

OECD Reviews of Human Resource Management
in Government

Belgium

Brussels-Capital Region, Federal Government,
Flemish Government, French Community,
Walloon Region



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Foreword

The *OECD Review of Human Resource Management in Government: Belgium* is the first country review to be carried out by the OECD in this field. The review builds on the work conducted over the years by the OECD Public Employment and Management Working Party (PEMWP, formerly the Human Resource Management Working Party, HRMWP), under the leadership of the OECD Public Governance Committee. The overall framework for the country review was discussed and agreed to by the PEMWP at its annual meeting at the end of 2006.

In parallel to this review, the Public Governance and Territorial Development Directorate of the OECD is also conducting a review of e-government in Belgium whose title will be *OECD e-government Studies: Belgium*. This study will be finalised in the fall of 2007.

The report on Government HRM in Belgium reviews the design and implementation of government HRM policies within the context of larger government values. These values are usually at least partially context specific. The report focuses on assessing: whether governments are managing the size, skills, and competencies of their workforce in a sustainable manner; whether HRM systems in governments are performance oriented; whether there is a balance between the flexibility and consistency of HRM rules within and across governments; and finally, whether the values promoted by government are consistent with the management rules and practices.

While policy options presented in this review are based on the lessons learnt from the experience of other OECD member countries, the review process has ensured a high level of consultation with multiple stakeholders so that policy options are relevant and attainable within the specific context and policy priorities of the governments under review.

Through the development of such reviews in the future in other OECD member countries, the OECD will not only help reviewed countries to think through their government HRM policy in a comparative perspective, but will also encourage and promote an improved sharing of experiences across countries on these important matters. This is achieved through the

involvement of a small number of high-level officials from different OECD member countries in the whole review process, through the official review by the Public Governance Committee, and by making an in-depth case study on a specific country, Belgium in this case, available to other OECD member countries.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This review was produced by the OECD Public Governance and Territorial Development Directorate in co-operation with the Federal Government of Belgium, the Brussels-Capital Region, the Flemish Government, the French Community and the Walloon Region. Special thanks are due to Mr. Georges Monard, former Secretary General of and now Special Advisor in the Federal Public Service P&O, who initiated the project, as well as to his colleagues, and the teams of co-ordinators in each of the governments under review. Throughout the review process, all governments under review have gone to great lengths to provide the OECD with the necessary information and analysis for the Review in a very open and transparent manner.

An international team of peer senior practitioners from OECD member countries participated in the whole review process and included: Mr. Patrick Borbey, from the Indian and Northern Affairs Organization in Canada (formerly from the Privy Council Office of the Federal Government); Mr. Dermot Curran, from the Department of *Taoiseach* (Prime Minister) in Ireland; Ms. Mandy McDonald from the Ministry of Justice in New Zealand; Mr. Philippe Sagon, from the Ministry of the Budget, Public Accounts and Civil Service in France; and Mr. Peter Van Der Gaast from the Ministry of Interior in the Netherlands. The OECD is grateful to their governments for allowing these high-level officials to participate in the review. It has been a tremendous value added to the review to have such an experienced team of practitioners put at the disposal of the exercise. In addition, Mr. Knut Rexed, presently consultant (and formerly Director General of *Statskontoret* in Sweden), was a consultant and peer to the review throughout the process.

The review was co-ordinated and mainly drafted by Ms. Elsa Pilichowski and Ms. Emmanuelle Arnould, from the OECD Secretariat, under the supervision of Mr. Nick Manning at first and Mr. Barry Anderson afterwards. Substantial inputs were provided by all experts mentioned above. Mr. Knut Rexed wrote entire sections of the report. Statistical data and analysis were produced by Mr. Edouard Turkisch, with substantial help from Mr. François Lequiller and Mr. Dirk Kraan (OECD Secretariat). Ms. Jennifer Allain prepared the review for publication.

