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### **The 2010 social balance sheet**

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The National Bank has analysed the social balance sheets for 2010 of 43 166 companies representing just over half of the firms filing a social balance sheet in 2009. The study is based on this “reduced population”, since the full set of social balance sheets is not available until fifteen months after the end of the financial year being analysed. Workers employed in the firms included account for almost 80 % of wage earners in the total population.

Against the backdrop of a cyclical upturn, employment expanded by 0.5 % in 2010. The growth gathered pace during the year, reflecting the time lags between the revival of activity and the actual recruitment of new staff, and reached 1 % at the end of the year.

The information supplied by firms which submit full-format accounts shows that job creation was sustained by the increase in temporary contracts (+5 %) and, to a lesser extent, permanent contracts (+0.4 %). There was also a strong rise in the employment of agency workers (+19 % as an annual average), but its share in terms of full time equivalent (FTE) employment (3.3 %) is still slightly below the pre-crisis level.

The recovery of employment was not seen in all branches of activity. The number of employees shrank in industry and in activities relating to finance and insurance. Conversely, health and social work and business services recorded strong expansion of the workforce. At regional level, the increase in employment was more marked in Wallonia than in Brussels and Flanders. In Wallonia, almost all branches of activity contributed to the expansion, but it was in health and social work that the most jobs were created. In Brussels, it was mainly the information and communication branch and health care that underpinned employment growth. In Flanders, staff reductions in trade and transport, information and communication and – above all – industry were offset by the expansion of health care.

After having declined in 2009 with the slowdown in activity, expenditure on formal and informal training increased again in 2010. The number of participants was also higher at 41.5 and 23.3% of workers respectively. In contrast, there was a decline in both the amount spent on initial training (alternating study and work experience) – which remains marginal - and in the number of participants to such training activities. Taking all schemes together, expenditure on training accounted for 1.71% of staff costs in 2010, up 3 % against the previous year.

A regional analysis revealed that a proportionately greater number of firms operating in multiple regions report training activities on their social balance sheet: three-quarters of them provide training, compared to 23 and 24 % respectively for firms based exclusively in Brussels or Wallonia, and 19 % for those based in Flanders. This difference is due mainly to a size effect, as multi-region companies employ 570 workers on average, compared to 26 workers for single-region firms. There are also differences between firms in the latter group in regard to training policy. Flemish companies spent almost 40% of their training budget on informal schemes in 2010, against 27% in Brussels and 19 % in Wallonia. More than one in five workers participated in these activities in Flanders, compared to 16 and 13% of employees respectively in Brussels and Wallonia. In the latter two regions, there is a higher proportion of alternating study and work experience: trainees and apprentices there represented 1.2 and 1.5% of the workforce respectively, against 0.9% in Flanders, and it accounted for 15 % of total training expenditure in Brussels, 7 % in Wallonia and 2% in Flanders.

The health and social work branch, where employment has been growing steadily for a number of years, was analysed in some depth. Half of the workers in this sector are employed in activities relating to human health. Employment is heavily concentrated in that segment, since 5% of employers account for 75% of workers. In residential care activities, there are mostly small firms but medium-sized companies account for half of the workers. Finally, in social work activities without accommodation, half of employees work in a firm with more than 250 FTEs.

In health and social work, the majority of employees – of whom 80 % are female – work part-time. The proportion of employees working reduced hours is actually two-thirds in residential care activities. The atypical working hours and the employment conditions probably encourage this type of working arrangement. The percentage of temporary contracts is also above average. Substitution contracts account for a third of them, and the figure is as high as 40 % in residential care activities. Conversely, agency work is less common.

The level of staff costs varies considerably within the branch: in 2009 one hour's work cost € 33.5 in human health, but barely € 22.7 in social work activities without accommodation. Finally, employees in the health and social work branch have broad access to training, but the training provided is less expensive and of shorter duration than in other branches of activity.