

The Interregional Observatory of Employment in Luxembourg and in the “Greater Region”

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The Interregional Observatory of Employment¹ (IEO) is very well known in the space named the “Greater Region”. Before explaining its roles, history and missions, it is useful to have a look at the context of this area. It is impossible to understand the birth of the IEO without a minimal knowledge of the labour market in the Greater Region. Afterwards, I will explain how the IEO is organised, and its developments, changes and perspectives. Before ending, I will shortly present some other observatories created in Luxembourg around the question of employment in general.

1. Initial Situation and Contextual Overview: Why an Interregional Observatory in and Around Luxembourg?

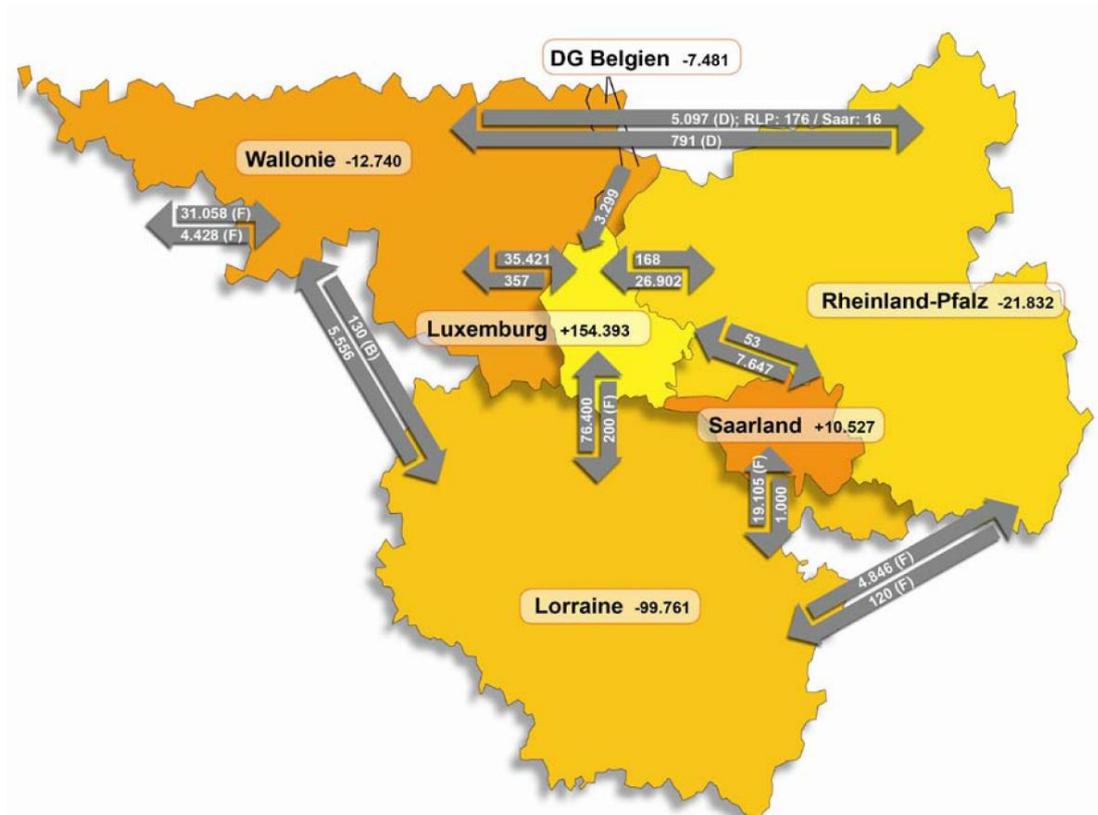
The Greater Region² comprises Luxembourg and its neighbouring regions: Wallonia, the German-speaking Community of Belgium, the French Community of Belgium, the German States of Saarland and Rhineland-Palatinate and finally the French region of Lorraine. It is not an area of political integration, but only of cooperation between member entities. This cooperation was born out of the iron and steel industry crisis in the 1960s and continued via the development of various institutions and the establishment of cooperation programmes. Within the Greater Region, Luxembourg stands out for two characteristics: it has a significant population of foreign nationals, and a labour market with many cross-border workers. I will illustrate the significance of the second aspect using statistical data.

¹ Here are the official denominations in French and German: *Observatoire interregional de l'emploi* and *Interregionale Arbeitsmarktbeobachtungsstelle*.

² The Greater Region comprising the territories cited above is the one of the results of a process of political cooperation initiated in 1968 between Germany and France. They were later joined by Luxembourg and some federal institutions of Belgium.

