuellement réalisée par un contrat de travail ne soit pas convertie en activités de bénévolat ou en activités avec maintien d'une allocation. Sinon, le statut et la situation du travailleur menacent d'être aussi précaires que la prestation de services à la communauté.
- Le salaire d'un travailleur doit lui permettre de mener une vie conforme à la dignité humaine. Le travail sous-payé ne contribue pas à une meilleure inclusion active, mais renforce justement les processus d'exclusion sociale.
- Les initiatives de travail dans les prisons ou dans des entreprises adaptées aux personnes handicapées doivent offrir des conditions de travail émancipatrices et ne peuvent pas céder à une trop grande rentabilité.
- Les systèmes d'enseignement doivent prendre de fortes mesures qui s'adressent aux élèves les plus vulnérables, afin de convertir ainsi les trajets d'exclusion en expériences émancipatrices en vue de l'investissement en l'avenir.
- Il y a un besoin d'une politique où
 - Les services de proximité nécessaires qui correspondent à une vision du travail bénévole, ou même la création massive d'emplois dans le secteur public dans ce cadre, avec l'implication d'acteurs particuliers, sont identifiés.

- Plutôt que l'emploi obligatoire, on évolue à nouveau vers une politique où le libre choix des personnes les motive à être à nouveau actives sur le marché du travail.
 - La pertinence du travail en fonction de la communauté est liée à la vie locale, la vie sociale, aux besoins de la personne et de l'environnement.
- Il doit y avoir une évaluation et une révision totale de toutes les mesures négatives et appauvrissantes qui ont été prises au cours de ces dernières législations en ce qui concerne l'exclusion du chômage, la dégressivité des allocations de chômage, les limites du droit à intégration sociale dans les CPAS par le biais de projets intégrés pour l'intégration sociale et les trajets de travail, la reprise obligatoire du travail des personnes malades, la complexité des statuts et les différences entre les statuts et la possibilité pour les employeurs de travailler avec des contrats de travail précaires
 - L'emploi doit être à nouveau lié à la pertinence du travail. Et ce n'est que de cette manière que l'on peut lutter contre la pauvreté par le biais de l'emploi, du travail et de la formation.

6. Lutter contre le logement inadéquat et le sans-abrisme

1. Élaborer une stratégie interfédérale de lutte contre le sans-abrisme traduisant dans la pratique les ambitions de l'accord de coopération du 12 mai 2014

Le sans-abrisme, et plus largement l'exclusion du logement, est un phénomène complexe qu'il convient d'appréhender de façon transversale en travaillant de concert avec toutes les parties prenantes concernées (État fédéral, Régions, Villes, société civile, communauté scientifique et personnes directement concernées). En effet, si cette thématique semble être à l'agenda politique, de nombreux défis restent néanmoins en suspens, et l'évolution du nombre de personnes concernées semble inexorable.

Afin d'y proposer une réponse, une stratégie structurelle, collective, coordonnée, chiffrée et à long terme est d'une importance cruciale, traduisant dans la pratique les ambitions de l'accord de coopération du 12 mai 2014.

En mai 2014, les autorités fédérales et les entités fédérées ont signé un accord de coopération concernant le sans-abrisme et l'absence de domicile fixe. Ce dernier définit le rôle et la responsabilité de chaque niveau de pouvoir dans le cadre de la lutte contre le sans-abrisme.

Un protocole additionnel à l'Accord de coopération doit compléter celui-ci avec une approche stratégique globale et interfédérale de la lutte contre le sans-abrisme selon les termes recommandés par le Parlement européen dans sa résolution du 16 janvier 2014 et selon les termes du Socle européen de droits sociaux. Cette stratégie doit s'inscrire dans la durée, être chiffrée et se baser sur des données empiriques, être évaluée de manière régulière pour en déterminer l'efficacité et lutter contre toutes les formes de sans-abrisme, comme prévu par la typologie ETHOS.

Ce protocole devrait comporter un mécanisme de concertation technique et politique l'habilitant à suivre les différents volets de l'accord. Le SPP Intégration sociale devrait en assurer le secrétariat et l'assistance technique.

Une Conférence interministérielle devrait créer les conditions pour un dialogue et une concertation appropriés permettant d'arriver à une réduction structurelle du sans-abrisme, compte tenu de la distribution des compétences.

2. Augmenter et approfondir les connaissances relatives au sans-abrisme

Dans le cadre du second plan fédéral de lutte contre la pauvreté (2012-2016), il était prévu la réalisation d'une étude dont l'objectif était de proposer un outil de suivi quantitatif du sans-abrisme et de l'absence de chez soi. Cet objectif fut partiellement réalisé dans le courant de la législature 2014-2019 à travers la recherche MEHOBEL grâce au concours de la Politique scientifique fédérale (BELSPO).

Ce faisant, les recommandations de l'étude MEHOBEL devraient faire l'objet d'un examen minutieux dans le cadre d'une concertation entre autorités publiques du niveau fédéral et des entités fédérées, permettant d'identifier la meilleure articulation entre les compétences de chaque niveau de pouvoir, dans le but de :

- pouvoir mesurer concrètement le sans-abrisme et l'exclusion en Belgique
- traduire ces chiffres en objectifs chiffrés réalistes (targets)
 - développer les dispositifs d'aide et d'accompagnement les plus efficaces
- évaluer les efforts consentis à la lumière des tendances observées et, le cas échéant, d'adapter la stratégie interfédérale.

3. Créer et renforcer l'accès à un logement durable, de qualité et abordable

La caractéristique commune aux sans-abris et aux sans domicile fixe est qu'ils sont exclus de logement pour une durée plus ou moins longue. Une solution durable est uniquement possible lorsque les sans-abris ont accès à une forme de logement durable, de qualité et abordable. Dans la lutte contre le réchauffement climatique, il est également important d'investir dans un logement de qualité et durable.

Ce faisant, cette stratégie interfédérale d'éradication du sans-abrisme devrait :

- faire de l'accès et de la préservation (lutte contre l'expulsion) du logement (accessible, durable et de qualité) la pierre angulaire de toute initiative en matière de traitement public du sans-abrisme
- prévoir la création de logements durables, de qualité et abordables (notamment via l'investissement dans le logement social) pour les sans-abris et les sans domicile fixe
- favoriser l'accès au logement particulier au moyen de soutien financier, médiation de location et autre développement du système d'accompagnement des personnes dans leur recherche de logement adapté et durable.
- lutter contre la précarité énergétique.

4. Prévenir le sans-abrisme

La manière la plus efficace pour lutter contre le sans-abrisme est d'en prévenir l'apparition. Ce faisant, si l'on souhaite réduire le flux de personnes tombant dans la rue, l'étude systématique d'incidence de certaines mesures politiques devrait voir le jour en vue d'éviter tout impact négatif sur le phénomène de sans-abrisme.

Cela implique également que des mesures transversales qui ont un impact direct sur l'apparition du sans-abrisme doivent être prises, comme l'accès à un revenu digne et, dans un sens plus large, l'efficacité des droits fondamentaux (droit aux soins, droit au logement, droit à la dignité humaine, etc.), les mesures en rapport avec la lutte contre le surendettement, la lutte contre le non-recours des droits sociaux, la réforme des soins de santé mentale qui fait que les gens tombent aujourd'hui dans la rue, le contrôle des loyers...

De nombreuses mesures d'accompagnement doivent être associées à une politique de prévention du sans-abrisme : lutte contre les expulsions domiciliaires, préparation à la sortie des institutions (aide à la jeunesse, maisons d'accueil, hôpitaux psychiatriques, prisons, etc.) en rendant effectif l'accès à un logement durable dès la sortie de celles-ci, lutte contre les violences intrafamiliales...

5. Investir dans des solutions efficaces et structurelles

Différentes expériences et stratégies publiques au niveau national et international tombant sous la dénomination « Housing First » ont démontré que cette approche offrait une issue durable afin de réduire substantiellement le sans-abrisme. Après 2 ans d'expérimentation plus de 80 % des personnes sont toujours en logement. Il est essentiel de combiner les instances publiques à des actes en augmentant considérablement les moyens disponibles pour cette approche, comme l'a fait le gouvernement bruxellois.

Outre le Housing First qui s'adresse aux sans-abris et sans domicile fixe les plus « nécessiteux », il est tout autant nécessaire de promouvoir une politique durable de sorties de rue grâce à l'accès rapide à un propre logement (« Housing Led policies ») et à l'introduction d'un accompagnement ad hoc plutôt que d'avoir recours à des mesures qui essayent d'aborder le sans-abrisme plus précisément au moyen de la mise à disposition de lits d'accueil d'urgence supplémentaires. Bien que le logement d'urgence soit nécessaire pour éviter que des personnes doivent dormir en rue, il ne peut aucunement constituer un remplacement des mesures structurelles permettant d'héberger les gens de manière durable. Aucun équipement ne pourra éradiquer de quelque manière que ce soit le sans-abrisme si une politique de sécurité sociale structurelle du sans-abrisme ne l'aborde pas préventivement et ce afin d'éviter autant que possible toutes les formes de sans-abrisme.

7. Accueil et intégration des personnes issues de l'immigration

Les immigrés, c'est-à-dire les personnes nées dans un autre pays, constituent aujourd'hui 16,4 % de la population belge. La plupart des immigrés sont d'origine européenne (54 % de la population d'immigrés), suivis des immigrés d'Afrique (25,8 %), d'Asie (15,6 %), d'Amérique (4,2 %) et de l'Océanie (0,1 %). Les études s'accordent sur le fait que la migration contribue au développement économique de la Belgique. Toutefois, il convient de relever le lien fort entre migration et pauvreté. En effet, en 2018, le risque de pauvreté et d'exclusion sociale était de 47,8 % pour les immigrés non-UE en Belgique contre 14,4 % chez les autochtones.

