



## **Strategy Europe 2020: Contribution from Wallonia and the Wallonia-Brussels Federation to the Belgian National Reform Programme 2012**

### **1. Introduction**

The present document is the joint contribution from Wallonia/Wallonia-Brussels Federation to the Belgian National Reform Programme (PNR) 2012. Its aim is to contribute to the drafting of the PNR, and constitutes an appendix. The structure of the document is modelled on the Belgian PNR, which has been constructed in accordance with the guidelines provided by the Commission. In particular, the report for this year consists of the updating of initiatives announced in 2011, and pays particular attention to the implementation and response to the Council recommendations and guidelines for this 2012 half-year.

The major guideline policy and principle initiatives of the Walloon and Wallonia-Brussels Federation policies linked to the Europe 2020 Strategy, its integrated guidelines and its main objectives on the whole remain unchanged in relation to the 2011 report. Reference is made to the 2011 PNR for an extensive description of these basic components.

### **2. Implementation of National Reform Programme (PNR) 2011**

#### ***2.1. Public finance***

Wallonia and the Wallonia-Brussels Federation are in full compliance with the budgetary path presented by Belgium in April 2011 within the framework of its stability programme 2011-2014. Belgium has pledged to bring its deficit below the 3% GDP threshold as from 2012 and to restore the budget balance by 2015 at the latest.

The standard borrowing of Wallonia and the Wallonia-Brussels Federation for 2011 was discussed within the framework of the cooperation agreement, 3 February 2010, reviewed by the Budget and Finance Inter-ministerial Conference. For the Federated Entities, the objectives discussed correspond to the overall balance ESA95 (European System of National and Regional Accounts) in multi-annual projections developed by the different entities and set out in the General Principles relating to the initial 2010 budgets put before the different parliamentary assemblies. The 2011 total objective of the two Entities corresponded to a maximum deficit of -815.74 million €.

Since the drafting of the initial 2011 budget, the Government has decided to accelerate its return path to equilibrium and has decided on an overall total balance of -594.032 million €, i.e. a favourable margin of 221.708 million € in relation to the official objective. During the 2011 budget adjustment, this favourable margin was increased to 252.154 million €, the total deficit being reduced to -493.633 million €.

This favourable margin of 252.154 million € enabled Wallonia to agree an intervention of 207.5 million in favour of Holding Communal, one of the principle shareholders in Dexia SA, within the wider framework of Belgian and French state intervention in favour of Dexia SA, while respecting a priori the official objective assigned to Wallonia and the Wallonia-Brussels Federation under the Stability Programme 2011-2014 tabled by Belgium in April 2011.

During the drafting of the 2012 budget, the Government again set down its return path to equilibrium by defining its objectives for 2012 to 2015:



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<i>Million €</i>	<i>2012</i>	<i>2013</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>2015</i>
<i><b>FWB</b></i>	-257.896	-202.890	-101.445	0
<i><b>Wallonia</b></i>	-201.700	-135.260	-67.630	0
<i><b>TOTAL</b></i>	<b>-459.596</b>	<b>-338.150</b>	<b>-169.075</b>	<b>0</b>

The Government limited the total deficit for 2012, to -459.596 million €, equivalent to 2.8% total revenue of Wallonia and the Federation (excluding borrowing). Regarding the objective laid down for the same year in the 3 February 2010 cooperation agreement discussed at the Budget and Finance Inter-ministerial Conference, the balance determined by the Government corresponded to an improvement of 112.833 million €. This improvement was confirmed during the budgetary control carried out in March 2012.

Finally, it should be remembered that since the 2009 budgetary year, a large-scale cost-cutting plan has been implemented in Wallonia and the Federation to ensure a return to equilibrium in 2015. This plan involves the freezing of a certain amount of primary expenditure at its 2009 level (zero nominal growth). In addition to this status quo, this expenditure represents net losses: -2.5 % in 2010 and -3.8 % in 2012 for Wallonia and -3.8% in 2012 for the Federation. The operational resources allocated to para-regional and para-community bodies were also frozen in nominal terms as from 2009, apart from increases offset elsewhere. In Wallonia, a particular effort has been made to improve the Region's own revenue collection.

Concerning **teachers' pensions** (cf. EuroPlus Pact), the draft order moving the age at which teachers may take early retirement from 55 to 58 years (DPPR - 'leaving before the age of retirement pension') was adopted in December 2011. The deferral is accompanied by measures allowing teachers to work part-time before taking full retirement, according to a 'melting pot' system of months accumulated over their career. Reforms carried out at federal level are in addition to new regulations yet to be determined.

