

# Social Commitment

## The human factor: how a people-centred HR strategy drives business success

This is no secret: Getting and keeping top talent is what makes a company successful. So, how does a global player like BESIX Group, with its diverse cultures across continents, rise above the rest - especially when the economic environment is challenging? It's all about crafting a supportive and warm atmosphere where growth and success are within everyone's reach. BESIX Group puts a deliberate emphasis on encouraging personal development, opening doors to new opportunities, and offering a secure environment for trying new things and exchanging ideas. What's the end game? Developing a culture of empowerment that enables everyone in the group to meet the challenges of a financially, socially, and environmentally sustainable world. Meet some of BESIX's inspirational People leaders to see how they tackle this challenge.



### Tell us more about the culture that is promoted at BESIX Group?

By Geert Aelbrecht, Chief People Officer and Group Sustainability & ESG Officer

"Let me share with you the heart and soul of our People departments' mission across the globe. At the core of our strategy lies a simple yet profound commitment: #WeCare. This mantra is not a slogan; it's the translation of our deep-rooted belief in the value of each individual within our group. Our aim is to cultivate a people-centred strategy that places well-being, growth, and satisfaction at the forefront of everything we do.

Being an employer of choice is paramount to us. It signifies more than just being a preferred place to work; it embodies our dedication to creating an environment that attracts and retains the best talent by offering respect, recognition, and opportunities to flourish. Our commitment to this goal is firm, as we all know that our success as a business is intrinsically linked to our employees' fulfilment.

Safety in the workplace is an area of utmost importance. We believe that every employee has the right to a safe and healthy work environment, free from harm or distress. Our pledge is to maintain and continually improve our safety standards, ensuring that our staff feels secure and protected every day they come to work.

Development opportunities for our employees also stand at the heart of our people strategy. We take pride in offering our staff members the tools, training, and support needed to achieve their professional aspirations.

In essence, our focus is clear: to develop and keep a supportive, safe, and stimulating workplace where every team member can thrive. Our employees' well-being, development, and safety are our top priorities because, at the end of the day, our people are our greatest asset. We can only be a successful company if everyone feels valued, supported, and inspired to achieve their best."

**1,305**  
new hires in 2023

**10,382**  
employees at 31.12.2023

**44.18**  
years average age

**112**  
nationalities in the Group

**10.21**  
years average seniority



**In early 2024, the Top Employer Institute awarded BESIX Group the certification as Belgian Top Employer for the fifth time in a row. Why is it important and what does it mean for your employees?**

By Johan Melort, Regional People Director Europe

"We're thrilled as we celebrate our fifth consecutive year being honoured as a Belgian Top Employer by the Top Employer Institute. This recognition reflects our commitment to develop and keep an environment where our teams can thrive, grow, and feel genuinely included. It's a clear signal of the positive workplace culture we've cultivated, centred around respect, personal growth, and mutual support.

We have been audited on our HR and People practices and strategies, our dedication to maintaining high standards in talent development and workplace well-being, and also on our efforts to continuously improve. We have achieved an excellent score of 90.92 %, which is above the benchmark and the highest score we have reached so far. This significant progress is largely due to our inclusion and diversity initiatives over the past years, which are underpinned by strong company values and behaviours.

We see this certification not just as a shiny award to frame on the wall but as an encouragement to further our commitment to our employees' success. It's the result of BESIX's dedication to our values and our people, which are the cornerstone of our culture and operations across the globe.

What's more, being named a Top Employer reinforces our attractiveness as a workplace, helping us both draw in and retain the best talent. We understand that the well-being of our employees is directly linked to the success of our business, and this recognition celebrates the essence of who we are as a company.

Looking ahead, we're motivated to uphold this award and to further strengthen our employee value proposition. Our focus on inclusion, diversity, and equity will only intensify, aiming to set even higher benchmarks in these areas. As a Top Employer, we pledge to continue improving the workplace experience for all our employees, supporting their growth and development with us every step of the way."

## What does BESIX offer its employees for their career and personal development?

By Axelle Vankleemput, Global Expert BESIX Academy

"We have many structural initiatives in place to develop and maintain a culture of learning, development, and care for our people. Here are three examples of programmes that we boosted in 2023 to ensure our colleagues have the resources to flourish in their careers.