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Assessment and Recommendations

Government employment in Belgium seems relatively costly, highly regulated, and with some governance difficulties

The level of employment in general government¹ in Belgium, as well as the level of compensation costs,² seem relatively high among OECD member countries,³ although this is not an indication of productivity or efficiency *per se*.⁴ This is an area of concern as compensation costs per employee have grown more rapidly in general government than in the labour force at large, and staff numbers have also increased quickly over the past 10 years. In the context of the ageing population in Belgium, this certainly weakens the sustainability of public finances and will undoubtedly undermine the governments' fiscal positions.

Part of these costs might be transitory and may be mostly due to inefficiencies in the federalisation process. Indeed, overlapping jurisdictions across the different levels of governments, as well as reported difficulties in moving staff across levels of government, might lessen in the long run as the federal system is made more efficient.

Another part of these costs appears to be more structural and may be more related to systemic inefficiencies and governance weaknesses in the different employment and human resource management systems.

Personnel management systems are indeed highly regulated in Belgium, leading to high transaction costs, to major difficulties in the delegation of authority to managers and in the implementation of performance-based management, as well as in the management of the size of the workforce. It is also the source of tensions between the implementation of statutory rules and the new vision of performance-

based HRM. Finally, it leads to relatively low staff mobility. In addition, governments have developed inventive ways of bypassing too burdensome regulation, notably by increasing the use of contractual staff and politicising the workforce, and by doing so, have added governance problems. Finally, the high degree of regulation has resulted in the judicialisation of the relationship between public employers and employees, with long and expensive court procedures to resolve any possible conflictual situations.

Reform in HRM is high on the agenda of all governments under review in Belgium

Since the country's economic difficulties of the 1990s, and the perceived significant decrease in public confidence following highly visible political scandals, all governments in Belgium have tried to reform their human resource management systems in order to improve their efficiency and governance. The governments have followed different paths of reform as they have been given increasing authority in the field of HRM.

Indeed, since the 1990s, the federalisation process has involved increasing autonomy to Regions and Communities in Belgium for the organisation of their own government. Originally with a rather rigid career-based system imposed by the Camus Statute, Regions and Communities are now free to organise their human resource management systems within the general principles established in the Royal Decree on General Principles (22 December 2000).⁵ A revised Camus Statute is still in force at the federal level.

While some reforms are relatively similar, the pace and depth of reforms vary significantly across governments, reflecting different value systems, economic situations, and willingness to reform. It is also possible that the current perceived absence of a coherent post New Public Management theoretical framework at the international level may inhibit reform efforts in some governments, and force others to adopt pragmatic reforms that are adapted to their specific needs instead of implementing “template reforms”.

Nevertheless, over the past decades, all governments in Belgium have started to review regulations in the HRM field (new codes, new job classification, rationalisation of ranks and grades, new pay scales), to simplify some rules in some areas of HRM, to introduce or implement competency based and performance-based management, and to give a special role to a reformed senior management. These HRM reforms have been implemented within the framework of wider management reforms (balanced scorecards, satisfaction surveys, process reengineering, performance measures, etc.). These reforms are broadly similar to general trends in OECD member countries, although in Belgium there is more emphasis than in other OECD member countries on the roles played by the “mandates” system for senior managers, and on competency based management.

The Flemish and Federal Governments seem to be in a relatively mature phase of reform implementation, with the Flemish Government having developed a somewhat more consistent set of management reforms, including the systematic use of a coherent cascade of performance targets and incentives, a certain degree of delegation of decision-making, and a consistent organisational structure. Both governments have taken steps away from the traditional career-based system of employment, through some broad-banding and the opening up of some posts to lateral entry. In the French Community and Brussels-Capital Region, the reform approach has been more incremental in nature, with no significant steps away from the traditional career-based system taken, but some emphasis put on performance measurement at the level of the organisation and on the management of competencies. The Walloon Region has taken the most cautious and incremental reform path with an explicit emphasis on retaining the distinctive traditions and attractiveness of public sector employment. It is presently reorganising to better adapt its organisational structure to the needs of strategic management.