Le risque de pauvreté pour les migrants non-UE est l'un des plus élevés de l'Union européenne, alors que le taux de pauvreté pour les autochtones est l'un des plus faibles de l'Union européenne. Ainsi, l'écart du taux de pauvreté entre autochtones et migrants non-UE est le plus important de tous les pays de l'Union européenne.

Le faible taux d'emploi chez les immigrés non-UE est l'une des principales causes de pauvreté chez cette population en Belgique. En effet, les statistiques en matière d'emploi pour les personnes issues de l'immigration en Belgique figurent parmi les pires de l'UE : le taux d'emploi pour les 20-64 ans est de 53,9 %, contre 72 % pour la population autochtone - soit un écart de 18 points de pourcentage, alors que l'écart moyen européen est de 9,5 points. Ces différences de taux d'emploi entre autochtones et migrants non-UE en Belgique pourraient s'expliquer en partie par des différences en termes de niveau d'éducation. Outre le niveau d'éducation, l'apprentissage des langues fait partie intégrante des conditions pour accéder au marché de l'emploi en Belgique. La différence dans les aptitudes linguistiques n'explique toutefois pas totalement le taux d'activité plus faible des migrants non-UE en Belgique.

Ce sont surtout des difficultés structurelles spécifiques à la Belgique qui expliquent les faibles résultats des migrants non-UE en matière d'emploi. Les difficultés administratives auxquelles les migrants doivent faire face, plus précisément la complexité des différentes procédures d'équivalence de diplômes et de compétences, qui est une compétence communautaire, constituent l'un des problèmes. En 2016, sur 97.820 demandeurs d'emploi inoccupés à Bruxelles, 43 % n'ont pas d'équivalence des études qu'ils ont suivies à l'étranger. Les difficultés pour la reconnaissance des diplômes compliquent non seulement le fait de trouver un emploi, mais conduisent également à une surqualification de la population migrante. Ainsi, un migrant sur trois (33,2 %) est surqualifié pour son poste en Belgique, contre seulement un autochtone sur cinq (19,8 %). Ces résultats impliquent des revenus plus bas pour la population migrante active, et donc un risque de pauvreté ou d'exclusion sociale plus élevé.

Les procédures longues et complexes pour l'obtention d'un permis de travail ou de séjour mettent la population migrante en difficulté. De nombreux migrants ne peuvent quitter leur travail sous peine de risque de perdre leur permis de séjour. Cela les rend vulnérables vis-à-vis de leur employeur et influence probablement leurs revenus. À cela s'ajoute que les migrants originaires de pays hors de l'UE disposent de droits de protection sociale limités, à l'exception des personnes bénéficiant de la protection

internationale et des migrants issus des pays ayant établi des accords bilatéraux de sécurité sociale. Les migrants en situation irrégulière forment évidemment une catégorie de migrants particulièrement vulnérables. Ils sont exclus des régimes de protection sociale à l'exception des soins médicaux d'urgence. Les obligations financières et la peur quotidienne d'être expulsé les rendent extrêmement dépendants de leur travail et/ou de leur entourage.

Pourtant, même les travailleurs en situation irrégulière jouissent de droits en matière de travail : salaire minimum versé individuellement, à un rythme régulier et indépendamment des bénéfices ou des pertes de l'employeur ; liberté de dépenser librement le salaire ; remboursement des frais de transport ; etc. Le problème des personnes en situation irrégulière dans notre pays est un symptôme d'une problématique plus large, notamment le manque de voies d'accès sûres et légales.

La discrimination est une cause importante des difficultés d'obtention d'un emploi en Belgique pour les migrants non-UE. Changer l'opinion publique est déterminant pour lutter contre la discrimination, d'autant plus que cette discrimination affecte également le risque de pauvreté et d'exclusion sur le marché du logement. En raison de la discrimination sur le marché du logement, trouver un toit décent et à un prix abordable est un défi de taille pour les nouveaux arrivants. Il en résulte une ségrégation géographique basée sur le revenu, l'appartenance ethnique et/ou le statut juridique (par exemple les bénéficiaires de protection internationale).

Sur base de l'analyse qui précède et des discussions, les recommandations suivantes sont faites :

- Augmenter les possibilités d'une immigration sûre et légale en particulier pour les personnes ayant besoin d'une protection internationale (notamment en respectant les engagements de la Belgique en matière de rétablissement et d'augmentation des quotas) et pour les autres migrants (notamment en travaillant sur une législation ambitieuse en matière de migration de travail au niveau wallon et bruxellois) tout en assurant une politique du regroupement familial qui respecte l'unité familiale.
- Concevoir et mettre en œuvre une politique visant une meilleure intégration des migrants
- (cours de langue, reconnaissance des diplômes et des compétences, soutien des services sociaux, etc.)
- Protéger les droits fondamentaux de tous les migrants, également leurs droits du travail.
- Renforcer la législation pour l'égalité et la lutte contre la discrimination et le racisme, notamment dans le domaine de l'emploi, du logement et de l'enseignement, et au niveau des politiques publiques, des pratiques entrepreneuriales et de l'action syndicale.
- Investir dans les connaissances relatives à la relation entre pauvreté et discrimination.
- Accorder de l'attention à un discours public positif plutôt que polarisant au sujet de la migration et des étrangers.

Vous trouverez davantage d'informations concernant la Plateforme belge contre la pauvreté et l'exclusion sociale UE2020 et la Journée Portes Ouvertes du 31 janvier 2020 [ici](#).

Annex 13 : Reporting table on the measures to alleviate the economic relapse induced by Covid 19

The measures taken by the respective governments against the further spread of Covid-19 have far-reaching consequences for the Belgian economy. In order to cope with these consequences, the governments have also taken a multitude of measures to help affected citizens, businesses and other institutions keep afloat for as long as necessary. This annex provides a schematic overview of the main measures. A distinction is made between measures with and without a direct impact on public finances.

On the 26th of March, the House of Representatives granted 'special powers' to the *federal government* to limit the spread of the Covid-19 virus and tackle its economic consequences. Hence, during a period of three months (renewable once), the Federal government is allowed to adopt royal decrees that have the same legal force as a law. These powers have been used forcefully to support the economy through a series of tax relief measures and by easing loan repayments for households and businesses. A package of measures has been adopted to facilitate access to temporary unemployment benefits and provide supplementary temporary workforce in industries that are still open. The federal government has also taken decisive initiatives to protect the income of the unemployed, ensure supplementary housing for possibly ill homeless people, and support the tourism industry and the cultural sector. The economic situation is closely followed by the Economic Risk Management Group (ERMG) which is entitled to provide recommendations to the government with a view to ensuring the continuity of critical industries and infrastructure.

In the course of March 2020 already, the *government of Flanders* established a large number of measures during several (special) Councils of Ministers, which provide a vigorous response to the major challenges posed by the corona crisis. Many of these measures (with and without budgetary impact) were included in the Flemish Reform Programme 2020 (FRP 2020) which was adopted by the Government of Flanders on 3 April 2020. The table below lists the measures which do not have any budgetary impact. As the Government of Flanders acts in quick response to changed circumstances, said table also takes into account additional and updated measures that have been implemented since the adoption of the FRP 2020. The following table clearly shows that the measures adopted by the Government of Flanders cover the entire socio-economic spectrum.

The *government of the Brussels-Capital Region* has adopted an unprecedented series of economic and social measures to support the most affected sectors: a single premium for companies obliged to close down, suspension or deferment of payment of certain taxes for companies and individuals, strong support for the cash flow of companies affected by granting public guarantees on bank loans, loans to the hospitality industry, support for integration companies and workers in the service voucher sector, ban on cutting off energy supplies, postponement of payment deadlines, etc. The non-commercial sector is also feeling the full impact of the crisis. It is therefore essential to support structures and workers active in the health, social, training and socio-professional integration, culture and sport or social cohesion sectors. Moreover, since many of these associations and services are in the front line in the fight against coronavirus and meet the primary needs of a large number of women citizens, it is essential to limit the negative effects on all their beneficiaries. They are in fact often among the most precarious and most exposed to health risks. Hence the need to provide organisations and services with the means to reorganise their missions (purchase of protective equipment, setting up new channels of communication between teams, reorganisation of teams, etc.), through a special Covid-19 fund of 29 million euros, intended for the sectors of home help, retirement (and care) homes, social action (support for migrants in transit and the homeless, combating violence against women), and aid for the disabled.

Since the beginning of March 2020, the *Walloon government* has adopted a set of measures aimed, on the one hand, at responding to the health crisis and curbing the spread of Covid-19, and, on the other hand, at dealing with the socio-economic consequences of this crisis. A decree granting special powers to the government was adopted in mid-March. At the socio-economic level, two task forces were set up: the first to create leverage in supporting businesses and the second to cope with social needs and support the most precarious populations. A special fund of 350 million euros has been set up, and will be used, on the one hand, to support businesses and self-employed people directly affected by the crisis (granting lump-sum compensation, setting up financial tools for guarantees and loans, 233 million euros), and, on the other hand, to support the social and health sectors (covering additional costs in health departments, maintaining subsidies to operators and compensation for loss of income, support for the most vulnerable sections of the population, etc., 112 million euros). These support measures have been supplemented by various regulatory provisions, such as suspension of applicable deadlines, protection of consumers and tenants, etc.

