

The Walloon Skill Centres

I. Présentation of the Walloon Skill Centres (« Centres de Compétence »)

The skills centres are the result of a partnership between the public sector and the private sector. Their main objective is to group the needs and answers of socio-economical actors. They bring together **FOREM Training**, **IFAPME** (Walloon institute for training of self-employed and SME's), the **social partners** from the professional sector that is concerned, **research centres** and **universities**.

These partnerships benefit from a mixed financing : Walloon Region, Sectoral Funds and European structural funds (ERDF and ESF).

Characteristics

The four main characteristics of Skill centres are the following:

1. To be in keeping with the development of the region

The skill centres are there to respond to needs expressed by companies, by their workers or by the Walloon Region. Therefore they are always situated either near the companies, or in specific zones where the Region and social partners intend to develop certain specific initiatives.

2. To prioritise conciliation and partnership

Skill centres have to be permanently 'on the same wavelength' with their socio-economic environment. The creation of a partnership and to make it succeed is a response to the necessity to integrate information from all actors.

3. Extend the range of training

Skill centres intervene in the field of integration of job seekers into the labour market by means of vocational training and further training. The skill centres also intervene in activities beyond actions in the field of training in the strict sense; they stay informed, give information, increasing public awareness, ... and they play a part in the validation of competencies, the improvement of paths of integration, etc.

4. Accessible for everyone

The public means put at the disposal of these projects are very important; as a consequence, the skill centres should be accessible for everyone; company heads and management, employees, job seekers, apprentices, teachers, students in their final year.

Missions

These are their missions :

1. TRAINING

Vocational training is the main activity of the Skills Centres. Vocational training is organised for :

- Job seekers,
- apprentices
- employees (also for management and head of a company)
- teachers, within the framework of life long learning
- students in their last year of secondary school, technical and professional, in order to make their transition towards a working environment easier.

Skill Centres don't aim at becoming the main training operator ; their role is to regroup and support the training offer provided by different operators famous for their quality level.

The problem of gender discrimination is taken into account, especially in attracting a female public to vocational training generally perceived as « masculine ».

2. AWARENESS

Skill Centres should be the place where the most complete and most recent information in a domain is gathered. Skill centres pay particular attention to the evolution on a professional level, the evolutions within jobs, and to training needs, and they are the « information suppliers » of other actors confronted with these sort of difficulties.

3. INFORMATION and AWARENESS

Skill Centres make sure to provide useful information in the fields of new technologies/evolution of existing technologies, new tools and education methods, the existing training offer and its providers, the evolution of standards, labels, ...

4. ADVISE (optional)

An optional activity of the Skill Centres consists of assisting companies and people in defining their training needs and work out an action plan.

5. R&D IN EDUCATION METHODS

Skill Centres can help develop education methods and tools adapted to special demands. This mainly refers to a remote access to a part of the training curriculum.

6. INTEGRATION OF JOB SEEKERS IN THE LABOUR MARKET

This is considered one of the main standards for the evaluation of actions developed for job seekers. Skill centres are asked to develop and put into place all actions that help to reach this objective. These activities are developed in collaboration with Le FOREM and the professional sectors.

7. SUPPORT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (optional)

Skill centres also play a role in the support of development as programmed by the region and the social partners.

8. QUALITY

Skill centres watch over the continuous improvement of quality of their production. They also make sure to include issues related to security and respect for the environment.

Networking

These centres have now formed a network in order to guarantee the coherence of actions, the harmonisation of the operation of the various skill centres and the exchange of resources.

The skill centres are managed management by a Steering Committee assure coherence in their objectives and actions, in their functioning and their resources. The steering Committee also allows common missions and guarantees the supervision of the skill centres.

1. OBJECTIVES

Co-ordinate certain actions linked to the basic functions of skill centres

Guarantee the coherence of the global strategy of skill centres

Multiply the profits of individual actions of each skill centre and assure each partner the possibility to intervene within the whole network of skill centres

Benefit from economies of scale

Give a coherent policy statement and corporate image to exterior interlocutors

2. MISSIONS

- Search for complementarity between skill centres
- Regroup and synthesise results of actions of awareness
- Modelling winning strategies within the framework of economic development
- Define a common financial policy
- Internal communication
- External communication, promotion, marketing
- Promotion of innovation education methods
- Common management and evaluation tools

→ One of the common actions realised aims at the setting-up of a *process to watch over the evolution of professions and new qualifications*

3. **FONCTIONNING**

The missions listed below are accomplished by a Steering Committee of the network, composed of a representative of each skill centre, a representative of Le FOREM who is the chairman of the committee and a representative of the ministry. Besides leading the usual missions, the roles of the committee are:

- to submit the demands for quality labels to the ministry
- Gathering information relative to the activities of the centre, evaluation of information, communicating reports to the ministry
- Submit an action plan linked to the network, a budget and an activity report.

A technical unit , put into place by Le FOREM, accomplishes the missions of the network.

Process of quality labelling

The Walloon Region attributes the name Skill Centre to initiatives that respond to a number of well-defined criteria. This label allows easy and direct access to resources made available by the network. The label is valid for a period of three years and can be renewed tacitely,

18 Skill Centres have been labelled in the Walloon Region and 3 are within the process.

II. Skill Centres in Liège

These are the skill centres in the Liège region:

AutoFORM, Skill centre in **automotive trades**.

Partnerships: FOREM Training, IFPME (Institut de Formation Permanente des Classes moyennes et des PME – Institute of Continuing education for the Middle Classes and SME's), Formation PME Liège-Huy-Waremme, EDUCAM (Foundation for Vocational Training in the Automobile Sector and related sectors – managed by social partners and financed by the sectoral funds at + 80% - mission: permanent analysis of training and labour market)

ConstruFORM, Skill centre in the sector of **construction**, in Grâce-Hollogne.

Partnerships: The partnership relies on putting together resources and means of 2 public training operators, Le FOREM and IFAPME , in addition to the Fund for Vocational Training in the Building Sector (Fonds de Formation professionnelle de la Construction – FCC) who together represent the Walloon building sector with equal representations.

FOREM Formation Logistique, Skill centre in the field of **transportation and logistics**, in Bierset.

Partnership : FOREM Training, Social Fund for Road Transport FULTRANS (Forem Training-University of Liège – Transport): a specific partnership exists with the University of Liège with regard to technological development, studies and training. The sectoral funds, managed with equal representations, are financed with contributions made by the employers. These contributions are used to finance vocational training of the employees. The partnership is directly established with the sectoral fund, without the intervention of a training centre like for EDUCAM.

TECHNIFUTUR, Skill centre that provides training in the fields of **assembly, production, mechatronics, maintenance and ICT**, in Seraing.

Partnership: FOREM Training, Agoria (employers federation of industry – 11 sectors, among which metal and materials), CSC & FGTB (trade unions), Cockerill Sambre and the University of Liège.

If we take the whole province of Liège into account (including the regions of Huy, Waremme, Verviers and the German speaking Community), we also have to mention a fifth skill centre: EPICURIS, a skill centre dedicated to catering professionals, Villers-le-Bouillet.