Proposal for an implementation roadmap for the Flemish Green Skills Strategy

Executive Summary

Authors

Tessa Zell

Maja Lardot

Pavla Cihlarova

Maja Biemann

Simon Broek

Gert-Jan Lindeboom

Koen Rademaekers

Contact person

Koen Rademaekers

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Executive Summary

E.1.   Introduction

This report presents the roadmap for the development of Green Skills in Flanders. The roadmap was developed as the final product of a project funded by the European Union via the Structural Reform Support Programme and implemented by Trinomics in collaboration with DG REFORM. The objective of the project was the development of a high-level strategy together with an implementation roadmap and a governance framework to guide and support skills development for the green transition. The main beneficiary of the project is the Flemish Department of Work and Social Economy (DWSE).

We followed a structured approach to arrive at actionable measures in the roadmap. As a first step, we assessed the content of each priority area of the strategy and described the actions deriving from it in a systematic way. We based ourselves on the previous inter-linked deliverables of the project (see figure below). As part of the second step, a first draft of the roadmap was discussed with key stakeholders relevant for the different actions. Thirdly, we consulted a broad group of stakeholders on the second draft of the roadmap. Based on their feedback, the roadmap was finalised and presented.

Figure 0-1 Sources to develop the strategy, roadmap and governance framework
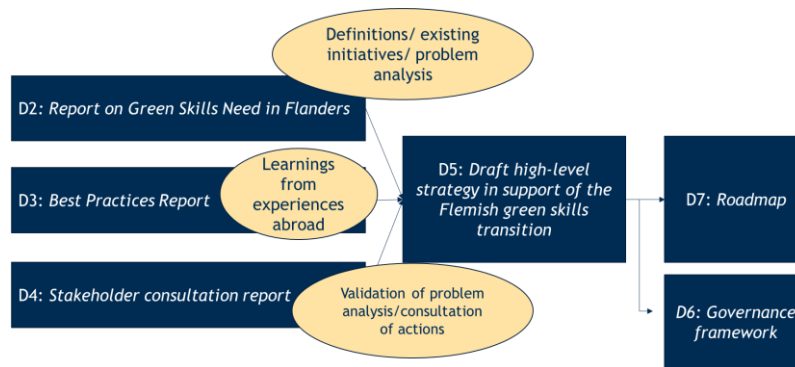
For the purpose of this project, we have defined green skills as skills which contribute directly or indirectly to the green transition, building on the following categorisation of skills and competences:

- Technical skills and competences (specific to occupations);
- Professional skills and competences (these can be applied across occupations, for example analytical or management skills);[1]
- Cross-cutting skills and competences (these are to be adopted by society in a broad sense in order to enable the green transition).[2]

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[1] Other examples of professional skills consist of: flexibility and adaptability, allowing to manage transitions and make decisions in terms of uncertain future; exploratory thinking and future literacy; capacity to embody complex values, e.g. system and critical thinking, problem framing.

[2] A competence is a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes while skills amount to only one aspect of competences.

E.2 Building blocks for the roadmap

The assumption underlying this roadmap is that, through the consultation processes for the high-level strategy and the roadmap, there is sufficient buy-in of the key stakeholders to discuss the implementation of the actions described. Furthermore, for many actions, a start can be made with some specific sectors after which the efforts can be scaled up to a wider set of sectors.

A preliminary governance structure could be set up, known as the 'Green Skills and Jobs Coalition', which will take care of the roadmap kick-off and setting up a permanent governance structure. This permanent structure will take a leading role for the governance of the green skills environment in Flanders and decide on the strategic priorities and work out the final actions. The relevant bodies in the structure will be responsible for monitoring the progress they make towards achieving the objectives set out in the Strategy and Roadmap. The coalition will also be responsible for assigning the actions to the right actors.

E.3 Actions to be implemented

The figure at the end of this executive summary provides an overview of all action groups, actions and the prioritisation of the actions on the short-, medium- and long-term. In the sections below, we provide a brief explanation of the different action groups.

E.3.1 Action group A: Setting up a governance structure – improving the coordination among Flemish stakeholders to respond to the green transition

A well-functioning governance structure is essential for the successful implementation of the roadmap and the strategy. There are many actors active in the field of green skills development and streamlining their cooperation would benefit the system as a whole. For the initial organisation of work and discussions around the design of the actions under the Roadmap and the validation of the Strategy, a preliminary body will be set up: the Green Skills and Jobs Coalition. Under this Action Group, four different actions are foreseen: (1) Formulate a common understanding and definition of green skills; (2) Integrate the impact of the green transition as a specific topic in the skills forecasting approach of Flanders; (3) Plug in and validate the Green Skills Strategy for all Flemish environmental, circular, climate and energy policy frameworks; and (4) Install the best governance structure based on the scenarios developed in the governance framework report (Deliverable 6).