As it has competence for compulsory education (involving nearly 1,043,000 students and staff) and higher education (nearly 220,000 students and staff), the *government of the French Community* had to be proactive from the start of the crisis. As the Minister-President is a member of the National Security Council, the government was able to take stock of the situation at the beginning of March and to take measures, financial or otherwise, according to how the situation developed, in order to provide the best possible support to operators dependent on its competences. Shortly thereafter, a decree granting special powers to the government was adopted, which in particular enabled it to set up an Emergency Fund with an envelope of 50 million euros (culture, early childhood, social subsidies for precarious students, university hospitals ...), to guarantee and accelerate the liquidation of subsidies to operators despite the crisis or even to release the budgetary means necessary for the temporary hiring of additional personnel for public services (IPPJ, Community center for minors removed).

The sudden outbreak of the COVID-19 crisis prompted the *government of the German-speaking Community* to adopt urgent and special socio-economic measures to combat the effects of the crisis. We distinguish between measures that have a direct impact on the budget of the German-speaking Community, which amounts to approximately 39 million euros in 2020, and measures that do not have a direct impact on the budget of the German-speaking Community. Due to the outbreak of the corona crisis, the original objective of a balanced budget can no longer be achieved, both because of the drastic loss of income already forecast for 2020 and because of a sharp increase in budgetary expenditure related to direct and urgent measures to combat the negative effects of the crisis. With regard to infrastructure, we believe it is very important, especially in times of crisis, to keep moving forward in order to stimulate the local economy. In addition, the German-speaking Community has adopted three direct aid measures which have no direct impact on the Community budget. These measures may be combined with other subsidies from other Belgian authorities such as the Federal State or the Walloon Region. They are as follows: (1) a subsidy guarantee for all institutions and associations subsidised by the community for the duration of the Covid-19 crisis; (2) an aid measure to ensure the liquidity of institutions and associations; (3) access to a special Covid-19 aid fund in the form of repayable loans for institutions and service providers in the community.

The following information provides an overview of the measures taken up to 21 April 2020 and is neither exhaustive nor final. Other measures are anticipated and will be necessary to address the health, social and economic consequences of this pandemic, taking into account the evolution of future measures by the National Security Council.

Table 1. Key socio-economic responses with budgetary implications to the COVID-19 pandemic

Liste des mesures	Description	État d'avancemnet de l'adoption	Code SEC	Impact budgétaire (En mio)	
				2020	2021
Fédéral					
Chômage temporaire	Le chômage temporaire est automatique, étendu et renforcé. Le taux de référence est augmenté de 65% à 70. En outre, l'ONEM verse un montant d'environ 5,63 € par jour de chômage. En plus du coût de l'augmentation du taux de référence et de la prime supplémentaire, il y a un effet volume de 3 626,4 millions	Publication d'un AR au moniteur belge le 30 mars 2020	D.6212	611,3	
Droit de passerelle	Revenu de remplacement pour les travailleurs indépendants qui sont contraints par le gouvernement d'interrompre leur activité, ou pour ceux qui ne sont pas obligés de fermer mais qui sont toutefois contraints de le faire pendant une période d'au moins 7 jours civils consécutifs.	Publication d'une nouvelle loi au Moniteur belge le 23 mars 2020	D.6212	1.085,6	
Report des cotisations sociales des employeurs	Un report de paiement d'un an pour les deux premiers trimestres de 2020.	Projet d'AR		Pas d'impact SEC	

Report de paiement des cotisations sociales des travailleurs indépendants	Un report de paiement d'un an. La mesure vaut pour les cotisations provisoires des premier et deuxième trimestres de 2020 et pour les cotisations de régularisation des trimestres de 2018 qui arrivent à échéance les 31 mars 2020, 30 juin 2020 et 30 septembre 2020.	Projet d'AR		Pas d'impact SEC	
Diminution des cotisations sociales des travailleurs indépendants	Les travailleurs indépendants dont les revenus sont inférieurs au montant servant de base au calcul de leur cotisation peuvent demander une réduction de la cotisation.			Pas d'impact SEC	
Report de paiement à l'ONSS	Un report de paiement à l'ONSS est accordé jusqu'au 15/12/2020. Pour certains secteurs, ce report est même accordé automatiquement (e.a. horeca, culturel, sportif et récréatif). Le report de paiement porte sur tous les paiements à partir du 20 mars 2020.	Projet d'AR		Pas d'impact SEC	
Report de paiement impôts fédéraux	La demande d'un plan de paiement doit être introduite pour le 30/06 au plus tard. Par ailleurs, les délais de paiement sont prolongés de 2 mois tant pour la TVA que pour le précompte professionnel, l'impôt des personnes physiques, l'impôt des sociétés et l'impôt des personnes morales.	Projet d'AR		Pas d'impact SEC	
Provision pour les coûts liés au coronavirus	Provision fédérale pour couvrir des coûts supplémentaires (achat de matériel médical et de protection, rapatriement de citoyens belges, etc., etc.)	Publication au Moniteur belge de la loi du 23 mars 2020 ouvrant les crédits	P.2	1.000,0	

		provisoires pour les mois d'avril, mai et juin 2020			
Gel de la dégressivité pour les chômeurs	Cela signifie d'une part que le montant auquel le chômeur peut prétendre au 1er avril reste maintenu jusqu'au 30 juin et, d'autre part que les phases de dégressivité sont prolongées de la période pendant laquelle le chômeur prétend à des allocations entre le 1er avril et le 30 juin.	Proposition de loi	D.6212	31,0	13,0
Artistes	Gel temporaire de la dégressivité des allocations de chômage pour les artistes Augmentation du taux de remboursement de 60% à 65% pour les dockers et les marins-pêcheurs en "plein chômage". Assouplissement temporaire des conditions dans lesquelles les chômeurs peuvent être employés dans des secteurs vitaux , tout en conservant 75% de leurs prestations (du 01.02.2020 au 30.06.2020) La durée des allocations d'insertion pour les jeunes travailleurs est prolongée de 3 mois.		D.6212	6,0	10,0
Total				2.733,9	23,0
Passifs implicites				Montant maximum des engagements conditionnels (En Mio)	

Convention de garantie entre le gouvernement fédéral et le secteur financier	Le secteur financier s'engage à reporter le paiement des dettes jusqu'au 30 septembre 2020 pour les entreprises non financières, indépendants et emprunteurs hypothécaires viables ayant des problèmes de paiement. Le gouvernement fédéral activera un mécanisme de garantie (avec un montant de garantie de 50 milliards d'euros) pour tous les nouveaux crédits et lignes de crédit avec une durée maximale de 12 mois qui sont prêtés par des banques à des entreprises non financières et indépendants viables.	Projet d'AR		50.000	
Total				50.000	
Vlaanderen					
Dringende aankoop van mondmaskers & beschermend zorgmateriaal		Ingevoerd	P.2	22,0	
Maatregelen met betrekking tot de gevolgen voor sociaal kwetsbare kinderen en jongeren		Ingevoerd		0,2	
Schakelzorgcentra	De oprichting van schakelzorgcentra, dit zijn noodcentra die patiënten kunnen opvangen wanneer de ziekenhuizen	In voorbereiding		4,6	

	overbelast dreigen te raken. Naargelang de nood kunnen in Vlaanderen tot 30 centra worden geopend.				
Tijdelijke beheersondersteuning voor woonzorgcentra in het beleidsdomein Welzijn, Volksgezondheid en Gezin		Ingevoerd	D.621	1,0	
Ministerieel besluit tot het toekennen van projectsubsidies aan de Federatie Tele-Onthaaldiensten, 4 CAW's (operatie '1712') en het Centrum ter Preventie van Zelfdoding.		Ingevoerd	D.3	0,3	
Kinderopvang: Ontwerpbesluit van de Vlaamse regering tot bestrijding van de negatieve gevolgen van het Covid-19-virus voor de gezinnen en de organisatoren in de kinderopvang	Het inkomstenverlies van kinderdagverblijven waar minder kinderen aanwezig zijn, wordt gecompenseerd.	Ingevoerd	D.621	32,5	

Ondersteuning van woonzorgcentra	Inkomenssteun voor woonzorgcentra waar de bezettingsgraad met 5% of meer daalt.	Ingevoerd	D.621	11,1	
Steun voor personen met een handicap	Extra steun voor personen met een handicap: 8,5% extra contante uitbetaling	In voorbereiding	D.621	10,0	
Ondersteuning van de geestelijke gezondheidszorg		In voorbereiding	D.621	18,2	
Compensatiemaatregelen voor buitenschoolse opvang, de opvang van zieke kinderen en gezinsondersteuning	Compensatie voor inkomensverlies	Ingevoerd	D.621	10,3	
Gezinszorg, Revalidatie, Geestelijke gezondheidszorg, Personen met een handicap, Dagopvang	Compensatie voor inkomensverlies	In voorbereiding	D.621	11,7	
Dagopvang	Compensatie voor inkomensverlies	Ingevoerd	D.621	1,4	

