

Structures of Education and Training Systems in Europe

BELGIUM – FLEMISH COMMUNITY

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For further in-depth information about the education systems in Europe, kindly consult the EURYBASE database (<http://www.eurydice.org>), the Cedefop database (http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/etv/Information_resources/NationalVet/Thematic/) and the website of the European Training Foundation (<http://www.etf.europa.eu/>)

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INTRODUCTION: GENERAL POLICY CONTEXT

Belgium is a federal constitutional monarchy, which was founded in 1830. It is in fact a double federation of:

- **3 communities** (the Flemish, French and German-speaking Communities), a.o. in charge of cultural, educational and person-related matters;
- **3 regions** (the Flemish, Walloon and Brussels Capital Regions), a.o. in charge of economy, transport and public works.

The Flemish Community consists of **the Flemish Region** including the Dutch-speaking institutions within the territory of the Brussels Capital Region. Flanders has 5 provinces and numbers 308 cities and municipalities. The Brussels Capital Region is the bilingual area Brussels Capital, which consists of 19 municipalities.

The constitutional revision dd. 15 July 1988 transferred all the **responsibilities regarding education** to the communities, with the exception of the age at which compulsory education starts and ends, the minimum requirements for diploma conferrals and the pension system. Paid Educational Leave (under the remit of the Federal Minister for Work), military training (under the remit of the Federal Minister for Defence) and police training (under the remit of the Federal Minister for the Interior and the Federal Minister for Justice) also remain in hands of the Federal Government.

The Flemish Community's only **official language** is Dutch, which is consequently also the teaching language. French is taught as a second language from the 5th grade of primary education onwards, while English is taught from secondary education onwards. Depending on the educational options chosen, pupils can also learn other languages at school (including German).

Belgium does not operate a system of compulsory schooling but one of **compulsory education** which begins when children turn 6 years of age and ends at the age of 18. Part-time compulsory education starts at the age of 16 or at 15 for pupils who have successfully completed the first two grades of secondary education. A few hundred pupils avail of home education and commercially-oriented private education, however neither are recognised or subsidised and are rare as a result.

Elementary and secondary schools **do not charge any registration fees**; schools are only permitted to pass on a number of "extra" costs (for extra-curricular activities for instance) which have been capped in elementary education since 1 September 2008. In secondary education, these costs can only be passed on following consultation at school-council level and parents must be informed of this arrangement in writing by the start of the school year at the latest (through the school regulations for example).

School/study allowances in nursery education, compulsory education (up to the age of 22) and higher education are allocated on the basis of the same allocation criteria and on foot of a family file that covers all the children within one and the same family across all levels of education. However, to increase pupil participation, school/study allowances have been linked to pupils' regular school attendance.

Families also receive **child benefit** for all dependent children up to the age of 18. 18 to 25-year-olds can also qualify for child benefit provided they are still dependent, are following education and/or do not have their own income (above a certain limit). Parents also get **tax relief** for their dependent children and can deduct childcare costs (provided by services supervised by Child and Family) from their taxes for children up to the age of 12 years.

The Belgian Constitution guarantees **the separation of Church and State**. The Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Anglican, Islamic and Orthodox religions including the organised freethinkers are all recognised philosophies of life. Go!, Education of the Flemish Community, schools and those affiliated

to subsidised official education must all offer a choice in philosophy of life education between one of the recognised religions and non-confessional ethics.

The Constitution guarantees **freedom of education**. Under this principle, any natural or legal person is entitled to set up schools (the '**inrichtende machten**' (**organising bodies**) or, in elementary education, the 'school boards'), and to organise and base them on confessional or non-confessional ethics or on specific pedagogical or educational principles. The school boards/organising bodies are largely autonomous in terms of teaching methods, curricula, pupil assessment and schools' pedagogical project. They can select, recruit and promote their own teachers and support, administrative and management staff, provided they do so in accordance with prevailing statutory legislation. To support their schools and to represent them, most of them have been organised into 10 umbrella organisations (cf. 1.2). To qualify for **subsidies/financing**, schools must abide by the decretally-established educational structure, follow a curriculum which unambiguously features the final and developmental objectives (cf. 1.4), facilitate inspections by the inspectorate, be affiliated to an LOP, lokaal overlegplatform (local consultation platform) (see below), engage in decretally laid down participation and operate a blanket non-smoking ban.

The Constitution also guarantees **parents a freedom of choice of school**. Parents and their children should have access to a school of their choice within a reasonable distance from their home. They are informed of and must underwrite the school's pedagogical project and the school regulations (which need to meet a number of formal criteria). For all pupils registered from school year 2010-2011 onwards, the school regulations shall contain a **declaration of commitment** which features mutual undertakings in terms of parent-teacher meetings, regular attendance and the policy on truancy, forms of individual pupil guidance and a firm commitment regarding the teaching language.

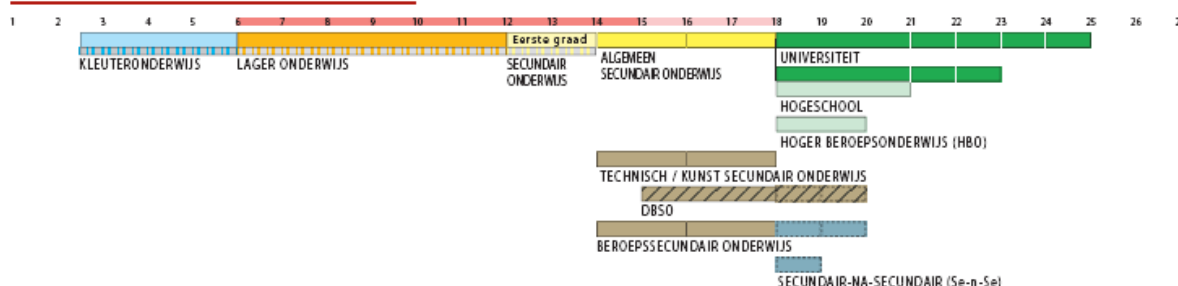
Under the **Equal Educational Opportunities Decree** of 28/6/2002, schools are no longer permitted to refuse pupils on grounds of skin colour, national or ethnic origin, background, religion or sex. Pupils can only be refused if the school's maximum capacity has been exceeded, because a child has specific needs or if the pupil was previously expelled from school. Brothers and sisters (or other children of one and the same family unit residing under the same roof) of a pupil who is already registered at a particular school have priority over all other new pupils. Schools catering for a percentage of GOK-leerlingen (GOK pupils) which lies at least 10% over and above the average in the LOP-gebied (LOP area) are entitled to prioritize GOK pupils who meet one of the equal educational opportunities indicators (parents belonging to the travelling community, poorly-educated mother, Dutch not spoken at home, school-allowance recipient, homeless pupil). LOPs, local consultation platforms regarding equal educational opportunities were set up to help implement this policy.

On 1/1/2008 Belgium numbered 10,666,866 residents all living within an area of 30,528 km²; the Flemish Region, with an area of 13,522 km² is home to 6,161,600 residents; the Brussels Capital Region, which covers 168 km², numbers 1,048,491 residents. 828,197 youngsters in Flanders were of school age (aged between 6 and 18 years); the number of 0 to 17-year-olds accounted for 19.7%, people of an active age (18-64 y) for 62.4% and senior citizens (+65 y) for 17.9% (SVR 1/1/2008). In 2006, 31.01% of people living in the Flemish Region had at the most obtained a diploma of lower secondary education, 37.85% at the most one of higher secondary education, 18.27% at the most one of non-university education and 12.87% of people had successfully completed a university education.

1. INITIAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING: ORGANISATION, FINANCING AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

1.1 Organisation of the education and training system

Belgium – Flemish Community



Pre-primary education (for which the Ministry of Education is not responsible)	Upper secondary general / ISCED 3	Compulsory full-time education
Préprimaire scolaire (for which the Ministry of Education is responsible)	Upper secondary vocational / ISCED 3	Compulsory part-time education
Primary	Post-secondary non-tertiary / ISCED 4	Compulsory work experience + its duration
Single structure	Tertiary education / ISCED 5B	Part-time or combined school and workplace courses
Lower secondary general (including pre-vocational)	Tertiary education / ISCED 5A	Study abroad
Lower secondary vocational		Additional year
ISCED 0 ISCED 1 ISCED 2		

BaO, basisonderwijs (elementary education) comprises kleuter (nursery) (cf. 2) and lager onderwijs (primary education) (cf. 3). Any new schools coming on stream must adopt the elementary-education structure, i.e. offer both nursery and primary education.

Besides mainstream nursery and compulsory education, Flanders also offers **special elementary and secondary education** which caters for pupils with special care needs.

SO, secondary education is divided horizontally in stages of 2 grades each, but there are also 3rd grades in the 3rd stage, the so-called 7th grades (cf. 5). From the 2nd stage onwards, SO is divided vertically into 4 branches of education: ASO, general SO, TSO, technical SO, KSO, artistic SO and BSO, vocational SO. BSO, vocational secondary education, is the only branch of education to offer a **4th stage** (which is gradually being phased out, cf. 5). Since 2000, pupils who have completed the 1st stage of BSO can follow experimental modular BSO (cf. 4.1).

The former 7th TSO and KSO specialisation years are now offered through the new vocationally-oriented **Se-n-Se, secundair-na-secundair onderwijs (advanced secondary education)** which may run over 1 to 3 consecutive semesters (cf. 5).

Henceforth, part-time compulsory education also requires pupils' full-time commitment. To that end, a **'stelsel van leren en werken' (alternance training system)** has been developed. This comprises DO, **deeltijds (beroepssecundair) onderwijs** (part-time (vocational secondary) education), organised by CDOs, centra voor deeltijds onderwijs (centres for part-time education), **deeltijdse vorming (part-time training)**, organised by CDVs, centra voor deeltijdse vorming (centres for part-time training) and **leertijd (apprenticeships)** in SMEs organised by the Flemish Agency for Entrepreneurial Training - SYNTRA Flanders (cf. 4.2).

Higher education comprises:

- programmes which lead to the degree of **Bachelor**, the degree of **Master** and the degree of **Doctor**, organised by university colleges and the universities (cf. 6.1);
- these programmes may be rounded off with a postgraduate certificate (cf. 6.1);
- programmes within **HBO5, hoger beroepsonderwijs (higher vocational education, qualification level 5)** which may be organised by schools offering full-time SO (in the case of the course of study "nursing" only), by CVOs (centres for adult education) and by the university colleges (cf. 6.2.);
- **integrated teacher-training programmes**, organised by the university colleges and **specific teacher-training programmes**, organised by CVOs (centres for adult education) university colleges and the universities (cf. 4.6).

1.2 Division of powers

The legislative body for Flanders is the Flemish Parliament, the Parliament of the Flemish Community and of the Flemish Region. The executive power is vested in the Flemish Government.

The Flemish Ministry of Education and Training, consisting of:

- **the DOV, Departement Onderwijs en Vorming (Department of Education and Training)**, headed by the secretary-general and in charge of policy support;
- 4 internal autonomous **agencies**, without legal personality, in charge of policy implementation and headed by an administrator-general:
 - **AgODi, Agentschap voor Onderwijsdiensten (Agency for Educational services)** (elementary, secondary, part-time artistic education, pupil guidance centres, inspection and guidance)
 - **AHOVOS, Agentschap voor Hoger Onderwijs, Volwassenenonderwijs en Studietoelagen, (Agency for Higher Education, Adult Education and Study Allowances)** which looks after the staff, the institutions and the students and course participants following higher or adult education;
 - **AOC, Agentschap voor Onderwijscommunicatie (Agency for Communication on Education)**, in charge of external communication;
 - **AKOV, Agentschap voor Kwaliteitszorg in Onderwijs en Vorming (Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Training)** (and VDAB and SYNTRA), founded in 2009, in charge of the quality-assurance system for pathways leading to certificates of recognised qualifications, in education, vocational training, non-formal education and EVC pathways.

AGION, Agentschap voor Infrastructuur in het Onderwijs (Agency for Infrastructure in Education) is discussed under 1.3.

VLOR, Vlaamse Onderwijsraad (Flemish Education Council) is a strategic advisory council within the policy area education and training. VLOR has decretal competences regarding study, concerted action and consultation on all the educational issues under the authority of the Flemish Community. VLOR must issue prior advice on all the draft decrees concerning education, policy reports and documents to be presented to the Flemish Parliament. The various VLOR councils seat representatives from the umbrella organisations of the educational networks, VLIR (universities), VLHORA (university colleges), the parent-association umbrella organisations, students and pupil umbrella organisations, teacher unions, the socio-economic world (SERV) and the socio-cultural organisations and representatives from continuing-education course participants, experience experts and directly elected principals of Elementary Education, Secondary Education, Part-Time Artistic Education, the Centres for Adult Basic Education and the Centres for Adult Education.

In 2010, VLIR, the Flemish Interuniversity Council, and VLHORA, the Flemish Council of University Colleges, will amalgamate into **VLUHR, the Flemish Council of Universities and University Colleges**.

Education is regulated by means of decrees, (federal) laws, decisions of the Flemish Government (BVRs), Royal Decisions (KBs) and ministerial circular letters. Important education decrees are often presented to the **Council of State** for legal advice, and to **SERV Sociaal-Economische Raad voor Vlaanderen (Flemish Social and Economic Council)**, (www.serv.be), for advice in relation to the link between education and the labour market.

For negotiations concerning the conditions of service in education, specific **social consultation bodies** were created at different levels, which differ according to educational network and educational sector. There is also a tradition of concluding long-range central **CAOs**, collective labour agreements. Staff in higher education are governed by a separate CAO.

Moreover, various bodies engage in consultation and issue advice on the **link with the labour market**.

- For technical and vocational education, so-called **sectoral committees** were established within the framework of VLOR for all major sections of the labour market (e.g. the metal industry, textile industry, food...).
- Especially for adult education, permanent working groups were set up within the **ERSVs, de Erkende Regionale Samenwerkingsverbanden (Recognised Regional Collaborations)**. These have a consultative function and formal advisory powers regarding the planning of new training programmes within adult education.
- The 5 **RTCs, Regionale Technologische Centra (Regional Technological Centres)** facilitate the education sector's access to high-tech equipment and promote cooperation with VDAB, SYNTRA and the sector funds. They also coordinate the work-experience placement provision.

In terms of the organisation of education in Flanders, we distinguish between three large '**onderwijsnetten (educational networks)**'.

- **GO! onderwijs van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap (Education of the Flemish Community)**, also called Community Education, is official education and is financed by the Flemish Community. Here, education is organised by the centrale Raad GO (central council)! and the 28 scholengroepen (school groups) (seating elementary and secondary-education schools, not to be confused with school communities).
- **Gesubsidieerd officieel onderwijs (subsidised official education)** is organised by cities, municipalities and provinces and is subsidised by the Flemish Community. It numbers 243 organising bodies. Since 2008, 2 or more municipalities who wish to cooperate on education will be able to set up an intermunicipal educational association (IGOV). To that end, they may also call on other organising bodies of educational institutions which are not affiliated to their own network.
- **Gesubsidieerd vrij onderwijs (subsidised private education)** is organised by 866 private-law organising bodies and is based on a specific denomination (Catholicism, Judaism, Protestantism) or on a non-confessional philosophy of life or even on a specific pedagogical or educational principle (the so-called alternative schools). These schools are recognised and subsidised by the Flemish Community. The overall majority of these schools belong to the Catholic educational network.

In the **Brussels Capital Region**, the Flemish Community Commission acts as the organising body for the Flemish schools located in the Capital Region.

For support, representation in advisory and policy bodies and to protect the interests of the affiliated schools, various groups of organising bodies have set up a **representative koepelorganisatie (umbrella organisation)**. These 10 umbrella organisations also organise pedagogical counselling and coordinate further-training activities for the affiliated institutions. They receive a budget to provide further training for the staff of the pupil guidance centres, the pedagogical counselling services and boarding schools, and for further-training initiatives which are specific to their own pedagogical project.

The rules and procedures in relation to **financial management** imposed on school boards differ greatly between the various educational networks.

