

The National Contactcentre, Belgium

Title of the policy or measure (in English)	The National Contactcentre of the Federal Labour Inspection of the Belgian Federal Public Service Employment, Labour and Social Dialogue
• Country	Belgium
• Sectors	All
• What groups are targeted by the measure	The following groups are all directly targeted by the measure: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Labour inspectors - the general public - jobseekers - workers - employers - other public services - social partners - accountancy and law firms
• Purpose of measure	Prevention
• Short sentence summarising the measure	The Belgian Labour Inspectorate set up an information Contactcentre in order to respond to all requests for information regarding labour legislation monitored and enforced by the Inspectorate. The aim of the Contactcentre is to encourage compliance with, and reduce evasion of, labour law.
Background	
• Background context driving the implementation of the measure	According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Conventions No. 81 and 129 which were ratified by Belgium, the Inspectorate's role consists of three tasks. In addition to executing checks and controls, and reporting to the relevant authorities, the third task concerns improving employers' compliance with respect to labour laws. The Contactcentre provides employers and workers with information and advice on how to comply effectively with the legal provisions. This supports and strengthens the prevention of individual and collective conflicts and contributes to the prevention of undeclared work.
• When was the measure implemented? (including start date and end date/ongoing)	The Contactcentre was set up in July 2011 on a pilot basis in one region - the province of West-Flanders - after validation by the board of directors of the Federal Public service. After a positive evaluation at the end of the year, the scope of the Contactcentre was extended to both East and West-Flanders and to the Province of Antwerp a year later. In 2015 the Contactcentre covered the whole Dutch speaking Flanders territory and in 2017 the French part of the Kingdom was also covered. From then on the Contactcentre was rolled out nationally.
• Names(s) of authorities/bodies/organisations involved	Federal Labour Inspectorate (labour law division) of the Federal Public Service Employment, Labour and Social Dialogue (SPF).
• Scope of the measure (a pilot project, nationwide, regional wide)	Nationwide
• Type of (policy) measure	Structural reform

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key objectives of the measure 	<p>General objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - rationalisation of the Labour Inspectorate's information and counselling task <p>Specific objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - increase of quality of information provided to the public - pursuit of uniformity in the information given to the public - promote better implementation of labour laws and encourage adherence to the law
<p>Specific measure</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Description of how the measure operates in practice 	<p>Anyone wishing to contact the Contactcentre can do so in the following ways:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Via phone - from Monday to Friday from 9am to 12pm and from 2pm to 4.30pm at telephone 02 235 55 60 (French and German) or 02 235 55 55 (in Dutch) Via e-mail - sent to info.cls@emploi.belgique.be (in French), info.cls@beschaeftigung.belgien.be (in German) or info.tsw@werk.belgie.be (in Dutch). <p>The Contactcentre is organised in the following ways:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> There are 6 local divisions of the National Contactcentre: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 3 in Flanders (integrated into the offices of the local labour inspectorate units in Bruges, Antwerp, Aalst) - 3 in Wallonia (integrated into the offices of the local labour inspectorate units in Mons, Liège, Namur). Contactcentre staff can choose to work in the office of the local unit of their choice (see above), or they can telework. In both cases (as for the whole labour inspectorate) all telephone communication takes place via voice over Internet Protocol (IP) addresses (skype for professionals). All incoming calls are visible to all call handlers and can be followed up. It is possible to organise group conversations or video calls (in order to discuss some difficult issues). Contactcentre staff members keep their integral status as a labour inspector; they are however specifically tasked to undertake a counselling role. Contactcentre staff have systematic training for each new regulation that enters into force. They work closely together with the jurists and logistic experts from the SPF legal service. They also have access to several legal databases from specialist private companies as well as the labour inspectorate's own documentation system (extranet). The staff is led by a responsible head in Flanders and one in Wallonia. These Contactcentre heads manage all aspects of the functioning of the Contactcentre. Phone calls are answered on the spot as much as possible. Very complex questions covering several problems may be submitted in written form (by e-mail). Documents (contract, payslip, letter of dismissal etc.) can be attached. The Contactcentre is also backed-up by a legal expert working in the head office of the Labour Inspectorate (one Dutch and one French speaking). This back-up is useful for relevant cases needing a national point of view or a new interpretation or even a strategy to be taken for the whole organisation. For example, after entering into force, a new labour regulation may not be strictly enforced for a few months so that the public and employers have time to become accustomed to the new rule.