Permanentie en afsluitingsplan voor internaten		In voorbereiding	P.2	1,5	
Verzorgings- en beschermingsmateriaal	Vergoeding residentiële zorg en gezinszorg voor de aankoop van verzorgings- en beschermingsmateriaal	In voorbereiding	P.2	32,1	
Communicatiecampagne in het kader van de coronacrisis	Creatie en aankoop van mediaruimte voor sensibilisering	Ingevoerd	P.2	3,6	
Hinderpremie	Ontwerpbesluit van de Vlaamse Regering tot toekenning van steun aan ondernemingen die verplicht moeten sluiten of exploitatiebeperkingen krijgen opgelegd ten gevolge van de maatregelen genomen door de Nationale Veiligheidsraad vanaf 12 maart 2020 inzake het coronavirus: De premie bedraagt € 4.000 in geval van een volledige sluiting gedurende de eerste drie weken en € 160 per dag vanaf 6 april 2020.	Ingevoerd	D.3	922,0	
Compensatiepremie	Ontwerpbesluit van de Vlaamse regering tot toekenning van steun aan ondernemingen die een omzetzaling hebben ten gevolge van de maatregelen genomen door de Nationale Veiligheidsraad vanaf 12 maart 2020 inzake het coronavirus: Een eenmalige compensatiepremie van € 3.000 wordt toegekend aan bedrijven en zelfstandigen die niet verplicht moeten sluiten, maar die hun omzet fors zien teruglopen (omzetverlies van minstens 60% ten opzichte van dezelfde periode vorig jaar - referentieperiode 14 maart - 30 april 2019). De premie is ook van	Ingevoerd	D.3	991,0	

	toepassing op personen die zelfstandige zijn in bijberoep en die vergelijkbare socialezekerheidsbijdragen betalen als iemand die zelfstandige is in hoofdberoep. Personen met een bijberoep die bijdragen betalen op een inkomen tussen € 6.996,89 en € 13.993,78 kunnen een premie van € 1.500 krijgen, mits ze ook voor minder dan 80% in loondienst werken.				
Coronanoedfonds (semi)overheidssector	Gesubsidieerde bedrijven zullen hun verliezen kunnen recupereren via een noodfonds (€ 200 miljoen) voor gesubsidieerde sectoren (cultuur, jeugd, media, sport, schoolreizen enz.) en specifieke sectoren (tuinbouw, segmenten van het toerisme, mobiliteit en openbare werken).	Ingevoerd		200,0	
Vergoeding van de kosten voor elektriciteit, verwarming of waterverbruik voor de eerste maand van de tijdelijke werkloosheid als gevolg van de coronacrisis	De forfaitaire vergoeding is gebaseerd op een gemiddelde water- en energierekening van alle gezinnen. De vergoeding bedraagt € 202,68 per werknemer die als gevolg van de coronacrisis tijdelijk of deeltijds werkloos is geworden (minstens 1 dag).	Ingevoerd	D.63	160,0	
Maatregelen om de continuïteit van kritieke diensten te waarborgen, de toeristische sector te ondersteunen en het herstel voor te bereiden		Ingevoerd	P.2	1,0	

Uitbreiding van het toepassingsgebied van de stimuleringspremie met bedrijven die te maken krijgen met een daling in omzet, productie of bestellingen als gevolg van de coronavirusmaatregelen	Uitbreiding van de bestaande steunregeling voor deeltijds werk met bedrijven in moeilijkheden (vermindering van de productie met 20%) als gevolg van de coronacrisis.	Ingevoerd	D.621	14,0	
Premie voor individuele beroepsopleiding (IBO)	Personen die een individuele beroepsopleiding (IBO) volgen, maar van wie de IBO-overeenkomst werd beëindigd als gevolg van de coronamaatregelen, kunnen rekenen op een premie van maximaal 70% van hun normale vergoeding. De premie wordt maandelijks toegekend.	Ingevoerd	D.621	1,3	
Maatregelen voor de particuliere en sociale huurmarkt	Indien een sociale huurder of een van de personen van wie het inkomen in rekening wordt gebracht voor de berekening van de huurprijs tijdelijk werkloos is door overmacht (omwille van het coronavirus), moet de sociale verhuurder de huurprijs herzien naargelang het huidige verminderde inkomen. De Vlaamse Maatschappij voor Sociaal Wonen (VMSW) en het Vlaams Woningfonds kunnen de kredietnemer (bijzondere sociale lening) gratis uitstel van betaling verlenen als de kredietnemer aantoot dat zijn inkomen is gedaald als gevolg van de coronavirusmaatregelen. De kredietnemer krijgt dan een uitstel van betaling van maximaal 6 maanden zonder dat er kapitaal of rente moet worden betaald tot uiterlijk 31 oktober 2020.	Ingevoerd	D.621	1,5	

Maatregelen voor gemeenschapswerk als gevolg van het coronavirus	Een maandelijkse toelage voor bepaalde wijk-werkers en de geldigheid van de wijk-werkcheques wordt verlengd.	Ingevoerd	D.621	0,9	
Beschutte werkplaatsen en lokale diensteneconomie-initiatieven		Ingevoerd	D.3	1,4	
Subsidie Digital for Youth	Subsidie om laptops ter beschikking te stellen van kansarme gezinnen voor de periode van 1 april 2020 tot 31 mei 2020	Ingevoerd	D.3	1,0	
Opslag van gevaarlijk medisch afval		In voorbereiding	P.2	0,4	
Optimalisering van lokale cybersecurity		In voorbereiding	P.2	2,2	
Versnelde investeringen in digitale werkruimte en basisinfrastructuur		In voorbereiding	P.2	11,2	
Investeringen in ICT-onderwijs		In voorbereiding	P.2	4,8	

Investerings in HR en organisatieontwikkeling		In voorbereiding	P.2	2,3	
Investerings ter versterking van e-learning in Vlaanderen		In voorbereiding	P.2	7,0	
Maatregelen binnen het domein Inburgering (tolken)		In voorbereiding	P.2	0,2	
Uitstel van betaling van de onroerende voorheffing (bedrijven)	Uitstel van betaling van de onroerende voorheffing met 2 maanden voor rechtspersonen ter ondersteuning van de liquiditeitspositie van ondernemingen	Ingevoerd		*1 billion EUR delayed tax receipts	
Uitstel van betaling van de verkeersbelasting (bedrijven)	Uitstel van betaling van de verkeersbelasting met 4 maanden voor rechtspersonen ter ondersteuning van de liquiditeitspositie van ondernemingen (in het bijzonder vervoers-, bus-, autoleasebedrijven)	Ingevoerd		*200 million EUR delayed tax receipts	
Uitstel van betaling van erfbelasting en registratiebelasting (gezinnen)	Uitstel van betaling van erfbelasting en registratiebelasting met 2 maanden voor natuurlijke personen om alle formaliteiten te kunnen vervullen	Ingevoerd			
Totaal				2.482,7	

Latente verplichtingen				Maximum bedrag voorwaardelijke verplichtingen (in mio)	
Crisiswaarborg PMV	Voor bedrijven en zelfstandigen die omwille van de coronacrisis een overbruggingskrediet nodig hebben en niet onder federale waarborgregeling vallen. Dit komt bovenop bestaande waarborgregeling tot 300 miljoen EUR per jaar voor investeringsleningen en werkingskapitaal tot 1,5 miljoen euro met 75% waarborging door Vlaamse overheid.	Ingevoerd		100,0	
Verhoogde waarborgen Gigarant NV	In het kader van de tijdelijke versoepeling van de Europese staatssteunregels ingevolge de coronacrisis, zal Gigarant (Waarborgregeling boven € 1,5 miljoen) een aangepaste COVID-19-waarborg in de markt kunnen zetten, die meer flexibiliteit biedt. De waarborgcapaciteit van Gigarant wordt hiervoor opgetrokken van de huidige € 1,5 miljard naar € 3 miljard	Ingevoerd		1.500,0	
Totaal				1.600,0	
Région wallonne					
Fonds extraordinaire - Volet économie	Indemnisation forfaitaire de 5.000 € à divers secteurs d'activités économiques (NACE)	Validation par le Gouvernement (Arrêté du Gouvernement)	D.3	233,0	

Constitution d'une réserve interdépartementale	Mesures de redéploiement à l'issue de la crise du coronavirus notamment orientées vers la relocalisation d'activités en Wallonie, l'économie circulaire, les circuits courts et des premières concrétisations du Plan de transition	Validation du principe par le Gouvernement (pas encore de mise en œuvre)	-	100,0	
Fonds extraordinaire - Volet emploi	Immunisation de la période de crise dans le calcul du subventionnement régional - mesure Titres Services (et CISP)	Validation par le Gouvernement (arrêtés ministériels)	D.3	26,2	
Fonds extraordinaire - Volet emploi bis	compensation forfaitaires structures insertion professionnelle (5,000 €)	Validation par le Gouvernement (arrêtés ministériels)	D.3	0,5	
Fonds extraordinaire - Volet Santé	compensations forfaitaires de 5,000 € aux structures du secteur santé	Validation par le Gouvernement (arrêtés ministériels)	D.3	83,3	
Volet Action sociale	Achat de matériel de protection ou de nourriture, engagement de personnel temporaire et additionnel pour les Relais sociaux, Maisons d'accueil, Maisons de vie communautaire, abris de nuit, structures d'hébergement liées à la mission confiée aux Gouverneurs.	Validation par le Gouvernement (arrêtés ministériels)	P.2	1,2	
Fonds extraordinaire volet action sociale, santé et emploi	Réserve stratégique au sein du PWT	Validation par le Gouvernement	-	3,9	

Constitution d'un stock de masques AVIQ	Stock de masques AVIQ (SAFA, ...) - 1.200.000 masques+ 380.000 masques réserve	Validation par le Gouvernement	P.2	2,7	
Achat de masques	AVIQ via SRIW 3.700.000 masques chirurgicaux et 750.000 masques de type FFP2	Validation par le Gouvernement	P.2	3,6	
	Masques fonds propres SRIW	Validation par le Gouvernement	P.2	0,4	
Commande de 5.000.000 de masques (réserve stratégique)	Constitution d'une réserve stratégique	Validation par le Gouvernement	P.2	0,6	
Achat de masques complémentaires	16.171.338 millions de masques chirurgicaux et 3.274.368 masques FFP2	Validation par le Gouvernement	P.2	18,7	
Impact fonction publique	Extention télétravail	Validation par le Gouvernement	P.2	0,3	
Arrêté du Gouvernement wallon de pouvoirs spéciaux n° 10 relatif à la suspension temporaire de certaines dispositions fiscales.	Suspension taxe AAD	Validation par le Gouvernement	D.2	4,8	