- In GO!, the school groups and the Board of Community Education assume the task of organising bodies. The Board will continue to set the rules on the allocation of resources among school groups. The school groups themselves are responsible for the autonomous financial and material management of the schools within their school group. A Board of Accountants, appointed by the Flemish Government, supervises the financial policy of the school groups. This Board of Accountants also supervises the Board of Community Education at financial level.
- In subsidised official education, the municipalities and provinces are responsible for the financial management of the schools. The budget has to be approved at a higher level – by the Permanent Deputation (the provincial authorities) as regards municipal budgets and by the Flemish Government as regards provincial budgets. Financial decisions at a lower level can be suspended at a higher level if the legislation is not complied with.
- The school boards of subsidised private education have greater autonomy. However, they must comply with the accounting rules of the new *vzw* (non-profit organisation) legislation and all relevant controls.

The **schooldirecteur (school principal)** is in charge of the school's management and policy.

For management purposes, educational institutions are increasingly encouraged to cooperate on a larger scale and to that effect the government grants these **meso structures** specific advantages in terms of the distribution of their operational resources.

- The **scholengemeenschappen (school communities)** at elementary and at secondary-education level.
- The **collaboration platforms** who look after the relief units to temporarily replace absent staff.
- The **LOPs, Local consultation platforms** overseeing equal educational opportunities.
- **Regional consultation platforms** within every RESOC area (Regional Socio-Economic Consultation Committee) in which the CDOs, CDVs and SYNTRA centres are obliged to participate in matters of the alternance-training system (cf. 4.2).
- The **associations** of one university and one or several university colleges.
- The **consortiums** for adult education (cf. 7).
- The new **joint ventures** at SE-n-SE, advanced secondary education, level (cf. 5) and HBO5, higher vocational education, qualification level 5 (cf. 6.2).

The Decree of 30 November 2007 concerning **the flankerend onderwijsbeleid op lokaal niveau (complementary education policy at local level)** regulates the social advantages local administrations of especially the large cities and municipalities wish to grant all elementary and secondary schools within their territory (irrespective of educational network). Under this policy, 13 cities with regional facilities and 14 cities without regional facilities are given project subsidies to, for instance, tackle learning lags and problematic behaviour at school, encourage parents' involvement, community activities, the collaboration with other social sectors, literacy and lifelong learning.

At all levels and in all educational networks **participation bodies** have been set up.

- Schools are obliged to set up a **school council**, seating parents, members of staff, representatives from the local community and (in secondary education) also pupils.
- They can also set up a **pedagogical council (staff council), a parent and pupil council** and are obliged to do so if 10% of the relevant group so request.
- At school-community level (joint ventures between various schools providing the same level of education within one of the 44 school zones), all the school councils of the affiliated schools must have a seat on a **medezeggenschapscollege (representative advisory board)**.
- In **higher education**, the participation of staff, students and the socio-economic and cultural sectors can be organised by the institutes for higher education in the form of an open-forum

model (in which students can issue policy advice) or in the form of a co-management model (where students have a seat on the executive).

1.3 Financing

Every year, the Communities receive a fixed financial contribution for education from the Federal State, based on the number of pupils aged between 6 and 17 years. In addition, the Flemish Government also has other forms of revenue, such as regional taxes and their own income of which a certain part is allocated to education.

The Decree of 4 July 2008 introduced a new **financing model which funds all elementary and secondary schools**, irrespective of network, in the exact same way as it is based on school characteristics (level, type, branch of education and area of study).

- To take the various objective differences into account, a certain amount of the budget (4.5% calculated on the basis of the number of eligible pupils) is withheld for school boards who (must) offer a choice in philosophy-of-life education between one of the recognised religions and non-confessional ethics.
- A certain amount is also withheld to cover the cost of the parents' right to opt for neutral education, offered within GO! (3%, calculated on the number of eligible pupils).
- And finally, part of the budget is distributed beforehand on the basis of the 4 GOK indicators (cf. introduction). In 2008-2009, this part will amount to 14% of the operational resources in elementary education, and to 10% of the operational resources in secondary education.

AGION, Agentschap voor Infrastructuur in het Onderwijs (Agency for Infrastructure in Education) subsidises the purchase, the construction, the renovation and the initial kitting out of buildings within the subsidised-educational sector, pupil guidance centres and boarding schools; it funds investments in higher education, stimulates and engages in cross-network and cross-policy-area cooperation on infrastructure in education; coordinates, steers and directs public-public and public-private collaborations on the infrastructure in education. In light of the "catching up on school construction" operation, the government selected a private company to design, build, finance and maintain these building projects. The company shall invest 1 billion euro and shall ensure that all selected projects are developed quickly. In return, it will get a 30-year availability fee from the schools, although the latter will become the immediate owners. This fee will be subsidised and funded by AGION. The new buildings must meet the E70 insulation standards and, as a pilot project, 25 passive schools (which hardly require any heating at all) will be constructed. The Vlaamse Bouwmeester (Flemish Government Architect) will co-assess the designs. A policy on rational energy consumption has been developed and all schools or their school community shall henceforth call on the services of an energy coordinator.

In 2008, the Decree of 14 March 2008 concerning the financing of the activities of university colleges and universities in Flanders, introduced a new **financing system for the whole of higher education (university colleges and universities)**. A fully integrated method to calculate the operational resources of universities and university colleges has as yet not been achievable due to the fact that these two types of education each have a different historical background and come with their own specific finalities. For that reason, it was decided to implement a model of **sub-budgets** for the various types of education. (The amounts listed in this document apply to 2008).

- An overall education socle for the university colleges and universities (100 million euro);
- A variable education part for professional programmes offered by the university colleges (366 million euro);
- A variable education part for academic programmes offered by the university colleges (156.5 million euro);
- A variable education part for academic programmes offered by the universities (313.5 million euro);

- An overall research socle for the universities (105 million euro);
- A variable research socle for the universities (176 million euro);

The first management agreements have a lifetime of 3 years (2008-2010), after that they will run for periods of 5 years at a time. During the final year of these management agreements, an evaluation is carried out. **Commissioners of the Flemish government**, appointed for a term of 5 years by the Flemish Minister for Education and Training, supervise the legality of the associations' decisions and their financial soundness.

Fresh resources for the compulsory research aspect of academic university-college programmes have not been included in this model. A new decision on these resources will be taken once the so-called academisation process will be finalized in 2013.

Thanks to the funds provided by the Incentive Fund, university colleges and universities are in a position to take initiatives to stimulate equal opportunities and diversity within higher education and, more specifically, to take measures to boost the intake, progression and outflow of students from those sections of the population which are currently underrepresented in higher education. In 2008, this Fund had € 3 million at its disposal, from 2009 it will be able to bank on € 6 million euro a year.

1.4 Quality assurance

Qualifications

The government supervises the quality of education by setting **eindtermen en ontwikkelingsdoelen (final and developmental objectives)**, **vocational qualifications** and a minimum timetable (for elementary education, defined as the common core curriculum, for secondary education as the core curriculum). The Decree of 30 April 2009 implemented a Flemish qualification structure. In conformity with the European Commission's translation tool, the "European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF for LLL)", all Flemish qualification certificates and the 8 levels of the Flemish qualification structure will be linked to the 8 levels of the European Qualifications Framework. A distinction is made between vocational and educational qualifications. **Vocational qualifications** are based on vocational-qualification profiles developed by SERV (cf. 1.2) and by the relevant professional sectors. These are ranked within AKOV (cf. 1.2) and must be recognised by the Flemish Government. In addition, other competence profiles can be developed.

To describe the **educational qualifications** of levels 1 to 5, the level descriptors of the Flemish qualification structure and the final and specific final objectives, including the vocational qualifications are used. For elementary, secondary, adult and special education, these were developed by the DVO, Educational Development Division (which subsequently became the Curriculum Entity, henceforth embedded into AKOV). They are then submitted to VLOR for further advice before being presented to the Flemish Parliament. They must always be ratified by decree.

Developmental objectives are minimum objectives with regard to knowledge, insight, skills and attitudes, which the educational authorities consider desirable for a specific pupil population. These do not have to be attained though must be pursued. The government deems **the area-of-learning/subject-related final objectives** regarding a minimum level of knowledge, understanding and skills to be indispensable and attainable for a specific pupil population. **Area-of-learning/subject-related final objectives regarding attitudes** must on the other hand, like the developmental objectives, only be aspired to by schools in all pupils. In addition, there are also **cross-curricular final objectives** which do not specifically appertain to one area of learning/subject but which can be aspired to by several areas of learning/subjects or educational projects. A well-argued derogation from the final objectives in function of a specific pedagogical project can only be granted after a weighty procedure is gone through and then only subject to decretal ratification. Only the Steiner schools have proposed and been granted (limited) derogations.

On the basis of the final objectives, the school boards draw up their own **curriculum**. In practice, however, this is usually done by the educational-network umbrella organisations. With a view to guaranteeing the standard of education, the curricula must be approved by the inspectorate. Official education must use curricula which have been developed by one of the official-education umbrella organisations.

A separate procedure applies for qualification levels 6, 7 and 8 which can only be obtained through **higher education**. For each programme, the required learning results are described. They are jointly described by all the institutions who (wish to) organise the programme in question, on the basis of the level specified in the Higher-Education Reform Act. The description and ranking process is coordinated by the Flemish Interuniversity Council (VLIR) and the Flemish Council of University Colleges (VLHORA). Thereafter, the qualifications described by VLIR and VLHORA are presented to the Dutch-Flemish Accreditation Organisation (NVAO). This accreditation organisation is in charge of recognising both qualifications and programmes. The common learning results of each programme are recognised by the accreditation organisation as qualifications of levels 6, 7 or 8.

All recognised educational and vocational qualifications with their inherent competences, and the way in which these qualifications can be obtained, will henceforth be registered in a **qualification database**. This information will be available to the public.

The Decree of 8 May 2009 concerning the quality of education provided a new regulatory framework for the tasks of further-training providers, the inspectorate and the pedagogical counselling services.

Internal quality assurance within schools is recognised and encouraged. In the future, all schools will systematically examine and monitor the quality of the education they provide. They are completely free in the way they go about this. Survey participation or the taking of parallel tests can form part of these self-evaluations.

The inspectorate

The onderwijsinspectie (inspectorate) (some 150 education inspectors) sees to it that the quality of education across all schools is maintained by carrying out systematically differentiated schooldoorlichtingen (full inspections), in team. Henceforth, the inspectorate shall define the focus of these full inspections on the basis of the individual school profiles and with due regard for the perceived strengths and weaknesses of each individual school. The reports of these full inspections are subsequently published on the inspectorate's website. Every year, the inspectorate publishes a public annual report, 'the onderwijsspiegel (Mirror of Education)' which discusses its main findings. Separate inspectors-advisors have been appointed to oversee the quality of the philosophy-of-life courses taught. The inspectorate covers all of elementary, secondary, adult and part-time artistic education, including the pupil guidance centres. It does however not have any authority over specific teacher-training programmes offered by adult education or over higher vocational education. In addition, some organising bodies of the large educational networks have retained their own inspectors-advisors. A philosophy-of-life-specific corps of inspectors-advisors has been appointed to oversee the quality of the various philosophy-of-life courses taught. These corps are directed by the respective heads of the recognised religions and organised freethinkers.

Pedagogical counselling

The PBDs, pedagogische begeleidingsdiensten (pedagogical counselling services) support schools and the CLB's (pupil guidance centres) in order to help them realise their pedagogical or agogic project and facilitate internal quality assurance. They also provide further-training activities, including in-service training for principals. These pedagogical counselling services are provided by non-profit associations, set up by the educational umbrella organisations. Per umbrella organisation, only one PBD is subsidised.

The Decree of 8 May concerning the quality of education has facilitated the subsidising of a non-profit association 'Samenwerkingsverband Netgebonden Pedagogische Begeleidingsdiensten' (Network-Related Pedagogical Counselling Services Collaboration) provided all network-related pedagogical counselling services are affiliated and projects are put in place which support all the institutions that belong to these projects' target group. Every year, subsidies are allocated:

- to develop a second-line infant-participation support structure to support nursery schools in municipalities which cater for at least 25% of GOK pupils, provided these municipalities are located within the working area of a local consultation platform;
- for second-line support in the area of linguistic-skills education in the elementary schools of the peripheral and language-boundary municipalities and the municipalities in the wider periphery of Brussels;
- further training for the coordinators and pathway counsellors working at the centres for part-time vocational secondary education and the centres for part-time training, the directors of the SYNTRA educational facilities and the learning-pathway counsellors (cf. 4.2).

Permanent resource centres within CLBs

The Decree of 1 December 1988 concerning CLBs also provided for staff for a permanent resource centre within each of the 3 main educational networks to provide network-related support to the centres affiliated to the individual networks. The Decree of 8 May 2009 concerning the quality of education stipulates that the role of the permanent resource centres is to boost the professionalization of CLB staff. To that end, they must come to an arrangement with the pedagogical counselling services within their own central network.

Research

Every year, the government organises 2 **surveys** to check to what extent pupils coming to the end of their elementary education or a particular stage of secondary education have attained the final objectives. Schools who do not participate in these surveys are offered parallel versions which probe the exact same issues as the nationwide survey but contain different questions. The results of these surveys form the basis for annual consultation and conferences.

Flanders very regularly participates in **international comparative studies**: PISA (2000, 2003, 2006, 2009), PIAAC (2011), TALIS (2007-2008), TIMSS (2003), PIRLS (2006), ICCS (2009), ICALT (2007), ESLC (2011).

Every year, the Flemish Minister for Education and Training allocates part of the budget to **OBPWO, Pedagogical Policy and Practice-Oriented Scientific Research**, which ties in closely with the strategic and operational objectives formulated in the Policy White Paper and the minister's policy letters.

The SSL, 'Study and School Careers' Centre is a Flemish multidisciplinary inter-university centre of excellence which collects data and carries out research on the path youngsters follow throughout their initial education, including their transition from education to the labour market.

Higher education

In higher education (HBO5, university college and university education), the institutions themselves are in charge of **internal quality assurance** for the programmes they offer.

Based on these self-evaluation reports, an external assessment panel carries out an external evaluation or **visitatie (external review)** of the programmes on an 8-yearly basis. For their evaluations, the panel uses the NVAO accreditation framework. The evaluations are currently organised and coordinated by VLHORA and VLIR, a task that soon will be assumed by the new VLUHR; for HBO5, this responsibility is shared with the steering group for adult education.

The external-review reports in turn form the basis for an **accreditation decision** the NVAO, the Dutch-Flemish Accreditation Organisation, takes at the request of the institution. In Flanders, it will take until the end of academic year 2012-13 before all the programmes will have gone through this particular form of evaluation. Together with the Higher-Education Reform Act of 4 April 2003, the Accreditation Treaty of 23 September 2003 forms the decretal basis for the introduction of accreditation in Flanders. The NVAO regulations were ratified by the Decree of 27 January 2006. Through its accreditation, the NVAO complies with the European Standards and Guidelines of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA). In the meantime, the Dutch-Flemish Accreditation Organisation (NVAO) has developed and tested a more in-depth accreditation system in pilot project which it ran at Dutch and Flemish university colleges and universities. This accreditation system comprises a combination of institutional audits and programme evaluations. It is the aim of the Flemish Minister for Education and Training to have the regulatory framework for the second round of the external review and accreditation system ratified by mid 2011. The NVAO keeps a Higher Education Register of all accredited programmes. It is up to the Flemish administration to ensure that the educational provision matches the data in this register.

For **HBO5, higher vocational education, qualification level 5** a vocational-education quality-assurance commission was set up. This commission issues advice on proposals regarding educational qualifications within the qualification structure. It also advises on the macro effectiveness of a new programme and rules in favour or against the composition of the external assessment panels. The commission seats experts on:

- vocationally-oriented training in secondary education,
- higher vocational education within adult education,
- professional Bachelor's programmes
- the training programmes offered by the public vocational-training providers for adults,
- labour-market direction.

The commission also seats a number of alternate members who represent the vocational sector or sectors these higher vocational-education programmes lead to.

2. NURSERY EDUCATION

The objectives of kleuteronderwijs (nursery education) and lager onderwijs (primary education) tie in with one another so that a continuous learning process can be guaranteed (cf. 3 primary education).

The Decree on basisonderwijs (elementary education) of 25 February 1997 integrated all the legislation regarding nursery and primary education. Autonomous nursery or primary schools can continue to operate but following the Decree of 10 July 2003 (landscape of elementary education) new schools have to adopt the new nursery and primary-education structure.

In the main, nursery education spans three grades and caters for pupils up to the age of 6. Although it is not compulsory, 99% of all 5-year-olds attend nursery education. Nevertheless, an active policy is still being pursued to ensure that all infants follow nursery education.