E.3.2 Action group B: Co-funding for specific activities

Enhancing green skills goes beyond creating awareness and points to more substantial issues for which companies, labour market organisations, skills development providers and the Flemish government need to invest to find solutions. Providing additional financial incentives can stimulate developments in this area. In this context, the actions belonging to this group help put in place the conditions for offering financial instruments that can motivate different stakeholders to take action to improve the supply and demand of green skills. Two headline actions are (1) Design a set of co-funding mechanisms to facilitate the development of Green Skills in Flanders and (2) Public financial support for urgent green skills development for the unemployed and those at risk of unemployment.

E.3.3 Action group C: Accelerate the integration of Green Skills in Flemish (Vocational) Education and Training

To tackle the lack of available workers with the needed green skills, it is important to increase the integration of green skills in the Flemish VET system and higher education. Although, this is already happening on an ad hoc basis, acceleration of this process is required. The roadmap proposes four actions to tackle this: (1) Further build on sectoral and intersectoral covenants and agreements to solidify the cooperation between actors and improve the match between supply and demand of green skills, (2) development of a tool to help businesses assess their current and future green skills needs, building on the existing approaches to skills forecasting, (3) expansion of the existing offer of green skills in VET programmes and higher education, either in existing programmes or by the creation of new programmes, (4) the development of Green Skills and Jobs Accelerator Plans which include the actions presented above. These plans have the aim of accelerating actions for increasing green skills in Flanders and bringing the right consortia together to implement them.

E.3.4 Action group D: Promotion and awareness raising

A general tendency that can be observed across the identified barriers is that the potential benefits of green skills are not fully understood among different target groups (such as learners, individuals on the labour market, including both employed and unemployed, as well as institutions and education providers). The actions under this heading contribute to making green skills better known, more visible, better integrated in education and training offer, and finally better valued. Three actions are suggested in this roadmap to address these identified barriers: (1) a broad public promotion campaign on green skills has the aim of increasing overall awareness in line with the high-level Strategy. It can be designed to target all of Flanders, including learners, workers, and employers to raise awareness to the importance of embedding green skills, as well as the opportunities these bring in addressing the green transition. (2) A second action focuses on the promotion of existing VET programmes that train learners for selected green jobs. Such promotion efforts aim to make the green skills development programmes more visible and attractive to learners. (3) Thirdly, a campaign should be undertaken which makes green skills of learners more visible to employers. This can be done through the introduction of a 'green skills label' to VET programmes, which helps add transparency on the content of programmes also for employers.

E.3.5 Action group E: Knowledge sharing and peer-learning

There is a lot of knowledge available in Flanders on green skills and several successful project on enhancing green skills have been implemented. However, the different actors in the field are not always aware of other initiatives. Therefore, the last action group on knowledge sharing and peer-learning has the objective of making different stakeholders share experiences with those working on green skills, to be informed about good practices and to benefit from peer learning. This action group consists of four actions: (1) Support front-runner companies and sectoral organisations to share their experiences; (2) Set up an online central information hub, with all information related to the green skills campaign; (3) Set up thematic networks between (VET) skills development providers and the world of work; (4) Integrating green skills in professional training for teachers and train the trainer programmes.

Figure 0-2 Actions and their timing

Timeline header:
- Short term — < 2 years
- Medium term — 2-5 years
- Long term — >5 years

Action group A: Setting up a governance structure

- A-1: Formulate a common understanding and definition of green skills
- A-2: Integrate the impact of the green transition as a specific topic in the skills forecasting approach of Flanders
- A-3: Plug in and validate the Green Skills Strategy for all Flemish environmental, circular, climate and energy policy frameworks
- A-4: Install the best governance structure based on the scenarios developed in the Governance Framework report (Deliverable 6)

Action group B: Co-funding for specific activities

- B-1: Design a set of co-funding mechanisms to facilitate the development of Green Skills in Flanders
- B-2: Public financial support for urgent green skills development for the unemployed and those at risk of unemployment

Action group C: Accelerate the integration of Green Skills in Flemish (Vocational) Education and Training

- C-1: Further build on sectoral and intersectoral covenants and agreements to solidify cooperation on matching supply and demand of green skills
- C-2: Online self-assessment tool for companies to assess current and future green skills
- C-3: Expand the offer of green skills in existing and new VET programmes and higher education
- C-4: Put the right consortia in the lead to establish and implement specific Green Skills and Jobs Accelerator Plans

Action group D: Promotion & awareness raising

- D-1: Launch of a broad awareness raising campaign on green skills in Flanders
- D-2: Highlight (vocational) education and training programmes for specific green occupations
- D-3: Introducing a green skills label for training certification

Action group E: Knowledge sharing and peer-learning

- E-1: Support front-runner companies and sectoral organisations to share their experiences
- E-2: Set up an online central information hub, with all information related to the green skills campaign
- E-3: Set up thematic networks between (VET) skills development providers and the world of work
- E-4: Integrate green skills in professional training for teachers and train the trainer programmes