Fonds extraordinaire - Volet Pouvoir locaux	compensation de la modération fiscale communale	Validation par le Gouvernement	D.73	4,0	
Outils économiques et financiers SOWALFIN - GELIGAR	Mesures de soutien des entreprises impactées par la crise du COVID-19 (garantie SOWALFIN et GELIGAR)	Validation par le Gouvernement	D.3	36,2	
S.A. SOCAMUT – groupe SOWALFIN.	Assurer le soutien de la trésorerie des petites entreprises et des indépendants préjudiciées économiquement par la crise du COVID-19 au travers d’une solution de financement conjointe à des crédits bancaires.	Validation par le Gouvernement		13,6	
Achat complémentaire de masques chirurgicaux, masques FFP2 et autre matériel pour les secteurs régionaux (social – santé).	Masques fonds propres SRIW + matériel et tabliers	Validation par le Gouvernement	P.2	42,8	
Secteur de l'eau	Dotations exceptionnelles au Fonds Social de l'eau : 500.000 EUR Contribution de la Région wallonne à l'indemnité forfaitaire unique pour les abonnés domestiques : 10.000.000 EUR (40 EUR par compteur d'eau)	en cours de validation	D.73	10,5	
Refinancement exceptionnel du Fonds spécial de l'aide	Refinancement des CPAS afin de faire face à la crise	Validation par le Gouvernement	D.73	5,0	

sociale à concurrence de cinq millions d'euros					
Octroi d'une aide pour les ménages ayant un compteur à busget	aide ponctuelle de 100€ pour les ménages équipés d'un compteur à budget en électricité et de 75€ pour les ménages équipés d'un compteur à budget en gaz	Validation par le Gouvernement	D.75	9,4	
COVID 19 – Besoins additionnels Secteur Santé – Handicap – Action sociale – Emploi- Economie sociale	Mesures complémentaires (subventions) dans le secteur de l'hébergement et hébergement d'urgence (MR-MRS-handicap-santé mentale-action sociale-précarité) Mesures complémentaires (subventions) dans le secteur des personnes en situation de handicap, santé mentale, Services d'Aides aux Familles et aux aînés, aide alimentaire, économie sociale, de l'autocréation d'emploi et de l'emploi	Validation par le Gouvernement	D.3	37,2	
indemnités entreprises et commerce complémentaire	Indemnisation forfaitaire dcomplémentaire à divers secteurs d'activités économiques (NACE)	en cours de validation	D.3	287,4	
Libération de moyens budgétaires pour des projets de recherche en lien avec le COVID-19 portés par des entreprises	20 Mio€ en subvention et 5 Mio€ en avance récupérable sur le budget à dégager pour financer des projets de recherche portés par des entreprises en lien avec le COVID-19	en cours de validation	D.3	25,0	

Mise en place d'un prêt à taux zéro pour le paiement du loyer via la SWCS	Mise en place d'un prêt à taux zéro pour le paiement du loyer via la SWCS + garantie mais comprise dans la garantie actuelle	Validation par le Gouvernement	D.3	4,2	
Total				954,5	
Passifs implicites				Montant maximum des engagements conditionnels (En Mio)	
Garantie SOWALFIN-SOFINEX PME	Augmentation des intervention en garantie	Approuvé Gouvernement		60,0	
SOCAMUT	<p>Solution de financement conjointe aux crédits bancaires afin de renforcer la trésorerie des micro/petites entreprises et indépendants impactés par la crise et leur permettre de relancer leurs activités au sortir de la crise :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prêt subordonné SOCAMUT de max. EUR 25.000 EUR (et max. 50% du crédit bancaire conjoint), après une franchise en capital étendue à 12 mois max.** - Conjointement à un nouveau crédit bancaire de max. 50.000 EUR de type amortissable (crédit d'investissement) ou à un nouveau crédit court terme (ou la majoration d'une ligne existante) garanti à 75% 	Approuvé Gouvernement		7,9	

GELIGAR	<p>Extension des garanties octroyées par GELIGAR :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Octroi après examen d'une garantie supplétive de 50% sur les lignes court terme existantes octroyées par les banques sans garantie initiale de la Région ; ▪ Octroi automatique d'une garantie de 75% sur les accroissements de lignes court terme (y compris moratoire accordé sur crédits à moyen terme) accordées aux entreprises pour les aider à passer cette période de crise; ▪ L'enveloppe de garantie actuelle est de 50 M€ couverte par la réserve mathématique ad hoc. Les mesures proposées impliquent de porter l'enveloppe à 250 M€. La réserve mathématique doit être augmentée de 12% par tranche de 50 M€ 	Approuvé Gouvernement	200,0
SWCS	Garantie prêt taux 0	Approuvé Gouvernement	50,0
Total			317,9
Région de Bruxelles-Capitale			
Dépenses (décidées jusqu'au 22/04/2020)			

Accompagnement pour entreprises en difficulté	La capacité d'accueil du Centre pour entreprises en difficulté (CED/BECEI) a été augmentée pour lui permettre de traiter de nouvelles demandes en collaboration avec hub.brussels.	Adopté	D7p	0,2	
Liquidation accélérée des aides à l'expansion économique	Afin de soutenir la liquidité des entreprises dans certains secteurs gravement touchés (horeca, commerce de détail, événements, tourisme, loisirs), la liquidation des dossiers d'investissement est prévue en une seule tranche plutôt qu'en plusieurs. Les tranches prévues pour 2021 et 2022 seront donc déjà liquidées en 2020.	Adopté	D9p	2,0	
Prêts de Finance&Invest.brussels	Pour les prêts existants, il est proposé d'octroyer aux clients un moratoire de 6 à 12 mois sur le remboursement du capital. Pour les nouvelles demandes, Finance&Invest soutiendra les entreprises à mettre en place une mesure contra-cyclique en octroyant également un moratoire sur le remboursement en capital pour les nouveaux prêts.	Adopté	-	-	
Garantie régionale (Fonds Bruxellois de Garantie) aux crédits bancaires de trésorerie	Max. 20 mio de garanties supplémentaires. Le montant inscrit dans le budget est censé couvrir la casse potentielle.	Adopté	D9p	5,2	
Mission déléguée à la S.A. Société Régionale	Octroi de prêts à faible taux d'intérêt aux principaux fournisseurs du secteur de l'horeca et des établissements de	Adopté	D9p	20,0	

d'Investissement de Bruxelles (SRIB)	restauration employant plus de 50 personnes. Renforcement des fonds propres des entreprises emblématiques de Bruxelles.				
Mesures de soutien des entreprises titres-services et de leurs travailleurs suite aux mesures d'urgence pour limiter la propagation du coronavirus COVID-19		Adopté	D3p	1,0	
Prime unique	Le versement d'une prime unique forfaitaire est destinée à aider les établissements bruxellois qui doivent faire face à une perte conséquente de leur chiffre d'affaire suite aux circonstances exceptionnelles décidées le 18 mars 2020 dans le cadre de la pandémie du COVID-19 telles qu'arrêtées par le Gouvernement fédéral, sur base d'une liste de codes NACE. Montant: 4.000 € pour les établissements visés par une obligation de fermeture.	Adopté	D3p	106,9	
Prime de compensation unique pour les entreprises de 0 à 5 salariés à temps plein qui connaissent une baisse d'activité considérable.	Prime unique de 2000 euros	Adopté	D3p	102,0	

Aides aux entreprises actives dans l'agriculture urbaine professionnelle durable	Subvention unique de 3000 euros	Adopté	D3p	0,2	
Indemnisation des exploitants de services de transport particulier rémunéré	Prime unique de 3000 euros.	Adopté	D3p	4,8	
Parking.brussels	Il a été décidé de ne pas recourir au régime de chômage temporaire pour les gardiens de parking (agents contractuels) de l'Agence régionale bruxelloise du stationnement pendant la période de la suspension actuelle des contrôles du paiement du stationnement routier réglementé dans le cadre de la crise sanitaire COVID-19. Ces coûts sont estimés à 514.142,98€ pour la période du 18 mars au 19 avril 2020 et, en cas de prolongation de la suspension du contrôle jusqu'au 3 mai 2020, un coût supplémentaire de 257.071,49€ pour la période du 20 avril au 3 mai 2020.	Adopté	D7p	0,8	
Accessibilité des aides économiques aux entreprises sociales d'insertion selon leur domaine d'activités	Les aides économiques et mesures de soutien sectorielles seront accessibles aux entreprises sociales d'insertion actives dans le domaine d'activités concerné. Le calcul de leur financement 2020 sera donc adapté et calculé sur les deux derniers trimestres pour ne pas pénaliser les structures.	Adopté	D7p	0,4	

Accueil urgent de 100 trans migrants sans abri séjournant dans le parc Maximilien		Adopté	D7p	1,4	
Dotation à la CCC	Mesures diverses - voir budget CCC	Adopté	D7p	16,0	
Dotation à la VGC	Mesures diverses - voir budget VGC	Adopté	D7p	2,7	
Dotation à la COCOF	Mesures diverses - voir budget COCOF	Adopté	D7p	11,0	
Recettes (décidées jusqu'au 22/04/2020)					
Exonération du paiement de la taxe régionale sur les établissements d'hébergement touristiques (city tax)		Adopté	D5	13,4	
Exonération de la taxe régionale sur l'exploitation des taxis ou voitures avec chauffeur		Adopté	D5	1,5	