The following map presents the flows of cross-border workers in the Greater Region in general and in the direction of Luxembourg, in particular on 30 June 2011. Around 20% of all cross-border workers of the European Union are concentrated in the tiny Luxembourg and 25% in the whole Greater Region.

Map 1 Flows of cross-border workers in the Greater Region



Source: Situation du marché de l'emploi dans la Grande Région, Huitième rapport de l'Observatoire interrégional du marché de l'emploi pour le treizième Sommet des Exécutifs de la Grande Région, décembre 2012, p. 88.

The repartition between residents and cross-border workers in the labour market in the country is presented in the following tables.

In Luxembourg, the share of cross-border workers amongst wage earners is enormous. As of March 31 2012, the General Inspectorate of Social Security (*Inspection générale de la sécurité sociale* – IGSS) estimated that cross-border workers represented 43.7% of all employed persons. All in all, there were

156,810 cross-border workers. Amongst them, 49.5% came from France, 25.2% from Belgium and 25.3% from Germany³.

Table 1 Composition of the labour market in Luxembourg (31 March 2012)

Status	Number	Percentage
Luxembourgers	104,375	29.1%
Resident foreigners	97,864	27.3%
Cross-border workers	156,810	43.7%
Together	359,050	100%
Foreigners + cross-border workers	254,674	70.9%

Source: Inspection générale de la sécurité sociale (IGSS).

Table 2 Residents and cross-border workers in Luxembourg (31 March 2012)

Status	Number	Percentage
Residents	202,240	56.3%
Cross-border workers	156,810	43.7%
Together	359,050	100%

Source: Inspection générale de la sécurité sociale (IGSS).

³ IGSS, 14 January 2013.

Table 3 The countries of residence of cross-border workers in Luxembourg (31 March 2012)

Country of residence	Number	Percentage
Belgium	39,580	25.2%
France	77,613	49.5%
Germany	39,617	25.3%
Together	156,810	100%

Source: Inspection générale de la sécurité sociale (IGSS).

Concerning cross-border workers, Luxembourg's situation is peculiar in Europe. The country does no longer possess a national labour market but instead a veritable regional one, in which undeniably international aspects appear. Mobility of workers is a historical reality characterised, by impressive cross-border flows since at least 1985. The situation is known, but it is worth devoting a little more attention to it.

Two major reasons may explain this phenomenon more precisely. First of all, the high unemployment rate in the regions bordering on Luxembourg. According to harmonised data⁴, in 2008 the following unemployment levels were recorded: 8.4% in Lorraine, 7.1% in Saarland, 5.6% in Rhineland-Palatinate, 7.4% in the Belgian German-speaking community and 10.0% in Wallonia. Luxembourg itself registered a rate of 5.1%. Such conditions on the borders of the Grand Duchy quite naturally attract a large number of persons who are unemployed in their own country. Luxembourg is moreover a job-creating economy. The second reason is the following: certain qualifications required by companies established in Luxembourg are underrepresented inside the country. Recourse to a qualified workforce outside the border hence becomes inevitable. We need only to recall in passing that the issue of professional training is one of the essential areas in which Luxembourg must still undertake efforts according to European Union recommendations.

⁴ Septième rapport de l'Observatoire interrégional du marché de l'emploi, IBA-OIE, décembre 2010, p. 35.

The researcher Mireille Zanardelli (2006: 24) showed clearly that the countries bordering Luxembourg constitute “the reserve of privileged labour for the privileged labour which the country requires”. Citizens of the countries bordering Luxembourg are, on average, increasingly educated as time goes on. Furthermore, the Greater Region is attracting highly qualified workers from further and further away who are seeking work in Luxembourg. It should be noted that the shortage of skilled workers has resulted in competition to attract them. Recently, Luxembourg has, for example, attracted young and highly-qualified workers from its neighbouring regions.

There are also other cross-border flows within the Greater Region which are not directed to Luxembourg. As shown, these flows, however, are small in comparison to those into Luxembourg.

This particular context explains the creation of the IEO. With the existence of so important flows, it became necessary to analyse this phenomenon and to provide, in case of problems, appropriate answers.

2. How Is the IEO Organised?

The IEO consists of a network of specialised institutes or public services of the Greater Region. Its seat is located at the INFO-Institut in Saarbrücken, Germany. This institute hosts the coordination and the secretariat of the network. The IEO observes social developments and especially the situation of the labour market in the Greater Region. It took up its work in 2000, after two years of preparations.