The integrated school-allowance system on the basis of a family file also applies to nursery education (cf. introduction).

In 2008-2009, there were 1,963 elementary schools, offering both nursery and primary education, and 170 autonomous nursery schools catering for 243,482 pupils in mainstream nursery education, divided across the various educational networks as follows: 14.3% in GO!, 23.1% in official subsidised education, 62.6% in subsidised private education.

2.1 Admission requirements

Infants may be registered in a nursery school from the age of 2.5 years, and always on the day after the next school holidays. Once infants are three years old they can be registered and accepted at any time.

2.2 Organisation of time and type of groups

Generally speaking, infants attending nursery education are grouped according to age: children from 2.5 to 4 years of age, from 4 to 5 years of age and from 5 to 6 years of age. This division into groups however is at the discretion of the organising body. Normally the teacher does not stay with the class group when it moves on to the next grade. Schools with too few pupils to organise different grades sometimes operate a temporary or permanent vertical-division system, which means that pupils of different ages are taught within one and the same group. The school boards are free to set class sizes.

The school year starts on 1 September and, in practice, ends on 30 June. Pupils have a one-week autumn mid-term break (the week around All Saints' Day), two weeks of Christmas holidays, a one-week spring mid-term break (Mardi Gras), two weeks of Easter holidays and two months of summer holidays. Classes are taught from Monday to Friday and start at the earliest at 8 a.m. and finish at the earliest at 3 p.m., at the latest at 5 p.m., interrupted by a lunch break of no less than 50 minutes. Wednesday afternoons are off. Pre-school and after-school care is organised by the schools.

2.3 Curriculum

For nursery education, ontwikkelingsdoelen (developmental objectives) (cf. 1.4), which apply to the end of infants' nursery-education career, were laid down by decree (Decree of 25 February 1997, and renewed under the terms of the Decree of 30 April 2009). Since 1 September 1998 these have been compulsory for all schools.

Developmental objectives have been formulated for five areas of learning which jointly constitute the common core curriculum.

- physical education (subjects: motor skills, a healthy and safe lifestyle, self-concept and social functioning),
- art education (subjects: visual arts, music, drama, dance, media and attitudes),
- Dutch (subjects: listening, speaking, reading, writing, linguistics),
- world studies (subjects: nature, humankind, society, technology (as of 1/9/2010 technique), time and space),
- mathematical initiation (subjects: numbers, measuring and space).

All schools must offer their pupils activities in all these areas of learning. The inspectorate checks whether the developmental objectives are actively pursued. On the basis of the developmental objectives the school boards or umbrella organisations draw up a development plan. Objectives and activities are set for all age groups in a continuous learning curve towards primary education. The timetable is drawn up by the school board.

Activities in nursery education mostly centre on a specific theme or point of interest. These themes are often linked to the year calendar but they may also be subjects the infants bring up themselves. Children learn through play in multi-functionally organised and equipped classrooms and an outdoor playground. Nursery education does not have to follow a specific curriculum.

2.4 Assessment

Assessments in nursery education are mainly based on observation and basically checks infants' level of development, their perspectives for a further smooth school career and, where necessary, diagnoses why certain infants are not on a par with their peers.

Parents may decide that their child should remain in nursery education for one extra year or that their child goes on to primary education one year early. The class council of the nursery school in question and the head of the CLB, Pupil Guidance Centre, will issue their advice but the final decision lies with the parents. Children who stay on in nursery education for one more year, are of school age.

2.5 Teachers

Alongside teachers, the nursery-education sector is also free to appoint childcare workers, depending on the number of infants registered.

3. PRIMARY EDUCATION

The Decree basisonderwijs (elementary education) of 25 February 1997 integrated all the legislation regarding kleuteronderwijs (nursery education) and lager onderwijs (primary education). ('Elementary education' may not be confused with basiseducatie voor volwassenen (adult basic education) (cf. 7)).

The general objectives of nursery and primary education are in line with each other. "On the basis of a pedagogical project, schools must create an educational and learning environment in which pupils can experience a continuous learning process. That environment must be adapted to the developmental progress of the pupils. BaO, elementary education, is responsible for the education of all pupils and must continue to permanently guide as many pupils as possible through continuous attention and broadening of that care." It is aimed at pupils' broad education and personal development at intellectual, moral and attitudinal level. The general objectives are translated into ontwikkelingsdoelen (developmental objectives) and eindtermen (final objectives) which indicate more concretely what is considered desirable and achievable for children in elementary education. For cohesion reasons, only 5 areas of learning and 2 cross-curricular themes have been defined.

Primary education comprises 6 grades.

The integrated school-allowance system for all levels of education on the basis of a family file also applies to primary education (cf. introduction).

In 2008-2009, there were 1,963 elementary schools, offering both nursery and primary education and 179 autonomous primary schools which all together catered for 381,882 pupils in mainstream primary education, divided across the various educational networks as follows: 14.4% in GO!, 22.6% in official subsidised education, 63.0% in subsidised private education. In January 2009, the number of management and teaching staff in mainstream elementary education came to 53,785 bfts, budgetary full-time equivalents (this figure includes both permanently appointed and temporary staff). In October 2009, 53,285 school allowances were paid out in nursery education (€ 80 on average) and 105,514 school allowances in primary education (€ 112.78 on average).

3.1 Admission requirements

Pupils normally start primary education at the age of 6 years. Parents may decide however to send their child to primary school at the age of 5 or may decide to keep it in nursery education for one year longer. This decision cannot be taken unless parents have sought the advice from the class council of the nursery school their child is attending and that of the head of the CLB, Pupil Guidance Centre, first. Though, the final decision always lies with the parents.

As of 1 September 2010, 6-year-old pupils will only be able to start primary education in a Dutch-speaking primary or elementary school provided they followed no less than 220 half days of Dutch-speaking nursery education during the previous school year or if they have passed a language test.

3.2 Organisation of time and type of groups

With the exception of hospital schools, children follow 28 to 29 teaching periods of 50 minutes each per school week. The school board has full autonomy when it comes to organising the education it offers, which it lays down in a school development plan, and enjoys the same autonomy as regards the drafting of the timetables, the way children are divided into groups and the number of pupils per class. The **year group system** is not compulsory but is by and large adopted by most schools. However various forms of differentiation are used, often internal class differentiation. In elementary education, the authorities do not impose minimum or maximum class sizes. Cf. 2.2 regarding the organisation of time.

In the main, one teacher teaches all the different subjects but special teachers are appointed for subjects such as music, physical education while, in official education, a specific teacher is appointed to provide philosophy-of-life education (religion or non-confessional ethics).

3.3 Curriculum

The common core curriculum consists of areas of learning and cross-curricular themes. The **leergebieden (areas of learning)**:

- **physical education**: motor skills, healthy and safe lifestyle, self-awareness and social integration
- **art education**: visual arts, music, drama, dance, media and attitudes
- **Dutch***: listening, speaking, reading, writing, strategies, linguistics, (inter)cultural focus (*revised as of 1/09/2010)
- **French***: listening, reading, speaking, oral interaction, writing
- **world studies***: nature, technique, humankind, society, time, space, use of resources
- **mathematics**: numbers, measuring, geometry, strategies and problem-solving skills, attitudes.

The **cross-curricular themes** are learning to learn, social skills and ICT.

The curriculum has been drafted on the basis of areas-of-learning-related, cross-curricular and attitudinal **final objectives** (cf. 1.4).

In addition, the Constitution provides that the common core curriculum should contain two teaching periods of **levensbeschouwelijke vorming (philosophy-of-life education)**. Official education must guarantee a choice between non-confessional ethics and religion.

French is a compulsory subject for pupils in the 5th and 6th grades. In Brussels, French can be taught from the first grade of primary school onwards and the number of teaching periods dedicated to French can be determined by the individual schools in function of pupils' intake characteristics. French-language awareness can be offered from the start of mainstream elementary education (so also in mainstream nursery education). Moreover, language awareness may also be offered in another language, on condition that pupils are offered French-language awareness first.

3.4 Assessment, study progress and certification

In primary education, the teacher tests small or large subject matter units on a very regular basis in order to assess to what extent pupils have attained the pre-set objectives and also to evaluate the efficiency of his/her teaching. Regular, individual school reports provide pupils and parents with information on the child's results, its progress, learning behaviour and personal development. The school decides which pupil has successfully completed a particular grade and can progress to the next grade. There is increasing expertise in working with instruments such as **child or pupil monitoring systems** to observe and monitor pupils' development. At the end of elementary education, the class council decides whether or not pupils should be conferred with a **getuigschrift basisonderwijs (certificate of elementary education)**. Here, schools enjoy a large level of autonomy.

3.5 Guidance

Elementary schools catering for large numbers of pupils, who need extra care due to developmental or leaning problems or because they have certain socio-emotional problems, are entitled to appoint a **zorgcoördinator (special needs coordinator)**.

Thanks to the **equal educational opportunities policy** (cf. introduction), elementary and secondary schools with relatively large numbers of disadvantaged pupils can receive additional support for periods of three consecutive school years at a time. This allows them to work on preventing and

tackling developmental and learning lags, on providing language-skills education, intercultural education, enhanced progression and orientation, social-emotional development and pupil and parent participation.

In the wake of **GON, the integrated-education project**, youngsters suffering from a disability and/or learning or behavioural problems can attend a number of or all classes or partake in certain or all activities in a school for mainstream elementary, secondary or university-college education, on a temporary or permanent basis. Educational institutions taking in GON pupils can bank on the support from a special-education school. **ION, the inclusive-education project** is aimed at a guided intake of 100 children with a moderate or severe intellectual disability into mainstream primary and secondary education.

The **CLBs, centra voor leerlingenbegeleiding (pupil guidance centres)** provide pupil guidance, school support and study and vocational guidance. CLBs are services pupils, parents, teachers and school boards can call on for information, assistance and guidance. Every school concludes a policy plan or policy contract with a CLB to that effect. CLB guidance is multidisciplinary and covers the areas of learning and studying, pupils' school careers (monitoring compulsory education, study-choice guidance, information regarding education and the link to the labour market, certification in special education...), socio-emotional development and preventative health care. Every CLB offers a basic service package, which consists of demand-oriented, pupil-specific services (for parents and pupils), truancy and infant-participation programmes (for parents, pupils and school teams), school support (specifically aimed at teachers and school teams), medical check-ups and prevention (whereby pupils' physical development is checked at regular intervals to ensure that all is well).

The CLBs are supported by a **permanent resource centre** for each of the three large networks. In total, there are 73 CLBs and 3 resource centres. In January 2008, they were manned by 2,786 bfts.

3.6 Teachers

In the main, one teacher teaches all the different subjects but special teachers are appointed for subjects such as music, physical education while, in official education, a specific teacher is appointed to provide philosophy-of-life education (religion or non-confessional ethics).

As of 2007, people who wish to embark on a teaching career have two ways of obtaining their diploma of teacher.

1) **Integrated teacher-training programmes**, offered by university colleges, which lead to a degree of Bachelor in education, nursery education, primary education and secondary education, respectively. These training programmes take 3 years and comprise 180 credits, including 45 credits for the practical component. In the 'secondary education' programme, students choose 2 teaching subjects.

2) Students who have already obtained another diploma of higher education or adult education (or who are following a programme to that effect) or who have relevant professional experience and only need to get additional pedagogical/teaching training can follow a **specific teacher-training programme**. This training programme involves a 60-credit study load of which 30 credits are specifically allocated to teaching practice. These programmes are organised by universities, university colleges and CVOs, Centres for Adult Education.

The practical component cannot only be acquired through **pre-service training**, i.e. teaching practice, but also through in-service training, a so-called **LIO (Leraar-In-Opleiding) baan (trainee-teacher position)**, which is a 500-hour a year teaching assignment. The trainee teacher receives a salary (that of teacher without a pedagogical skills certificate) and is supported by the teacher-education college, a staff member of the centre, the institution or the school where he/she is employed, in charge of mentoring.

All the different teacher-training programmes are equivalent and are based on the same basic teacher competences and take previous qualifications and acquired competences into account. To boost professionalization, support teacher-training programmes and encourage cooperation between the teacher-education colleges, 4 expertise networks were established (each within the framework of an association), including a cross-association regional platform.

Teachers are not civil servants but have their own specific **status**. Currently, their status varies according to whether they are teaching in community education or in subsidised education, though these differences are gradually being erased. The conditions of service are also laid down in CAOs (collective labour agreements), which are concluded following collective consultation and remain in effect for variable periods of time (usually for 2 to 5 years).

Every year, schools must draw up an **in-service training plan**. Schools are free to choose which organisation they will entrust with the in-service training of their staff. Annually, the government sets a number of priority in-service training themes; once the in-service training projects focussing on these themes have been approved, they are offered free of charge to all the networks. The themes for the 2009-2010 school year are artistic and cultural education, secondary-education final and developmental objectives (cross-curricular; for natural sciences 1st stage; for technology 1st stage and elementary education).

4. SECONDARY EDUCATION

In this section we shall on the one hand discuss full-time secondary education (4.1.) and, on the other hand, part-time vocational secondary education, which together with part-time training and the apprenticeship system, forms part of alternance training pupils can follow to comply with their part-time compulsory-education obligation (4.2.). They all require youngsters' full-time commitment of no less than 28 periods of 50 minutes a week. The integrated school-allowance system for all levels of education on the basis of a family file also applies to secondary-education pupils, irrespective of system (cf. introduction). The essential texts of law governing secondary education are:

- The Decree of 31 July 1990 concerning Education-II.
- The Decree of 14 July 1998 laying down various measures in relation to secondary education and amending the Decree of 25 February 1997 concerning elementary education.
- The Decree of 10 July 2008 concerning the alternance training system within the Flemish Community
- The Decision of the Flemish Government of 13 February 2009 concerning apprenticeships.

4.1. FULL-TIME SECONDARY EDUCATION

Full-time secondary education is subdivided into four stages of two grades each (at times supplemented by a third grade). The 4th stage (in BSO only), the 7th grades and Se-n-Se, advanced secondary education are discussed under 5.

OKAN, onthaalonderwijs voor anderstalige nieuwkomers (reception education for foreign mother tongue newcomers) (for which supplementary teaching periods are provided and which was followed by 2,302 pupils during 2009-2010) does not appertain to any particular stage.

Alongside the **1st grade A** of the 1st stage, there is also a **1st grade B** for pupils who have fallen behind in primary education or who are less suited to a mainly theoretical education; this year is in fact a bridging class between LO and SO. Often, pupils end up in secondary education on the basis of their age without necessarily having completed their elementary education.

Once pupils have completed the 1st grade B, they can either go on to the prevocational 2nd grade or to the 1st grade A. 1st grade A is followed by 2nd grade A.

The second and third stages offer four branches of education which are further subdivided into areas of study, where pupils pick a certain course of study:

- **ASO, General Secondary Education** aims to provide a broad theoretical education and prepares pupils for higher education;
- **TSO, Technical Secondary Education** focuses especially on general and technical theoretical subjects, provides practical classes and prepares pupils either for a professional career or for higher education;
- **KSO, Artistic Secondary Education** combines a general and broad education with active artistic practice and prepares pupils either for a professional career or for higher education;
- **BSO, Vocational Secondary Education** allows pupils to acquire specific vocational skills combined with a general education. Transition to higher education is possible but rather rare.

Educational institutions can offer any one of the following combinations of stages: 1st / 1st + 2nd / 2nd + 3rd / 1st + 2nd + 3rd / 2nd + 3rd + HBO nursing / 1st + 2nd + 3rd + HBO nursing / HBO nursing (if previously only the course of study 'nursing' was organised) / and up to and including the 2012-2013 school year: 2nd + 3rd + 4th / 1st + 2nd + 3rd + 4th.

In 2008-2009, 436,146 pupils followed mainstream secondary education (including the 4th stage), divided as follows across the various networks: 16.6% in GO!, 7.9% in official subsidised education, 75.5 % in subsidised private education, across 953 schools. In the 2nd and 3rd stages, 117,212 pupils

followed ASO, 93,143 pupils followed TSO, 6,191 pupils followed KSO and 73,491 pupils followed BSO. In January 2009, mainstream secondary education numbered 63,596 budgetary full-time equivalents, divided between management and teaching staff. The cost per pupil in secondary education was € 7,383. In October 2009, 126,367 school allowances of € 377.22 on average each were paid out in secondary education.