The BESIX Development Academy (BDA) is our flagship training programme, designed for engineers and technical functions staff. It's a comprehensive training curriculum that covers a wide range of topics, including technical skills, soft skills, health & safety, and functional skills - and since 2023, company culture. Divided into three levels, the BDA is tailored to correspond to specific career stages, with the aim of providing employees with the skills they need to perform their job and upskill them throughout their careers.

Additionally, we're also proud to offer the BESIX Potential Academy (BPA), a programme designed to promote the young potentials within the BESIX Group. This programme, running for over ten years, brings together participants worldwide, chosen for their achievements and aspirations. They attend a one-week residential seminar, featuring business courses specifically developed in collaboration with Vlerick Business School and customised to the group's activities. Throughout the programme, participants work in teams on business cases, culminating in a presentation of their innovative ideas to a jury from BESIX Group. The 2023 edition of the programme highlighted a winning project named "LAIKA," a robotic dog designed for the autonomous digitisation of construction sites.

Furthermore, in 2023, we launched the Executive Leadership Training Programme in collaboration with the Solvay Brussels School. This online initiative is focused on enhancing leadership abilities among our senior managers. Over four years, the programme covers seven modules addressing the intricate challenges of today's and tomorrow's business world, underlining the significance of leadership in achieving organisational success.

These three programmes represent only a small fraction of our career development activities, but they reflect very well our dedication to empowering our employees, helping them meet their professional aspirations, and excel in their roles. They represent our investment in our colleagues' continuous improvement and skill development, which, in turn, contributes to our company's growth and success.

In addition to these structural programmes, we also offer a myriad of stand-alone training classes. An example of a new class introduced in 2023 is 'Managing Across Generations,' which reflects our recognition of the diverse generational dynamics within our workforce."

## How would you say Diversity & Inclusion are concretely applied across BESIX Group?

By Emily Brooks, Group People Manager BESIX Watpac

"Let me illustrate our D&I mindset with some examples from our entity in Australia, BESIX Watpac. In 2023, we reinforced its commitment to creating a supportive, inclusive, and community-focused workplace environment, via various initiatives to ensure the well-being of our employees and contribute positively to society.

Because of the paramount importance of mental well-being, we reinforced the psychosocial safety framework and established the Mental Health and Well-Being Working Group. We also renewed our partnership with the Goanna Academy to support mental health awareness, particularly among Indigenous Australians, and actively participated in initiatives like the RU OK? Day ("Are you OK") and 'Movember', raising significant funds for mental health and suicide prevention.

On the diversity and inclusion front, we at BESIX Watpac pledged for a 25 % female workforce by 2025 and took steps to eliminate gender pay gaps. Initiatives such as Lean-in Workshops and the Cultivate Sponsorship Programme supported the professional growth of female employees. We also worked with the TaskABLE team to create work opportunities for people with disabilities.

Community engagement also remained a key focus in 2023, with the BESIX Watpac Community Fund supporting various initiatives related to health, education, and the environment. As the first founding partner of the Tradie Health Institute, we backed research into trade-related lung diseases. Furthermore, we also continued our reconciliation efforts, implementing a National Indigenous Participation Policy across projects, contributing to exceeding Indigenous participation targets, and significantly investing in Indigenous businesses."



## The European Parliament has called for a legislative framework about the workers' right to disconnect in our digital age. Is this something you've discussed with your social partners as well?

By Gauthier Vanvyve, Industrial Relations Coordinator

"Here at BESIX Group, we have always been committed to our employees' well-being. For years, we have prioritised flexible work arrangements, fitness activities, medical support, and more. In 2023, we have addressed a topic that's become incredibly relevant in our always-on digital world: the right to disconnect. We have collaborated with our social partners to develop a clear understanding of this concept.

As a result, BESIX Group entered into a collective agreement with the European Works Council in 2023. Concretely, the 'right to disconnect' refers to our employees' freedom to disengage from work-related communications outside of their standard working hours, unless it is an emergency or a part of their job requirements, without any repercussions on our trust in them.