## *2.2. The labour market*

The Marshall Plan 2.Green puts the accent on qualification through work based learning (see section on 'Education and training') and the general trend for work experience undertaken by job seekers to be given professional status, particularly in the case of young people. Individual Support, during the drafting of action plans, allows different initiatives to be offered to **young job seekers** throughout their courses, according to their individual needs. These initiatives aim to obtain practical and appropriate responses for specific individual needs. In particular:

- A 'Skills Test': These tests are grounded in a methodology based on a presentation which immerses the target audience in the world of manpower shortages and career prospects - including the 'green' professions - on the labour market. The system set up by FOREM (the Belgian employment service) is being gradually extended to other operators;
- Group or individual sessions help a young person to position themselves in one or many professions and to identify a possible professional specialism adapted to suit their personal situation. These sessions also offer the opportunity to establish plans of action adapted to enable a young person to achieve their goals (observation stages, in-company placements, role plays);
- Organised dissemination of opportunities for young people in today's market: emerging and in-demand skills, etc.);



- Awareness of work opportunities in Flanders (close collaboration with VDAB - public employment service of Flanders) by supporting young people in their search for work in Flanders;
- Information on the possibilities of courses and employment overseas, from FOREM consultants on international mobility (linked to the EURES network - European Employment Services);
- The selecting of some young people for operators offering expertise specific to the young person's educational orientation and job market guidance;
- For the most vulnerable young people, a multi-dimensional career track (including the professional and social dimension). This route focuses on close collaboration with operators, enabling the job seeker to resolve any problems arising from the area of integration into the world of work alongside the fulfilment of job search related activities. This route can be taken over a longer period (max. 2 years). The young person can be sent to a social assistant (from 2011);
- Full information on employment aid, linked to the hiring of the job seeker by an employer (Belgian Hiring Plans - Plans activa, Win Win etc...);
- Access to education.

The initiatives mentioned in the section 'Education and training' within the framework of the fight against early school leaving and favouring an increase in the graduation rate has made an impact on fight against youth unemployment.

The 'Social Inclusion' axis of the 2007-2013 programming of Structural Funds, developed in the ESF (European Social Fund) programmes, enables all socioprofessional integration projects to be supported, particularly the training, carried out by actors in the pathways to integration. Projects specific to groups of priority beneficiaries are the main concern (job seekers distanced from the labour market, notably the poorly skilled, persons with disabilities, recipients of social integration income, persons of foreign origin). In addition, back-up measures for and on the labour market destined for young people and older workers are being developed.

Almost 50% of those helped to find work within the framework of the individual support system for job seekers, do not hold a 'Certificat d'Enseignement Secondaire du 2ème Degré' (Education certificate/diploma awarded at the age of 16) and 36% are under 25 years of age.

The objective of the new APE (Employment Development Plan) merchant order to be adopted in 2012 will be to support small enterprises (TPE) during the setting up of the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> employment. It will target the following groups: persons of 50 and over, persons younger than 30, persons who have been without employment for more than 2 years.

Current reforms concerning **an active policy of integration into the labour market** are detailed in the section on 'Employment'.

### **2.3. Industrial Policy, SMEs, and the Internal Market**

The Walloon Government is pursuing its **policy of competitiveness and clustering poles** within the framework of its industrial policy.

Concerning the poles, the 7<sup>th</sup> call for projects was closed in 2011, with a total of 36 projects financed (29 research projects, 5 training and 2 investment projects), for a budget of 62 million €. The 8<sup>th</sup> call was launched in November 2011 (deadline: 30 June 2012). The call for 'sustainable development' is also open to clusters.



At cluster level, 31 December, 2011, 11 clusters were recognised under the decree of 18 January 2007, grouped together approximately 1,150 members. Enterprises predominate, with 80% members listed. The 2011 budget dedicated to this policy amounts to 1.4 million €. An external evaluation was carried out in 2011.

Works related to the Decree perpetuating these policies have continued: its adoption should not however take place before 2013.

In 2011 particular emphasis was placed on the internationalisation of poles and clusters, particularly through the European network 'Innovation Express' and the CIP (Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme) calls, as well as participation in many INTERREG (Innovation and Environment Regions of Europe Sharing Solutions) projects, and the support of AWEX (Walloon Export Agency) for the internationalisation of the poles. In the first half year 2011, AWEX also financed 75 projects promoting the exports and international visibility of the poles, including the implementation of the initiatives 'Scientific Liaison Officer' and pole ambassadors, and led 17 targeted activities overseas. From the point of view of foreign investors, the 96 dossiers brought to fruition from 2006-2011, covered an investment of 570 million € and the creation of more than 1,700 jobs.

In 2011, the Walloon government launched a Plan of Action favouring the creation and development of SMEs, in accordance with the recommendations put forward by the Commission through the Small Business Act. The **Walloon SBA** endorses four priority principles: (1) The promotion of all forms of entrepreneurship, (2) The development of initiatives to facilitate access to credit financing for SMEs, (3) The development of technological and non-technological innovation, (4) the internationalisation of SMEs and their access to both internal and external markets.