Generally, the IEO prepares information on the labour market for the political leaders of the Greater Region in order to enable useful conclusions concerning the structural employment policies. Besides serving the political level, it also provides insights to other actors and stakeholders involved in employment policies in the Greater Region. The IEO can thus be considered a cross-border system of diagnostic of the socio-economic developments.

The missions of the IEO are defined by the Summit⁵ of the Greater Region or by its steering committee. Of course, important contributions are provided to the IEO by all the statistical offices of the Greater Region.

The IEO is under the auspices of an interregional steering committee. This steering committee comprehends all components of the Greater Region: members of all governments, representatives of the Economic and Social Committee of the Greater Region and a representative of the workgroup of the statistical offices. The steering committee defines the priority tasks in close exchange with the political leaders of the Greater Region. All the members of the network contribute according to their own competences in their regions.

Who are the members of the IEO? Of course, the members come from all the parts of the Greater Region:

- For the Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg: the members are bound in a consortium between the national public employment service ADEM (*Agence pour le développement de l'emploi*)⁶ and the research centre CEPS/INSTEAD (*Centre d'études de populations, de pauvreté et de politiques socio-économiques/International Network for Studies in Technology, Environment, Alternatives, Development*).⁷ They are linked by agreements and by the EURES network (European Employment Services) which is administered between these administration and research centres.
- For the Belgian federal structures, three members manage the IEO: the first member is the Economic and Social Council of the German-speaking Community, than the former Eastern Belgian Observatory for Employment (ABEO) that became DGStat⁸. Last we find the Walloon Institute for Evaluation, prospective and statistic IWEPS (*Institut wallon*

⁵ The "summit" brings together the heads of governments in the Greater Region: the Prime Minister of Luxembourg, the Minister-Presidents of Saarland and Rhineland-Palatinate, the President of the Lorraine Region and the Minister-Presidents of the Walloon Region, the Belgian French-speaking Community and the German-speaking Community.

⁶ www.adem.public.lu.

⁷ www.ceps.lu.

⁸ www.dgstat.be.

de l'évaluation, de la prospective et de la statistique)⁹ that depends on the Walloon Region. DGStat is a working group directed by the Economic and Social Council, the Ministry and the Employment agency of the German-speaking Community in order to observe and follow the situation of the labour market, the social and economical life conditions in Eastern Belgium and in the neighbour municipalities. This workgroup collects all statistical data and evolutions in the aim to provide relevant information to the politic, social and economic leaders. Reports are regularly published on several topics. The IWEPS, created in 2004, establishes indicators to characterise the functioning of the Walloon labour market, conducts provisional analyses to anticipate the needs in workforces and the types of needed skills and, finally, organises the evaluation of several measures and their impacts on the development of employment and unemployment.

- For the French Region of Lorraine: the first member is the regional Observatory of employment, training and qualifications OREFQ (Observatoire régional de l'emploi, de la formation et des qualifications).¹⁰ Created in 1992 by an agreement between the French State and the Lorraine Region, located in the city of Nancy, this observatory produces some considerations on employment and training policies, in particular by the observation of the evolution of the jobs, the skills and qualifications and the needs in qualifications in the Lorraine Region. The second French institution involved is the EURES centre of Lorraine (CRD Eures Lorraine – Centre de ressources et de documentation Eures Lorraine). As in Luxembourg, EURES is involved in the IEO in Lorraine. It benefits from the support of the Regional Council of Lorraine and of the European Commission. The CRD EURES Lorraine delivers information to workers and firms on cross-border mobility in the Greater Region, conducts actions in the framework of expected skills and jobs and cross-border professional training. Practical information is provided by a specific website and by printed documents to a large audience.

⁹ www.iweps.be.

¹⁰ www.orefq.fr.

- For the German States of Saarland and Rhineland-Palatinate: the partner is the *INFO-Institut*, an advisory institute specialised in applied social sciences and consultancy for public and private institutions. Different topics from the applied sciences are taken into account by the *INFO-Institut*, mainly from the fields of economics and regional studies. Cross-border research in the Greater Region plays a prominent role herein.

The representatives of all these institutions are, for most part of them, researchers with academic competences. They possess profound knowledge on the subject-matter and are familiar with policy developments in the considered area.