4.1.1 Admission requirements

Pupils who have obtained a certificate of elementary education can start 1st grade A. Pupils who have not obtained this certificate are nevertheless allowed to go to 1st grade A, subject to the parents' approval, a positive advice from the CLB, Pupil Guidance Centre and from the admissions class council of 1st grade A.

Transition from one branch of education to another is permitted throughout secondary education, provided that the admissions class council's decision is adhered to and that the conditions for transition between courses of study are met. In the third stage of general, technical and artistic education, transition is rather more restricted.

4.1.2 Organisation of time and type of groups

In "full-time secondary education" school weeks number a minimum of 28 teaching periods (36 teaching periods a week for TSO and BSO courses). Cf. 2.2. for further information

In theory, secondary education operates the year group system, i.e. classes made up of pupils of the same age. Because of failures and pupils repeating years, these classes can at times be quite heterogenous (especially in vocational education).

4.1.3 Curriculum

In the **1st grade of the 1st stage** the timetable is divided between subjects that make up the core curriculum and possibly also an optional component (optional subjects). In **2nd grade A of the 1st stage**, a distinction is made between the core curriculum, basic optional curriculum subjects and sometimes also an optional component. It prepares pupils for when they have to choose a specific course of study in the 2nd stage in one of the 4 branches of education offered from then onwards. Aside from the core curriculum, **the pre-vocational 2nd grade** also offers a choice between the various occupational fields in preparation for the choice pupils will have to make in the 2nd stage between the various courses of study offered within vocational secondary education, which may, at times, also include an optional component.

The government only imposes a **minimum time table**, defined as core-curriculum subjects, which depend on the stage/branch of education all pupils are compelled to follow. In other words, the organising bodies themselves decide how the weekly timetable is divided. Only in the 1st stage a minimum time table for the core curriculum has been imposed.

The **core curriculum** consists of philosophy-of-life education, Dutch, French (in BSO only in the 1st stage, but in the future either French or English in the 2nd and 3rd stages of BSO), English, mathematics, natural sciences or physics or biology or chemistry, history, geography, art education or visual arts or music (only in the 1st stage), physical education, technique (in the 1st stage).

From the 2nd stage onwards, secondary education is divided into 4 different **onderwijsvormen (branches of education)**: ASO, general, TSO, technical, BSO, vocational and KSO, artistic secondary education. Within these 4 branches of education there are 29 **studiegebieden (areas of study)**, which group a range of **studierichtingen (courses of study)**. A course of study corresponds to a specific curriculum subject or a specific group of curriculum subjects which characterise the

course of study in question. Pupils choose one course of study. Within a course of study a distinction is made between the **core curriculum**, the **specific component** and a **complementary component** (complementary course provision schools and pupils are free to choose themselves). In every structural component, all schools operate one or more curricula which have been approved by the government to ensure that the core curriculum and the specific component is realised. Structural components such as basic optional curriculum subjects, occupational fields and options are classified as "specific" when they prepare pupils for very limited and highly specialised vocations or vocational sectors and/or can only be offered on a very limited basis on account of their intrinsic validity.

The authorities use the final and developmental objectives and vocational qualifications as a tool for quality control (cf. 1.4). For the core curriculum (with the exception of the course philosophy-of-life education) **subject-related final objectives** have been formulated. For mainstream secondary education they are laid down per stage and per branch of education. In terms of the core curriculum of 1st grade B and the pre-vocational 2nd grade of the 1st stage, **subject-related and cross-curricular final objectives** have been formulated. Aside from the subject-related final objectives also **attitudinal final objectives** and **cross-curricular final objectives** have been developed. In terms of progression-oriented specific structural components, **specific final objectives** have been elaborated (currently for ASO and TSO top sports only).

As of 1 September 2010, the new mainstream secondary education (including BSO) cross-curricular final and developmental objectives will apply across the board (and will no longer be enforced on a stage-by-stage basis). Their common denominator is essential skills which are generically formulated (devoid of any context) and relate to: communication skills, creativity, perseverance, empathy, aesthetic skills, exploring, flexibility, initiative, critical thinking, media smartness, an open and constructive attitude, respect, collaboration, responsibility, self-image, independence, meticulousness, thoughtfulness. These are crystallised in a number of contexts: physical health and safety, mental health, socio-relational development, the environment and sustainable development, the politico-judicial society, the socio-economic society, the socio-cultural society. These are pursued right throughout the six grades of secondary education and refer to the 'ultimate comportment' that is considered desirable in pupils who have completed secondary education and to learning as a continuous process.

Recognised vocational qualifications are complete and ranked units of competences pupils need to embark on a vocation as a professional. These are (vocational) competence profiles, defined by SERV, which the Flemish Government recognises as vocational qualifications. These competences are obtained via the specific component of a vocationally-oriented structural component. As long as no recognised vocational qualifications have been defined, a set of competences, which the Flemish Government formulated on the basis of descriptor elements from the qualification structure of a recognised reference framework, are used to define the specific component of a vocationally-oriented structural component.

The inspectorate assesses the curriculum on the basis of the set criteria and the final and developmental objectives and advises the Minister for Education as to their approval. As regards the realisation of the optional or complementary component, no curricula have to be submitted to the government for approval.

Since 1 September 2000, after the 1st stage, vocational secondary education has been experimenting with **modular education**. In modular education, each course, apart from the core curriculum, is subdivided into a number of vocationally-oriented training modules into which general educational elements have been integrated and in which the necessary attention is paid to key skills. In this way, pupils are better prepared for a professional career but also for their personal life and social integration. The professional profiles established by the social partners through SERV are of importance here as are the final objectives which were drawn up by the Government for each stage

and each branch of education. On the basis of the professional profiles a closer link with the labour market is ensured.

Modular education is organised per area of study, it is not subdivided into stages, grades or cycles. The areas of study involved are: 'car engineering', 'construction', 'graphic communication and media', 'commerce', 'woodwork', 'cooling and heating', 'personal hygiene', 'mechanics and electricity', 'care', 'textile' and 'nutrition'. Schools may not simultaneously offer a specific area of study in modular and non-modular form. Each area of study combines a number of learning pathways. A learning pathway is a coherent unit which is rewarded with an officially recognised certificate. One and the same module or learning pathway may feature in various areas of study. The modules and learning pathways are identical in full-time mainstream and special education as well as in part-time education. The maximum number of teaching periods per week is 36. The modular contents of learning in full-time mainstream secondary education do not operate any curricula while those in special secondary education do not operate any course profiles. Competences can also be acquired through work-experience placements or (in special secondary education) through work experience. Work experience may be organised in blocks or in the form of alternance training. On-the-job-learning, whatever its format, always gives courses of study an added value.

4.1.4 Assessment, study progress and certification

The choice of **teaching methods** and teaching aids comes under the freedom of the organising bodies. Therefore, there are no official guidelines in this respect. Overall it can be said that instruction is provided in a subject-related manner. Because of the cross-curricular final objectives one is also forced to work in a cross-curricular fashion.

Pupils are assessed by means of tests and exams, organised by the individual teacher under the final responsibility of the school's organising body. No more than 60 half days per school year may be dedicated to pupil assessments. Continuous assessment is of course also an option.

In secondary education, the **class council** acts as the central assessment body. The guidance and deliberation class councils consist of the principal or his representative and all the members of the teaching staff who teach a particular pupil in a particular grade (all these persons are entitled to vote). They may be assisted by the deputy principal, the technical advisor (coordinator), support staff and/or the members of staff providing the pupils of the school in question with psycho-social or pedagogical counselling (these people have an advisory voice). In contrast to the guidance and deliberation class councils, the admissions class council does not have to be composed of all the teachers teaching the structural component pupils choose. The class council is responsible for the tuition of a specific group of pupils, the assessment of their progress in school, it decides whether an individual pupil is entitled to go to the next year and it issues certificates.

3 types of oriënteringsattesten (orientation certificates) may be issued:

- an A-attest (A certificate) if the pupil has completed the grade successfully;
- a B-attest (B certificate), if the pupil is admitted to the next year but certain branches of education and/or courses of study are excluded;
- a C-attest (C certificate) which means that the pupil must stay back.

The decision may also be deferred and may be made conditional to the pupil passing a re-examination. The final decision is made by the parties involved (e.g. in the case of a B-certificate the pupil/parents may decide that it would be worth repeating the year).

Aside from these orientation certificates, the class council can confer a **diploma secundair onderwijs (diploma of secondary education)** at the end of:

- 3rd stage: the 2nd grade ASO, TSO, KSO, the 3rd grade BSO, organised as a specialisation year, the 3rd grade BSO, not organised as a specialisation year (the so-called nameless 7th grade);
- 4th stage BSO: the 1st or the last grade;
- at the end of the HBO course of study 'nursing'.

After 1st grades A and B, a **getuigschrift basisonderwijs (certificate of elementary education)** can also be obtained by pupils who did not yet receive one; after the prevocational year, an equivalent certificate may be granted.

Getuigschriften (certificates) may also be issued:

- After the prevocational year and the 2nd grade of the 1st stage: the certificate of the 1st stage of SO.
- After the 2nd grade ASO, TSO, KSO of the 2nd stage: the certificate of the 2nd stage of SO.

In vocational secondary education pupils can, aside from orientation certificates, also obtain **studiegetuigschriften (certificates)** after the 2nd and 3rd grades of the 2nd and 3rd stages and the 2nd grade of the 4th stage. In a number of grades, especially the 2nd grade of the 3rd stage TSO, KSO, BSO and the 2nd grade of the 4th stage BSO, pupils must also pass an **integrated test (GIP)**.

In every course of study of the 2nd and 3rd grades of the 3rd stage, all branches of education, and in every grade of the 4th stage BSO and in modular vocational secondary education, a **getuigschrift over basiskennis van het bedrijfsbeheer (certificate of business-administration basics)** can be obtained. This certificate can also be conferred in part-time vocational secondary education, provided the pupil has spent at least 4 years in secondary education (or in an apprenticeship), the 1st stage not included.

In **modular vocational education**, the deliberation class council makes its decision once pupils have completed one module (here, the deliberation council only seats those members of the teaching staff who have actually taught the module in question to the pupils concerned). Pupils are conferred with a **deelcertificaat (modular certificate)** or a **certificaat (certificate)** (if the module or the learning pathway was completed successfully) or an **attest van verworven competenties (certificate of acquired competences)** when the module was not completed successfully (in that case, the certificate will list the competences youngsters did master). Pupils who meet the final objectives, have passed their vocational training and have completed a number of years of secondary education can, depending on the case, obtain:

- a certificate of the 2nd stage of secondary education;
- a certificate of the 2nd grade of the 3rd stage of secondary education;
- a certificate of the 3rd grade of the 3rd stage of secondary education, organised as a specialisation year;
- a diploma of secondary education.

4.1.5 Guidance

The CLBs, pupil guidance centres (cf. 3.5) provide pupil guidance, school support and study and vocational guidance.

To help pupils decide on the course of study or vocation they wish to pursue, a number of initiatives are taken such as SID-ins (study information days) for pupils in their last year of SO, a house of vocations for youngsters between the ages of 11 and 14, a SERV choose-your-course CD and website, a portfolio about learning and professional careers, developed by the DBO, Vocational Education Service and VDAB, an online database listing all the education and training providers. The DBO also hosts an alternance-training portal site.

Since September 2009, all BSO and TSO pupils have been encouraged to acquire work experience during the sixth grade, while, in BSO, as many pupils as possible are encouraged to gain work experience from the fifth grade onwards. Work-experience placements run for at least one week on a school-year basis, which corresponds to one timetable teaching period. Although pupils are encouraged to do work experience, it is by no means mandatory. Even teachers are encouraged to follow in-company training, a.o. under the European PROLERON project.

Some of the initiatives taken to stimulate entrepreneurship include an annual special enterprise week, a strategic ministerial plan 'entrepreneurial education and training' and a new virtual knowledge centre on entrepreneurial competences.

RTCs, Regional Technological Centres, organise actions at provincial level in the areas of infrastructure, work experience for pupils and in-company training/further training for teachers (see also 1.2).

4.1.6 Teachers and trainers

Each subject is taught by a teacher specialised in that particular field. Teachers' teaching qualifications depend on their skills certificates. They teach a number of grades and pupils are taught by different teachers.

Cf. 3.6. for further information

4.2 STELSEL VAN LEREN EN WERKEN (ALTERNANCE TRAINING)

This system is open to youngsters who have completed their full-time compulsory education and are under the age of 25. Since 1983, youngsters can avail of part-time compulsory education from the age of 15 provided they followed the first two grades of full-time secondary education, in all other cases from the age of 16.

The Decree of 10 July 2008 thoroughly reformed the system and it now comprises part-time vocational secondary education, part-time training with personal-development pathways and apprenticeships, which have been brought more into line with one another. This system centres on the full-time commitment from youngsters, who are screened in terms of the various pathway-to-work possibilities and who also receive continuous pathway-to-work guidance. The modular learning pathways also lead to a valid certificate. Full-time commitment means that youngsters must dedicate at least 28 periods of 50 minutes a week to their education and training; needless to say, it is hardly a coincidence that this load corresponds to the minimum number of periods pupils in full-time secondary education are expected to follow. Henceforth youngsters can meet this full-time commitment requirement (which comprises a component learning and a component on-the-job-learning):

- by combining part-time learning at a CDO with a component on-the-job-learning consisting of labour-market participation or a personal-development pathway, a preparatory pathway or a bridging project.
- by combining theoretical training (at a SYNTRA campus) during an apprenticeship (in SMEs), with practical training (under an apprenticeship contract with an employer). On-the-job-learning during an apprenticeship can only be fulfilled by means of a preparatory pathway if the youngster's apprenticeship contract is suspended or terminated.

DO, part-time education forms part of the network-related educational provision and can only be organised in an autonomous CDO, centrum voor deeltijds (beroepssecundair)onderwijs (centre for part-time (vocational secondary) education) or a non-autonomous CDO (= connected to an educational institution offering full-time TSO or BSO).

A recognised **CDV, centrum voor deeltijdse vorming (centre for part-time training)** can only offer: personal-development pathways, general education within DO, support for pupil-related activities in CDOs (e.g. activities such as looking after unqualified youngsters or arranging time-in for youngsters who are at risk of dropping out).

Theoretical training within the apprenticeship system is provided by the **SYNTRA centres which offer training for the self-employed and SMEs** at a SYNTRA campus.

CDOs, CDVs and SYNTRA centres are obliged to take part in the activities of the commercially-oriented **regional consultation platforms** which have been set up within each of the 15 RESOC areas (Regional Socio-Economic Consultation Committee). All school communities will have to establish a working relationship with at least one regional consultation platform.

Number of pupils availing of DO: 6,935, across 48 CDOs.

Number of CDVs: 21 locations (organised by 6 training organisers); 1,166 personal-development pathways.

Number of course participants in **leertijd (apprenticeships)** during 2008-2009: 4,262 following community studies (45,791 teaching periods), 4,520 following a 'professional knowledge' course (102,510 teaching periods). Number of apprenticeship contracts on 31/12/2008: 3,640. Flanders numbers 5 regional SYNTRA umbrella organisations and 24 campuses.

4.2.1 Admission requirements

Youngsters who opt for the alternance-training system must register with a CDO or a SYNTRA centre. Their pathway-to-work guidance will begin within 14 days of registration and starts with an intake & screening process which defines the pathway that will be marked out for them (cf. 4.2.5).

Youngsters who are not yet able to work in a labour-oriented fashion are offered a temporary preparatory pathway or bridging project so as to prepare them for work. If even this step proves to be too daunting, youngsters are offered a tailor-made personal-development pathway at a CDV, Centre for Part-time Training.

Persoonlijke ontwikkelingstrajecten (personal-development pathways) were devised to guide youngsters, who are not yet able to work in a labour-oriented fashion, towards a qualified pathway. These are by and large socially-vulnerable youngsters whose behavioural, emotional and social problems are further compounded by the circumstances they live in. During these personal-development pathways, counsellors try to give them an insight into their own situation and to make their problematic circumstances more bearable. Even though these pathways can only be organised by a CDV, Centre for Part-time Training, youngsters must first register with a CDO. For that reason collaboration between both is essential. A well-founded report must be drawn up about any youngster before he can embark on a personal-development pathway. This is done by a member of the CLB, linked to the competent CDO, and is based on the results of the intake and screening process, the CLB data and, where applicable, may also be based on the details furnished by the class council. As a minimum, this report will feature the type of personal-development pathway the pupil in question should follow as well as the starting date. The pathway must come to an end at the end of the school year in which the youngster finishes compulsory education.