It is intended to supplement regional support policies for SMEs, on the basis of an analysis of the specific needs of Wallonian SMEs, and the level of implementation of the European recommendations. The development process of this Plan is intended to be participatory, involving the social partners, the representative organisations of the SMEs and the SMEs (the organisation of an 'SME Parliament'), as well as the actors on the ground. A Walloon 'SME Envoy' has been appointed.

In addition, new initiatives concerning the support for SMEs have since been launched, especially in terms of **access to financing** (strengthening of the business transfer guarantee mechanism, a blend of guarantee and loan for TPEs, the self-employed, liberal professions and artisans, micro-credit for female entrepreneurs and failed entrepreneurs), of business **transfer and internationalisation** (the training cheque for internationalisation), as well as **support for the entrepreneurial spirit** (development of pedagogical tools and courses for students, female entrepreneurship). Note that different initiatives supporting these objectives are implemented with Structural Fund support.

As regards the financing of the SMEs, a reflection was initiated for the mobilisation of European-level instruments (EIF, EIB - European Investment Fund, European Investment Bank - and Structural Funds), in relation to the period 2014-2020. New mechanisms are also under discussion. The strengthening of different support systems for the internationalisation of SMEs is anticipated for 2012 (identification of partners, clustering, adaptation of the Portage Programme, strengthening of the export cluster mechanism, stimulation of training).

As for the entrepreneurial spirit element, the focus for 2012 will highlight consideration of the SMEs needs in higher education, university entrepreneurship, business acculturation courses for future teachers and communication regarding business transfer. The integration of courses aiming to develop the entrepreneurial spirit in initial teacher training is also under discussion,



as well as the establishment of a training module on entrepreneurial spirit in higher education networks.

Also envisaged is the opening up of the 'EXPLORT' programme to partnerships with higher education institutions. These partnerships take the form of free courses overseas on behalf of Walloon enterprises.

Regarding **activity creation** support, initiatives have been developed where self-employed work is the main occupation through initiatives favouring those whose self employment is their supplementary occupation: extension of accessibility to cheque training and length of time for cheque usage, support for candidate entrepreneurs through employment auto-creation support organisations (SAACE, a 12<sup>th</sup> SAACE is expected in 2012), the implementation of the '**Airbag**' plan for the settling into self employment as a main occupation for those whose self-employment has been a supplementary occupation for more than three years and for those who have received training as a supervisor or who have followed a SAACE course. The legislative process concerning the new system is almost complete; this system should enter into force in the 1<sup>st</sup> half of 2012.

In 2011, the Walloon and the Wallonia-Brussels Federation continued to implement their **administrative simplification plan** (Let's Simplify Together Plan 2010-2014 and the Industry Action Plan), with the focus on the simplification of regulations, the simplification and dematerialisation of processes (mainly concerning SME access to public markets and environmental permits, aspects which will still receive special attention in 2012), the evaluation and reduction of the administrative charge, the deletion of obsolete texts (15 new texts have been proposed for deletion). The principal of expectations was introduced as a pilot in October 2011. The development of an 'SME Test' is planned for 2012.

### **3. Thematic coordination: Europe 2020 strategy objectives**

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#### **3.1. Employment**

In order to try and increase the employment rate, Wallonia and the French Community of Belgium have developed a strategy based around three priorities:

- Pursuing and promoting an active labour market integration policy
- Promoting lifelong learning (see "Education and training")
- Developing a framework that facilitates the creation of quality business and employment opportunities (see Chapter 2).

In terms of the first priority, two major reforms are currently being implemented, as evidenced by the following developments.

#### **Provision of one-on-one support for jobseekers**

At present, the aim is to offer support:

- In the month following the month of registration, for under-25s registering as newly unemployed upon leaving education with pre-university level qualifications (no higher than CESS)
- In the two months following registration, for under-25s registering as newly unemployed upon leaving education with university or other higher-level qualifications (those with university degrees will be contacted by the call centre from the first month onwards)
- No later than six months after registration for other jobseekers



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- Once the support period is over, when individuals will be contacted by the National Employment Office (ONEM) with the offer of additional low-level support.

This one-on-one support process has been phased in since January 2010, with the gradual introduction of employment advisors.

Based on the objectives for one-to-one support and the available financial resources, the Walloon Training and Employment Agency (FOREM) aims to provide a total of 528 advisors in 2012. This will ensure that support can be given to the anticipated number of jobseekers (130,000), taking into account the impact of federal government measures (work experience for young people and encouraging people over the age of 50 to return to work).

