

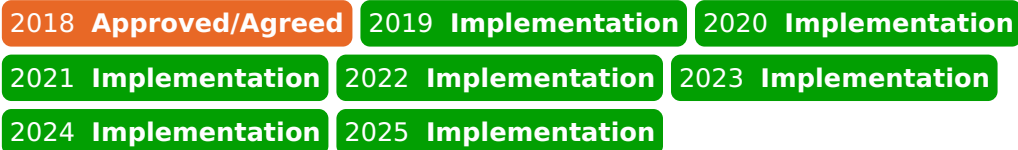
Addressing skill shortages in Walloon companies

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

PRACTICAL MEASURE/INITIATIVE

 BELGIUM-FR

Timeline



ID number 28029

Background

Despite a high level of unemployment, many jobs cannot find suitable candidates. Such difficulties in matching labour supply and demand lead to shortages on the labour market.

Objectives

Fight against labour shortages in Wallonia and assign employers which are in need of additional employees with the responsibility to train those people which are directed to them.

Description

In August 2018, the Walloon Region signed an agreement with the business sectors and their training funds as part of the fight against labour shortages. This agreement is expressed in three strong measures implemented by Le Forem.

- (a) shortages punch (*Coup de poing pénuries*) action: the objective of this action is to act quickly and specifically on the particularly serious shortages encountered by small and large companies. As soon as a company or several companies are looking for at least eight workers for the same job, they can submit a request to Le Forem. Le Forem will offer them a tailor-made programme: joint selection of candidates and a flexible training plan. At the end of the training, the hiring of at least 80% of jobseekers who have successfully completed their training is guaranteed. This initiative effectively addresses companies' skill shortages by enabling job seekers to access roles they would not have qualified for without specialised training;
- (b) an optimised Insertion training plan (PFI) system based on a training plan responding better to the real needs of companies, the extension of the system to public employers, and administrative simplification. The new Insertion training plan changes the old monthly bonus system so that an intern does not earn more than a worker of equivalent function in the company, which was a perverse effect of the old system;
- (c) the establishment of a financial incentive paid to learners following a training in shortage trades: a financial incentive of EUR 350 is granted to any jobseeker who has

successfully completed training in a trade in short supply. Furthermore, jobseekers will benefit in addition from support in preparing for the job interview, which will be guaranteed at the end of their training. The list of jobs in short supply is published by Le Forem and jobseekers can register for training leading to one of these jobs.

Le Forem has also relaunched a new wave of discovery days, *Mardis d'avenir*, for jobs with shortage issues. The objective is to promote to jobseekers training courses leading to a trade in shortage. On the programme: workshops, visits to centres, and exchanges with trainers and trainees. Every Tuesday, several discovery sessions are organised in different training centres or competence centres, with a focus on a particular sector or profession.

2018 Approved/Agreed

2019 Implementation

Based on a study from 2018, le Forem identified 88 critical professions, of which 55 were in short supply. In 2019, various measures have been put in place to help jobseekers to find and train in these trades, such as the Tuesdays of the future, information sessions aimed at making young people aware of the jobs in shortage and the training that leads to them, as well as the shortages punch actions.

2020 Implementation

Since the launch of the measure, 41 business requests have been received by the services and 15 agreements have been signed until 2020. 145 jobseekers benefited from training organised jointly by Forem and 33 companies.

The requests received mainly concern the construction (15), agro-food and ICT (6 each), and transport and logistics (5) sectors.

2021 Implementation

In 2021, the proportion of shortage occupations covered by training was 103 out of 126 (81.74%) and the proportion of training in shortage/critical professions compared to all the training offered was 193 training courses out of 352 which respond to shortages (54.83%).

In 2021, due to the pandemic situation, the production capacity of centres was reduced. Le Forem received 10 requests from companies for the *Coup de poing pénuries* programme. 179 new learners were registered out of which 119 successfully completed the training and 95 of them were then recruited by the requesting company.

2022 Implementation

In 2022, the proportion of shortage occupations covered by training was 113 out of 141 (80.14%) and the proportion of training in shortage/critical professions compared to all the training offered was 211 out of 346 (60.98%).