				Total	289,41	
Passifs implicites				Montant maximum des engagements conditionnels (En Mio)		
Garantie régionale (Fonds Bruxellois de Garantie) aux crédits bancaires de trésorerie		Adopté			20,0	
				Total	20,0	
Communauté française						
Fonds d'urgence et de soutien aux secteurs pour faire face au covid-19	Enveloppe de 50 millions destinée aux différents secteurs de la FWB, sur base de décisions d'affectation ultérieures prises par le Gouvernement. A ce stade, 30 millions ont déjà été affectés.	Le Fonds a été créé après adoption en dernière lecture d'un arrêté de pouvoirs spéciaux.			50,0	
				Total	50,0	

Commission communautaire commune (COCOM)					
Action sociale/sans abrisme/migrants - Sans- abrisme: Renforcement	Renforcement matériel, renforcement maison d'accueil	adopté	D.3	0,9	
	Renforcement accueil secteur public	adopté	D.73	0,2	
Action sociale/sans abrisme/migrants - Sans- abrisme: Création	Création dispositifs de crise pour personnes sans-abri diagnostiquées co-vid	adopté	D.3	1,2	
Action sociale/sans abrisme/migrants - Sans- abrisme: aides diverses	Service mobile d'intervention, accompagnement psychosocial, coordination, accueil de nuit...	adopté	D.73	1,2	
	Service mobile d'intervention, accompagnement psychosocial, coordination...	adopté	D.3	1,5	
Action sociale/sans abrisme/migrants - accueil covid	Accueil covid	adopté	P.2	0,9	

Action sociale/sans abrisme/migrants - Migrants	Coordination aide alimentaire, augmentation capacité d'accueil	adopté	D.3	1,1	
Santé mentale	Initiatives privée	adopté	D.3	0,0	
Santé mentale	Initiatives publiques	adopté	D.73	0,0	
MR-MRS	Mesures globales (250/lit), maisons de repos intermédiaires	adopté	D.75	4,6	
Services à domicile	services d'aide à domicile, gardes à domicile	adopté		0,8	
CRF	Centres de rééducation fonctionnelle	adopté	D.75	2,7	
Santé mentale - autres	Maisons de soins psychiatriques, secteur d'accueil et d'hébergement (diminution des recettes), habitat accompagné (matériel), IHP	adopté	D.75	0,8	
Soins palliatifs	Soins palliatifs demandes	adopté	P.2	0,0	
Planning familiaux	Demandes	adopté		0,1	

Renforcement Equipe-communication	Campagne de communication FAMGM, consultant, infirmier chef	programmé		0,2	
Engagement 200 ETP	Infirmiers + assistants administratifs (contrat de service)	programmé		6,0	
Soutient médecins ligne 112	Soutien de 11 médecins de la ligne 112	programmé		0,2	
Total				22,3	
Commission communautaire française (COCOF)					
Enseignement	Lutte contre la fracture numérique des jeunes bruxellois. Raccrochage scolaire.	Programmé	D.3	0,3	
Handicap	Centres d'hébergement et services d'accompagnement	Programmé	D.73	2,3	
Sport et cohésion sociale	Soutien aux clubs et asbl sportifs disposant d'un bail commercial et renforcement de l'offre en cohésion sociale auprès des publics fragilisés par la crise	Programmé	D.3	0,8	
Social	Renforcement services médiations de dettes	Programmé	D.73	0,4	

Santé	Renforcer les dispositifs psy pour jeunes adultes et étudiants en souffrance	Programmé	D.73	0,8	
Social	CASG : renforcement des équipes pour absorber l'augmentation des demandes	Programmé	D.73	0,6	
Culture	Soutien au secteur	Programmé	D.3	0,6	
Insertion socioprofessionnelle	Reprise des formations	Programmé	P.2	0,2	
Action sociale et famille	Première vague d'aide d'urgence	Adopté	P.2	1,7	
Santé et promotion santé	Santé mentale, toxicomanie, soins palliatifs, ...	Adopté	P.2	1,5	
Handicap	Première vague d'aide d'urgence	Adopté	P.2	5,4	
Culture	Première vague d'aide d'urgence	Adopté	P.2	0,7	
Cohésion sociale	Première vague d'aide d'urgence	Adopté	P.2	0,3	
Insertion socioprofessionnelle	Première vague d'aide d'urgence	Adopté	P.2	0,2	

				Total	15,5	
Communauté germanophone¹¹⁹						
Dépenses courantes	Masques et autre matériel médical, campagnes de communication, matériel informatique	Adopté/Encours	P.2	3,0	0,0	
Dépenses en infrastructure	Augmentation substantielle des crédits dans le domaine des infrastructures dans un but de relance de l'économie locale	En préparation	D.99	9,8	13,0	
Soutien aux communes et CPAS	Augmentation des dotations à concurrence de 5 %	En préparation	D.73	1,2	1,5	
Soutien en matière d'emploi	Diverses mesures dans la promotion d'emploi (AKTIF)	En préparation		0,5	0,0	
Soutien personnel soignant	Avancement de l'augmentation des barèmes initialement prévue pour 2021-2024 vers 2020-2022	En préparation	D.1p	0,5	1,4	
Soutien garderie	Revenu de remplacement pour le personnel de garderie	En préparation	D.62	1,0	0,5	

¹¹⁹ Remarque: Nous avons déjà pris en compte en 2020 l'effet d'une dégradation du PIB de 8%, bien qu'on sait, que cette "mesure" n'a qu'un effet cash en 2021.

	Total	16,0	16,4
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Table 2. Key socio-economic responses without budgetary implications to the COVID-19 pandemic

Level of government	Short title of the measure	Description of the measure			Foreseen impact (qualitative description of foreseen impacts and their timing)
		Main policy objective and relevance to address the pandemic	Legal/administrative instruments	Adoption status and timetable on upcoming steps	
Taxation					
Federal	Modification of tax shelter system	Flexibility towards investors.	Law	Draft has been submitted for evaluation to the Council of State	Extending the period for investors to liberate the necessary funds from 3 months to 6 months.
Federal	Suspending registration tax mortgage	No federal registration tax when transferring mandated loans into mortgages.	Royal Decree		
Federal	Delay in payments for VAT	Give companies more time to settle VAT during the months of February, March and April	Royal Decree	Approved by government	Extending the deadline for payments by 2 months.
Federal	Delay in payments for withholding tax	Give companies more time to pay the withholding tax during the months of February, March and April.	Royal Decree	Approved by government	Extending the deadline for payments by 2 months.

Federal	Shift in tax prepayments	Delay the dates on which taxpayers have to make prepayments.	Royal Decree	Approved by government	Extending the deadlines for prepayments of taxes during the current year.
Federal	Monthly settlement of VAT	Increased reimbursements for VAT with more settlements during the month of March.	Royal Decree	Approved by government	Increased VAT reimbursements during March, companies receive their settlement faster.
Federal	Tax exemption for regional compensations	Insuring that extraordinary compensations for the Covid-19 crisis by the regions are not taxed.	Law	Draft has been submitted for evaluation to the Council of State	All compensations by regional governments are free from federal taxes.
Brussels	Extension of payment deadline for withholding tax on real estate	By extending the deadlines for payment of withholding tax on real estate by 2 months, the taxpayer has more financial leeway.	Special Powers Decree No. 2020/004	Draft Decree adopted in 1st reading on 2 April, 2020	Temporarily relieve the finances of businesses and affected households
Flanders	Deferral of property tax payments for companies	Deferral of property tax payments with 2 months for legal entities in order to support companies' liquidity positions	Administrative instrument	Executed (tax year 2020)	1 billion euros of delayed tax receipts
Flanders	Deferral road tax payments for companies	Deferral of road tax payments with 4 months for legal entities in order to support companies' liquidity positions (in particular transport, bus and car leasing companies)	Administrative instrument	Executed (tax year 2020)	200 million euros of delayed tax receipts

Flanders	Deferral of inheritance and registration tax payments for households	Deferral of inheritance and registration tax payments with 2 months for natural persons in order to be able to fulfill all formalities	Administrative instrument	Executed (tax year 2020)	N/A
Financial sector					
Federal	Deferment of mortgage repayments	Suspension of mortgage payments for up to 6 months for families and the self-employed and suspension of capital repayments for corporate loans.	Charter		Give families, the self-employed and businesses a pause of payments for loans for a period up to 6 months.
Federal	Guarantee scheme	Provide a government guarantee for future loans.	Royal Decree	Measure is approved, Royal Decree will be approved by late April.	Provide government backing so that banks can give future loans to companies in need of financing.
Support to companies					
Flanders	Establishment of Task Force 'Economic Impact Corona'	Analyse the economic consequences of the coronavirus and listen to the concerns and questions raised by companies in Flanders. The trade unions and the banking sector (Febelfin) also take part in this Flemish task force.		3 March 2020	Clarify and publicise existing support measures. To answer questions and concerns.