3. Development, Changes and Processes for the IEO

The IEO was created in 1998, after a decision of the fourth Summit of the Greater Region¹¹. The first role assigned to the IEO was to gather, compare and analyse information concerning employment in the Greater Region in order to establish conclusions concerning the development of the economy and the employment. A small team constituted of some institutions of all the areas of the Greater Region was created to concretise the IEO. The observatory was financed, since the beginning, by the partners that were members of the observatory and by all ministries of the Greater Region. From the beginning, too, the IEO received the instruction to collaborate with the EURES network, in particular with the cross-border networks active in the Greater Region: *EURES Pôle européen de développement* (EURES PED) that includes the Belgian Province of Luxembourg, the Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg and the Lorraine Region, and the *EURES Saar-Lor-Lux-Rheinland-Pfalz* (EURES SLLRP), that comprises the Grand-Duchy, the Lorraine Region and the German States of Rhineland-Palatinate and Saarland.

Thus, from the start, a strong cooperation has been established between the new IEO and the European network EURES for the following reasons.

¹¹ 4è Sommet de la Grande Région, 19 novembre 1998, Trèves, Rhénanie-Palatinat, Déclaration finale commune. Archives Maison de la Grande Région, Déclarations communes des Sommets de la Grande Région, IV/19-11-98/RP/vf.

Trade unions play a major role in the representation of cross-border workers in Luxembourg. Professor Philippe Hamman (2005), of the University of Strasbourg, has shown that cross-border workers are also represented by the trade unions via the networking activities of EURES, administered by the European Commission. For a number of years EURES has thus played a significant role in supporting these workers in Luxembourg.

EURES has a particularly important role to play in cross-border regions, areas with significant levels of cross-border commuting. More than 600,000 people who live in one EU country and work in another have to cope with different national practices and legal systems.

There are currently over 20 EURES cross-border partnerships, spread geographically throughout Europe and involving more than 13 countries. Aiming to meet the need for information and coordination connected with labour mobility in the border regions, these partnerships bring together public employment and vocational training services, employers and trade union organisations, local authorities and other institutions dealing with employment and vocational training. EURES cross-border partnerships serve as valuable points of contact among employment administrations, both regional and national, and the social partners. They are also an important means of monitoring these cross-border employment areas, which are a key element in the development of a genuine European labour market¹². Around Luxembourg, as mentioned, there are two specific cross-border partnerships: PED (*Pôle européen de développement*) and *Saar-Lor-Lux/Rheinland-Pfalz*.

The trade unions could, via EURES, further develop their role as institutions representing cross-border workers and thus contribute to the social cohesion of Luxembourg. I have to mention that organisations of employers are involved in EURES, too.

In 2001, the meeting of the 6th Summit of the Greater Region¹³ took place in Mondorf-les-Bains, Luxembourg, and at this occasion, new missions were attributed to the IEO:

¹² ec.europa.eu/eures/main.jsp?catId=56&acro=eures&lang=en.

¹³ Déclaration commune 6^{ème} Sommet de la Grande Région, Mondorf-les-Bains, 12 novembre 2001, pp. 15-16.

- Organise efficiently and durably the junction between the needs of the labour market and the needed skills
- Collect primary statistical data
- Make a prospective analysis of the labour market
- Formulate proposals to help the public management of the labour market

These missions have been assigned to the IEO to permit a better cooperation between the political leaders of the Greater Region and the social and economic actors in the labour market, and to take more concerted decisions to ameliorate the socio-economic competitiveness of all the areas in the Greater Region.

On the occasion of the meeting of the Summit, the IEO prepared a first important report concerning the state of the labour market in the Greater Region: activity rate, unemployment rate, situation of cross-border workers and employment per economic sectors. A decision has been taken to update this report regularly, the eighth version was published in December 2012.

During the Summit, a steering committee of the IEO was set up. As mentioned previously, it is composed of representatives from the public members of the Greater Region and a member from the statistical offices of this area. Moreover, members of the Economic and Social Committee of the Greater Region (*Comité économique et social de la Grande Région – CESGR*)¹⁴ are permanently associated with the steering committee with a right to take part in votes. So, the steering committee became the single organism that had the competency to give instructions to the IEO. The committee has the right, too, to formulate recommendations to the Summit concerning the works of the IEO. After a proposal of the CESGR, the Summit asked the IEO to analyse specifically the situation of the employment in the construction sector and in the catering and hotel sector. Other proposals of analyses have been formulated concerning the situation of women's labour market participation, the evolution of job offers, sectors of activity with skills shortage, tourism, new technologies of information and communication, car industry and informal economy.

¹⁴ The CESGR is composed of several representatives from public services, trade unions and employers associations of the Greater Region.