The outcomes for 2011 were as follows: 500 FTE advisors (698 individuals) were involved in the support scheme, providing help to almost 95,000 people. In addition to these 500 advisors, a network of FOREM social workers (20 individuals, or 16 FTE) provided support to people with specific problems. These social workers help jobseekers deal with any issues that are making it difficult for them to look for work. Once these issues have been resolved, the jobseekers are referred back to the advisors, who will help them enter the labour market.

In addition to internal restructuring, the increased demand for advisors in this new role has required the implementation of a specific training programme.

In terms of the technological developments required to implement the new support scheme, in 2011 these focused mainly around targeting potential service users, the creation of an action plan, the classification of skills based on standardised nomenclature and a tool to connect jobseekers with operators.

Since 2010, the FOREM has implemented two new policies:

- Every individual is now provided with support for one year (rather than just young people who register upon leaving education)
- The length of time between registration and the assessment interview for jobseekers other than young people has been reduced to ensure people receive support no later than six months after they register.

Particular attention has been paid to supporting women (50%), under-25s (36%) and low-qualified people. 16% of the latter held the CEB (qualification obtained at the end of primary school), while 34% held the CESDD (taken at age 16).

The decree covering one-to-one support for jobseekers and the cooperation scheme was adopted by parliament and published in the Belgian Official Journal in January 2012. It is set to be implemented by July 2012.

### **Improving the effectiveness of the Walloon Training and Employment Agency in accordance with the FOREM management contract and decree**

The main aims of the reform are to set out the task at hand (getting jobseekers into the labour market, with a view to providing quality, long-term employment and ensuring employers' recruitment needs are met), refocusing FOREM on its core objectives and restructuring it as necessary, and ensuring optimal allocation of resources to improve effectiveness and efficiency.

The main achievements in 2011 were:

- 31 March 2011: Walloon Parliament adopts a decree formalising the creation of a strategic committee, an executive board and an auditing committee for the FOREM
- 13 September 2011: management contract signed



- December 2011: Walloon Government adopts the FOREM decree on its second reading.

The key dates for 2012 are:

- March 2012: third reading of FOREM decree before the Walloon Government
- Second quarter of 2012: finalisation of strategic operational and interdepartmental plans for the implementation of the management contract and internal performance indicators.

The new priorities set out in the management contract will apply to the period 2011-2014.

The implementation of policies designed to promote **lifelong learning** is ongoing (see also Section 3.3). These include increasing targeted training opportunities (green jobs, languages, competitiveness clusters, ICT), supported by Structural Funds; linking up regional and community-level education and training policies; and striking a better balance between supply and demand, notably through the development of dual and vocational education and by working more closely with business sectors (sectoral agreements).

In terms of languages, the “Wallangues” language training programme was launched in 2011, with the aim of enrolling 150,000 people by the end of 2012 (80,400 were enrolled as of February 2012). In addition, 97,152 training vouchers were used to access language training in 2011.

In May 2011, representatives of higher education institutions and three business sectors (new technologies, construction and chemistry) signed a framework agreement aimed at helping young people gain experience through dual programmes offering higher education courses combined with work experience. The agreement is also intended to encourage more young people into higher education and make these priority sectors more attractive to jobseekers.

### **3.2. R&D and innovation**

Both governments are continuing their work to increase investment in R&D and innovation, and to improve the effectiveness of policies in this area. This involves both promoting excellence in scientific research and further encouraging and valuing research and innovation within the economy as a whole, as well as improving the way in which the various components of the regional innovation system work (broad-based innovation). The integrated 2011-2015 Research Strategy and the “Creative Wallonia” plan have been developed to put these ideas into action.

The key achievements of the **2011-2015 Research Strategy** in 2011 were:

- The governments of Wallonia and the French Community of Belgium approved the “Wallonia-Brussels Jobseekers Partnership” in May 2011, which contains six key objectives broken down into 25 measures. A long-term budget of €1 million has been made available for this project in the Marshall Plan 2.Green.
- The first call for “public-private partnership” (PPP) projects was launched in November 2011, with an indicative budget of €6 million. PPPs combine regional finances with investment from businesses and research institutions to respond to the technological needs of a given business sector.
- The Walloon Government agreed to provide annual funding of €5 million to support cutting edge research infrastructures that will enable research teams to claim their place on the ESFRI roadmap.
- A new scheme entitled “First International” was launched. The aim of the scheme is to fund research projects likely to have a positive effect on economic and social development and the creation of long-term employment opportunities. It will also train



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researchers in emerging technologies and give them the chance to gain experience in the international scientific community by undertaking a minimum of six months' work in a foreign research organisation. The scheme should provide funding for ten full-time research positions.

- The "WB Green" scheme was launched at the end of November 2011 to fund sustainable development and environmental projects, with an indicative budget of €10 million. This is the first programme of its kind to enable universities, other higher education institutions and research centres from both Wallonia and Brussels to work together on the same research project. Sponsorship is open to businesses with sites in Wallonia and/or the Brussels-Capital Region.

