



The “2013-2014 Walloon SME Envoy’s Report”

Abstract

SMEs are the backbone of the Walloon economy. They represent 99% of the companies in Wallonia, 78% of the jobs in the private sector and 18% of the GDP. Within the last 10 years, the number of SMEs has increased by 12%. Moreover, those of which that have been active between 2006 to 2012 have created almost 28 000 new jobs meaning a 14.9% increase of the headcount. They are consequently at the core of our regional economic dynamism.

For all those reasons, it is essential to enable them to start and grow and to exploit to the maximum their innovative capabilities. Considering the growing complexities of challenges and issues faced by SMEs and the many actions developed by the public authorities to cope with them, an increased coordination of tools and actors of the Walloon SME policy seemed essential to adapt to the SMEs’needs. That is why, Wallonia decided to implement the European Small Business Act (SBA) through a structural dialogue between SMEs, their representatives and all the public stakeholders concerned by the SME policy.

Since 2011, the Walloon SBA enables to implement concrete actions, most often at the request of SMEs expressed during the various editions of the “Parliament of SMEs”.

Three years after, the Walloon SBA received recognition from the European Commission for which it is a model without equal throughout Europe. Besides, the Walloon economic and social committee (CESW) composed by representatives of the employers and union organizations calls for its continuation and its amplification.

The Walloon SBA is today at a turning point. That is why this third report is divided in three volumes in order to enlighten what could be the future of this process.

The **first volume** assesses three years of SBA's implementation in Wallonia and presents how it could be possible to improve its value added in favor of SMEs in the Region. This assessment includes the point of view of the Steering Committee which is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the SBA in Wallonia and which is composed by members of the administration and Public Interest Bodies concerned by one or more aspects of the SBA's 10 areas of focus. This volume includes also SMEs and social partners' expectations. Amongst other, this report pledges for :

- An enlargement of the Walloon SBA's scope to the 10 areas of the European SBA;
- A broader political support for the Walloon SBA by the entire Government and not only by the Minister of Economy;
- A clearer mandate for the Walloon SME Envoy in order to be able to mobilize stakeholders more quickly.

The **second volume**, updates the "*Analysis of the implementation of the Small Business Act's recommendations in Wallonia*". The 10 Europeans' SBA principles and recommendations are systematically analyzed to highlight how they are implemented by concrete actions in favor of SMEs in the Region. The analysis stresses that Wallonia implements 100% of the Commission's recommendations of which 35% partially. It also shows that Wallonia has made numerous progresses in the areas of administrative burden's reduction, female entrepreneurship, public procurement, support to young entrepreneurs, resource efficiency, supports to export,...

This volume demonstrates that SMEs are at the core of the Walloon priorities. This affirmation is confirmed by the analysis of the implementation of the European "Entrepreneurship 2020" plan. Indeed, it highlights the fact that 80% of this plan's recommendations are totally or partially implemented in Wallonia.

The **third volume** finally takes stock of the statistical situation for SMEs in Wallonia. It demonstrates that in each of the 10 SBA's principles, SMEs still encounter specific difficulties but that they are despite this matter of facts the backbone of the regional economy.



Conclusions from this report will have to be taken into consideration in order to develop tailored policies for SMEs with all the stakeholders in the near future.

The Walloon SBA is also at a turning point because of the European context. Indeed, future European changes will also have to be integrated into the Walloon agenda. So, a specific focus will be given to the next Commission's communication on the SBA and to the Green Action Plan. Those two documents will feed the Walloon strategy.

To conclude, this confirms the need to keep progressing on the important priorities for SMEs in Wallonia but also seals the beginning of a new dynamic involving all the relevant stakeholders.

The Walloon SME Envoy

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