

Assessment programme of *PM2.V* (Marshall Plan 2.Green, *Plan Marshall 2.Vert*)

Executive summary

THEMATIC ASSESSMENT 8 – LANGUAGES PLAN

In order to improve the linguistic abilities of its citizens, the Walloon Government has launched, in the context of the *PM1.0* (Marshall Plan 1.0, *Plan Marshall 1.0*), the *Plan Langues*. It covers under a single name a series of measures, most of which already existed before the *PM1.0* (Marshall Plan 1.0, *Plan Marshall 1.0*). The *Plan Langues* was renewed in 2010, when the *PM2.V* (Marshall Plan 2.Green, *Plan Marshall 2.Vert*) was launched. The specific objective assigned to this *Plan Langues* is “to support the development of functional multilingualism among all Walloons in order to meet market needs”.¹

In the context of the assessment programme of the *PM2.V* (Marshall Plan 2.Green, *Plan Marshall 2.Vert*) commissioned by the Walloon Government, the objective of this report is to assess the effectiveness of that *Plan Langues*. It is more precisely a question of assessing the effects of the actions of the *Plan Langues* on its beneficiaries in terms of getting closer to employment.

According to the concerns of the sponsor, the adopted option was to focus the assessment of the Languages Plan on unemployed jobseekers. The measures that concern this target audience are immersion in language schools abroad or Flanders, in-company traineeships and intensive training courses.

The data collection and analysis methodology applied in this work has been a mixed approach. The qualitative method that has been used (interviews, documentary analysis of political and administrative texts) has essentially led to an in-depth understanding of the *Plan Langues*. The quantitative method (analysis of an administrative database of the beneficiaries of the *Plan Langues* provided by the *FOREM* (employment public service, *Service public wallon de l'emploi et de la formation*), and data collection and analysis via a telephone survey among beneficiaries) was used to measure the effectiveness of the policy.

The *conclusions* of the analysis are articulated around four dimensions.

Firstly, the beneficiaries' gross employment insertion rate is 42%. The share due to the action of the *Plan Langues*, subjectively reconstituted, is 32%. This share represents the proportion of beneficiaries estimating that the action that they have followed had been decisive in their finding a job. An estimate of the net employment insertion rate² is consequently 13%.

Important differences in net rates exist according to the action that was followed: 42% for in-company traineeships, 21% for immersion in language schools abroad or Flanders and 12% for intensive training courses. These differences are essentially due to the personal characteristics cited below, the distribution of which varies according to the action.

Factors explaining the insertion rate include:

¹ Text from *PM2.V* (Marshall Plan 2.Green, *Plan Marshall 2.Vert*)

² This net rate is calculated by taking the proportion of people in employment after the language action who had said that that language action had been decisive in their finding a job.

- For the characteristics relating to the beneficiaries: age, diploma level and professional career prior to entering the training;
- For the factors due to the *Plan Langues*, the network effect;
- The planning of the job search.

The chances for the beneficiaries of the *Plan Langues* of obtaining a job :

- Diminish with age;
- Are twice as great for someone with at least a bachelor degree compared to someone whose highest diploma is lower than the bachelor degree;
- Are doubled for beneficiaries who have begun their job search before the end of the *Plan Langues* compared to those who have started it after;
- Are tripled for a beneficiary whose professional career contains few spells of unemployment compared to someone whose professional career is different;
- Are multiplied by 1.6 for beneficiaries who have increased their professional network thanks to the *Plan Langues*.

The second dimension of the conclusions is of interest to jobseekers who are beneficiaries of the *Plan Langues*. It is noted that they are very satisfied with it. However, for a significant proportion of beneficiaries of immersion in language schools, the duration of the action is considered to be too short. 91% of the beneficiaries believe that the *Plan Langues* have met their expectations.

The linguistic progress at the conclusion of the *Plan Langues* are convincing: only 11% of the beneficiaries haven't achieved a higher level of language skill.

The survey reveals positive effects in terms of self-confidence for all of the beneficiaries and an important network effect for those who have benefited from in-company traineeships.

The third dimension of these conclusions is to do with the employers. About them, one notes:

- A lack of detailed information concerning linguistic abilities in the job offers;
- The language skills required in the job offers are not always in concordance with the exercise of the job: There is sometimes the presence of the criterion without the need, and vice versa.

Lastly, the fourth dimension of the conclusions relates to the implementation of the policy. Whereas access to the *Plan Langues* is conditioned by the existence of a professional plan requiring command of languages, 20% of the beneficiaries have said that the motivation "I followed the *Plan Langues* in order to have a command of a foreign language because that is what I was missing for finding a job" is not an important motivation.

The *PM2.V* (*Marshall Plan 2.Green, Plan Marshall 2.Vert*) focuses the *Plan Langues* on people who are close to employment. In the context of this assessment, that is a question of jobseekers. The profiles of the beneficiary jobseekers partly reflect the characteristics required by the *FOREM* (employment public service, *Service public wallon de l'emploi et de la formation*) in order to be acceptable for this program (professional project, requirement of diploma, etc.). Because of this, the breakdowns, especially per diploma and per professional career, strongly differ from those of the Walloon jobseekers.

One could not expect an important effect on insertion specifically related to the *Plan Langues*, given the close-to-employment nature of its audience (young, good degree and with few or no unemployment spells).

At the end of our analysis, we are making the following seven *recommendations*:

- 1) Given the importance of the network effect on insertion into employment, the actions or the contacts relating to professional environments are to be preferred;

- 2) One beneficiary out of five believes that a command of the languages is not necessary for implementing his or her professional plan. However, access to the *Plan Langues* is conditioned by the existence of a professional plan involving a command of the languages. Consequently, it is proposed to systematically make sure that the candidate's professional plan is in line with knowledge of a foreign language or another national language;
- 3) The analysis has shown that twice as many beneficiaries who have begun their job search before and during the *Plan Langues* find a job (compared to those who have begun their job search after the action). It is consequently suggested that *FOREM's* employees be advised to monitor the efficiency of the beneficiaries' job search more intensively, although there is no obligation for the jobseeker to seek work throughout the entire training period;
- 4) In order to objectify the beneficiaries' linguistic progress after the *Plan Langues*, it is recommended to support *FOREM's* project to generalise the language-level positioning.
- 5) The employers' needs for languages are little known. It would be useful to make them more aware of the use of the *CECR* (Common European Framework of Reference, *Cadre Européen Commun de Référence*) during the publication of job offers in order to identify their linguistic needs (Which level? Spoken use, written use, both?). This would make it possible to facilitate reconciliation between acquired and required skills.
- 6) For jobseekers, access to the *Plan Langues* depends on several obligatory criteria, including the existence of a professional plan. The appreciation of this criterion is subjective. In order to avoid candidates with similar characteristics seeing themselves granted different decisions according to *FOREM's* regional management in front of which they have to appear, a reflection on the manner of objectifying the appreciation of this criterion could be envisaged;
- 7) The distribution according to age, diploma and professional career differs strongly between jobseekers who benefit from the *Plan Langues* and Walloon jobseekers. If the intention of the decision-makers was to encourage access to the *Plan Langues* to people close to employment, then the implementation of the Plan meets that expectation. On the other hand, if such was not the intention, the definition of the target audience should be objectified.