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# Vocational training in the Belgian Construction industry – the European perspective

- ▣ **Challenges and roadblocks**
- ▣ **Organizations, objectives & achievements**
- ▣ **New instruments and new policies**
- ▣ **Sharing best practices = added value for all**

# Challenges and roadblocks

# Challenges

- ▣ Making sure the industry has a qualified/skilled workforce in sufficient numbers and in all branches
- ▣ Making sure the training provided meets the needs of all partners involved: labour, industry, society at large
- ▣ Making sure education, vocational training, industrial and human resources management are tuned to technological evolution
- ▣ Monitoring the market and stimulating employability

# Challenges

- ▣ How to promote vocational vs general education?
- ▣ How to absorb unemployment by retraining young/older adults?
- ▣ How to integrate new entrants + new target groups: immigrants, women...
- ▣ And how not to lose the older/experienced age group?

**N° 1 challenge: the ambitious European goal to achieve retraining and upgrading of every second worker by 2010!**

# Roadblocks

- ▣ No common European building sector, despite open borders
- ▣ A number of rusty but changing national institutions within often two-tier societies

**In the meantime:**

- ▣ Public authorities versus private initiatives
- ▣ The tendency to protect monopolies

# Roadblocks

Legal and mental obstacles:

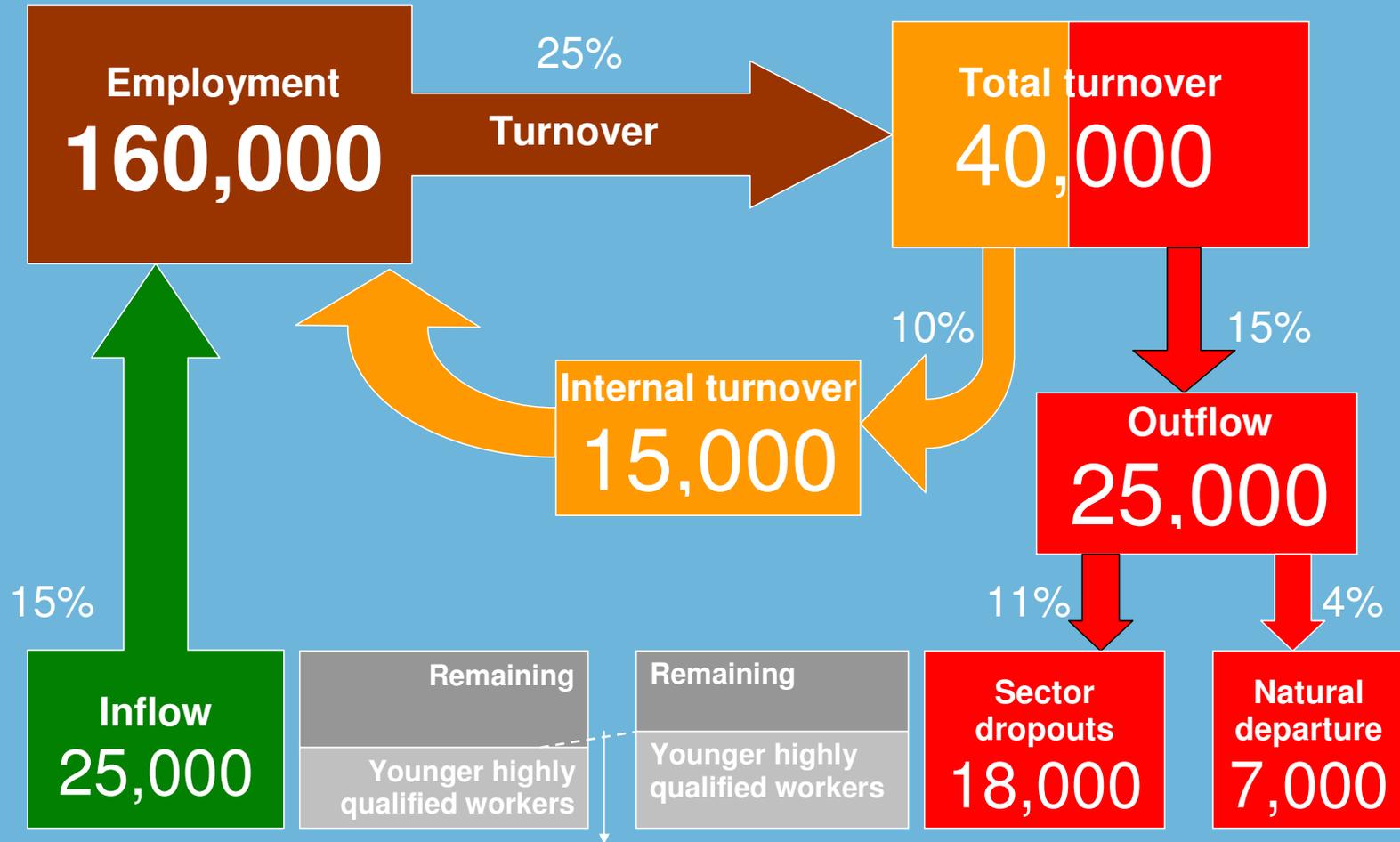
- ▣ Wage differentials, communication problems, mutual recognition of formal and non formal qualifications, the regulated versus the “parallel” market...