Overall, the story of government HRM reforms in Belgium is that of a transition from a centralised, rigid and highly regulated HRM system, to a devolved system with some attempts at decentralising decisions on HRM within government. This transition has raised issues regarding the actual focus of governments' HRM on performance, as well as regarding the capacity of governments to avoid a fragmentation of HRM values, policies and practices both within and across governments. On all these matters, the situation varies significantly from one government to another in Belgium. However, some long-term difficulties seem to have remained in all governments, especially regarding increases in staff numbers and compensation costs, the blurred political administrative boundaries, some inconsistencies between regulation and actual practices on the use of employment formats, as well as the overregulation of the HRM systems.

All governments should pay special attention to staff productivity and efficiency...

In common with many other OECD member countries, Belgium is entering a period of fiscal and economic challenges arising from its ageing population and consequent increased demand for services coupled with a smaller economically active population. The government fiscal strategy is partly based on pre-funding these additional costs with growing budget surpluses.⁶ This in itself is an important reason for paying special attention to staff productivity and efficiency, *i.e.* their costs compared to their outputs in the context of wider achievements in the various domains of public policy.

...by better monitoring their staff numbers and compensation costs...

Important measures need to be taken to ensure that employment policies are sustainable in the long run. All Belgian governments would gain from improving their workforce planning, reviewing their workforce size (with an emphasis on reassessing their functional needs by reviewing the government's tasks), the levels of compensation costs, as well as the possibilities for outsourcing in a cost efficient manner. In all governments, the budget constraints should be hardened, with new policy priorities being met with the clear understanding that it will be

without overall increases in staff numbers. In parallel, governments should devise a long-term workforce planning strategy that aims at improving cost efficiency and plans how to best take advantage of staff departures due to retirement, especially of lower ranking staff. These new strategies should all take into account the new public service challenges created by an ageing society, and changing demands on public services.

For efforts in this field to be sustainable, however, it seems crucial that the negative incentives created by the federal funding of regional and community governments' pension costs and social employment⁷ be removed. In Belgium, subsidised social employment in government is both a general labour issue, as one may question the overall benefits of such measures, but it is also an issue of intergovernmental governance, as the subsidised costs fall disproportionately on the Federal Government which only employs some of the staff funded through these programmes.

Finally, in order to make sure that transitory increased costs due to the federalisation process do disappear as federalism is made more efficient, it is important that a cross-government dialogue on staff numbers and costs be initiated to better understand inefficiencies in the federalisation process, and find adapted solutions. This dialogue could focus on governments' functional overlaps, and on how to decrease the transaction costs of the federalisation process.

**...by
strengthening
their HRM
performance
management
systems and
further
delegating
managerial
responsibilities**

Like many OECD member country governments, all Belgian governments have quite strongly indicated that they are moving towards a greater emphasis in their HRM systems on managing staff performance. In this regard, the following improvements could be made to their strategy:

i. Strengthen the consistency of the overall management framework with performance management

The assessment of staff performance management systems in OECD member countries has shown that one of the *sine qua non* conditions for systems to help achieve greater performance is that they are part of a wider strategic management approach, involving regular reviews of organisational objectives, delegation of authority and greater customer orientation.

Overall, many efforts have been made by all governments in Belgium in terms of implementing new strategic management tools such as balanced scorecards and the Common Assessment Framework, and there are signs that the cascade of targets is slowly taking place. The use of these tools, however, might be somewhat detached from the overall strategic management of organisations. This means that to a certain extent, these tools seem to remain stand alone management pieces, with few real linkages between target-setting and the assessment of objectives on the one hand, and decision-making on the other hand. For example, while some governments use programme budgeting (reclassification of the budget and appropriation of funds according to policy areas rather than kinds of input), the linkages between outputs/outcome indicators on the one hand, and budgeting on the other hand seem to be very limited. In addition, the organisational structure of governments might not be optimally configured to respond to the needs of strategic management, with only the Federal and the Flemish Governments having

extensively reorganised their institutions to better delineate responsibilities between policy-making, strategic thinking, target-setting on the one hand, and policy implementation and the achievements of results on the other hand (although there are some developments in this direction in the French Community and the Walloon Region). Finally, apart from the mandate systems implemented for senior management, there seem to be only a few linkages between the organisations' strategic management tools and staff management.