As part of the Marshall Plan 2.Green, €125 million was allocated to R&D projects within competitiveness clusters in 2011 (sixth and seventh calls for projects). The eighth call for projects is currently underway.

The **Creative Wallonia** plan, launched at the end of 2010, aims to stimulate innovation and creativity in Wallonia, both in the economy and the population as a whole. The plan takes an open approach to innovation, but also targets particular groups, including students, jobseekers, civil servants, businesses and designers. The aim is to develop new ways of raising awareness, promoting the spread of technology, creating innovation ecosystems and stimulating the launch of new products and services. A number of actions were launched in 2011 and will continue to be built upon throughout 2012:

- Organisation of a Creativity Week in November 2011
- Involvement of university departments in multidisciplinary research and training projects in the fields of creativity and innovation
- Adoption of an ICT Master Plan (to be implemented in 2012)
- Creation of a trend analysis centre to support Walloon employers
- Call for coworking projects (shared workspaces offering different services and promoting knowledge growth): eight projects selected, with a budget of €600,000
- Call for "smart work centre" projects: six to eight projects should receive equipment funding in 2012, to a total of €300,000
- Introduction of a specialised consultancy scheme aimed at supporting an innovation audit of SMEs, which will be up and running in 2012
- End of call for projects for the "Boost-Up" scheme, aimed at self-employed people and SMEs in the creative industries sector looking to launch innovative prototypes: six projects selected, 2011 budget of €400,000 (set to double in 2012)
- "Wallimage Crossmedia" (€570,000 of funding for eight projects): this scheme is designed to support innovative digital marketing campaigns for film productions aimed at attracting audiences through alternative forms of media
- Introduction of a scheme designed to support the development of innovative technological products, from prototype to production to launch.

A new green innovation consultancy scheme designed to support SMEs was also launched in 2011.

Finally, a peer review of the Wallonia regional innovation system, headed by the OECD, is currently underway, and will conclude in 2012.





### 3.3. *Education and training*

The regional and community governments are committed to the promotion of lifelong learning, notably through the development of partnerships between education and training providers and by offering quality education and training opportunities for all.

The common aim of all the education programmes is to enable every individual to succeed by tackling failure and school drop-out rates, as illustrated by the following projects.

#### **Vocational education overhaul**

A number of different initiatives are underway, notably the provision of support for the work of the French-speaking Professions and Qualifications Agency (SFMQ) and the introduction of “qualification by units” (CPU), which is the French Community of Belgium’s response to the implementation of the ECVET system. Other initiatives include the development of dual education, the development of career guidance based on labour market requirements and the expansion of adult education opportunities.

The key developments in each of these priority areas are:

- **CPU**, which replaces the requirement for failing students to repeat the last two years of compulsory secondary education with a continuous remedial education scheme, was gradually introduced in two formats in 2010-2011, and the trial will continue in 2012-2013, offering five qualifications in one single format adopted by all the schools involved. The five qualifications will be fully rolled out in 2013-2014, and further qualifications will be added later. The initial results are encouraging.

An extensive teacher training programme has been designed for the CPU project, and more than 800 people have received training to date.

Special education levels 3 and 4 are also affected.

At European level, the work of the CPU-Europe project is ongoing. Visits to local projects in Finland, France, Luxembourg and the German-speaking Community have already taken place. Following a call for projects from the Commission, a group of ECVET experts are now working in the French-speaking Community.

- New **Advanced Technology Centres** (CTAs) continue to open (14 opened in 2010-2011, nine are set to open in 2011-2012 and eight in 2012-2013), supported by Structural Funds.
- The **Interagency Vocational Education Steering Committees** (IPIEQs) ran a number of campaigns to raise awareness of different types of trades and technical education programmes in 2010-2011. These committees aim to raise the profile of vocational education, but in 2011-2012 their work focused primarily on restructuring secondary-level vocational education by supporting the creation of options leading to employment and maintaining less popular options through integration. The first projects to group options together will be ready for 2012-2013, and an assessment will be undertaken.
- **Dual education reform**: The aim is to introduce a single dual education contract for all young people enrolled on a workplace training course alongside their compulsory education (with the IFAPME [Wallon Institute for Dual Education, Sole Traders and SMEs], SFPME [Brussels SME Training Agency] or a CEFA [Dual Education Centre]). This will replace the apprenticeship contract and vocational training agreement (CISP). It will also be possible to obtain the CQ6 certificate for the IFAPME and there are plans to develop a pathway between management training courses and undergraduate degrees (EPS/IFAPME partnership).



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Since the French-speaking Office for Dual Education has yet to be created due to legal difficulties, the governments have decided in the meantime to launch a steering group tasked with promoting and supporting dual education. By the end of the school year 2011-2012, a single dual education contract should be available, making dual education more accessible and practical for both students and businesses.