Work-related communications - whether they are emails, phone calls, or messages via text or WhatsApp - can sometimes be overwhelming. They can disrupt our work-life balance, particularly in a vast organisation like ours, with colleagues operating across different time zones. We recognise the significance of maintaining a healthy work-life balance and are committed to promoting this for all our team members. The right to disconnect aims to cultivate this balance, mitigating the negative impacts of work-related stress and burnout.

This being said, the right to disconnect is not an obligation. Our workplace has become increasingly flexible, largely due to practices like teleworking. As such, we permit our employees to connect at times that best suit their schedules and work styles. We are confident that our shared enthusiasm for our projects, coupled with our daily commitment, will strike the ideal balance.

To wrap up, it is important to underscore the value of time off. It is vital for maintaining a healthy work-life balance and can rejuvenate us, leaving us ready to embrace new challenges."

## In 2023, BESIX introduced additional health care benefits for some of its staff. Can you elaborate?

By Laurence Debart, Global Reward Recognition Manager

"In 2023, we have taken significant strides to ensure our workforce and their families feel supported and cared for, in both their professional and personal lives. One of our latest initiatives includes the implementation of comprehensive ambulatory and dental insurance. This new benefit covers not only our employees but also their family members for ambulatory care, including optical and dental services, under favourable conditions. This is in addition to the hospitalisation insurance we already provide, which fully covers our employees and their families in the event of hospitalisation and serious illness, at no cost to them.

Furthermore, we recognise the importance of preventive care, which is why we offer a complete health check-up every two years for our employees over 45. In the unfortunate event of long-term illness, we ensure that a certain percentage of the employee's net salary is maintained, offering financial stability when it's most needed. And, as part of our commitment to preventive health measures, we offer a flu vaccine to all our employees every fall, helping to safeguard their health and well-being."



# Enhancing employee health, safety, and well-being

## Safe workplace

As part of its commitment, BESIX Group has established a goal of creating a safe work environment with ‘zero accidents and incidents’ for all employees, including subcontractors, regardless of their position. The group materialised its safety policies into a comprehensive safety culture strategy in 2018, consisting of four key pillars: developed leadership, commitment and participation, knowledge and awareness, accountability and responsibilities. In 2023, BESIX continued to prioritise the implementation of its Quality, Health, Safety, and Environment strategy, translating it into a Safety Pledge endorsed by senior management and deployed across all projects and sites. This demonstrates the group’s ongoing commitment to safety, both for its employees and for the wider community.

## Safety Pledge

The Safety Pledge, originally endorsed in 2018 by BESIX Group’s top executives was reintroduced in 2023 across all BESIX construction sites with an updated design centred around BESIX Group’s four fundamental safety principles: BE SAFE, the Life Saving Rules, Management Safety Walks, and Subcontractor Engagement.

In 2023, BESIX Group’s senior executives and occupational health advisors came together to review the BESIX Group Safety Pledge and its fundamental safety principles, with the ambition to globally re-endorse the BESIX Group Safety Pledge in 2024. An official signature moment of the reviewed Safety Pledge took place at the group’s Annual Meeting in February 2024.

## Transforming QHSE management from manual to digital & proactive with OASIS

In 2023, following a year of configuration work, OASIS, the new QHSE digital solution for BESIX Group site operations, business units, and group management, was launched globally. Fourteen modules were fully rolled out, involving numerous users and employees in managing QHSE risks in their daily activities.

OASIS includes an “action module” that fosters accountability by involving partners, subcontractors, and clients in efficient risk management, marking a significant advancement in supporting BESIX Group’s culture of excellence.

In addition to facilitating people’s engagement in risk management, the solution offers numerous automations that simplify day-to-day tasks for many users. It also meets ISO14001, 45001, and 9001 standards, proving to be a valuable tool for continuous improvement.

Moreover, OASIS features an enhancement module where users can propose improvements or request new functionalities. Dedicated OASIS support teams handle these requests. Further modules and functionalities are currently in development and are expected to be deployed in 2024.



1. Safety Pledge signature ceremony



2. OASIS safety digital solution



## BESIX 4 fundamental safety principles

### 1. BE SAFE

In 2023, the BE SAFE ambassador community expanded from 436 to 537 members. The BE SAFE principle, central to shaping BESIX’s safety culture, is supported by a programme involving volunteer workers and focused on observation, feedback, correction, improvement, reward, training, and coaching practices.

