

Dissemination of the European Framework Agreement

The European Framework Agreement has been widely disseminated at cross-sectoral and sectoral levels, as well as at the level of the Regions, in order that relevant actors were enabled to highlight the measures taken at their respective levels relating to active ageing and the intergenerational approach. This agreement has been translated in French and Dutch by the Council's Secretariat and disseminated at European and national levels.

In order to prepare this second report, contacts have been made with all the above mentioned actors so that they could both present an overview of measures taken at their own level and lay out their ambitions relating to this issue. In this context, the National Labor Council played a key role in centralizing the available information relating to social policies at federal, regional and sectoral levels.

Implementation of the European Framework Agreement¹

At federal level

- Encouraging the retention, the integration or the reintegration of workers above 50 years of age in the Labor Market
- Adoption of the collective agreement n° 137, setting at 57 years the minimum age for accessing to a regime of half time work during the 2019-2020 period for workers with a specific career (heavy work, night work, construction sector, long career, restructuring). This minimum age has been set at 55 years for a reduction in working time to a 4/5-time job.
- Extension of the scope of work disability benefits to workers who continue to work after the statutory pension age;
- Organization of work and Burn-out

In the framework of the first call for pilot projects subsidized to prevent burn-out, 202 concrete projects have been introduced in 2018. The implementation of 50 selected projects has started in December 2018 and is still ongoing. An interim evaluation is scheduled for September and the final assessment will be carried out by the end of 2020.

A second round of projects is currently launched and applications for subsidies can be put forward up until 31 July 2019. The selection of projects will be completed by the end of November 2019.

- Voluntary return to work of workers with health issues

The Council has carried out in September 2018 an assessment of the regulations set out by the Government since 2016 relating to reintegration into the workforce. In this assessment, the Council called for the implementation of a monitoring instrument enabling to carry out an objective assessment of regulations. It also suggested changes in regulations that will make them more relevant to the realities on the ground.

At regional level

- In the Brussels Capital Region, 44 measures adopted in the framework of the "Plan formation 2020" aim at strengthening vocational training. Among these measures, a 30

¹ For further information, see the National Labor Council report n° 113 of 28 May 2019.

months' allocation allowance is granted to workers aged 57 and over from the date of their registration at the Brussels's PES (Actiris).

- In the Flemish Region, the “werkbaarheidscheque” (workability voucher) has been launched in May 2019, in the framework of the «Werbaar Werk » Action Plan. This measure applies in addition to measures already being implemented. It can be used by undertakings in order to identify and to address difficulties related to feasible work. One should also note communication campaigns aimed at enhancing a positive approach to feasible work, as well as the financial support to coaching, in the context of these policies. In the framework of the training support reform and in addition to measures presented in the 2018 Report, a credit-training has been granted under certain conditions to low-and-medium-skilled workers. A campaign has also been launched with a view to encouraging workers to follow training courses. Lastly, a common framework for certificates of professional qualifications, partial qualifications or professional competences delivered by a Center for assessment and testing of existing skills has been introduced by a Flemish regulation in April 2019.
- In the Walloon Region, the measures developed under the 2018 Implementation Report of the Framework Agreement have been continued. The “Impulsion 55 ans +” measure, which includes a reduction in employer social security contributions for older workers, had already been granted to 38.000 full time equivalents in the first quarter of 2018. In connection with its role in supporting undertakings in projects aimed at improving working conditions, the Occupational Experience Fund supported more than 1600 workers in 2016-2017.
- In the German-speaking Community, the AKTIF and ACTIF + support schemes provide a monthly financial subsidy during a period of 2 or 3 years to employers for hiring unemployed job seekers. The AKTIF scheme focuses specifically on workers aged 50 years and over who involuntarily lose their jobs.

At sectoral level

Increasing efforts are being made by the sectors to focus on older workers in the context of policies in favor of at-risk-groups. From now on, one third of the sectors that have concluded a collective agreement relating to efforts in favor of at-risk-groups provide for such measures. These measures may vary in their content, while a certain degree of homogeneity is observed in related sectors. Similar features notably include knowledge transfer through on-the-job training by mentors or coaches (7 sectors), training measures notably intended to address technological developments (banking and finance sector), workload reduction (financial support for time-credit open to workers older than 50 years), etc.

In connection with the Employment Plan for older workers (collective agreement n° 104), sectors have introduced several measures and highlighted some good practices. A specific measure provides for a tax exemption for allowances granted to employers who hire workers aged 58 years and over, under the condition that this allowance is provided for in a collective agreement concluded at the level of the sector. This measure has been introduced in three sectors. As from 1 January 2019, this allowance may also be individually exempted.