All governments, and especially the French Community, Brussels-Capital Region and the Walloon Region, could thus gain considerably by adjusting all public management processes and structures to the needs of performance management in order to have a consistent performance-oriented management framework.

In addition, apart from arm's-length agencies, the delegation of input control rules (and especially budgetary and establishment controls) on personnel seems to be limited, although relatively more extensive in the Flemish Government, with some interesting developments having taken place in the Federal Government and the French Community. However, whatever the levels of delegation of controls might be, the managerial room for manoeuvre is limited by very rigid overall employment frameworks for statutory staff, and rigid compensation levels. The managerial freedom that managers could have gained from the increased use of contractual staff has been limited by practices that have aimed at maintaining equity across different types of staff (see below on contractual staff).

While good staff performance management will not take place without a gradual further delegation of authority to managers, it should be noted that the relaxation of input control rules and the increase in managerial freedom require highly professional and well trained managers, as well as an adapted budgeting system and mature organisational and individual performance management systems. These

preconditions are probably closer to being met in the Flemish and Federal Governments, although all governments would also have to make an extra effort to better delineate administrative and political boundaries and to invest in leadership capacities (see below).

In parallel, and because policy-making and implementation in Belgium are already quite fragmented across governments, but also by ministry and by agency, it seems important that governments establish institutions and processes that increase horizontal and cross-sectoral co-operation in public service work. Indeed, the experience of other OECD member countries shows that otherwise, going further with performance management will strengthen the stovepipe approach to government, leading to inefficiencies and inadequate policies. This is especially important in governments like the Flemish Government which have created arm's-length agencies and are facing more difficulties with cross-agency co-operation.

ii. Use competency management as a strategic management tool

The role of competency management in HRM is particularly emphasised in all governments in Belgium, and comparatively more than in other OECD member countries. This is especially the case in the Flemish and Federal Governments, with the other governments moving in this direction as well.

Moving towards the greater management of competencies is a welcome development as it is a way of integrating the HRM function into the mainstream corporate goals of an organisation, as well as making the different parts of the HRM functions (recruitment, probation, induction, promotion, training, development, performance management, discipline rewards) more consistent. Governments which are just moving in the direction of competency based management including the French Community, Brussels-Capital Region and the Walloon Region are

strongly encouraged to continue developing their **competency** framework, and to make the use of competencies a reference for the development of staff throughout their careers.

It seems, however, that there is a tendency to give disproportionate attention to competencies in some governments, almost as if acquiring competencies was similar to achieving results. This is especially the case in the Federal Government, which has gone as far as to base most of its HRM incentives (training, salary incentives and career development) on competencies rather than on actual performance. It seems to also be a risk in governments which are starting to implement competency management.

Moreover, so far, competency frameworks have mainly been used as a basis for development dialogue between staff and managers, and not as part of systematic workforce planning.

The role and place of competency management could thus be reviewed so that competency management remains an input into the strategic management of organisations, and does not take the place of performance management and of a focus on results.

iii. Emphasise the two-way psychological contract in performance management

In all governments, there is evidence that a lot of attention is being given to staff development in the performance management systems. It is important, however, to use performance assessments for other core HRM decisions – promotions, rewards and sanctions. So far, however, although performance appraisals are now well developed in all governments, they remain weakly linked to the promotion systems. This situation is even more acute for contractual employees, who do not have career paths within governments. As for other rewards, the Flemish Government has implemented performance-related pay, albeit in a limited way, and the Walloon Region

is planning to introduce a degree of performance-related pay for mandated managers. The Federal Government has introduced merit-based bonuses, but based on the acquisition of competencies rather than on the achievement of performance results. Finally, there are almost no applied formal sanctions for poor performance.

