



# Belgium (Flanders)

## RESOC and SERR

### Framework and setting

**Geographic scale** Two partnerships recently established in Flanders are the Regional Socio-economic Committees (RESOC) and the Socio-economic councils of the Region (SERR). The respective regions vary in size from covering 150,000 up to 700,000 inhabitants per RESOC/SERR region.

**Policy framework** Sub-regional Employment Committees were initiated in 1974 as sub-regional advisory committees of the National Employment Service. In 1994, district platforms (streekplatformen) were established at the sub-regional level. The Sub-regional Employment Committees were transformed in the 1990s to independent committees with a co-ordinating role on sub-regional employment policy. In 2004, a new law on sub-regional partnerships regarding socio-economic policy development was voted. Sub-regional structures were developed combining the advisory and consultative tasks on labour market and economic policies. In each sub-region two new regionally-based structures, the RESOC and the SERR were established. RESOC is a tripartite consultative committee whilst SERR is a bipartite advisory and consultative structure. Several RESOC and SERR can combine forces within one broader acknowledged regional or provincial partnership. These partnerships are a legal body and have a NGO status.

### Partnerships at work

**Rationale** The partnerships have been created as strong advisory and consulting structures in the region providing both bottom-up and top-down information and influencing socio-economic policy development.

**Objectives** The main objectives of Flemish RESOCs are to draw up a regional pact every six years including strategic choices and solutions for resolving socio-economic problems in the region, to stimulate innovative initiatives, to give advice on socio-economic matters, and to provide a consultative framework for regional actors on labour market and economic policy development. The main objective for each Flemish SERR is to organise bipartite consultation on economic and labour market issues and to give advice on labour market policies and related measures.

**Functions** The partnerships have an advisory function on employment and economic policies which have a strong local or regional impact and provide a forum for consultation between central partners involved in regional socio-economic development.

**Policy areas** The policy areas covered: labour market and economic policy development.

**Policy tools/ Instruments** The tools used include formal policy advice regarding various employment measures for the Flemish Ministers of Employment and special human resources counselling and guidance for project developers regarding employment equity and diversity.

**Timeframe** There is no time limit.

**Partners** The main partners of RESOCs are local and provincial authorities, Social Partners, VDAB (the Flemish Public Employment Service) and NGOs. A representative of the local or provincial authorities acts as President. SERR is a regional bipartite body of the social partners, presided by one of the members.

**Contracts** There is no contract between the partners, but RESOC has the objective to develop a strategic socio-economic pact for the region effectively binding all undersigning partners.

**Legal status** NGO

**Sources of Financing** ERSVs (the recognised regional partnerships) are legal bodies supporting RESOCs and SERRs in a larger region. They receive a yearly staffing budget from the Flemish Government for their central advising role on labour market and economic issues and for

their project-development staff. They can also apply for funding of innovative projects. Provincial and local authorities provide additional funding.

- Results** New structures have been set up since 2005 and results from this period include:
- \_ Project developers have stimulated and guided over 2,000 diversity action plans in companies and organisations.
  - \_ Regional centres for social economy have been stimulated and established.
  - \_ Local employment services have been stimulated.
  - \_ Employment policy measures have been improved and better focussed on the basis of committee advice.

## Partnerships' highlight

- Programme/Project** Diversity action plans: From 1999 onwards, the sub-regional employment committees have been the central partners for the development and provision of guidance on diversity action plans in over 2,000 companies. These action plans focus on the recruitment, progression, training and retention of members of target groups (e.g. migrant workers, disabled persons and elder workers), aiming to achieve employment equity on the labour market.
- Timeframe** Since 1999, objectives and guidelines have been established in consultation with social partners on the Flemish level and reviewed on a yearly basis.
- Objectives** The objective is to realise employment equity and diversity in the Flemish labour market.
- Activities** Activities include the development and stimulation a of HR-policy aimed at the durable integration of target groups in the labour market (e.g. diversity plans, competency policy) and stimulation of the social economy and local services economy.
- Results** Results include:
- \_ yearly action plans on labour market and economic policy at the sub-regional level;
  - \_ Regional Pacts for economic and labour market development endorsed by all partners;
  - \_ active role in stimulating diversity plans in companies (2006 target: 525 diversity plans);
  - \_ several innovative projects leading to structural adaptations in policy, and
  - \_ well-informed and supported regional actors.

## Contacts

### Partnership co-ordination at national / sub-regional level

At Flemish level, there is a guidance committee composed of partners at Flemish level e.g. social partners, government, ministry and PES and partners at sub-regional level (representatives of RESOC/SERR). A co-ordinating Unit is implemented in the Ministry of Employment, Miet Verhamme, e-mail: miet.verhamme@wse.vlaanderen.be, www.vlaanderen.be/werk

### Partnership co-ordinators at regional / local level

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