Flanders	Circular on public contracts and corona	Flexibility in implementation of public contract regulations (in terms of sanctions and penalties) and increase in liquidity of successful tenderers of public contracts (inter alia, through accelerated payment and interim payments). Whenever possible, continuation/restart of activities, provided safety measures (e.g. social distancing) are complied with.	Circular	Communicated to the Government of Flanders on 10 April 2020. A second circular is being prepared on a uniform regulation regarding compensation	To reduce liquidity problems of successful tenderers of public contracts. To avoid administrative and legal proceedings between public contract parties. To provide an incentive to a number of economic sectors (e.g. building sector).
Flanders	Flexibility in deadlines of grants due to corona	Beneficiaries of grants who, as a result of the crisis, find it difficult to meet the deadlines agreed upon in one of the grants consult with VLAIO on the possibility of extending these deadlines.		Active	Preventing the fact that companies who cannot meet the deadlines agreed upon in the grants will have to repay (part of) the grant and face financial difficulties
Flanders	SME growth subsidy	Companies can receive a subsidy for the purchase of knowledge in the form of external advice or strategic recruitment to explore alternative supply routes made necessary by the coronavirus.		Active	Support companies to stay active and help them to explore alternative supply channels

Brussels	Information and communication with businesses	Reinforcement of the 1819 service, the hub.brussels information point that centralises and disseminates all official information (on both federal and regional measures) that could help Brussels businesses and entrepreneurs.	Decision of the Brussels Government	In place since 4 March 2020	
Brussels	Moratorium on Finance&Invest.brussels (F&I) loans	For existing loans, a moratorium of 6 to 12 months on capital repayment.	Decision of the Brussels Government	Operational	Free up cash flow of affected companies in the next 6 to 12 months. For future loans, encourage the implementation of counter-cyclical measures.
Brussels	Strengthening support for companies in difficulty	For new loans, F&I will support companies by also granting a moratorium on capital repayments.	Decision of the Brussels Government		
Brussels	Continued international economic aid	The mission of the Centre for Enterprises in Difficulty (BECI) of the Brussels Region is strengthened in order to increase its ability to support	Amended funding order	Applied to specific grants	

		companies in difficulty following the Covid-19 crisis, in collaboration with hub.brussels.			
Brussels	Zero rate for activated mortgage mandates	The aim is to prevent companies from having to pay a 1% registration fee when banks activate mortgage mandates in order to protect themselves against the effects of this crisis.		In preparation	This measure avoids a burden for companies in difficulty.
Wallonia	Task Force	Support the companies affected by the pandemic.			In March 2020, the Walloon government set up a Task Force bringing together Walloon economic stakeholders. Its objective is to inform, help and support Walloon companies facing difficulties related to coronavirus.
Wallonia	Delays in the reimbursement of loans	Provide delays in the reimbursement of the loans from the regional development banks.			The Walloon financial tools as a whole (SRIW, GROUPE SOGEP, SOWALFIN, invests) decided to grant a general moratorium on the reimbursement of outstanding loans until the end of March 2020. In addition, this moratorium may be extended until the end of April 2020. The measure is aimed at easing the

					financial burdens on companies and freeing up cash in the short term.
Wallonia	Solidarity fund	Implementation of a special solidarity fund for the company.	Government decree		A special solidarity fund has been set up with a procedure for handling applications for compensation and a working capital fund "Indemnisations entreprises COVID-19".
Employment, training and social economy					
Federal	Package of measures to support people that have been forced to stop their professional activities.	<p>As regards the employees: facilitating access to the temporary unemployment scheme and temporarily (until June 30) raising the income replacement rate of people in temporary unemployment.</p> <p>As regards the self-employed: facilitating access to the bridging right that provides income support and ensures continuation of social security rights. Temporary relaxation of the obligations regarding the payment of social contributions and taxes.</p>			<p>Avoid that the link between employees and the companies they work for is lost due to the temporary cessation of professional activities as a result of the outbreak of the Covid-19 virus.</p> <p>Support the income of employees and self-employed affected by the outbreak and the government's response to it and ensure continued social protection.</p> <p>Belgium's comprehensive social protection system acts as an automatic stabiliser. These additional ad hoc measures facilitate access to the existings schemes and reinforce them.</p>

Federal	Extension of the period of validity of meal, gift, sports and cultural vouchers and eco-vouchers	Maintain the purchasing power of workers.	Royal Decree	Measure is approved, approval Royal Decree is pending.	Extension of the validity period by 6 months for meal, gift and eco-vouchers and by 3 months for sports and culture vouchers.
Federal	Deferral of social security contributions	Support for companies	Special powers decree	Approved by the government	Deferral of payment of contributions for the first and second quarters until 15 December 2020.
Federal	Supplementary student work	Supplementary workforce in industries that are still open.	Special powers decree	Approved by the government	Supplementary workforce in industries that are still open.
Federal	Asylum seekers allowed to work	Supplementary workforce in industries that are still open.	Special powers decree	Approved by the government	Supplementary workforce in industries that are still open.
Federal	Critical sectors: successive short-term contracts allowed	Supplementary temporary workforce in industries that are still open.	Special powers decree	Approved by the government	Supplementary temporary workforce in industries that are still open.
Federal	Critical sectors: 120 hours extra voluntary overtime (on top of 100 existing), that are exempt of taxes and social contributions	Supplementary temporary workforce in industries that are still open.	Special powers decree	Approved by the government	Supplementary temporary workforce in industries that are still open.
Federal	Critical sectors: temporarily allowed to lend workers to other companies	Supplementary temporary workforce in industries that are still open.	Special powers decree	Approved by the government	Supplementary workforce in industries that are still open.

Federal	Vital sector (agriculture): workers in time credit can interrupt this time credit to go work in that sector	Supplementary temporary workforce in industries that are still open.	Special powers decree	Approved by the government	Supplementary workforce in industries that are still open.
Federal	Vital sector (agriculture): temporary unemployed in other sectors, can temporarily work in agriculture and keep 75% of their UB while working	Supplementary temporary workforce in industries that are still open.	Royal Decree	Almost published	Supplementary temporary workforce in industries that are still open.
Federal	Unemployment benefits: no degressive benefits during 3 months	Protect income of unemployed that cannot reasonably find a job now.	Royal Decree	Almost published	Protect income of unemployed that cannot reasonably find a job now.
Federal	Unemployment benefits: artists and school leavers get three months extension of benefit rights	Protect income of unemployed that cannot reasonably find a job now.	Royal Decree	Almost published	Protect income of unemployed that cannot reasonably find a job now.
Wallonia	Measure to maintain the level of professional trainings	To maintain / improve the level of professional trainings.	Government decree	Adopted	The Government has approved a decree to allow for the maintenance of subsidies for training, integration and social economy operators faced with a drop in activity and/or the need to develop new channels of interaction with their beneficiaries.
Brussels	Support for the non-profit sectors (health, social	In addition to a fund dedicated to the sector, subsidies to the non-market sector are	Decisions of the Common and	Active	Allow the sector to cover unforeseen expenses and avoid the temporary unemployment of staff

	assistance, support for disabled people, etc.)	maintained, in particular by equating subsidized periods not worked with work performed.	Francophone Community Colleges		
Flanders	Extension of work permit	Temporary extension of the work permit for people who cannot return to their home country, on the basis of a temporary extension of residence (simple work permit procedure; max. 3 months, renewable).	Decision of the Flemish government (27 March 2020)	Active	
Flanders	Support measures for the social economy	<p>Temporary suspension of progression pathways and extension of integration pathways.</p> <p>Temporary suspension of the rule for employing a number of target group employees in customised work companies.</p> <p>More financial breathing space by not automatically collecting (reductions) monthly payment advances (temporary).</p>	Decision of the Flemish government (20 March 2020)	Active	Supporting companies active in the social economy in their business operations in absorbing the financial and economic consequences.

		Guaranteed financing of unpaid supported employment (temporary).			
Flanders	Matching Covid-19 vacancies	Capturing urgent 'corona'-jobs in critical sectors and matching them quickly and efficiently with jobseekers interested in these temporary jobs		Ongoing: (1) monitoring; (2) collaborations with partners to communicate on this platform and reach employers with urgent vacancies; (3) communication/sensibilization	<p>Capturing the most urgent vacancies and making quick and qualitative (skills + safety) matchings.</p> <p>Offering temporary opportunities to all jobseekers.</p> <p>Impact on skills-development.</p>
Support to citizens and non-commercial institutions					
French Community	Relaxation of the conditions for granting subsidies	Allowing recipients to retain their full subsidies when they are unable to comply with subsidy conditions due to the measures taken to combat the epidemic.	Decree special powers.		
French Community	Early granting of structural subsidies	Awarding recurrent beneficiaries their structural subsidies earlier, to allow them to have liquidity more quickly.	Decree special powers.		

German speaking Community	Grant guarantee	If an association, public institution, private person, etc. which received a grant commitment from the German-speaking Community in 2020 was unable to comply with the grant conditions due to the corona crisis, the grant guarantee will apply.	Decree of 17 January 1994 setting up supplementary budgetary funds for the German-speaking Community	The subsidy guarantee may be cumulated with other grants from other Belgian local authorities such as the Federal State or the Walloon Region.	If the costs or the reduction of activities can be proven to be due to the corona crisis, they can still be claimed for the period after the corona measures are lifted.
German speaking Community	Increase in liquidity	Short-term assistance to bridge any liquidity shortfalls. This is the advance payment of already approved grants.			If necessary, organizations receiving a grant from the German-speaking community for personnel and functional costs can apply for the monthly instalments of the 2nd quarter 2020, i.e. April, May and June, to be paid out in one tranche in order to help overcome possible liquidity bottlenecks at short notice.
German speaking Community	Corona relief fund for loss of revenue and additional expenditure	Beneficiaries are non-commercial sector institutions: the cultural sector, the sports sector, the leisure sector, adult education, but also the health sector, infant care, the social sector, retirement homes and the disabled sector.	Coronacrisis decree of 6 April 2020		Dotation of 10 million euros. The Corona relief fund is intended to bridge short-term liquidity bottlenecks in order to ensure that services are maintained and jobs are secured. Interest-free loans are granted via the Corona relief fund to compensate for temporary revenue shortfalls and unavoidable additional expenditure due to the corona crisis.

