

## **Abstract**

### **The Court of Audit examined the VDAB's HR policy**

*The Court of Audit examined staff matters at the Flemish Public Employment Service (VDAB). The audit showed that the staff plan established in 2008 complies with quality requirements, but that it is outdated and does not pay a lot of attention to efficiency. The VDAB hasn't considered whether outsourcing some tasks wouldn't be more efficient and effective than having its own staff do the work. A quarter of the staff, i.e. instructors and technical management staff has separate but unsatisfactory staff regulations. The strategic HR policy and integrity policy have strong points, but the organizational structure of the HR department could be further improved. The Court of Audit found few material errors in the recruitment and selection, mobility and salary processes. The infringements on staff regulations are mainly due to deliberate choices made by the management.*

#### **Audit**

The Court of Audit examined whether the VDAB uses a quality staff plan and compared the staff regulations with the principles of good regulation. It also assessed the internal control system of the staff cycle and checked three staff processes: recruitment and selection, mobility and salary.

#### **Staff plan**

The VDAB based its staff plan 2008 on the existing staff. Since 2008, it has set up an optimization policy aimed at freezing and reducing staff numbers, but this policy didn't rely enough on the optimization of processes. The staff plan didn't provide an analysis of the discrepancies between existing and required competences. The VDAB admittedly ensured a good communication and monitoring of its staff plan. Yet the plan hasn't been fully implemented and is not up-to-date anymore. The VDAB has been increasingly outsourcing personal career coaching since 2005. Outsourcing has not been proved to be more efficient or effective than execution by its own staff. Anyway, the staff plan doesn't include a comparative assessment.

#### **Staff regulations**

The VDAB has issued separate staff regulations for its instructors and technical management staff which don't comply with the principles of good regulation. Furthermore, the general use of contractual recruitment for this type of staff violates the general principles of the public service, and the VDAB doesn't allow these members of staff to access the global internal job market including the different departments of the Flemish authority.

### **Internal control**

While still allowing for potential improvement, the VDAB has a strong integrity and HR policy. The HR department has a large number of collaborators, only a small number of whom have a university or similar degree. The strategic HR objectives have been fixed, but a more detailed risk analysis and adequate risk management measures are still missing. The management is assisted for the internal control of its processes by an internal audit department. Moreover, audit cells perform intensive checks of the staff management, although there is so far no assessment of these checks' efficiency and effectiveness.

### **Staff processes**

When recruiting staff on a contract basis, the VDAB sometimes infringes the principles of objectivity and equal treatment. More than half of the cases of contract hiring are not sufficiently accounted for. The VDAB pays little attention to documenting and justifying the recruitment of contract staff and instructors. There is no written procedure describing the recruitment and selection process. The Court of Audit also found errors regarding salary regulations and procedures for filling vacancies. The VDAB also erroneously linked two different grades and salaries to the same function.

### **Minister's response**

In his answer, the minister for Employment referred to the action plan set up by the VDAB to meet some of the Court's findings and recommendations. He supported the VDAB's view according to which outsourcing activities is a political decision, which cannot be appraised only from the angle of a personnel audit.

**The audit report on "Staff matters at the Flemish Public Employment Service (VDAB)" has been sent to the Flemish Parliament. The full version can be found on the Court's website ([www.ccrek.be](http://www.ccrek.be)).**

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