# Organizations, objectives and achievements e.g. the Belgian experience

# The industry

- ▣ 26,000 companies, mainly small and medium-sized
- ▣ Some 33 branches, including structural and infrastructural building, equipment, HVAC, finishes, decoration...
- ▣ Total workforce: 160,000 (manual labour only)
- ▣ Employees overall: some 220,000

# Inflow and outflow In the Construction sector - Belgium



Problem:  
Lack of skilled construction workers

# Paritarian sectoral funds in Belgium

- ▣ **FSE/FBZ: “existence security” fund**  
compensating loss of income due to bad weather, health hazard, invalidity, etc...
- ▣ **CNAC/NAVB: safety of construction sites**
- ▣ **FVB/FFC: vocational training**
- ▣ **Pensio B: extra pension fund for construction workers**

# FVB/FFC: ID

The Belgian Fund for vocational training in the construction industry is a self-supported paritarian organization funded by a levy of 0,6% of the aggregate wage mass of all construction workers.

Budget: € 27,000,000

Board members: representatives of Labour (unions) and Industry, including trades & crafts.

# FVB/FFC: assignment

The FVB/FFC's aim is to promote, support, facilitate and co-ordinate vocational training (for all of the building trades) of current and future workers in the construction industry.

# FVB/FFC: scope of activities

- ▣ Initial training of youth (compulsory education > age of 18)
- ▣ Retraining of unemployed (occupational resettlement)
- ▣ Continuing training, upgrading qualifications of the current workforce (+ train the trainer)

# Sectoral training strategy: 3 cornerstones



# Partners

- ▣ **Education: secondary/technical/vocational (some 250 schools)**
  - ◆ 27,000 full-time students
  - ◆ Annual turnout 5-6,000 qualified youth with 9 weeks practical on-site training experience
- ▣ **The industrial apprenticeship for the age groups 16-18/18-25 years (3,000 apprentices) – part-time education**

# Partners

- ▣ The training divisions of the federal/regional Labour Exchange Agencies
- ▣ Individual companies through the so-called “company training plan” providing for both in-company, on-site training and external courses

# Achievements

The sensibilization of individual companies and of their employees has resulted in a dramatic increase of training sessions, especially in the current workforce – both on weekdays (during working hours) but also during winter stop, plus in evening or Saturday courses.

# Achievements

As the main focus is the active worker, the sector has made it possible to organize extra training during working hours. We are presently reaching more than 5,000 companies and more than 50,000 workers. We have committed ourselves to step up by more than 30%.

Remember: By 2010 we should reach 1 out of 2 workers annually.

# Achievements

Careful planning enables the informed employer to subscribe to up tot 120 hours of extra training per worker at practically no charge!

# Achievements

By breaking barriers between the public and the private sector and by helping companies through pooling and “solidarization” of efforts and spinoffs life-long learning has gradually become part of the industrial culture.

# Training active workers: objective as phased

| Established growth path for the FVB/FFC |                |               |
|---|----------------|---------------|
|   | Objective in h | Increase in % |
| 05-06                                   | 481,000        |               |
| 06-07                                   | 535,000        | + 11%         |
| 07-08                                   | 605,000        | + 13%         |
| 08-09                                   | 672,000        | + 12%         |

# Strong points

- ▣ The consensus of the “social partners” in matters of training, their vested interest, is translated into specific collective labour agreements.
- ▣ The implementation of these is assigned to the FVB/FFC.
- ▣ The agreements reached with stakeholders and partners are result-oriented and based on mutual commitments.

# Strong points

- ▣ More training = more employability = more quality = more employment and competitive edge.
- ▣ Moreover, our financial means to reach out “carrots “before sticks with the sector’s backing has added to credibility.

# Key to success for sectorial training strategy

- ▣ Consensus social partners
- ▣ Joint training cost = essential
  - ◆ Mainly small and medium-sized enterprises
  - ◆ High turnover of personnel
- ▣ Make all systems as accessible as possible, remove barriers
- ▣ A minimum of red tape for the companies

# Key to success for sectorial training strategy

- ▣ Training programmes grafted on professional profiles
- ▣ Give companies good advice about the different possibilities
- ▣ Promote an industrial training culture
- ▣ Last but not least: Strive for quality in training!

# New instruments and new policies

# New instruments

- ▣ During the past decade the FVB/FFC has developed a number of computerized instruments in various fields
  - ◆ Data base, registration
  - ◆ Surveys, detection of training needs
  - ◆ Assessment, communication
  - ◆ Quality control
  - ◆ And last but not least a “Company Training Plan”

# New policies

New policies have been implemented to inform all “customers” of training opportunities and procedures and to convince them of the advantage + workability of sector-subsidized systems involving groups of companies, on a regional basis or branch-wise.

How?

# New policies

By “selling” them our support package: financial aid, pooling of available infrastructure, simplification of administrative work, counselling, planning and control, along with guidance to job-seekers, integrated safety training, follow-up courses and integration of new technologies.

**Sharing best practices =  
added value for all**