

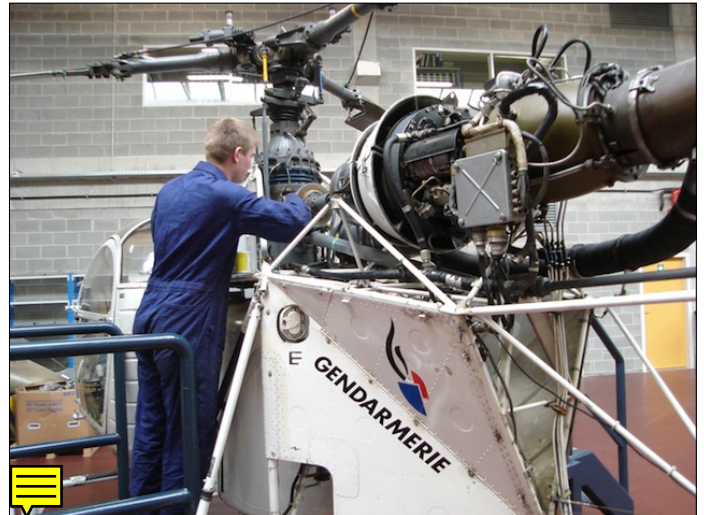
Belgium (West-vlaanderen)

Sky's the limit for aviation centre of excellence

A new knowledge, skills and education centre for the Flemish aviation industry opened in 2007 at Ostend-Bruges International Airport. The VLOC (Flemish Aviation Training Centre) currently trains nearly 200 students a year.

"VLOC offers students a unique opportunity to benefit from state-of-the-art aeronautical infrastructure, to facilitate their subsequent transition into professional life." Ivan Becuwe, lecturer, VLOC

Unique in Flanders, though modelled on facilities in the Belgian region of Wallonia, the centre offers a range of courses aimed at everyone from engineers to pilots. It is the product of an extensive synergy between public authorities and private partners, and has quickly become a centre of excellence in a highly competitive field.



Getting off the ground

The aviation and space industry is strategically important for Flanders, supported by several dozen Flemish companies, research centres and educational institutions. Recently it has enjoyed significant expansion and creates high added-value jobs for more than 50 000 people.

However, recent surveys in Flanders highlighted the region's need for an integrated aviation and airport policy, as well as for better education and training for those working in the sector. Aviation professionals also noted the extremely fragmented state of training in Flanders, which held it back from competing with nearby regions and countries.

Opened in June 2007 at Ostend-Bruges airport, the VLOC is a partnership between the Region of Flanders, private companies, colleges of higher education and universities. The new building and facilities were created by the Catholic University College of Bruges-Ostend (KHBO), with Flemish Government and European funding – the latter covering a third of the total construction budget. The goal is to train commercial airline pilots, aeronautical engineers and aircraft technicians.

JAR-approved training centre

The centre covers both theoretical and practical training. It is open to everyone from students in secondary vocational education to university students and industry professionals looking to update their skills – and even jobseekers in the region.

Calling on aircraft engines, multimedia equipment such as cockpit simulators and system trainers, and distance learning where appropriate, the VLOC is now achieving high performance levels and opening up new career opportunities for some 200 students annually. The target from 2014 onwards is 320 students.

The centre provides direct (full-time equivalent) employment for around 12 trainers, supervisors and employees, while indirectly supporting local jobs in areas such as transport and hotel accommodation. It also meets the need to train or retrain people for aircraft maintenance in line with Europe's Joint Aviation Requirements, in force since 2003.

Technical information

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