During the 7th Summit of the Greater Region¹⁵ which took place in Saarbrücken, Saarland on 30 June 2003, the IEO was congratulated, in particular concerning the collaboration with the statistical offices and concerning studies realised on female employment, ageing and cross-border work in general. It has been decided to realise a study on the functioning of the IEO.

The steering committee was appointed to make in-depth analyses on several new topics: professional qualifications of young people and gathering of specific new data concerning the cooperation area.

The 8th Summit of the Greater Region¹⁶ took place in Metz, Lorraine, on 24 January 2005. The Summit confirmed the role and encouraged the IEO to pursue the works concerning the integrated labour market of the cooperation area.

In 2006, when the 9th Summit took place on 1 June in Trier, Rhineland-Palatinate, the participants congratulated once again the IEO for the achieved works concerning, in particular, cross-border work and the impact of the demographic evolution until 2020 for the sustainable development of the employment policy in the Greater Region. The gathered members added that the results of IEO's works have to be transmitted to the interregional EURES networks to verify the practical possibilities of the feasibility of several pilot projects. In the past, the IEO was financially supported by the Interreg IIIC project "eBird" and the members of the Summit encouraged the IEO to use the financial possibilities provided by the new Objectif 3 Interreg programme IV, 2007-2013.

After the 12th Summit in Völklingen¹⁷, Saarland, on 24 January 2011, it was indicated that the role of the IEO was fundamental concerning the possibilities of early identifications of evolutions and problems in the labour market in the Greater Region, an essential "early-warning system" to build in-time appropri-

¹⁵ Déclaration commune du 7^e Sommet Sarre – Lorraine – Luxembourg – Rhénanie-Palatinat – Région wallonne – Communauté française de Belgique – Communauté germanophone de Belgique le 30 juin 2003 à Sarrebruck, pp. 21-22.

¹⁶ 8^{ème} Sommet des Exécutifs de la Grande Région. Déclaration commune. Metz, le 24 janvier 2005, pp. 9-10.

¹⁷ Déclaration commune. 12^{ème} Sommet de la Grande Région, 24 janvier 2011, Weltkulturerbe Völklinger Hütte, p. 7.

ate measures. The members encouraged once again the IEO to join Interreg programmes and their funds.

Finally, during the last Summit¹⁸, organised in Pont-à-Mousson, Lorraine, on 24 January 2013, the members were satisfied with the report of the IEO concerning the employment of languages in the Greater Region. They also mentioned that the results of the works of the IEO were well disseminated and that the website (www.iba-oie.eu) of the observatory is very useful because the entirety of the reports and analyses produced since 2001 are there available by numerical way.

4. Results and Perspectives for the IEO

Since the beginning, the IEO produced several results and organised some events:

- Four reports on the social and economic situation of the Greater Region¹⁹, covering the years 2006 to 2012.
- Eight reports on the situation of the labour market in the Greater Region²⁰, giving the situation from 2001 to 2012.
- Two specific studies. The first concerned the “eBird” (2004-2006) project (the labour market in the Greater Region until 2020)²¹. The second is the “Opti-Match” project 2008-2010 (matching supply and demand in the labour market)²².
- Seven public debates on several topics from 2005 to 2012²³: cross-border workers, demographic perspectives, economic development, roles of the public employment services, supply and demand in a cross-border context, use of languages.

¹⁸ Déclaration commune. 13^{ème} Sommet de la Grande Région, 24 janvier 2013, Abbaye des Prémontrés – Pont-à-Mousson, 13^{ème} Sommet des exécutifs, Présidence Lorraine 2011-2013, p. 9.

¹⁹ www.iba-oie.eu/Rapports-sur-la-situation-econ.21.0.html?&L=1.

²⁰ www.iba-oie.eu/Rapport-sur-la-situation-du-ma.24.0.html?&L=1.

²¹ www.iba-oie.eu/e-BIRD-2004-2006.85.0.html?&L=1.

²² www.iba-oie.eu/OPTIMATCH-2008-2010.80.0.html?&L=1.

²³ www.iba-oie.eu/Ateliers-debats.23.0.html?&L=1.

Three final considerations can be made concerning the evolution of the IEO.

First, this observatory has been created in a particular context in Europe: a context marked by numerous flows of cross-border workers, in particular in the direction of Luxembourg. The labour market of this small country has changed considerably in a few years. Nowadays, this labour market cannot be considered as a national one but as a regional one! Consequently it was necessary to create a particular and interregional observatory to study the development of this phenomenon and its consequences on mobility, languages or skills, for example. It is essential to point out that there was a common wish among all elements and actors of the Greater Region to build this observatory.

