

Environment

Belgian and International Setting

It is absolutely essential to describe briefly the Belgian and European employment situation that undeniably influenced FOREM's strategic choices.

At the European level, most noteworthy was the 1996 adoption of International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No. 181, which recommended opening up the job market and creating a market in which public employment services and private agencies could freely compete. Belgium is still in the process of ratifying the Convention.

The competition therefore comes mostly from abroad, but also increasingly at the regional level. Belgium already has a multitude of private temporary work, placement and training agencies that compete with FOREM.

Internal Catalytic Factors

The 1996-99 management contract required FOREM to achieve ambitious concrete results. In 1997 FOREM did a self-evaluation with the help of two studies conducted among clients by outside agencies. The first examined the satisfaction of external clients and the second FOREM's image. Both took the form of surveys. The results are not outstanding and point to a number of shortcomings.

Level of Satisfaction -- 1997

Satisfaction rates		1997
Individuals	Job-seekers	51%
	Unemployment Reabsorption Plan workers	60%
	Training interns	66%
Employers	Temporary personnel hirers	71%
	Employment services clients	55%
	URP worker hirers	65%

The main criticisms levelled at FOREM can be summed up as follows:

- FOREM doesn't provide customized service. Clients want their needs handled personally by a single representative offering a service package adapted to their situation;
- According to employers, there is little balance between labour supply and demand;
- FOREM pays little attention to the service sector.

Image Study -- 1997

FOREM's spontaneous image	Individuals	Employers
Positive associations	54%	54%
Neutral associations	20%	22%
Negative associations	26%	24%

FOREM's name was recognized by just about everyone, but most viewed FOREM employees as "bureaucrats" or "paper-pushers". Many respondents still had a strong tendency to confuse FOREM and ONEM activities. The weaknesses uncovered by the survey were a lack of flexibility and communication.

The audit, however, was not all gloomy and revealed the human potential and vitality found within the organization.

A combination of factors related to opening up the employment market and the mixed results of internal surveys

led FOREM to adapt its development strategy and opt for a new organizational model.

As we have seen, the ILO Convention in the process of ratification along with the results of the external audit and objectives of the 1996-99 management contract forced FOREM to adopt a new method of operation with a predominantly extroverted orientation. In its new action plan, the client (individual or employer) would henceforth be at the centre of the organization's concerns. Yet since FOREM would primarily remain a public service, it still had to attach a great deal of importance to equal opportunity and universal access to its services.

Around the same time, the one-stop concept was emerging in Belgium. The idea was therefore naturally worth exploring if this type of solution could be seen as an electronic point of contact with citizens, and it was in this particular context that the Hotjob project gradually took shape.
