

Background

From ONEM to FOREM

Upon leaving school, unemployment registration is an administrative procedure that every student must undertake. Registration enables them to preserve their right to social security, while remaining temporarily covered by their parents' mutual. Unemployment registration also has other advantages such as the possibility of landing a subsidized job, which for the employer means reduced social contributions or else premiums for hiring.

Up until 1989, unemployment registration had to be done at the ONEM (National Employment Office). Yet passage of the Special Act of August 8, 1980 on institutional reform led to a division of powers at the regional, community and national level. This division took effect in 1989. ONEM retains jurisdiction over managing unemployment insurance while functions delegated to the regions (placement of job-seekers) or communities (occupational training of job-seekers and workers) became the responsibility of newly created organizations:

	Employment	Training
Walloon region	FOREM	FOREM
Flemish region	VDAB(1)	VDAB
German-speaking community	ADG(2)	ADG
Brussels capital region (French-speaking)	ORBEM(3)	Brussels Formation
Brussels capital region (Dutch-speaking)	BGDA(4)	VDAB

FOREM's Mission

FOREM has a twofold mission:

- An employment and training service for individuals (the organization undertakes to help the job-seeker find and land work as well as provide training based on their profile and aspirations);
- A recruitment and employee training service for employers.

Managing job offers is therefore a core mission of this public service. To cite a few statistics(5), in 2000, FOREM recorded 234,568 job-seekers, who can be categorized as follows by sex and age group:

Age Group	Male	Female	Total
Under 25	27,010	30,927	57,937
25 -- 40	44,168	65,656	109,824
40 -- 50	24,488	28,876	53,364
50 or over	7,259	6,184	13,443
Total	102,925	131,643	234,568

That same year, FOREM managed 53,000 job offers distributed through various channels such as postings at FOREM centres and partners, the "jobline", Internet, television, the print media and radio (with an 80.5% satisfaction rate). FOREM also dispensed (directly or through partnerships) a total of 18,000 training courses, which represents 6,548,527 hours of training.

Status

FOREM was created by a Walloon Regional Council decree on December 16, 1988 which gave it the status of a Class B regional public-interest organization. FOREM enjoys self-management, which in its case is handled by a management committee.

FOREM has 150 offices throughout Wallonia, a budget of 10 billion Belgian francs and 3,200 agents, making it the largest Walloon pararegional organization.

Following the June 1999 legislative elections, the new Walloon government launched a program called "A Contract for Wallonia's Future." In it, political authorities confirmed their intention of modernizing and improving the performance of public services.

On April 17, 2001, Marie Arena, Walloon Minister of Employment and Training, signed the new 2001-05 management contract that called for FOREM to reorganize by clearly separating activities that by nature would continue to depend on the public service from those that henceforth would be open to competition. The new FOREM was organized into three divisions, each with its own function:

- A director-coordinator function that mainly involved implementing the employment policies emanating from the government. This is the level that handles the tasks of coordinating agents, information, and user and employer orientation;
- A public training provider function that offered free services for job-seekers, workers and firms active in occupational training;
- A public corporation to manage revenue-generating activities of a commercial nature such as a temporary placement or personnel selection.

The new organization therefore had to adapt its tools to the new demands of competition, while continuing to provide a public service.

Funding

FOREM's main sources of funds are:

- Grant under Walloon Region budget: 76.55%
- European Social Fund: 0.84%
- Miscellaneous revenue, mainly the sale of goods or services related to FOREM's activities and financial products: 1.89%
- Receipts of non-training agencies: 0.81%
- Reserve account: 15.28%
- Other: 4.63%

(1) Vlaams Dienst voor Arbeidsbemiddeling en Beroepsopleiding [*Flemish Employment and Office Service*]

(2) Arbeitsamt der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft [*German-speaking Community Employment Office*]

(3) Office Régional Bruxellois de l'Emploi [*Brussels Regional Employment Office*]

(4) BrusselsenGewestelijke Dienst voor Arbeidsbemiddeling [*Brussels Employment Office*]

(5) Figures taken from 2000 statistical report.