Poverty reduction and social inclusion					
Federal	Task force vulnerable groups	Bringing together experts, NGOs and politicians to discuss measures for vulnerable groups that suffer from containment measures.	Task force		Reflection on measures for vulnerable groups that suffer from containment measures.
Federal	Supplementary homeless housing	Extension of federal winter night center and subsidies to big cities to provide special shelter for possibly ill homeless.	Royal and ministerial decrees	Almost published	Special shelter for possibly ill homeless.
Flanders	Temporary ban on disconnecting electricity and natural gas	During the Covid-19 health crisis, except in the case of an immediate security threat and only as long as that threat persists, distribution system operators may not shut down the supply of electricity or natural gas for: (a) all customers who are connected to low voltage or to a low pressure pipe; (b) residential customers connected to medium voltage or to a medium pressure pipe.	Decree	Enacted by the Flemish Parliament on 1 April 2020 and promulgated by the government on 3 April 2020	Due to the fact that according to this socio-economic measure they are not to be disconnected from their energy supply, the debts of the social customers of the distribution system operators may grow. These debts will have to be cleared after the end of the Covid-19 health crisis.
Brussels	Supply of electricity, water and gas: extension of the winter period 2019-2020	The winter period (1 October to 31 March), during which it is forbidden to cut off a	Decrees of the Brussels Government of 19 March and 18 April 2020	Adopted	Avoid cutting off power to households for the most vulnerable people during confinement.

		household's supply, is extended until 30 June 2020.			
Wallonia	Social Emergency Task Force	To prevent extreme poverty and protect the poorest persons from the pandemic.	Government decree	Adopted	In the field of social measures, a Social Emergency Task Force has been set up. In addition to government representatives, it brings together representatives from the Walloon Anti-Poverty Network, the Federation of Social Services and the Walloon Agency for Quality of Life (AVIQ).
Wallonia	Miscellaneous provisions on employment, training and socio-professional integration	To maintain training to improve the social integration.			Miscellaneous provisions on employment, training and socio-professional integration
Education and child care					
Federal National Security Council	Schools provide childcare	Schools provide childcare during regular school hours (including childcare before and after school hours). There are 3 groups of healthy pupils for whom schools provide childcare: 1.Children whose parent(s) work in in a critical sector 2.Children in special educational needs education, boarding	Ministerial Order containing urgent measures to curtail the spread of COVID-19	The Ministerial Order was adopted on 12 March and amended on 23 March.	This measure ensures that parents who work in a critical sector (care, safety, food industry, distribution, etc.) and cannot work from home can continue to do their job. This measure also protects children who are medically and/or socially vulnerable and children for whom childcare at home is not a safe option. This measure also ensures that the composition of so-called 'contactbubbles' (an existing group of people who already had contact before) also remains the same

		<p>schools, the medical pedagogical institutes of community education (MPIGOs) and the boarding schools of community education that are permanently open (IPOs). 3.Children in a vulnerable home situation</p> <p>From May 18:</p> <p>Primary and secondary education will continue to provide for the reception of pupils at school and pre- and after-school care, for the same three groups as mentioned above, but now also for children whose parents goes to work and doesn't have other opportunities for childcare.</p>			<p>in childcare. This offers herd protection and creates herd immunity</p>
French Community	Distance learning platform (higher education)	<p>Making the "maclasse.crp.education" system available free of charge to establishments of different types, forms and levels of education in the French Community.</p>			

		The extension of the exemption from distance education registration fees for "minors enrolled in an educational establishment organised or subsidised by the French Community [...]" to include adults enrolled in a compulsory education establishment organised or subsidised by the French Community.			
French Community	Stepping up the "digital school" strategy	Providing digital tools for acquiring distance learning skills in periods of confinement.			
Agriculture					
Federal	Vital sector: workers in time credit can interrupt this time credit to go work in that sector	Supplementary temporary workforce in industries that are still open.	Special powers decree	Approved by the government	Supplementary workforce in industries that are still open.
Federal	Vital sector: temporary unemployed in other sectors, can temporarily work in agriculture and keep 75 % of their UB while working	Supplementary temporary workforce in industries that are still open.	Royal Decree	Almost published	Supplementary temporary workforce in industries that are still open.

Flanders	Agricultural Investment Fund (AIF), temporary guarantee	The temporary guarantee is designed to be deployed in times of agricultural or general crisis. The fund guarantees maximum 80 % of the loan during the first three years. The loan amount is used for the operating assets of the company, which are under pressure due to the decreased turnover.	Ministerial decree	Applications can be submitted via an electronic counter	It is to be expected that, thanks to the loan, companies will have a greater chance of eventually bringing their economic activities back up to levels before the crisis.
Flanders	Accelerated payment of AIF investment files	The sectors with the greatest negative economic impact are favored in the administrative processing of investment files. In the first place, this concerns the floriculture sector.	Decree of the Flemish government of 19 December 2014 regarding aid for investments and takeover in agriculture. Accelerated payment does not require a change of Flemish legislation or the EAFRD program document		
Flanders	Non-harvesting	As part of their operational program producer organizations may apply for non-harvesting of agricultural products that are most affected by the crisis.	Regulation (EU) No. 1308/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 establishing a common		

			organization of the markets in agricultural products, and repealing Council Regulations (EEC) No. 922/72, (EEC) No. 234/79, (EC) No. 1037/2001 and (EC) No. 1234/2007		
Tourism and culture					
Federal	Voucher system for package deals in travel sector	Temporary possibility for tour operators in the travel sector to give a voucher instead of reimbursement.	Ministerial decree	Approved by the minister and confirmed by government	
Federal	Voucher system for the event sector	Temporary possibility for event organizer to give a voucher instead of reimbursement.	Ministerial decree	Approved by the minister and confirmed by government	
Federal	Temporary suspension of execution measures for companies and associations	Give the companies and associations a temporary pause button. Enterprises can't be declared bankrupt and are	Royal decree	Advice is demanded from the Council of State	Impact for all enterprises who are in financial difficulties

		protected against execution measures.			
Brussels	Support for events, tourism, cultural and sports sectors	The subsidies for events and activities scheduled between March 1 and April 30, 2020 inclusive are maintained despite their postponement or cancellation due to the coronavirus pandemic.	Government order of March 26, 2020+ COCOF order	Adopted In force on March 16, 2020	This measure limits losses in the sector following the cancellation or postponement of events supported by the Region.
Wallonia	Lifting of local taxes for HORECA and tourism sectors				De nombreuses mesures ont été adoptées afin de permettre aux pouvoirs locaux de poursuivre leurs missions d'aide aux citoyens et aux entreprises. Ainsi les taxes communales sont suspendues dans les secteurs de l'HORECA et du tourisme.
Flemish government	Flexibility in administrative obligations and deadlines	Provide flexibility in terms of completeness, deadlines and requirements of project files by the Flemish Department of Culture, Youth and Media and Cultural Funds	Flemish government decision – emergency decree	Decision on 2 April 2020	Deadlines for submission of grant applications and reporting will be maintained, but the Department of Culture, Youth and Media is more flexible regarding the completeness of grant applications and/or reporting. Likewise, various Cultural Funds (Flanders Audiovisual Fund - VAF, Literatuur Vlaanderen) have introduced flexibility regarding the deadlines and requirements of grant application and/or reporting.

Public administration					
Wallonia	A coronavirus coordination unit has been set up within the Public Service, with the support of the regional crisis centre.	To preserve a good level of public services	Administrative decision	Adopted	The mandate of this unit is to assess the situation in real time and to adapt instructions and recommendations to staff and management. Various provisions have been adopted to ensure compliance with the measures for social distancing and the detection of positive or suspect cases.
Wallonia	Suspension of deadlines	To preserve a good level of public services	Administrative decision	Adopted	It has also been decided to suspend the applicable deadlines for all cases under the Region's jurisdiction.
Wallonia	Adaptation of working conditions of municipal agents	To preserve a good level of public services			Various measures have also been taken to adapt the working conditions of municipal employees.
Brussels	Temporary suspension of deadlines and appeal deadlines	The time periods laid down or provided for in all Brussels legislation and regulations are suspended for a period of one month, which may be extended twice	Decree No. 2020/001 with Special Powers of 2 April 2020 (extended on 16 April) + decrees of the community commissions	In force on 16 March	
Brussels	Extension of deadline for registration fees	Extension of the 3-months period taking into account the time limits to execute a notarial deed or to establish one's main	Government decree	Draft decree adopted in 1st reading on 2 April, 2022	

		residence in the acquired property.			
Flanders	Exemption from licensing and notification obligation for the construction and operation of additional hospital and other care facilities, additional production facilities for medicines and medical equipment and research institutions with regard to the coronavirus outbreak	<p>1) The Emergency Decree allows initiators, during the state of public health emergency declared by the Government of Flanders, to immediately remedy urgent needs for medicines and medical equipment, increased capacity of hospitals and other care settings or research institutions. No licensing or notification procedure needs to be implemented. A notification mentioning the initiatives and making them known suffices.</p> <p>The general and sectoral requirements of VLAREM continue to apply.</p> <p>2) A second part was added which gives the Government of Flanders the authority to derogate from procedural deadlines and procedural or administrative requirements in</p>	<p>Emergency Decree of 20 March 2020 containing measures in the event of a state of public health emergency</p> <p>Order of 20 March 2020 establishing the state of public health emergency</p>	<p>In force since 20 March 2020</p> <p>Temporarily for 120 days (up to and including 17 July 2020, renewable once by the Government of Flanders)</p>	<p>The Emergency Decree allows initiators to immediately respond to urgent needs for medicines and medical equipment, increased capacity of hospitals and other care facilities or research institutions during the period of 'civil emergency regarding public health' set by the Flemish government.</p> <p>Meanwhile, 8 initiatives have been notified. They concern temporary structures for triage, extra emergency services and the production of hand gel. Whether other notifications are to be expected, is difficult to assess and depends on the evolution of the crisis.</p>

		various decrees and their implementing orders			
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