It is thus recommendable that performance appraisals do not become stand alone elements of staff management and are linked to the rest of the human resource management processes, *i.e.* recruitment, incentives, sanctions and dismissals. Carrying out performance appraisals on subordinate staff should, of itself, become part of the assessment of officials with staff management responsibilities. In other words, they should be appraised on the basis of their proactive and meaningful ongoing management of the staff resources which have been put at their disposal. International experience shows, however, that performance appraisals should probably be used both as a way of dealing with development and underperformance, with a focus on better developing and changing the allocation of responsibilities of underperformers, and as a way of rewarding good performance. In addition, as international experience has shown, governments in Belgium should continue to take a careful approach linking pay incentives with performance evaluation, as performance-related pay can be difficult to implement and potentially divisive. A very well functioning performance management system needs to be in place before performance-related pay can be implemented and have positive results.

Good governance in human resource management in government should be significantly enhanced...

For an HRM system to be well performing, a number of governance features need to pre-exist. These are not always present in governments in Belgium today. In particular, all Belgium governments under review could make employment regulation less complicated and rules more coherent, improve the consistency of evolving management systems with evolving core values, as well as the transparency and relevance of systems governing the

delineation between the political and administrative responsibilities.

*...by
deregulating
personnel
management
systems...*

Governments in Belgium have all started to simplify rules and procedures, and would gain considerably from continuing to do so. The deregulation of HRM systems (with necessary safeguards regarding the procedural rights of employees) will be core to the successful implementation of performance management in governments. Finally, deregulating will be necessary to rationalise the use of statutory and contractual employees.

*...by
rationalising the
use of statutory
and contractual
employees...*

Belgium appears to be a special case among OECD member countries regarding the large and increasing extent to which governments use (supposedly “temporary” or “mission specific”) contractual staff. Indeed, some governments in OECD member countries have changed their employment statute so that all staff are employed under public law or private law “contracts”, while other governments are purposely and openly replacing statutory employees with contract employees. Belgium is specific in that contractual staff are employed under rules that are clearly considered different from what should be general government employment rules, and their increasing number appears to have been unplanned, bypassing basic employment regulations too often, and resulting in a very large proportion of long-term employees not being properly managed.

Some governments in Belgium seem to be making some efforts in this area, with the Walloon Region having managed to slightly decrease the proportion of its contractual staff in central government, although the overall proportion of contractual staff remains high.

The situation is very unsatisfactory both from a governance and an equity perspective, although it is to be noted that governments are making specific efforts to improve the management of contractual employees. Officials from most governments (the Walloon Region being the exception) recognise that

contractual staff are often used as a substitute for statutory employment. This practice bypasses the conditions for the use of contractual employees in the 2000 Royal Decree on General Principles. In addition, contractual staff do not provide the flexibility their status would logically provide as most are on open-term contracts and there are very few cases of dismissals. It seems that the most important reason for hiring contractual staff lies in the cumbersome recruitment process for statutory staff, due partially to *ex ante* internal controls in each government and, although much less clearly, to the SELOR procedure. In addition, with a low level of outsourcing compared to other OECD member countries, governments have instead used a large proportion of contractual employment to fill in some of the lower skilled positions such as drivers, cleaning personnel and canteen personnel.

In the long run, there are two (mutually exclusive) types of reforms that governments could take in order to address this situation:

1. Reduce contractual employment to merely temporary employment necessitated by work congestion and replacement needs, and increase outsourcing for lower skilled government functions in order to improve efficiency. This, however, would require a more flexible employment format for statutory employees, combined with the simplification and streamlining of the procedures for creating, abolishing posts and recruiting.
2. Reduce statutory employment to a limited core civil service, primarily at the central level in the different governments, and use contractual employment for all other functions, including all employment at decentralised levels. This should be accompanied by measures to ensure that

recruitment for casual employees is fair, non-discriminatory and based on merit; that their career paths are well managed; and that their benefits (especially pensions) are realigned with those of present statutory employees.