### 2. Life Saving Rules

The Life Saving Rules principle emphasises compliance, detection of deviations, correction, and continuous improvement in managing critical occupational health and safety risks on sites. In 2023, nearly 5,000 deviations from the BESIX Life Saving Rules were proactively detected and addressed on-site by individuals committed to improvement.

### 3. Management Safety Walks

Leadership and worker participation are exemplified during on-site Management Safety Walks, especially as senior executive management is involved. In 2023, a notable 3,124 Management Safety Walks were conducted across projects around the world, with BESIX senior executives participating in 477 of them.

### 4. Subcontractor Engagement

While BESIX can subcontract activities, it strives to collaborate closely with partners and subcontractors to enhance health and safety capabilities together, believing that cooperation leads to high performance. In 2023, a subcontractor engagement module was integrated into OASIS to improve mutual QHSE performance.

## Global Safety Time Out 2023

A tradition at BESIX since 2008, some 21,580 individuals took part in the 2023 Global Safety Time Out held on 28 April. This event provided an opportunity for BESIX employees, customers, partners, and subcontractors to discuss, debate, engage, and learn about occupational health and safety topics. Stress management and the BE SAFE principle were among the subjects featured in the 2023 sessions, but other topics were also addressed.

## Institution of Occupational Safety & Health (IOSH) courses

Since 2019, BESIX has been a certified IOSH training provider. BESIX has customised the IOSH “Managing Safely” and “Working Safely” courses into in-house tailored programmes. These courses lay the groundwork for essential knowledge that BESIX expects all employees to have regarding managing occupational health and safety risks.

The BESIX IOSH “Managing Safely” and “Working Safely” courses cover all aspects of ISO14001, VCA, and the best health and safety practices using a blended approach: e-learning for theory supplemented by interactive workshop sessions.

In 2023, three new senior health and safety professionals joined the team of in-house IOSH trainers at BESIX. In 2024, BESIX aims to update both courses to align with recent evolutions in company management systems and references.

## Injury rate

The injury rate at BESIX has varied across different business units, but overall, the total recordable illness and injury frequency rate remained stable in 2023 compared to 2022, with a value of 4.77. However, there was a worsening of the Lost Time Injury (LTI) frequency and severity rates in 2023.

Unfortunately, three fatal accidents occurred in 2023 at sites in Saudi Arabia, under the operation of a BESIX joint venture partner where BESIX had no direct operational control, in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, and Cameroon.

BESIX believes that strengthening its strategy and reinforcing its four fundamental safety principles, supported by OASIS, the newly designed digital solution, and backed by IOSH to enhance knowledge and skills in safely managing occupational health and safety risks, will lead to an improvement in the injury rate.

## Health as a priority

BESIX Group has joined hands with Belgian trade unions and the Building and Woodworkers’ International (BWI) to advocate for the recognition of health and safety at work as a fundamental right by the International Labour Organisation (ILO). Management, along with representatives of the BESIX European Works Council and trade unions FGTB and CSC, have signed the Declaration on Healthy and Safe Workplaces. This action underscores the company’s dedication to the health and well-being of its employees and strengthens its initiatives to foster safer and healthier working environments.

## Healthcare measures

BESIX Group ensures the health and well-being of its employees by offering health insurance schemes compliant with local laws and regulations. The company conducts regular occupational health exams and provides free consultations for employees and workers. In addition to these mandatory measures, BESIX organises biennial medical check-ups for white-collar employees aged 46 and older, and annually for those aged 50 and above. The group also encourages preventive measures, including voluntary flu vaccination campaigns each year.

## Ergonomics

The group prioritises the health and well-being of its employees, whether on-site or in the office. To promote good ergonomic practices, the group has developed toolkits to educate staff on these principles, regardless of their workplace location.

BESIX Group understands the significance of creating comfortable work environments, including elements such as natural light, a healthy atmosphere, and appropriate equipment. In office settings, employees are encouraged to maintain good posture while working at their screens. On-site, safety equipment tailored to specific tasks, proper postures to preserve muscle health, and breaks to avoid prolonged periods of work are all emphasised.

Additionally, the group promotes physical activity among its staff through the BESIX Fit programme, recognising that excessive sitting can have negative health effects.