Voortrajecten (preparatory pathways) are aimed at youngsters who do not yet have any clear career perspectives and remain indecisive about the training programme they wish to pursue and who have not yet acquired the necessary work attitudes and skills. These pathways (a specific training and guidance module) put the emphasis on intake, diagnosis and orientation. Preparatory pathways run for a maximum of 312 hours, either or not uninterruptedly and may, but not necessarily so, run over more

than one school year. Youngsters, who have registered with a CDO/CDV or a SYNTRA campus before they have turned 18, can follow a preparatory pathway until the end of the school year in which they become 19 years of age.

Brugprojecten (bridging projects) are a form of labour-market participation which was introduced for youngsters who are very much willing to work but who need to expand their labour-oriented attitudes and skills. In these bridging projects they can acquire 40 weeks' work experience with a public administration or a non-profit association (third-party organisations with legal personality). They are paid a minimum monthly apprentice allowance of about 230 euro (non-index-linked amount). Bridging projects are followed for a maximum of 800 hours, either or not uninterrupted and may, but not necessarily so, run over more than one school year. Youngsters can, on a one-off basis and for a period of no more than 2 days, follow observatory work experience in a bridging project or through work, with a view to possible employment at a later stage. This is aimed at youngsters who have not yet reached the necessary structural on-the-job-learning level but are keen to get a brief "insight". In this case, pathway counsellors direct youngsters' observatory work experience towards the youngsters in question from within the CDO.

Youngsters cannot be admitted to a **DO, part-time education** course if they have already obtained a certificate for that same course through secondary education, adult education or via an apprenticeship. Youngsters can no longer register for a module of a DO learning pathway if they already successfully completed that very model through secondary education or adult education. Medical suitability may be a prerequisite for certain programmes in light of consumer protection (contact with food) or because of the inherent characteristics of certain professions (e.g. roofers).

Apprenticeships are also subject to a trial period during which the pupil can familiarize himself with the training programme or the place where he will serve his apprenticeship. Trial periods may run for 1, 2, 3 months, depending on whether the apprenticeship contract has been concluded for a period of maximum 1 year, for a period of between 1 and 2 years or for more than 2 years, respectively.

4.2.2 Organisation of time and type of groups

Personal-development pathways are flexible pathways, and may comprise the following combinations:

- a personal-development pathway totalling 28 (50-minute) periods, consisting of the components 'learning' and 'on-the-job learning' (no labour-market participation, bridging project or preparatory pathway);
- a personal-development pathway totalling 15 (50-minute) periods, comprising the component 'learning' in combination with a bridging project or a preparatory pathway;
- a personal-development pathway totalling 13 (50-minute) periods, comprising the component 'on-the-job learning' (no labour-market participation, bridging project or preparatory pathway) in combination with part-time education at a CDO.

For information on preparatory pathways and bridging projects, please refer to 4.2.1.

In **DO, part-time vocational secondary education** classes are spread over a maximum of 4 half days from Monday to Friday. The word 'maximum' refers to the fact that, for some pupils, part-time vocational secondary education amounts to 15 hours and for others, who follow the general subjects in a recognised training institution, only to 8 hours. This staggering of classes does not in any way detract from the option to organise classes at a different 'rhythm', subject to approval from the Department of Education.

DO is not subdivided into stages, grades and areas of study but into courses of study or even learning pathways. By 2015, DO will be fully modular. All learning pathways will then consist of one or more modules. One module can feature in various learning pathways. Youngsters will be able to embark on

a training programme at any time during the school year and may also spread the programme over one or several school years. Modules can also start at any time during the school year and may be spread over a number of days or weeks, and even run into the next school year. Modules will not be time restricted so that pathways can be tailored to suit all youngsters individually. Until such time as the switch-over is complete, CDOs will continue to operate the linear system in which training programmes begin at the start of the school year and run over one or several school years. Part-time secondary education is provided during 40 weeks a year and comprises 15 weekly teaching periods of 50 minutes each, dedicated to general and vocationally-oriented training. CDOs can make their own general-education and vocationally-oriented training-roster arrangements (in practice, often 1 day of 7 teaching periods is dedicated to general education and 1 day of 8 teaching periods to vocational training). However, this general rule can be deviated from in function of the situation on the ground.

Apprenticeships comprise:

- Practical training (4 days a week) in a company, provided by the employer or an apprentice mentor, appointed by the employer.
- Theoretical training of no less than 30 weeks per school year which includes general education (minimum 4 hours a week) and vocationally-oriented training (minimum 4 hours a week). This may be supplemented by other courses, such as language courses or remedial courses for pupils who have fallen behind in their education. The training is provided by trainers at a SYNTRA campus and takes 1 day a week (1.5 days for 15-year-olds).

The duration of the apprenticeship contract must correspond to the length of time it would take to train for the vocation governed by the contract. However it must run over at least one full course year and may not exceed three years.

4.2.3 Curriculum

DO, part-time (vocational secondary) education

DO comprises quite a number of training programmes. At macro level, the list is drawn up by the Flemish Government. On the basis of the government's list, the CDO course provision is then programmed at micro level (i.e., by the boards of the centres). The local CDO provision is directed at intermediary or meso level (school communities, regional consultation platforms).

DO courses cover both general education and vocationally-oriented training. To a certain extent, this has to be offered in an integrated fashion. The general education for youngsters who follow a pathway that leads to a certificate of the 2nd stage SO, a certificate of the 2nd grade of the 3rd stage SO or a diploma of SO must meet the subject-related final objectives for the subjects of the BSO core curriculum (with the exception of physical education) and also the BSO cross-curricular final objectives. Vocationally-oriented training provided within the framework of a modular learning pathway must comprise at least one recognised vocational qualification. For vocationally-oriented training under the linear system, approved training data sheets are used which contain a description of the minimum teaching objectives and contents the training programme in question should meet.

CDOs can also cooperate with one or several institutions which put their own material resources and teaching staff at the disposal of the centre they are working with:

- CDOs may simply organise vocationally-oriented training and get a CDV to see to the general-education component. One advantage of this is that the DO programme then dovetails with the pedagogical-didactical approach and culture of the CDV itself and that of its trainers;
- as regards the organisation of their vocationally-oriented training, CDOs may collaborate with a TSO or BSO institution, with another CDO, a centre for adult education (CVO) or with a training centre for the self-employed and SMEs. One bonus here is that they can avail of the vocationally-oriented expertise and specific equipment of their partner institution.

Part-time education can also organise **OKAN**, reception education for foreign mother tongue newcomers. This is aimed at Dutch language skills, naturalisation and independence.

DO also organises a special course, the “**reception group**”, which is aimed at youngsters who, for one reason or another, are unable to fully embrace one of the other training programmes on offer. In this programme labour-market participation is excluded and even combinations with a bridging programme seem to be more of an exception than the rule. The time youngsters spend in the reception group must be restricted and must either have been laid down structurally within the CDO organisation or regulated by the class council for every youngster individually. (The "reception group" is not to be confused with the personal-development pathways CDVs organise).

Apprenticeships

Theoretical training at a centre which offers training for the self-employed and SMEs at a SYNTRA campus.

- The general-education component is based on the curricula which have been approved by the competent minister. Here, the BSO final objectives apply. Via thematic project work and separate training periods dedicated to linguistic and arithmetic skills, apprentices' personal development is broadened. Specific attention goes to: sound self-development, solid family and professional life, citizenship and global citizenship.
- This vocationally-oriented training programme covers technical learning contents and supplements and is intrinsically linked to practical in-company training. Here, “the practice of demonstration” is used, i.e. practical demonstrations are combined with a thought and learning process which the pupil goes through aloud together with the trainer and which goes accompanied by a demonstration. In vocational-technical training, the trainers provide theoretical support in relation to the vocation the youngster is training for on the shop floor.
- The additional language courses are aimed at providing non-Dutch speakers with a basic knowledge of Dutch or at giving apprentices a basic knowledge of another language which would stand to them when they need to deal with clients.
- Remedial courses are aimed at pupils who have fallen behind.

One very important tool is the apprentice agenda. This is used to record all the assignments and tasks apprentices are given at the company or the campus, including all the classes they need to attend.

All pupils in one and the same training grade follow their theoretical training in one and the same group. Pupils who are training for one and the same vocation or who follow a group of related vocational training programmes receive their vocationally-oriented training within one and the same group.

4.2.4 Assessment, study progress and certification

Youngsters who have followed a **personal-development pathway** are conferred with a personal-development-pathway certificate of acquired competences by the CDV. This certificate gives a detailed description of the various steps within the personal-development pathway that were completed successfully.

The organisers in charge of **preparatory pathways** or **bridging projects** issue youngsters who have completed a preparatory pathway or a bridging project with a certificate of acquired competences. Youngsters can then use this certificate, in combination with their DO certificate, as a form of portfolio.

In **DO**, it is the class council who decides how youngsters are individually assessed; during this assessment the class council checks whether youngsters have adequately met either the module or learning-pathway objectives so as to entitle him to a recognised Flemish Community certificate. The assessment decisions are taken with due regard for the concrete data featuring in the youngster's file

and more specifically with due regard for the results of the youngster's assessments throughout the school year.

Under **the apprenticeship system**, youngsters' general level of education is assessed by means of a written end-of-year exam (70%) and via interim assessments (30%), on the basis of which pupils' progress in terms of general education is measured throughout the school year; interim assessments focus on pupils' attitudes, the assignments they have submitted and the results of the tests they sat.

The practical and vocationally-oriented component is assessed at the end of every year and by means of:

- a practical end-of-year test on the practical aspect of their training, which focuses on the vocational competences they need to acquire (60%);
- a written theoretical end-of-year exam on their vocationally-oriented training (30%);
- interim assessments, based on pupils' attitude, assignments and tests, which monitor pupils' progress during vocationally-oriented classes throughout the course year (10%).

Pupils who do not pass their general-education exam are given the opportunity to re-sit the exams during the same year. SYNTRA Flanders decides whether or not a pupil who did not pass his vocationally-oriented training exam may repeat it during the same year. Repeating the practical test can only be done during the next course year.

In **part-time education** the following certificates can be conferred:

- An **attest van verworven competenties (certificate of acquired competences)**: if the youngster either failed to successfully complete a module of a modular course or failed to successfully complete a non-modular training course.
- A **deelcertificaat (modular certificate)**: if the youngster successfully completed a module of a modular course.
- A **certificaat (certificate)**: if the youngster successfully completed a modular or non-modular course. An exemption certificate for one or more modules of a modular course is deemed to be the equivalent of a modular certificate for the modules the youngster has been exempted from even though the youngster is not physically presented with the modular certificate(s) for the module(s) he received his exemption for.

Apprenticeships can lead to the following certificates:

- An **attest (certificate)**: if pupils have successfully completed one or more apprenticeship-training years.
- A **certificaat (certificate)**: if pupils have successfully completed their apprenticeship training.
- A **getuigschrift leertijd (apprenticeship certificate)**: if pupils have successfully completed their entire apprenticeship training programme.

Within **DO and the apprenticeship system**, the following certificates can also be conferred:

- A **getuigschrift van de 2^e graad van het secundair onderwijs (certificate of the 2nd stage of secondary education)**: on condition that pupils have obtained at least one certificate, have spent at least 2 school years in secondary education or in an apprenticeship after the 1st stage of secondary education and have adequately attained all the objectives of the curriculum and consequently successfully completed their entire training.
- A **studiegetuigschrift van het 2^e leerjaar van de 3^e graad van het secundair onderwijs (certificate of the 2nd grade of the 3rd stage of secondary education)**: on condition that pupils have obtained at least one certificate, have spent at least 4 school years in secondary education or in an apprenticeship after the 1st stage of secondary education and have adequately attained all the objectives of the curriculum and consequently successfully completed their entire training.
- A **diploma van secundair onderwijs (diploma of secondary education)**: on condition that pupils have obtained a certificate of the second stage of secondary education, have obtained

at least one certificate, have spent at least 5 school years in secondary education or in an apprenticeship after the 1st stage of secondary education and have adequately attained all the objectives of the curriculum and consequently successfully completed their entire training.

- A **getuigschrift over de basiskennis van het bedrijfsbeheer (certificate of business-administration basics)**: if youngsters - the first stage excepted - have spent at least 4 school years in secondary education or in an apprenticeship and are fully au fait with the basics of business administration.

Youngsters can start work:

- under a **part-time employment contract** which entitles them to a minimum wage;
- under an **industrial apprenticeship contract** under which the employer undertakes to train the youngster on the shop floor. It is organised by the joint apprenticeship committees who draw up apprenticeship rules, propose a standard apprenticeship contract and organise the final examinations for these youngsters. The company's training manager draws up an apprenticeship programme. Apprentices are entitled to an apprentice allowance;
- under a **startbaanovereenkomst (starting-job agreement)** (provided they start work before 1 January of the year in which they turn 19);
- as a **family-business assistant** (on condition that they are related to the manager);
- under a training contract with VDAB for **IBO, individuele beroepsopleiding (individual vocational in-company training)**, in which case VDAB contracts its training assignment out to a company which trains job-seekers on the shop floor;
- under a **temping contract** with an agency;
- under a BIO, **beroepsinlevingsovereenkomst** (vocational-immersion agreement) with Flemish, provincial or local authorities.

4.2.5 Guidance

Pathway-to-work guidance is aimed at actively supporting youngsters on their path towards a proper position on the labour market. It consists of the following stages:

- 1) **Intake & screening** at a CDO or with a SYNTRA apprenticeship counsellor, within 14 days of the youngster's registration. These will also register the youngster as a job-seeker with VDAB. Youngsters are screened in terms of work readiness, interests, motivation and previously acquired competences. The pathway counsellor subsequently enters the screening results into the VDAB pathway follow-up system. The results are binding and a deciding factor in whether youngsters are channelled towards labour-market participation, a bridging project, a preparatory pathway or a personal-development pathway.
- 2) On the basis of this screening process, a **pathway-to-work guidance plan** is drafted within thirty days, in consultation with the youngster's class council or apprenticeship guidance team and the CLB (cf. 3.5), which is then discussed with the youngster and formalized in a contract.
- 3) All pathway advice is discussed, and if necessary fine-tuned, at a **bimonthly case meeting** between the pathway counsellor, the CLB, VDAB and, where applicable, also the CDV. The youngster's consecutive pathway stages are entered into the VDAB pathway-follow-up system. Moreover, during the course of this process there is always an option to avail of VDAB pathway-to-work guidance.
- 4) **Acquired competences** are filed into a **portfolio** and updated as the youngster's pathway progresses and is ultimately passed on to VDAB.

In the case of apprenticeships, learning-pathway counsellors define and guide the training pathways and the general-education pathways of pupils who have signed an apprenticeship contract, on the basis of the intake and screening process. They also provide guidance for employers. Learning-pathway counsellors enter into an agreement with the SYNTRA Flanders' Commission of Practical Training which also recognises and monitors the counsellors. The SYNTRA Flanders' pedagogical counsellors coordinate pupils' pedagogical and didactical guidance. Together with the learning-

pathway counsellor, the trainers providing general and vocationally-oriented training, the director of the centre or his representative, the CLB staff and the SYNTRA Flanders pedagogical counsellor they make up a guidance team. This team follows up pupils throughout their apprenticeships. Guidance by the pupil-guidance cells is provided on a monthly basis. Guidance teams look after problem course participants. Any appeal or complaint procedures end up with the apprenticeship counsellor and/or the Commission of Practical Training though, increasingly, the sectors themselves also fulfil a supervisory role where in-company training in their individual sectors is concerned. Since 2007, SYNTRA Flanders has operated a sector-specific guidance system.

Only one non-profit association is subsidised to provide further training for pathway counsellors, i.e. SYNTRA Flanders. This **further-training centre** must also extend its services to all centres operating within the alternance-training system.

As regards guidance by the CLBs, pupil guidance centres, please refer to 3.5.

4.2.6 Teachers and pathway counsellors

CDV staff are contractually appointed. The legal-status arrangement prevailing within education does not apply to them. This is the reason why staff salaries are subsidised under the lump-sum payment system which also covers the operational expenses of CDV.