In the meantime, there is an urgent need to provide contractual staff with a career path, without which their performance cannot be rightly managed.

...by clarifying political and managerial responsibilities, and investing in leadership capacity...

Among OECD member countries, Belgian governments under review also stand out regarding the lack of clarity in the political/administrative interface, resulting in structural difficulties in implementing performance management and unclear accountability of senior management. It is likely that this situation results from a mix of factors including the coalition nature of government (although some other OECD member countries with coalition governments have a clear political/administrative interface), the need to ensure responsiveness of public administration, and a historically weak senior management.

First, the large size of “cabinets” creates major difficulties in public governance. Cabinets are indeed used for more than the usual purpose of providing politically sensitive advice to ministers as they ensure the political oversight of executive bodies. This practice bypasses the usual HRM regulations, undermines the attempts made at increasing individual accountability of senior managers, blurs career paths for staff who would like to be able to reach senior managerial positions, and negates efforts to implement performance management.

Second, there seems to be a relatively high degree of politicisation of senior management positions, even in governments which have opened up their senior management positions and implemented a mandate system for senior managers. The experience of OECD member countries shows that politicisation is not necessarily a problem if and only if established for ensuring that the policies of elected governments are

implemented by a relatively “resistant” bureaucracy, and provided there is absolute transparency about the positions that are subject to the spoilage system. This is presently not the case in Belgium.

To respond to these difficulties, governments in Belgium have taken interesting measures consisting of the following: *i*) the integration of cabinet staff into strategic management especially in the Federal and Flemish Governments, as well as a reduction of the size of cabinets. Both of these measures seem not to have had long lasting results; *ii*) decreased resources allocated to cabinets (Walloon Region for example); *iii*) the professionalisation of the management of senior management, by opening up their recruitment, and implementing a mandate system (renewable contracts depending on the achievement of objectives). A well functioning mandate system should help ensure more responsiveness of public administration without unusual involvement of the political sphere, and thus help decrease the need for large cabinets and political appointments in senior positions.

It seems, however, that the only tangible result of these measures on the delineation of responsibilities between senior management and cabinets has been an increased collaboration between cabinets and senior management on technical issues in some governments. This is far from the needed clarification of roles and responsibilities between cabinets and senior management and the depoliticisation of senior management appointments.

Other conditions need to be met before there can be a clearer delineation of responsibilities: *i*) like other OECD member countries, governments need to invest in building “leadership” capacity in their senior management, that is the capacity for managers to make their organisations achieve results; *ii*) all governments under review in Belgium also need to improve their processes for co-ordinated horizontal work across departments and ministries at senior civil service level and below (so that cabinets do not necessarily have to do this horizontal work); *iii*) there

needs to be a strong political commitment to depoliticise.

***...by promoting
a coherent set of
values***

While traditional public service core values (fairness, loyalty, probity, equity, etc.) are enshrined in the different texts regulating the management of public servants in Belgium, the different governments under review in Belgium have recently made significant efforts to transmit new core values to their staff concerning efficiency, quality and customer orientation. This transmission has been made rather explicit in management codes and processes, with the Federal and the Flemish Governments as well as Brussels-Capital Region having made significant efforts in this area. In all governments, formal management and regulatory tools (strategic organisational management tools, staff performance management systems, etc.) seem to be in place to provide a supporting environment to these new core values.

The change of focus, however, has been somewhat undermined by the overregulated HRM processes that reduce flexibility in personnel management. In addition, there seems to be a disconnection between new core values and HRM regulation and practices.