Since 2009, it has been possible to obtain a certificate in recognition of skills acquired outside the education system (ReCaF: Recognition of Skills Acquired through Training). This training is linked to the needs of the labour market, with a specific job in mind. The certificates are awarded at the end of the training period following skills testing, and follow a standardised format.

- Promotion of **trades and technical education programmes**: Euroskills 2012 will be held at the Spa-Francorchamps racetrack. In preparation for this event, trade villages were set up for the qualifying rounds. These were visited by more than 2500 young people. This joint initiative may be renewed in the future.
- The **catchment areas and synergy centres** should result in a cooperation agreement by the second half of 2012. The working groups were set up in 2011 and began consulting with the relevant bodies at the start of 2012.
- **French-speaking Professions and Qualifications Agency (SFMQ)**: Following a trial phase in school year 2010-2011, the SFMQ began producing a series of new occupation and training profiles in 2011-2012. These training profiles have been approved by all the key players in the field of education and training, and will be developed into training programmes and courses.

### **Pilot studies aimed at preventing pupils having to repeat a year**

This is the first stage in a long-term initiative addressing different areas of the school curriculum and involving a variety of different players.

- The “Lift off!” scheme targets children aged 2, 5 and 8 years old and the adults who support them, and is designed to achieve a gradual reduction in the number of children being kept back a year or a key stage at primary school. Timetable: information sessions in March and launch of pilot projects in September.
- Call for differentiated instruction projects aimed at 12-14 year olds. The aim is to support pilot studies into different methods of adaptive, supportive learning designed to help pupils meet key skills targets at 14, for pupils who have received their CEB (qualification obtained at the end of primary school).

### **Draft decree on the education of newly-arrived immigrant pupils**

At the start of 2012, the Government of the French Community of Belgium approved the first and second readings of a draft decree aimed at introducing a **welcome and education programme for newly-arrived immigrant pupils** (known as DASPA), which would replace the 2001 decree aimed at integrating newly-arrived immigrant pupils into the education system (the “bridging classes” decree). This new, more flexible programme should be in place by the start of the new school year, in September 2012. It is designed to welcome, orientate and integrate newly-arrived immigrant pupils and to offer educational support adapted to pupils’ individual needs. It also introduces a transition period, of limited duration, when the pupils will be taught separately before joining the mainstream classroom.

### **Pilot “well-being” scheme**



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Since September 2011, 80 schools of all different types have been taking part in a pilot “well-being” (personal and social education) scheme, which will last for two years. The aim is to promote the introduction of various wide-ranging and sustainable prevention projects in schools, which will take into account their diversity, needs and resources and require those involved to work together and respect each other’s roles and objectives.

### **Class size agreement**

At the start of 2012, the Government of the French Community of Belgium officially acknowledged the agreement on **class size in primary and secondary schools**. This agreement, drawn up in December 2011 between the unions and school authorities, calls for the optimal use of school resources, the ultimate aim being to set a maximum number of pupils per class.

### **Inclusion of pupils with special needs in mainstream education**

Following two years of gradual introduction, in 2012 this process is now being assessed, in partnership with those involved.

Since 2009, the French Community of Belgium has been engaged in a vast programme to **modernise its higher education system**. This programme involves a wide range of different measures, to be developed and implemented over a number of years.

Some of the more recent developments, taken in line with the modernisation strategy set out by the Commission, include:

- The decree of 19 July 2010 on free and democratic higher education. A new decree on inclusive higher education, which is currently being drawn up, has the same objective: to improve disabled students’ access to teaching.
- The decree of 6 October 2011 on course documentation, which guarantees access to syllabi and other course materials for all students, not only represents a significant step towards tackling drop-out and failure rates, but is also a guarantee of quality in education.
- The decree of 20 October 2011 on higher-level dual education, which allows students to acquire a proportion of the skills required to achieve a higher education degree from work experience, begins to draw together education and business on both a structural and pedagogical level. In addition, dual education master’s degrees are currently being trialled by higher education colleges in the French Community of Belgium.

Moving forward, these achievements need to be consolidated and the ideas currently under consideration need to be further developed. The modernisation of higher education in the French Community of Belgium will require a radical restructuring of the sector. The proposed new structure is based on the creation of a single governing body tasked primarily with increasing the visibility of our higher education system at an international level, along with a number of smaller bodies responsible, among other things, for improving quality and efficacy in close cooperation with socioeconomic partners in their local areas.

### **3.4. Social action and social cohesion**

Social cohesion is a political objective in Wallonia, defined as the ability of a society to ensure the well-being of all its members and a dynamic process consisting of all the measures taken ensure that everyone has access to their basic rights. Social cohesion is created through the strength of the ties that bind a group together, and depends on all citizens having access to



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housing, employment, healthcare, culture and leisure activities. It therefore requires a comprehensive, joined-up approach.