CDOs are educational institutions which operate on an autonomous basis or are connected to a school offering full-time mainstream TSO or BSO (cf. 4.1.6).

Pupils in an **apprenticeship** are given general and vocationally-oriented training by trainers and receive their practical training from their employers. Especially as far as professional knowledge is concerned, these trainers are people who work in the field and either run their own business or are part of the management team of an SME. All general-education trainers have obtained a certificate of teaching competence. SYNTRA Flanders organises 120 hours of initial advanced training for its trainers which mainly focuses on pedagogical and didactical matters. Moreover, periodical advanced training is organised on a regular basis and focuses on technical elements or on specific aspects of the pedagogical-educational approach. Employers (who provide 4 day/week apprenticeship training) are given sequential training. Sequential training mainly focuses on issuing instructions to apprentices, their coaching and conflict management.

5. POST-SECONDARY NON-TERTIARY EDUCATION

Post-secondary non-tertiary education comprises the so-called **7th grades** ASO and KSO which prepare pupils for higher education, the 7th grades BSO, the 4th stage BSO, and Se-n-Se.

All these courses are organised by schools that offer full-time SO and are governed by the Decree of 31/07/1990 concerning Education-II, the Decision of the Flemish Government of 19/07/2002 and the Decree of 30 April 2009 concerning advanced secondary education and higher vocational education.

The following **7th grades** (3rd grades of the 3rd stage) are offered:

- **Within ASO**, a preparatory year for higher education, the special course of study 'special scientific education'.
- **Within KSO**, a preparatory year for higher education, aimed at pupils who have not attended KSO, who did not have any or insufficient prior artistic education and who nevertheless wish to go on to higher artistic education: 'special visual arts education' for the area of study 'visual arts' & 'special music education' for the area of study 'performing arts'.
- **Within BSO**, in the form of a specialisation year; specialisation years within BSO should in principle be within the same area of study pupils have followed already, but can also be chosen by pupils who have been following a different course of study, provided the relevant admissions class council does not object;
- **Within BSO**, a so-called nameless 7th grade (which has not been organised as a specialisation year).

In the 4th stage of BSO, vocational secondary education, pupils have a choice of 2 courses of study, visual arts and fashion design (in 2 areas of study) which run over 2 years. However, these courses are due to be phased out completely over the next few years.

As of 1/9/2009, **Se-n-Se, secundair-na-secundair onderwijs (advanced secondary education)** comprises the former specialisation years offered in the 3rd stage of TSO and KSO which run over two consecutive semesters; in time, some Se-n-Se courses of study that will run over one semester or which may take three consecutive semesters to complete will also be available. These courses are very much vocationally-oriented and contain a relevant component on-the-job learning, educational activities aimed at general and/or vocationally-oriented competences where course participants learn their skills in a work environment.

Pupils who follow these 7th grades or Se-n-Se are entitled to a **school allowance** up to and including the school year in which they turn 22 years of age. This age restriction does not apply to the 4th stage of BSO.

During 2008, 252 pupils followed the 4th stage of BSO.

In that same year, the number of pupils following these 7th grades numbered 47 in ASO, 1,782 in TSO, 122 in KSO and 10,735 in BSO.

5.1 Admission requirements

Pupils who wish to follow a **7th grade within ASO or KSO, organised as a preparatory year for higher education**, need to be in possession of a diploma of SO.

The nameless 7th grade BSO (not organised as a specialisation year) is open to people who have obtained a diploma of SO, a certificate of the 2nd grade of the 3rd stage of SO or for regular BuSO pupils (education form 4) provided the admissions class council issues a positive advice. This also applies to the **7th grades BSO, organised as a specialisation year**, but in this case their certificate would need to have been issued in a course of study which appertains to the same area of study or, otherwise, a favourable advice from the admissions class council is required.

The **4th stage of BSO** is open to people who have obtained a diploma of SO, a certificate of the 2nd grade of the 3rd stage of SO or provided the admissions class council has issued a positive advice on the basis of an admission test.

Se-n-Se welcomes holders of a diploma of secondary education, issued in a course of study within the same area of study. When students wish to progress to a different area of study, they will require a favourable decision from the admissions class council. However, it is also accessible provided the admissions class council issues a favourable decision based on an admission test.

5.2 Organisation of time and type of groups

Regarding the **7th grades and the 4th stage of BSO**, please refer to full-time secondary education 4.1.2.

Se-n-Se courses may start either on 1 September or on 1 February, depending on the organising body's decision. So, it will therefore be possible to organise or follow Se-n-Se for one semester but also to start a new Se-n-Se course within one and the same school year with a different group of pupils.

5.3 Curriculum

The core curriculum in the **7th grades BSO**, whether or not organised in the form of a specialisation year, must consist of general subjects (of which two or more can be integrated under the project 'general subjects'), the subjects of the first and the second grades of the third stage of BSO and must take up at least 12 hours/week. When this year is organised in the form of a specialisation year, at least another 14 hours/week must be allocated to technical subjects and/or practical subjects.

No core curriculum is imposed for the grades of **the 4th stage BSO, the 7th grades ASO and KSO, organised as a preparatory year, or for Se-n-Se**. In Se-n-Se, TSO and KSO and in the 4th stage of BSO, in official education, pupils are no longer compelled to follow religion or non-confessional ethics.

In terms of **Se-n-Se, collaboration** is crucial. For that reason, the institutions providing full-time secondary education will be able to collaborate with other secondary-education institutions, centres for adult education or university colleges, public providers of vocational training for adults, the vocational sectors relevant to the Se-n-Se course in question, companies or organisations and police or fire-service colleges (this cooperation is only possible for the course 'Integral Safety' offered by technical secondary education). These types of collaborations should allow schools to call on outside experts or avail of up-to-date equipment and infrastructures, but also to run part of the training course at the partner institution.

5.4 Assessment, study progress and certification

For information on the assessment process, please refer to full-time secondary education 4.1.4.

- Pupils who have completed the 7th grades ASO, KSO, organised in the form of a preparatory year for higher education, are conferred with an attest van regelmatige lesbijwoning (certificate of regular course attendance).
- In the 7th grades BSO and the 1st or last grade of the 4th stage BSO, pupils may obtain a diploma secundair onderwijs (diploma of secondary education).
- In the 7th grade of BSO, organised as a specialisation year and in the 2nd grade of the 4th stage of BSO, pupils need to pass a GIP, integrated test and a studiegetuigschrift (certificate) may be issued.
- In every grade of the 4th stage of BSO a getuigschrift over basiskennis van het bedrijfsbeheer (a certificate of business-administration basics) may be obtained.

- In an Se-n-Se course, the deliberation class council reaches its decisions at the end of the first semester if the course has been completed by then. For courses which run over three semesters and therefore into the next school year, the deliberation council does not take any decisions until such time as the course has been completed. Pupils can obtain a certificaat van een opleiding secundair-na-secundair (certificate of advanced secondary education) (Se-n-Se). Pupils who failed to successfully complete the course of study in question or who did not follow the course for the pre-set duration at the institution concerned are conferred with an oriënteringsattest C (orientation certificate C).

5.5 Guidance

The CLBs, pupil guidance centres (cf. 3.5) provide pupil guidance, school support and study and vocational guidance. For other initiatives regarding choice of course and vocational-choice orientation, cf. 4.1.5.

5.6 Teachers and trainers

Cf. 4.1.6.

6. TERTIARY EDUCATION

Higher education comprises:

- programmes which lead to the degree of Bachelor, the degree of Master and the degree of Doctor (cf. 6.1);
- these programmes may be rounded off with a post-graduate certificate (cf. 6.1)
- programmes organised by higher vocational education which lead to the degree of graduate (cf. 6.2)
- integrated and specific teacher-training programmes which lead to the diploma of teacher (cf. 3.6, 4.6 and 5.6)

6.1 UNIVERSITY COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY EDUCATION

Basic regulations higher education (cf. <http://onderwijs.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/regelgeving/>).

- Decree of 12 June 1991 concerning universities in the Flemish Community.
- Decree of 13 July 1994 concerning university colleges in the Flemish Community.
- Decree of 4 April 2003 laying down the restructuring of higher education in Flanders (Higher-Education Reform Act).
- Decree of 19 March 2004 concerning the legal status of students, participation in higher education, the integration of certain departments of higher education for social advancement into university colleges and the support for the restructuring of higher education in Flanders (Decree on participation). (With an analogous Special Decree of 19 March 2004 for the Flemish autonomous university colleges).
- Decree of 30 April 2004 concerning the flexibilisation of higher education and laying down urgent higher-education issues (Decree on flexibilisation).
- Decree of 27 January 2006 to ratify the regulations of the Dutch-Flemish Accreditation Organisation regarding the laying down of management principles applicable to accreditation decisions and the testing of new programmes against higher-education programmes in the Flemish Community.
- Decree of 8 June 2007 concerning study financing in the Flemish Community.
- Decree of 14 March 2008 concerning the financing of the activities of the university colleges and universities in Flanders.

The implementation of the **Bologna Declaration** in Flanders was shaped by the aforementioned 'Higher-Education Reform Act', the 'Decree on participation' and the 'Decree on flexibilisation' of 30 April 2004 concerning the new qualification structure (this in compliance with the EQF, European Qualifications Framework). On 2 February 2009, independent international experts confirmed that the Flanders' higher-education qualification framework was compatible with the overall framework of the European Higher Education Space.

The higher-education system consists of 5 **universities** (and alongside them one very small university and one Transnational University Limburg), 22 **university colleges** and 5 **associations** (formed by one university and one or several university colleges). In addition, the Higher Education Register lists another 10 accredited institutes for higher education and there are also 5 private higher-education institutes or academies of fine arts with whom management agreements have been concluded.

Pursuant to the Bachelor-Master-Doctor structure the following types of programmes are organised:

- **Professional Bachelor's programmes** (ISCED 5B) are professionally oriented and are organised by university colleges only. They are a continuation of secondary education.
- **Academic Bachelor's programmes** (ISCED 5A) offered by university colleges within an association or by universities are geared towards transition to Master's programmes. They also tie in with secondary education.

- **Master's programmes** are offered by universities and university colleges, within the framework of an association.
- For further in-depth-study students can follow **advanced Bachelor's programmes, advanced Master's programmes and post-graduate programmes.**
- The highest level of scientific specialisation is the **doctoral programme**. Doctorates are based on original scientific research and culminate in the candidate defending his/her doctoral thesis in public.

Universities and university colleges may also organise short itinerary programmes with a minimum study load of 20 credits within the framework of further professional training. These are ratified by a postgraduate certificate. An integrated overview of all the programmes can now be found on the Higher Education Register.

The number of students pursuing a university-college education came to 180,050, those pursuing a university education to 76,766; 83,180 students had registered for an initial programme under a degree contract in a professional programme while 97,875 students had registered for an academic programme.

In January 2009, there were 7,811 bfts working as management and teaching staff in university-college education as against 2,589 autonomous academic staff and 1,788 bfts as academic support staff in university education.

6.1.1 Admission requirements

Students wishing to register for a **Bachelor's programme** must be in possession of a diploma of secondary education or a foreign proof of study which is recognised as being equivalent. If a student does not hold the required diploma to directly enter into the programme he wants to register for, he may be asked to follow a preparatory programme first. Only the areas of study 'medicine' and 'dentistry' require prospective students to sit an **admission test**. However, higher artistic education also organises admission tests for the areas of study 'audiovisual and visual arts', 'music' and 'performing arts'. Students may also be asked to sit a language exam.

An academic Bachelor's programme gives direct access to a **Master's programme**. Holders of a professional Bachelor's degree are required to follow a bridging programme (transition programme between professional Bachelor's programmes and Master's programmes comprising a study load of no less than 45 and a maximum of 90 credits). Preparatory programmes, on the other hand, are transition programmes between an academic Bachelor's and Master's programme which students may be asked to follow if their degree of Bachelor does not directly tie in with the Master's programme they wish to pursue.

A degree of Bachelor is a prerequisite for anyone wishing to follow an **advanced Bachelor's programme**. However, access may be restricted to graduates of specific Bachelor's programmes only. In that case, graduates of other Bachelor's programmes wishing to register for an advanced Bachelor's programme must first follow a preparatory programme.

A Master's degree is a prerequisite for anyone wishing to pursue an **advanced Master's programme**. However, institutions may further restrict access to graduates from Master's programmes with specific programme characteristics.

Doctoral programmes are only open to holders of a Master's degree. Candidates who have not obtained a Master's degree may be accepted on condition that they pass a skills evaluation or an exam.

6.1.2 Cost of the studies and financial support for students

Students may either register for a credit contract (covering one or several programme components), a degree contract (covering a programme or a full bridging or preparatory programme) or for an exam contract.

Tuition fees are regulated by the Decree of 30 April 2004 concerning the flexibilisation of higher education. The amount depends on whether or not the pupil qualifies for a grant, on whether or not he is an EU citizen, on the learning pathway, the programme (Bachelor's, Master's, bridging programme ...) and on the number of credits. Henceforth, students in the last year of secondary education can also register under a credit contract. Under a credit contract of up to 10 credits they pay 50% of the tuition fees grant-rate students are charged.

The integrated system for school and **study allowances** for all levels of education on the basis of a family file also applies to higher education (cf. introduction). During the 2008-2009 academic year, 41,561 study allowances were paid out to students in higher education, for an average amount of € 1,569.26 (according to the figures available on 16/10/2009; Statistical Yearbook 2008-2009). (Cf. the relevant website of the Department for Education and Training).

Doctoral students may be funded by the university as university assistants or in the form of doctoral fellowships or by the Fund for Scientific Research and related funds.

Other **forms of support** would be scholarships, a.o. within the framework of European exchange programmes or for scientific research. Study loans are granted by private organisations and foundations. Erasmus students may qualify for a mobility grant. Students suffering from functional disabilities can avail of financing for special learning tools. The higher-education institutions also provide numerous social facilities (a.o. student restaurants and accommodation).

6.1.3 Organisation of the academic year

Legally, an academic year is described as a period of one year which commences at the earliest on 1 September and at the latest on 1 October and ends on the day before the start of the next academic year. However departure from this fixed one-year period may exceptionally be granted if the board of the institution decides to either bring forward or put back the start of the academic year. Most university colleges and universities operate a **semester system**, i.e. the academic year is divided into two separate teaching periods or semesters. After the 2nd semester there is a summer recess, followed by the second examination session, which consists of several weeks of exams. The organisation of the academic year – including the holiday arrangements for students – is included in the education regulations drawn up by the board of the institution.

6.1.4 Assessment, study progress and certification

In line with the Decree on flexibilisation, the year system was replaced by a **credit system** (in conformity with ECTS).

Institutions may grant students exemptions in **recognition of acquired qualifications (EVK) and/or acquired competences (EVC)**.

Students are entitled to register at least twice for each programme component, and per registration they are entitled to at least 2 chances to pass. Students are normally given one or two weeks to prepare for the **examinations** which take place over two exam sessions, i.e. in June and September. Under the semester system, exams are also organised in January (at the end of the first semester); these are counted as being part of the first exam session. At the end of every Master's programme students must submit (and sometimes defend) a **dissertation** (a Master's dissertation).

The Decree on participation of 19 March 2004 a.o. regulates students' legal protection in relation to **study-progress decisions** (such as exam decisions, disciplinary exam-related decisions, the conferring of certificates of competence, the granting of exemptions, decisions compelling students to follow a bridging or preparatory programme and any measures in terms of study-progress monitoring. Under this Decree, a Council for disputes about decisions on study progress was also set up as an administrative court of law at Flemish level.

The board of the institution issues a **proof of credit** to students who pass a programme component and confers the degree of **Bachelor** or **Master** on students who successfully complete their Bachelor's or Master's programme. The degree of **'Doctor'** or **'Doctor of Philosophy'** is conferred by a university jury once the candidate has successfully defended his doctoral thesis, which shows that new scientific knowledge can be generated on the basis of independent scientific research, in public.

NARIC Flanders is Flanders' **National Academic (& Professional) Recognition and Information Centre** within the framework of the European Commission and is also the European National Information Centre of Flanders within the framework of the Council of Europe and Unesco. It is in charge of the academic recognition of foreign higher-education degrees and of the professional recognition of the regulated profession of teacher, on the basis of the applicable European Directive (Directive 2005/36/EC).