2023 Implementation

In 2023, of the 158 occupations identified as critical or in shortage, 114 (73%) were covered by Forem training programmes. Additionally, 231 out of 360 courses in the catalogue (65%) were aligned with these shortage or critical roles.

Shortages punch action - data for 2023:

Total for 2023

Demands Received

58

| | |
|---------------------------|-----|
| Positions to Fill | 530 |
| Trainees to Train | 564 |
| Trainees Entered Training | 173 |
| Successful Trainees | 112 |
| Hired Trainees | 98 |

In September 2023, the Walloon Region, with support from the European body Director General Reform and the OECD, launched the TSI project aimed at improving the governance framework for economic immigration to attract and retain skilled talent in Wallonia. Numerous stakeholders were consulted during the last quarter to assess the strengths and weaknesses of Wallonia's immigration model.

2024 Implementation

Following a slight downturn in 2023 due to recruitment challenges among job seekers, the implementation of the Shortages punch programme surged in 2024, with the target of 50 tailored training programmes expected to be exceeded (see results below). Additionally, actions of this programme were attracting job seekers despite the recruitment difficulties associated with these roles. While close monitoring and tailored support - such as skill refreshers, job trials, and hands-on guidance by training mentors - remain essential to help trainees succeed, the shortages punch programme was proving to be highly appealing to job seekers, as they offer solid job prospects and align with reputable companies.

Coup de Poing Pénuries Data for 2024

Total for 2024

| | |
|---------------------------|-----|
| Positions to Fill | 424 |
| Trainees to Train | 467 |
| Trainees Entered Training | 397 |
| Successful Trainees | 287 |
| Hired Trainees | 226 |

To address shortages in skills and qualified labour, Wallonia is also focusing on talent from outside the European Union to meet the demand for specific profiles. A targeted list of shortage occupations for hiring non-EU workers is updated annually and is valid from 1st October 2024, to 30th September 2025.

On 14 March 2024, numerous international experts met in Brussels to present their migration models and share best practices. The rest of the year was dedicated to extending these discussions and preparing recommendations to better align labour supply and demand, thereby enhancing Wallonia's international appeal to attract strategic skills in key economic sectors.

2025 Implementation

The Shortage punch initiatives are still being rolled out and are expanding. This programme, which develops training courses tailored to specific job positions and offers trainees immediate employment opportunities, continues to prove its effectiveness for both companies and jobseekers.

In 2024, 77 shortage punch initiatives were carried out, and 52 had already taken place between January and July 2025.

A total of 539 jobseekers took part in the Shortage punch training in 2024, and 321 participated between January and July 2025.

Bodies responsible

- Le Forem (The Walloon Office for Vocational Training and Employment)

Target group

Learners

Young people (15-29 years old)
Unemployed and jobseekers
Persons in employment, including those at risk of unemployment

Entities providing VET

Companies
Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)

Thematic categories

Modernising VET offer and delivery

Modernising VET standards, curricula, programmes and training courses

Supporting lifelong learning culture and increasing participation

Financial and non-financial incentives to learners, providers and companies
Providing for individuals' re- and upskilling needs
Lifelong guidance
Ensuring equal opportunities and inclusiveness in education and training

European priorities in VET

VET Recommendation

VET agile in adapting to labour market challenges

Subsystem

CVET

Further reading

[Agreement protocol](#)

[Insertion training plan \(PFI\)](#)

[Shortages punch \(Coup de poing penuries\)](#)

[Work authorization for foreign salaried workers from outside the European Union](#)

Related policy developments

2025 Implementation

Walloon recovery plan

The Wallonia Recovery Plan, adopted in October 2021, includes more than 300 projects and programmes, structured around six strategic priorities:

 BELGIUM-FR

Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

IVET CVET

“ ... ” Cite as

Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2026). Addressing skill shortages in Walloon companies: Belgium-FR. In Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2026). *Timeline of VET policies in Europe* (2025 update) [Online tool].

<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/timeline-vet-policies-europe/search/28029>