In terms of helping people find employment, Wallonia has a global policy, but focuses specific attention on supporting certain categories of jobseeker, particularly those who are furthest from the labour market. The main focuses of the regional social inclusion policy are education, training and labour market integration, most notably through employment support services and development of the social economy. Wallonia has also developed an integrated approach to tackling extreme poverty, over-indebtedness and barriers to housing access.

The region supports the three priorities of the Belgian Platform against Poverty EU 2020: active integration of people excluded from the labour market, combating homelessness and housing instability, and tackling child poverty.

Regarding the priority measures, the following areas of progress can be emphasized:

- **Improving the work-life balance by increasing the supply of childcare services and personal assistance services,....** : To address the constraint generated by the end of the scheme notified to Europe as part of State assistance, there will be three separate schemes under the EPA: merchant, non-merchant, and local authorities. In this regard, a new EPA decree for the merchant will be finalized in 2012 for implementation by 2013. This new EPA merchant decree will aim to support small businesses during the creation of their first, second and third employment positions. It will especially target the following groups: those 50 and older, young people under 30, and those who have been inactive for more than 2 years.

At the end of 2011, 2300 EPA/PTP FTE were maintained. For new positions, the Walloon Government decided to open 260 EPA positions in 2012 in sectors targeting people with disabilities, seniors and others.

- **Strengthening support for those who are isolated from the job market:** In literacy, a multi-year agreement (2011-2013) between the Walloon Region and Reading and Writing in Wallonia was signed in September 2011. This agreement concerns four work areas: supporting the logical development of territorial action plans for literacy, developing illiteracy detection, increasing the supply of training programs, and especially for those (re)enrolling in social security, support for worker training. An overview of these actions was carried out in 2011, and will be supplemented by an external evaluation in 2012.

The refinancing of the program of Article 61 of the Institutional Act of the PCSAs, on the hiring by businesses of SIA beneficiaries, up to 50%, was decided in 2011 and came into force in early 2012. Training and information at the PCSAs were developed.

- **Housing:** The policy of increasing and improving the quality of the housing supply is continuing. This includes increasing the public housing stock and renovating the existing stock, in particular to improve energy efficiency and award housing and energy subsidies for improving private housing.
- **Structural funding for overnight shelters:** Discussions are continuing on this project and consultation with public partners and voluntary associations will continue in 2012, as well as the search for financial resources.
- **Combating excessive debt:** As part of prevention, a portal will be launched in March 2012. The reorganization and professionalization of the sector is under way (legislation passed on the first reading in October 2011, second reading in the first half of 2012). Refinancing of the sector was obtained, and 37 EPA positions will be dedicated to it.



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- **Increasing access to basic rights at the local level:** The Social Cohesion Plan of the cities and municipalities of Wallonia (SCP) 2009-2013 aims to support Walloon municipalities that commit to promoting social cohesion in their territory. The SCP promotes the exercise of six fundamental rights under regional jurisdiction (the right to a decent income, the right to health protection and to social and medical assistance, the right to decent housing and a healthy environment, the right to work, the right to receive training, the right to cultural and social development) and activates two levers: The social development of neighbourhoods and the fight against all forms of deprivation, poverty and insecurity in general.

The SCP encourages social cohesion in 147 Walloon municipalities for an estimated employment level of around 670 FTE. In total, the Plan provides almost € 34 million (2010). In total, there are 1,699 actions distributed in four areas: social and professional integration (24%), access to housing (12%), access to health care and addiction treatment (19%), rebuilding social, intergenerational and cultural bonds (43%).

The impact assessment of the first Social Cohesion Plan 2009-2013 will be performed by the end of 2012. It must also identify possible improvements in preparation for the next SCP 2014-2019.

- **"The Rights of the Child" Action Plan 2011-2014** in Wallonia and the Brussels-Wallonia Federation addresses two areas : information, training and education about the rights of the child and the fight against social inequality and discrimination. It consists of concrete measures to guarantee all children an adequate standard of living, which requires paying particular attention to housing for children, parenting support, to ensure every child a home, and quality teaching and education, to fight against health inequality and fight against abuse.

**3.5. Energy and Climate** The Walloon energy policy rests on four fundamental areas: promoting the rational use of energy (including energy efficiency), developing renewable energy, ensuring universal access to energy, and supervising liberalized electricity and gas markets.

Moreover, the Marshall Plan 2.Green is dedicated to transversal integration of sustainable development issues, and in particular energy and climate issues, which implies an integrated approach mobilizing various intervention areas: research and innovation, land planning, financing, guiding and supporting businesses, employment, training, industrial policy, etc.