Every degree always comes with **diploma supplement** which is based on the model developed by the European Commission, the Council of Europe and UNESCO/CEPES who used the Flemish example as a model. For programmes that are fully run in a language other than Dutch, the diploma supplement is issued both in the language of the programme and in Dutch.

6.1.5 Guidance

Guidance is organised by the institutions themselves.

6.1.6 Academic staff

The Decree of 13 July 1994 shapes the legal framework of the conditions of service of teaching staff at **university colleges**. The degree of Bachelor is a prerequisite for anyone wishing to work as a junior practical lecturer or senior practical lecturer while the degree of Master is indispensable for the offices of lecturer (docent), senior lecturer, assistant and senior research assistant; a degree of Doctor is required for the offices of doctor-assistant, lecturer, senior lecturer, professor and professor ordinarius. Additional seniority conditions prevail for anyone applying for the posts of senior practical lecturer, senior lecturer (hoofdlector), senior research assistant, senior lecturer (hoofddocent) or professor.

Since 1991, the category of teaching staff at **universities** has been abolished. The academic staff must both conduct scientific research and provide academic education. The Decree of 12 June 1991 and the BVR (Decision of the Flemish Government) of 1 December 1998 shape the legal framework of the conditions of service. Members of the autonomous academic staff are formally required to hold a degree of Doctor while the assistant academic staff need to hold a degree of Master. To be appointed as a practical assistant, candidates need to hold the degree of Bachelor.

From a contractual point of view, the aforementioned staff are employees in subsidised higher-education institutions and a type of civil servant in the funded institutions. However, the difference between both statuses is small. The board of these institutions may temporarily or permanently appoint candidates to any vacancies that arise. Only assistants are always appointed on a temporary basis. Academic staff are paid by the universities. Assistant academic staff are appointed on a temporary basis only while autonomous academic staff are given permanent appointments, except for professors extraordinarii who hold a part-time position.

There is no specific initial teacher training for the teaching staff at university colleges or the academic staff at universities.

6.2 HBO5, HIGHER VOCATIONAL EDUCATION, QUALIFICATION LEVEL 5

1 September 2009 saw the introduction of Hoger Beroepsonderwijs (HBO5) (Higher Vocational Education, qualification level 5). HBO5 now covers all the programmes offered by hoger onderwijs voor sociale promotie (HOSP) (higher social-advancement education) and the course of study 'nursing' offered in the 4th stage of vocational secondary education. (Decree of 30 April 2009 concerning advanced secondary education and higher vocational education & the Decree of 31 July 1990 concerning Education-II, as amended).

HBO5 specifically caters for students (referred to as 'course participants' in these programmes) who, after their secondary education, wish to obtain a level-5 qualification (pursuant to the Flemish and the European Framework) but wish to do so via shorter programmes. HBO5 also offers the working population and job-seekers a range of qualification opportunities. For that reason, it offers short and flexible pathways. Dual pathways will give the employed an opportunity to acquire certain competences within their own work environment. HBO5 also wishes to become a stepping stone towards the professional Bachelor's programmes so, as a result, HBO5 programmes will have to guarantee course participants a follow-up pathway to the relevant Bachelor's programmes.

The programmes are of higher-education level and are organised by the centres for adult education and the university colleges, with the exception of the course of study 'nursing' (previously 4th stage of BSO) which is only organised by the institutions who offer full-time secondary education; this course will remain available in modular form until the end of school year 2011-2012. HBO5 programmes run over 6 semesters.

It offers 5 areas of study: 'biotechnology', 'health care', 'commercial and management sciences', 'industrial sciences and technology' and 'social work'. These programmes are organised both in linear and in modular form. However, the linear programmes will have to be phased out by 1 September 2012, at the latest.

The Flemish Government will compile a register of all higher-vocational education programmes. New HBO5 programmes will first have to pass the macro-effectiveness test (from the Vocational-Education Quality-Assurance Commission) and a new HBO5 programme test (from the accreditation body) before they will be approved.

Collaboration arrangements are of crucial importance. In terms of the organisation of higher-vocational education programmes, schools offering full-time secondary education, the centres for adult education or university colleges are free to collaborate with:

- one or more educational institutions;
- one or more public vocational-training providers for adults,
- one or more vocational sectors at which the programmes are aimed;
- companies or organisations.

Within the context of this collaboration, one educational institution shall always act as the coordinating institution. Solely the coordinating institution will be competent and responsible for the setting of programmes, assessments, certification and quality assurance. Educational institutions or public vocational-training providers for adults within one of these collaborations will only be allowed to organise parts of a higher-vocational education programme outside of the coordinating institution.

The higher-vocational education programme provision within adult education is coordinated by the centres for adult education. The HBO5 courses 'nursing' are coordinated by an institution offering full-time secondary education.

Due to the fact that the professional profiles, vocational qualifications and teaching qualifications are still awaiting ranking, no new HBO5 programmes could be launched during 2009-2010.

During the period 1/4/2008-31/3/2009, 25,065 course participants registered for higher vocational education organised by adult education, which corresponds to 6,139,008 course-participant teaching periods. 4,693 pupils were registered for the course 'nursing' under the modular system while 79 were following this same course under the linear system.

6.2.1 Admission requirements

The course of study 'nursing' and higher vocational education organised by the CVOs is open to anyone (provided they have complied with part-time compulsory education) in possession of a studiegetuigschrift 2e leerjaar van de 3^e graad van het SO (certificate of the 2nd grade of the 3rd stage of SO), a diploma SO (diploma of SO), a certificaat (certificate) of a programme organised by secondary adult education comprising no less than 900 teaching periods, a diploma HOSP (diploma of HOSP), a diploma van het hoger beroepsonderwijs, (diploma of higher vocational education) a diploma of short-type higher education with full curriculum, a degree of Bachelor or Master, or on the basis of an admission test, organised by the centre.

6.2.2 Cost of the studies and financial support for course participants

The cost of these studies and the financial support available to course participants depend on the level of the organising institutions (secondary, adult education, higher education).

There are no age restrictions for school allowances paid to course participants following the course **nursing**.

As of school year 2008-2009, course participants who register at a CVO are charged 1 euro per teaching period. The total amount course participants have to pay has been capped at 400 euro per course and per school year or at 1,200 euro for the entire course within a period of four school years. Various target groups (a.o. the unemployed and detainees) have been exempted from registration fees while others pay reduced registration fees (a.o. certain categories of disabled people). Course participants do not qualify for a school or study allowance. However, once HBO5 course participants have completed their course they may apply for a subsidy which will allow them to recoup either all or part of the registration fees they have paid.

6.2.3 Organisation of the academic year

This depends on the level of the organising institutions (secondary, adult education, higher education).

The course **nursing** is not divided into grades but runs over 6 semesters. The programme must be in compliance with European Directive 2005/36/EC and the contiguous ministerial decision of 28 February 2008 concerning accountable general nursing staff and the Royal Decrees concerning the practising of medical professions. For that reason, the course must number at least 4,600 teaching periods. As a result, the educational institutions will have to compel course participants to engage in a number of course-related personal activities (additional work experience, self-study, thesis...) for at least 4 hours a week from the 2009-2010 school year onwards.

The CVO school year commences on 1 September at the earliest and ends on 31 August. Courses run until 30 June at the latest. Courses that have been organised in modular form (or which are based on units/submodules) may be started at any time and can be spread across several school years. The training provision under the linear system is spread over no less than 32 weeks, but never exceeds 40 weeks. Classes may be taught every day of the week.

6.2.4 Assessment, study progress and certification

The CVOs assess course participants on a module-by-module basis. Assessments may be performed on a continuous basis or at the end of a module. During the transition period, CVOs who have adopted the linear system must organise at least one exam on every subject at the end of the school year. In higher vocational education, a second assessment period may be organised.

Course participants may obtain the following certificates through HBO5:

- an attest van verworven competenties (certificate of acquired competences) (issued to course participants who failed to successfully complete a particular learning-pathway module);
- a deelcertificaat (modular certificate) (for modules that have been completed successfully);
- a certificaat (certificate) (for a modular programme or a programme of less than 900 teaching periods);
- the diploma van gegradueerde (degree of graduate) (associate degree), ratifies a HBO programme of no less than 900 teaching periods, which always comes with a diplomasupplement (diploma supplement);
- a getuigschrift over de basiskennis van het bedrijfsbeheer (certificate of business-administration basics).

In the course of study 'nursing', course participants may also be conferred with a diploma of secondary education. In that case, the diploma will always feature the total number of teaching periods.

6.2.5 Guidance

This depends on the level of the organising institutions (secondary, adult education, higher education).

6.2.6 Academic staff

This depends on the level of the organising institutions (secondary, adult education, higher education).

7. ADULT EDUCATION

Continuing education in Flanders is provided by a very diverse number of systems.

Adult education comes under the remit of the minister for education and comprises:

- **adult basic education** for the poorly-educated, organised by 13 CBEs, centra voor basiseducatie (centres for adult basic education) (one per working area), which catered for 39,223 course participants during 2007-2008
- **secondary adult education**, organised by 106 CVOs, centra voor volwassenenonderwijs (centres for adult education) (Flanders numbers 113 CVOs in total); in the period 1/9/2008 – 31/3/2009, it catered for 7,972 course participants in the linear system and for 292,121 course participants in the modular system
- (part of) **higher vocational education**, organised by 63 CVOs, centres for adult education, with 25,065 singular registrations during the period 1/4/2008-31/3/2009 (this is discussed under 6.2)
- **specific teacher-training programmes** (as discussed under 3.6).

Within one single working area (boasting one CBE and several CVOs), a **consortium volwassenenonderwijs (adult-education consortium)** ensures that the course provision is inter-attuned, that the various centres cooperate amongst themselves and with the other public adult-education providers. It also provides an ombudsman service for course participants.

In January 2009, there were 736 people (expressed in bfts) working as management and teaching staff within adult basic education, 5,509 bfts within secondary adult education, 1,225 bfts within higher vocational education organised by adult education and 5,202 bfts within part-time artistic education.

Part-time artistic education also comes under the remit of the minister for education. It does not only cater for adults but also for youngsters from the age of 6 years upwards. It is organised by 66 academies for visual arts and by 101 academies for music, drama and dance and henceforth also by the academies who organise both visual arts and music and one or several other courses of study. During the 2008-2009 school year, DKO numbered 167,647 course participants, 75.4% of whom were under the age of 18.

Vocational training comes under the remit of the minister for employment and comprises:

- **beroepsopleiding (vocational training)** for job-seekers and the employed which is organised by **VDAB** at its own competence centres; during 2008 47,759 employed persons and 89,129 unemployed persons completed a training programme, all together accounting for 13,781,281 training periods.
- **ondernemersvorming (entrepreneurial training)** aimed at the self-employed and SMEs, organised by the Flemish Agency for Entrepreneurial Training **SYNTRA Flanders** across 5 SYNTRA campuses, catering for 26,720 course participants seeking to improve their professional knowledge and for 5,801 course participants who registered for a course 'business administration' (For information on apprenticeships, cf. 4.2).

During 2008, VDAB and SYNTRA Flanders concluded a framework agreement on the collective use of buildings and training equipment. Within this framework agreement the VDAB competence centres and the SYNTRA campuses can work out their own cooperation arrangements.

Training in agriculture comes under the remit of the minister for agriculture and is organised across 48 recognised training centres. In 2007, 322 beginners followed training in agriculture. The Department for Agriculture and Fisheries > Division Sustainable Agricultural Development is responsible for the recognition of the organisers (the recognised centres), the registration of trainers, the funding of training activities, the on-site inspections, the signing of certificates and the payment of participants' social-advancement allowances.

Non formal **sociaal-cultureel volwassenenwerk (socio-cultural adult work)** comes under the remit of the minister for culture. It is offered across 57 socio-cultural associations, 32 socio-cultural movements, 13 folk high schools and 26 training institutions. The department of Culture, Youth, Sport and Media is responsible for the preparation, follow-up and evaluation of the policy. The agency for Socio-cultural work for youths and adults > department Local Cultural Policy and Socio-cultural Adult Work takes care of policy implementation.

7.1 Political and legal framework

Adult education	Decree of 15 June 2007
Proofs of experience	Decree of 30 April 2004 + BVR (Decision of the Flemish Government) of 23 September 2005 + BVR (Decision of the Flemish Government) of 5 October 2007
Dutch Language Houses	Decree of 7 May 2004 + BVR (Decision of the Flemish Government) of 22 July 2005
Vocational training VDAB	Decree of 7 May 2004
SYNTRA Flanders - entrepreneurial training - advanced training	Decree of 7 May 2004 - BVR (Decision of the Flemish Government) of 23 February 1999 - BVR (Decision of the Flemish Government) of 4 April 2003
DKO, Part-time Artistic Education	Decree of 31 July 1990 Decree of 10 July 2007
Training in agriculture	Decree of 3 March 2004
Socio-cultural adult work	Decree of 4 April 2003

AKOV, the Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Training (cf. 1.2) concentrates amongst other things on the quality and transparency of EVC pathways. Cooperation within the EVC field of action is very important here. In that light, AKOV activated an **EVC Knowledge Network**, led by an EVC Promoter Team. The EVC Promoter Team has been operational since June 2009. It seats 23 members, representative for the Knowledge Network. All those offering pathways towards the accreditation and/or the recognition of acquired competences are free to join the Knowledge Network. The idea is to develop and exchange expertise and best practices regarding high-quality recognition procedures, quality standards and reliable methodologies and tools. The Promoter Team and Knowledge Networks also draft policy recommendations in this regard. A special website was developed aimed at all the organisations who are professionally involved in EVC.

During 2010, a pathway will be launched within the socio-cultural sector with a view to arriving at a common vision on the qualification structure and EVC. In the meantime a new tool, Oscar, was developed which should give participants of socio-cultural youth and adult work an overview of the competences they are acquiring by following training courses and by taking up honorary positions and doing voluntary work.

Within the framework of the Decree on the Flemish qualification structure, recognised qualifications will be recorded in a **qualification database** which will be freely consultable. In terms of vocational qualifications, it is currently being examined how they could be attuned to COMPETENT, the database of vocational-qualification profiles, which was developed by SERV and VDAB.

Since 2001, in the wake of the 1993 VLOR initiatives and those from the Flemish Social and Economic Council of 1995 the cooperation between education and enterprise has been receiving more structural

support through **covenants** on employment and training with the sectors. The various undertakings the social partners made within the framework of the Competence Agenda, were also laid down in 28 sector covenants, which were based on the 2007-2009 model covenant, which VESOC, the Flemish Economic and Social Consultative Committee approved on 11 May 2007. They concretely specify a.o. how many work-experience places will be created for part-time education, how many work-experience places for full-time education, how many training programmes can be followed, how many jobs can be created, the recognition of acquired competences etc. In a number of cases this also leads to negotiations on specific **education covenants**.

7.2 Division of powers

Cf. 7 introduction

7.3 Financing

Registration fees

People who wish to follow **adult basic education** are not charged any registration fees. However, the CBEs are entitled to pass on the cost of course materials to the course participants.

Since the 2008-2009 school year, course participants registering for a **CVO** course must pay 1 euro per teaching period; this amount has been capped at 400 euro per course and per school year or at 1,200 euro for the entire course over a period of four school years. The standard rate for an NT2 course is fifty cent. Course participants registering for the area of study 'general education' (second-chance education) or for the course 'experiential expert on poverty and social exclusion' are fully exempted from registration fees. Moreover, various target groups are also exempt from paying registration fees while others only pay a 0.25 euro reduced registration fee. Working people can pay half of their registration fees in training vouchers.

For unemployed job-seekers all **VDAB courses** are free. This also applies to e-courses, though, other categories of unemployed people may also qualify for a fee exemption. Any employee who follows a programme at his own initiative only pays a fee for the course teaching materials. Depending on the category of the training programme, this fee ranges between 25, 40 and 50 euro/day with a maximum of 250 euro per course. The overall cost of e-courses varies from programme to programme. The employers' fees for training programmes depend on the type of course, the duration, the location (in-house or at a VDAB centre), the number of participants etc... This price is negotiated and contractually agreed with the head of training of the VDAB centre in question. Employee training programmes which are provided at the request of employers cost between € 80 and € 160 per participant per training day.

The prices for **entrepreneurial training by SYNTRA** depend on the duration and on the type of programme offered.

As regards **training in agriculture**, the centres are free to set their own registration fees.