Then, another remarkable element is that the IEO includes members not only from research centres or public services exclusively. The observatory was built by both and there was no change in its composition during the years. It always was necessary to have a kind of joint-venture between public actors and researchers in order to understand and explain the observed phenomena of cross-border work in the Greater Region. The connection with the EURES network that appeared during the development of the IEO is another good example of a mixed collaboration, because, as observed, organisations of employees and trade unions are involved in this network. The IEO became a good example of cooperation between several kinds of actors acting on a particular regional labour market.

Last, it is perhaps difficult to affirm that the IEO knew real shifting roles during its existence. I think it is better to say that it knew several adapted roles. It has been observed, during all the evolution of the IEO, that the studies it made, the researches it conducted, were ordered by the Summit of the Greater Region, always when particular problems appeared. At the same time, the IEO was allowed to conduct studies itself following the insights of its members. I mentioned the studies concerning not only the cross-border work in general, but also the role of women in the labour market or the situation in the restaurants and hotels of the Greater Region, as examples. The studies were commissioned when the Summit or the IEO itself were convinced that it was necessary to have a clear situation on a particular phenomenon in order to propose solutions if necessary. That is certainly the heart of the role of the IEO: the adaptation to the reality in the Greater Region and, in particular, on its labour market.

5. Other Observatories in Luxembourg

As observed, the IEO is an interregional observatory, which reason of existence are the massive flows of cross-border workers in the space of the Greater Region. Of course, there are internal observatories in Luxembourg, too, specifically dedicated to national problems. Here, I would like to point out shortly three different observatories:

The Observatory of employment RETEL (Réseau d'étude sur le marché du travail et de l'emploi)²⁴

Created in 2011 under the authority of the Ministry of Labour and Employment, this observatory gathers several actors: the National Institute of Statistics STATEC (*Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques*), the IGSS, and the ADEM. Others actors joined this consortium, bringing in the same time their particular experiences: CEPS/INSTEAD research institute, the Central Bank of Luxembourg BCL (*Banque centrale du Luxembourg*), the University of Luxembourg, the Social and Economic Council CES (*Conseil économique et social*), professional associations as, for example, the Chamber of Wage earners and the IEO. It is partly financed by the European Social Fund.

Several goals were assigned to RETEL: to produce inquiries on different aspects on the development of the national and regional labour markets and develop statistical methodologies about data concerning employment, in particular. This creation is inserted in the reform of the ADEM in order to provide a better knowledge of the functioning of the labour market and the consequences of immigration in the country.

Since 2011, several seminars and congresses have been organised by RETEL on different topics: the evaluation of public policies and ageing, for example. The next seminar will be organised in November 2013 on the topic of the employment of young people. Another goal of RETEL is to organise in Luxembourg a better connection between the data of different institutions, in order to permit better academic and administrative analyses of the situation of the people in the labour market.

²⁴ www.mte.public.lu/retel.

The Observatory of Absenteeism (Observatoire de l'absentéisme au travail)²⁵

Created by the IGSS and CEPS/INSTEAD Research Institute in collaboration with the social partners and the Ministries of Labour and Employment and Social Security, this observatory is a very specific one because it is dedicated directly to the enterprises located in Luxembourg. Some indicators are delivered in order to provide specific information to these firms. With the provided data, the enterprises can have a view and can establish a diagnostic concerning the absenteeism in their specific workplaces, in comparison with other enterprises of the same sector of activity.

The Observatory of Professional Training (Observatoire de la formation)²⁶

Created in 2012 by a law²⁷, this new observatory has the mission to provide statistical and qualitative analyses on the topic of professional training. As explained previously, professional training is deficient in Luxembourg and it was necessary to adopt a specific institution to analyse the progresses made in this framework. This new observatory has been created by a common will of the Luxembourgish government, employers and trade unions. A scientific council of this observatory is in place since April 2013 and it is of course too early to benefit from results concerning its action.

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²⁵ www.observatoire-absenteisme.public.lu.

²⁶ www.infpc.lu/Observatoire/Article/accueil-observatoire/fr.

²⁷ Loi du 21 juillet 2012 modifiant la loi modifiée du 1er décembre 1992 portant 1. création d'un établissement public pour le développement de la formation professionnelle continue et 2. fixation des cadres du personnel des Centres de formation professionnelle continue, Mémorial A, numéro 190, 5 septembre 2012.

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