As part of the **regional strategy for renewable energy development**, the overall goal is to reach 20% renewables in final energy consumption in 2020, including a contribution of 8,000 GWh of electricity from renewable sources on Walloon soil.

The following measures and developments can be emphasized in relation to this goal:

- Setting a goal of 4,500 GWh of wind power by 2020. This goal is part of updating of the current reference framework. It will include a positive mapping and the establishment of a law-making framework. Socio-economic benefits linked to the growth of the wind sector can be envisioned following a skills inventory of Walloon companies in the different segments of the sector, from design to installation.
- The support system for solar energy was adjusted. Concerning solar photovoltaic installations under 10 kW, the number of green certificates is now declining over time. Thanks to this measure, the time to achieve a favourable return on investment is maintained despite the decreasing number of green certificates over the life of the installation. Subsidies for thermal solar on new housing were also adjusted to include



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them in the support mechanism for efficient new homes, while maintaining a specific incentive for that sector.

- Work related to the support mechanism for green electricity through green certificates is ongoing as part of improving the current system to include reasonable comprehensive support by sector. Green certificate quotas post-2012 were finally adopted, giving visibility to green electricity investment to 2020. The adjustment of the green certificate mechanism should be finished in 2012.
- Certain players in the biomass energy sector were solicited following an illustrative study on the potential of this energy in Wallonia. Work will continue in order to arrive at a 'sustainable biomass' strategy, including biomass for heat and cogeneration at the end of 2012.
- As part of the transposition of Directive 2009/28/EC, the establishment of a certification procedure for installers of energy production from renewable sources is planned, in partnership with other federal and federated entities.

The Multi-Year Plan on the **first Employment-Environment Alliance** (EEA) was adopted in September 2011 by the Walloon Government, as well as around 40 multi-sector contracts. The purpose of these contracts is an adherence in principle to the overall objectives of the Alliance and the commitment to contribute to the actions planned in one or more specific objectives. Its implementation will span the period from 2011 to 2014.

The overall objective of the first EEA is to improve the quality of Walloon construction and related energy efficiency, while ensuring the transition of the entire construction industry towards a more sustainable approach and increasing its level of employment

This overall objective is divided into three specific objectives:

*1. Stimulate demand for sustainable renovation / construction of private buildings*

One specific objective of the EEA is to stimulate demand for renovation of private housing by creating a coherent and attractive incentives program. This program will consist of a Public-Household Partnership (PHP).

The PHP must be seen as a plan to gradually reform and rationalize existing incentive programs, complemented by new financial and non-financial measures (support and guidance). It will focus on four major areas:

- Creation of a single window, commitment of "ecopassers" (support of households) and setting up a construction "passport" (Ecopass);
- A reform of the system of "energy-housing" subsidies currently available to citizens in order to streamline the programs;
- Making attractive EEA financing available to households that embark on at least two different types of sustainable renovation projects;
- Additional incentives, especially for renters and for the transposition of the Directives on energy efficiency, energy services and energy efficiency in buildings.

Regarding private sector businesses, different incentives will be adapted or created.

- Pilot experiment on third-party investors relating to electricity savings of independent merchants (support and financial mechanism);
- Analysis and redirection, if needed, of the energy savings assistance program for companies (AMURE);



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- The 16 branch agreements of the first generation will expire at the end of 2012. The second generation of agreements could integrate renewable energy and the product life cycle;
- Call for project proposals for the creation of exemplary works in the service sector;
- Establishment of a guarantee scheme for investments in energy efficiency in SMEs.

## 2. *Stimulate demand for sustainable renovation / construction of public buildings*

This goal will be achieved through a set of actions targeting:

- Public contracts: integrating social and environmental clauses in specifications, creation of an unregulated performance reference system, ...
- The implementation of a **public housing renovation plan (WOODPECKER Plan)**. Following the calls for project proposals launched in 2011, these will be implemented in 2012 (4,000 housing units);
- The completion of pilot projects in public housing;
- The development of collective boiler rooms in the public housing sector;
- The launch of two calls for UREBA project proposals for schools, municipal buildings and the voluntary sector, and the energy renovation of administrative buildings in Wallonia.

## 3. *Strengthen the capacity of the construction sector, including providing training for sustainable renovation / construction of buildings*

Several categories of actions are planned:

- The implementation of a comprehensive, integrated plan for “green” training programs. Many sectors are concerned and different partners are involved. Several audiences are targeted: job seekers, apprentices, students and their teachers. Actions involve sector training and promotion as well as orientation. This comprehensive program aims to adjust the training offered to the new needs of businesses in order to help maintain and create employment in labour-intensive sectors.
- Specific support of businesses in construction and promotion of entrepreneurship, the creation of entrepreneur clubs for sustainable construction, the creation and implementation of a business quality label;
- A call for "green materials" project proposals to develop new sectors in Wallonia.