On the one hand, as governments are moving towards greater flexibility in their HR systems, a major restatement of core values and changes in core regulation will be required. The Flemish Government may have already reached this stage, and all legislation (especially the Royal Decree on General Principles) should be made consistent with actual HRM practices. On the other hand, the changes in core values that all governments recognise will require traditional HR management systems and processes to evolve in governments where they have not yet evolved.

The inter-governmental governance framework could be reformed to remove rigidities and enhance flexible mutual co-operation and learning

While divergence in reform paths can be dynamic and creative in a federal country, it may also create difficulties and rigidities, resulting in multiple and small labour markets for governments and in increased transaction costs on shared government competencies. Divergence can also blur the governance system and make it too complex and incomprehensible to citizens, companies, and the government itself. These are issues that should be recognised in federal countries. However, like in many federal countries, there is no reason why HR systems in Belgium should not diverge across governments, as long as systems are understandable to citizens, mobility is not impeded by diverging rigid statutory systems, and co-operation is working.

A minimum convergence of systems is supposedly maintained today by the 2000 Royal Decree on General Principles. However, the convergence, if any remains, is increasingly minimal. Indeed, the principles of the Decree have been bypassed by many governments' practices, most importantly in the use of contractual staff (see below). In addition, the Royal Decree has not prevented the HRM systems in the different governments from going into different directions.

At the same time, formal and informal collaboration and consultation on HRM have been almost non-existent across governments (except between the French Community and the Walloon Region, but these have almost similar constituents).⁸

The scope of the principles set in the Royal Decree on General Principles could thus be significantly reduced in order to only maintain compulsory minimum common standards in governance principles (such as union rights, selection on merit, etc.). In this case, credible sanctions should be applied if governments do not abide by these basic principles.

In parallel, however, it is important that voluntary co-operation between governments be significantly enhanced through the institutionalisation of the ministerial conference of the ministers of the civil service, and increased collaboration at senior civil service levels. All governments could also gain from increased mobility of employees across governments, especially at senior management levels (through, for example, the development of a common competency framework for senior managers across governments). Mobility across governments could naturally be promoted and organised by SELOR,⁹ whose governance, however, will likely have to be reviewed in the medium term. Increased mobility will also require specific efforts to be made on the issue of bilingualism, especially for senior managers.

Considering their overlapping constituency, the Walloon Region and the French Community could consider furthering their collaboration and even harmonizing their HRM rules in order to allow cross-government careers, especially at management levels.¹⁰

Notes

1. The definition of general government comes from the System of National Accounts and encompasses all governments in Belgium.
2. Both globally and per employee.
3. One of the specificities in Belgium is that outsourcing in general government is relatively low and governments have probably retained in-house functions performed by lower paid staff.
4. The data analysed do not include the quantity and quality of services delivered by general government.
5. The general principles of the administrative and remunerative statutes for national public servants to staff of regional and community authorities and services. Importantly, this decree has played an important role in constraining how governments organise: *i*) statutory and contractual employment; *ii*) the rights and duties of public servants, including freedom of speech, of information, duty of loyalty, integrity, etc.; *iii*) key human resource management arrangements, including an objective recruitment process, disciplinary arrangements, annual and other types of leave, redeployment, and pay maxima and minima.
6. *OECD Economic Survey: Belgium*, OECD (2007).
7. Most of the pension costs of all government employment in Belgium falls on the Federal Government. In addition, the Federal Government retains competence on unemployment policy and compensation. As part of its strategy to reduce unemployment, the Federal Government promotes employment in the different governments for those who have never been employed, by paying some of their remuneration.
8. In the Dutch-speaking part of the country, the Region and the Community have been merged into a single institution.
9. SELOR is the federal selection agency for statutory personnel for the central governments of the Federal Government, Brussels-Capital Region, the Flemish Government, the French Community, and the Walloon Region.
10. This issue does not arise in the Dutch-speaking part of the country, as the Region and the Community have been merged into a single institution entitled the Flemish Government.