	<p>7. Any question received by the Contactcentre related to discussions or interpretations in the context of an on-going enquiry or investigation by labour inspectors are immediately referred to the inspector heading the enquiry.</p>												
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What resources and other relevant organisational aspects are involved? 	<p>A small part of the labour inspectorate's manpower (15 to 16 full-time equivalents (FTE) out of 270 labour inspectors operational in labour law) have volunteered to adjust their job task, and to provide counselling and give advice rather than performing checks and enquiries.</p> <p>Technical support available to this team includes access to knowledge databases, skype communication, training, internal dialogue & discussion, IT roadmap and backup server for compilations of the written answers to queries that come in to the Contactcentre.</p>												
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the source(s) of funding? 	<p>No additional funding. Funded from the Labour Inspectorate budget.</p>												
<p>Evaluation and outcome</p>													
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has the measure achieved its objectives? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Contactcentre responds quickly maintaining a high standard of quality. Respondents have expressed satisfactionⁱ concerning the quality of responses given by Contactcentre staff as well as response times (most emails are answered within 3 days). Support provided by Contactcentres not only concerns providing information or advice regarding difficult legal texts, but also entails counselling and following up on individual disputes (dismissal of workers, employers in search of best flexible-working schedules within the legal context). Standardising responses to queries was a primary objective of the Contactcentres and has been facilitated through the systematic approval of responses by the responsible heads (one based in Flanders, one in Wallonia) 												
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessment method (including indicators used to measure its impact), and the outputs and outcomes achieved 	<p>Annual evaluations were carried out to validate the progress of the measure which led to the gradual extension of the pilot. Once installed at the national level, annual (quality) evaluations of each member of the Contactcentre will take place. There are periodic consultations with the heads of the</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="545 1339 1487 1675"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="545 1339 794 1482">Flanders (Dutch speaking enquiries)</th> <th data-bbox="794 1339 1024 1482">2015</th> <th data-bbox="1024 1339 1257 1482">2016</th> <th data-bbox="1257 1339 1487 1482">2017</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="545 1482 794 1603">Telephone calls</td> <td data-bbox="794 1482 1024 1603">7 166</td> <td data-bbox="1024 1482 1257 1603">9 950</td> <td data-bbox="1257 1482 1487 1603">12 880</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="545 1603 794 1675">e-Mails</td> <td data-bbox="794 1603 1024 1675">3 539</td> <td data-bbox="1024 1603 1257 1675">5 476</td> <td data-bbox="1257 1603 1487 1675">6 112</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Contactcentre and the head office. The table shows an increase in the level of contact (Dutch speaking enquiries) being made with the Contactcentre in Flanders.ⁱⁱ</p> <p>The Contactcentre also provides statistics showing the top 10 list of regulations that callers/emailers enquire about or that are the subject of dispute.</p>	Flanders (Dutch speaking enquiries)	2015	2016	2017	Telephone calls	7 166	9 950	12 880	e-Mails	3 539	5 476	6 112
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are lessons learnt and the key conditions for success? 	<p>Lessons learnt and success factors include the following;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keeping jargon as low as possible for a better understanding of the law by the public; 												

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More and more labour inspectors are relying on the Contactcentre as a source of advice. In future, depending on the staff capabilities, the Contactcentre will also act as a (legal) helpdesk for inspectors. • Contactcentre staff are labour inspectors themselves and so have the advantage of knowing the daily needs and realities of employers and workers. • The Contactcentre has helped to reduce the workload in the local district offices – notably by reducing the number of telephone calls and e-mails going to these offices - freeing up more time for inspection activities and management.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of transferability (e.g. other countries/groups/sectors) 	<p>Due to the fact that all labour inspectorates have to fulfil a counselling role, providing information/advice to the public (Convention 81/129 of the ILO), it should be feasible for all of them to develop a made-to-measure Contactcentre. In order to implement a Contactcentre a Member State needs to fulfil some pre-conditions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The willingness of the management to re-allocate a limited number of labour inspectors to carry out this role as well as fully supporting the development of the Contactcentre; • Identifying a limited number of labour inspectors who are motivated and interested in supporting and assisting clients with labour law problems; • The ability to organise a good system for documenting queries, a knowledge database, as well as training in labour law issues.
Additional information	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contacts 	<p>Franky BLOMME, social inspector , head of unit to the Belgian Labour Inspectorate Email address: franky.blomme@werk.belgie.be Telephone: +32 496/570.112</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sources 	<p>Internal only, to be obtained on demand (Dutch and French)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Metadata and key words for online search 	<p>Belgium; Contactcentre; Dutch language; French language; labour inspectorate; counselling; labour law; contact point</p>

ⁱ This assessment is made on the basis of non-formal expressions of satisfaction by people contacting the Contactcentre with queries via email.

ⁱⁱ Due to the fact that the French speaking part of the Contactcentre only started in 2017, statistics are only partial. Estimating through extrapolation for the active months would suggest that enquiries to the French speaking part of the Contactcentre might be half that of the level of Flanders (there are fewer employers and workers in the French speaking part of the Kingdom). An estimate of the total number of phone calls to the Contactcentre per year is around 20 000 a year, and around 10 000 emails a year.