For courses offered by **Part-Time Artistic Education** youngsters were paying 56 euro during the 2009-2010 school year (reduced rate: 36 euro) while adults were paying 183 euro (reduced rate: 106 euro). This amount is passed on to the Department for Education and Training. Various target groups enjoy a reduced rate.

Usually small contributions are sought for the educational programmes organised by the **socio-cultural adult organisations**. The providers in question are free to set the amount.

Financial support for course participants

Paid educational leave is aimed at the social advancement of employees working in the private sector. Under this system they are granted extra time off for the courses they follow during their leisure time or they are given leave to attend courses, this if the courses coincide with their working hours.

Employees or temping staff who are living in Flanders or in the Brussels Region (where also Actiris, the former BGDA, Brusselse Gewestelijke Dienst voor Arbeidsbemiddeling, operates), can purchase **training vouchers** to the value of maximum € 250 per calendar year. They can use these to pay for training programmes organised by recognised training providers. The beneficiaries themselves only need to pay half of the registration fees in training vouchers. People who never obtained a diploma of general, vocational or technical secondary education can even get a full refund for the training vouchers they purchased. People who do not hold a diploma of higher education and wish to pursue a higher-education programme that runs over more than one year (Bachelor's, teacher training or higher vocational education) costing more than 250 euro can claim an additional 250 euro in training vouchers. Some categories of people who followed career guidance are also entitled to additional financial support.

SMEs and the self-employed can qualify for "**SME portfolio support**". Under this system, employers pay 50% of the cost of the service provision, but never more than € 5,000.

For course participants looking for work, **VDAB** offers a number of **allowances**. And in addition there are also a number of allowances for people involved in "on-the-job-learning".

Course participants of 18 years and older who entered into an **apprenticeship**, whereby they combine entrepreneurial training at a SYNTRA campus with practical training in a company of their own choice, are paid a work-experience allowance. This allowance depends on their previous education.

Course participants following **training in agriculture** are paid a social-advancement allowance (of 6 euro per hour).

Financing/subsidising of the institutions

The CBEs, centres for adult basic education and the CVOs, centres for adult education are subsidised/funded by the government and are entitled to trainer hours and points. Based on the course-participant teaching periods, they are given a number of full-time equivalents to hire trainers, a point lump sum to hire support staff (and managerial staff for the CVOs) and an operational allowance. 5% of the operational allowance (in the case of the CBEs) or of the operational resources (in the case of the CVOs) must be allocated to quality assurance and the development of learning tools. Each centre will be entitled to one full-time director. In addition, the CVOs also generate operational resources from course participants' registration fees, from the assessment of course participants who followed distance learning or course participants who need to be assessed in the area of study 'general education' and who have not followed any formal education.

The adult-education consortia jointly receive subsidies for labour costs, operational expenses and investments to the tune of 3.017 million euro at least. Of this, 650,000 euro will have to be allocated to the support and coordination of the development of an educational and training policy for detainees, the pin-pointing of their educational and training needs and their educational-pathway guidance. The remainder of the principal of this subsidy will be divided amongst the adult-education consortia on the basis of the total volume of course-participant teaching periods the centres affiliated to the consortium generate.

The VOCVO, the Flemish Support Centre for all of Adult Education receives an annual subsidy for labour costs, operational expenses and investments.

The activities (and the **vocational training**) of **VDAB** are largely funded by the Flemish Government. Within this framework VDAB concludes a Management Agreement with the Flemish government.

Besides the contributions from the Flemish Community it also derives an income from the European Union and from invoicing employers.

The agency **SYNTRA Flanders** is subsidised by the Flemish Government - policy area Work and also receives European and Flemish contributions for specific projects. It subsidises the 5 recognised training centres for the self-employed and SMEs (SYNTRA). The centres receive both an operational and an investment subsidy. They must supplement the subsidies they receive with their own revenue which is mainly generated by the registration fees course participants pay.

The academies for part-time artistic education receive a teaching periods' package based on the number of pupils counted on 1 February of the previous school year. In addition, they also receive operational resources from the Flemish Community.

The socio-cultural organisations receive a lump-sum payment.

- The lump-sum payment for **associations and specialised training institutions** consists of a basic amount and a variable amount. The original subsidy amount was fixed on the basis of the size of the organisations. This amount can increase or decrease on the basis of the evaluation of the workings of these organisations which is a.o. conducted on the basis of an external review by a joint committee seating representatives from the Agency Socio-Cultural Work for Youths and Adults and a number of external experts. Organisations who receive a positive final evaluation can receive additional subsidies if they want to capitalize on the policy priorities specified by the Flemish Government. These priorities are defined after a social debate on the needs highlighted by the sector and the policy intentions of the Flemish Government itself has taken place.
- **Movements** are granted an amount, based on how their application file is assessed. The decree specifies minimum and maximum amounts per organisation. The Minister sets the amount on the basis of the advice he receives from an advisory committee.
- As of 2005, **folk high schools** receive a maximum of 1.5 euro per resident living within their working area (with a minimum of 500,000 euro), irrespective of the outcome of an evaluation of their activities.
- Aside from the subsidies the socio-cultural adult organisations receive from the Minister for Culture, they more often than not also generate their own income (such as contributions from participants and donations) and also benefit from other subsidies. These may be provincial subsidies, subsidies from other Flemish or federal ministers (if the theme or target group of the organisation fits in with another policy area) and European project subsidies.

7.4 Programmes and providers

Objectives

The objective of **adult education** is, on the one hand, to provide course participants with the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes required for personal development, social integration, participation in further education, practising a profession or mastering a language and, on the other hand, to give course participants an opportunity to obtain certificates.

Vocational training by VDAB centres on three objectives with a view to a lifelong and sustainable place in the labour market:

- stimulating, organising and enhancing the development and recognition of competences in job seekers specifically through the establishment of competence centres, the recognition of acquired competences and the organisation of training programmes;
- providing, organising and facilitating vocational training and the accompanying guidance for job seekers and employees in training centres and/or on the shop floor;
- granting allowances (especially training vouchers) for training programmes.

Under the terms of the management agreement, the VDAB must, through its offer, reach an over-representation of the following **target groups**: ethnic minorities, employment-impaired workers, older citizens, and the poorly-educated. This implies that the competence centres will adapt their methodological processes to these new clients and will focus on a suitable channel mix.

Through its **entrepreneurial training** SYNTRA Flanders wants to organise high-quality and specific vocational training programmes for youngsters and adults who wish to embark on a professional career as a self-employed person or within the sector of small and medium-sized businesses and thus boost entrepreneurship as an essential factor of socio-economic development. At various levels, these vocational-training programmes are organised in a modular fashion where work alternates with training so that participants can compile the package most suited to them.

DKO, part-time artistic education meets pupils' general artistic interest, offers them an opportunity to express their artistic creativeness, helps them discover art and prepares youngsters for higher artistic education.

Training in agriculture caters for all those who are involved in agriculture, horticulture and horticultural business management organisations at a professional level (self-employed owners, their collaborating family members, employees, contractors), florists and landscape gardeners; employees of public-park departments; recognised sellers and users of phytocides and recognised users of biocides; beekeepers. Training for beginners is available for all those wishing to find employment in any of these sectors. Hobby agriculturists can register for short training activities.

Socio-cultural adult work wants to give people an opportunity to develop in a balanced way, to develop their competences, give people meaning and encourage their emancipation and thus contribute to cultural development, social integration and to the realisation and reinforcement of a democratic society.

Admission requirements

People who wish to register for a course offered by **adult basic education** must be in compliance with part-time compulsory education (i.e. must have turned 18 years of age). For the courses 'literacy education Dutch as a 2nd language', 'Dutch as a 2nd language' or languages, course participants must be in compliance with full-time compulsory education, i.e. be 15 or 16 years of age at the time of registration and must have followed the first two grades of full-time secondary education. However, pupils between the ages of 12 and 16 who are following full-time secondary education can henceforth also register for the courses 'Dutch as a 2nd language', on condition that the course they have chosen does not coincide with school hours. For these course participants, this additional course is free of charge.

People who wish to register for a course offered by **secondary adult education** must be in compliance with full-time compulsory education (courses 'Hebrew' excepted). The courses 'general education' are open to all those who have complied with part-time education.

Only the **Dutch Language Houses** are entitled to organise and coordinate the intake, testing and referring of NT2 course participants within the area of study 'Dutch as a second language' who are not in possession of an NT2 certificate.

The **VDAB vocational training programmes** are open to all adults regardless of nationality. By means of incentives and through guidance, especially the target groups are encouraged to follow training. For certain programmes higher admission requirements apply and selection tests must be passed. Since the 2007-2008 school year, the competence centres have also been open to schools and their pupils at a rate of 72 hours per pupil and within a pre-arranged schedule.

People who wish to follow **entrepreneurial training with SYNTRA Flanders** must either be in compliance with compulsory education and must either have sufficient previous education (e.g. through an apprenticeship) or have acquired sufficient professional experience in the vocation that forms the subject of their entrepreneurial training. If these conditions have not been met, they can gain practical experience through supplementary practical training or on-the-job training via an apprenticeship. Certain programmes do set higher admission requirements in terms of previous education however.

DKO, part-time artistic education is structured along various hierarchical levels, i.e. one cannot follow a specialisation course without having followed sufficient training at a lower level first. On condition that the minimum-age requirement for a specific course of study has been met, pupils normally start their chosen option in the first grade. To progress to a subsequent grade, pupils must have passed the tests of the year they have just completed.

In the case of **training in agriculture** participants must have completed compulsory education before they can enter the training programmes.

Socio-cultural adult work does not operate any specific admission requirements.

Course offer

In **adult basic education**, the courses in the areas of learning 'Dutch', 'languages', 'mathematics', 'social orientation' and 'information and communication technology' are offered at primary-education level and at the level of the first stage of full-time secondary education and operate the exact same final and developmental objectives. The areas of learning 'literacy education Dutch as a second language' and 'Dutch as a second language' offered within adult basic education comprise courses which are organised at the level of orientation stage 1 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. For these courses basic competences have been defined. The courses in question are offered in modular form.

Secondary adult education offers courses at the level of the 2nd and 3rd stages of full-time secondary education, except in the case of the areas of study 'Dutch as a second language', languages at orientation stages 1 and 2 and languages at orientation stages 3 and 4, ranked in accordance with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. Course participants have a choice between 31 areas of study in total.

- The area of study 'general education' now also includes all the courses that used to be offered through the former **second-chance education**. These cater specifically for adults over the age of 18 who as yet wish to obtain a diploma of secondary education. The exams are organised by the very centres for adult education which also confer diplomas of secondary education.
- The courses offered within the area of study 'general education' are governed by the same **final objectives** or specific final objectives as the corresponding courses of study offered through full-time secondary education. The final objectives are specified per course of study.
- For the courses offered within the other areas of study, the same final objectives and recognised vocational qualifications apply as those governing the corresponding courses of study offered through full-time secondary education, with which they have been harmonized.
- For courses within areas of study offered through secondary adult education in respect of which there are no corresponding courses of study or specific final objectives within secondary education, course-specific **basic competences** have been defined. These basic competences are defined per individual course of study. The approved secondary adult-education course profiles include certain key competences.
- **Key competences** are cognitive, psycho-motor or affective skills which are essential to a particular vocation but which are broader and are in a way instrumental to the overall personal development of course participants. These must be aspired to. The boards of the centres will

have to implement the way these are divided per module and will have to include them in their curriculum.

VDAB does not only organise hundreds of vocationally-oriented training programmes covering most of the occupational fields, but also courses 'Dutch as a 2nd language' and ICT courses. These courses are held during working hours, in the evenings or on Saturdays and can be organised in a host of different ways. They may be held in VDAB training centres or elsewhere, they can consist of work-experience placements, training programmes at a recognised centre, individual vocational training in a company or educational institution and e-learning.

- **On-the-job-learning** can be done via work-experience placements which form part of all regular training programmes hosted at a competence centre, via an individual vocational in-company training traineeship (IBO) or even through induction training, a company-oriented vocational finishing programme or also through 2 months' study. Once the training has been completed, the host company must offer the course participants an indefinite employment contract.

Entrepreneurial training covers various types of training programmes (alongside apprenticeships, cf. 4.2).

- **Entrepreneurial training** prepares participants who wish to become self-employed or hope to set up or work in a small or medium-sized company for general, technical, commercial, financial and administrative management. It can take anything between 1 and 3 years and consists of courses in business administration and modular professional-knowledge courses. It may be combined with an apprenticeship in which the course participant receives his/her practical training in a company on a full-time or part-time basis, with the support from a learning-pathway counsellor. Apprenticeships run for a minimum of 6 months or up until the end of the entrepreneurial-training programme.
- The **course 'business administration'** takes one year and leads to a certificate of business-administration basics, which is required for a business-license certificate. Since 2008, course participants can also obtain this certificate through e-learning. The course **'business management for SMEs'** is geared towards company managers or executive functions and requires higher previous education.
- **Some 80 certified advanced training programmes** at the end of which the Flemish Government issues course participants with a specific diploma or certificate. Course participants need to pass an exam in most of these programmes. The advanced-training programmes in question mainly cater for people practising fast-changing professions such as health and safety advisors, energy experts... or to allow certain professionals such as colour consultants, beauticians.... specialise further. The programmes are developed and continuously monitored in consultation with the relevant professional federations.
- In addition, there are another 350 different **uncertified advanced training programmes** geared towards the self-employed, SMEs and their close collaborators. And of course, there are also a whole host of tailor-made programmes on offer.

Training in agriculture comprises courses for beginners, training courses, work-experience placements, short training activities and completion days.

DKO, part-time artistic education offers 'visual arts', 'music', 'drama' and 'dance' courses. Classes in the course of study 'visual arts' last 50 minutes while all other courses of study classes run over periods of 60 minutes. The learning pathways run over a full school year of maximum 40 weeks, from 1 September until 30 June.

The learning activities offered by **socio-cultural adult organisations** are most diverse. (Cf. websites).

Qualifications

In **adult basic education**, CBEs issue a deelcertificaat (modular certificate) when course participants have successfully completed a module and a certificaat (certificate) when they have completed an entire learning pathway.

In **secondary adult education**, CVOs confer an attest (certificate) when one unit of the temporary modular structure has been completed successfully, a deelcertificaat (modular certificate) per module and a certificaat (certificate) at the end of a complete learning pathway. Within the area of study 'general education' course participants can also be conferred with a diploma (diploma) (and on condition that they hold a diploma of SO also for other courses).

VDAB confers various types of VDAB-certificaten (VDAB certificates) a.o. in conjunction with supplementary sectoral certificates, certificates issued by a company or supplementary legal certificates.

Course participants following entrepreneurial training with SYNTRA Flanders can also obtain various proofs of study.

- People following **entrepreneurial training** who pass both a professional knowledge and a business-administration course are conferred with a diploma (diploma) which meets the statutory business-licensing conditions in terms of professional knowledge and the basics of business administration.
- Course participants who only pass the course 'professional knowledge' are issued with a getuigschrift beroepskennis en praktijk (certificate of vocational knowledge and practice) which meets the professional-knowledge requirements.
- Course participants who only pass the course 'business administration' are issued with a getuigschrift van basiskennis van bedrijfsbeheer (certificate of business-administration basics) which meets the business-administration requirements.
- Certified advanced training which dovetails with entrepreneurial training results in an official Flemish Community certificate.
- Uncertified advance training (current topics, language courses, business administration and management themes, new regulations...) leads to a attest (certificate) from the organiser SYNTRA.

Training in agriculture may result in a course-specific getuigschrift (certificate). A programme for beginners in agriculture and horticulture which has been successfully completed leads to an installatieattest (certificate for establishing a business). The certificate for establishing a business counts as sufficient proof that its holder has acquired the necessary basic knowledge of business administration to allow him to register with the Crossroads Bank for Enterprises.

Within DKO, course participants receive an attest (certificate) when they have successfully completed a particular stage or a getuigschrift (certificate). This does not have any 'civic effect' but demonstrates that they are able for a particular level.

SoCiuS has developed a portfolio, i.e. a folder in which people store and compile all the non-formal and informal learning experiences they have acquired through recognised and/or subsidised **socio-cultural adult work** and youth work. Two types of documents are stored in this portfolio. On the one hand it contains documents which inventory and document people's competences and, on the other hand, certificates that were conferred after they passed tests based on autonomous or public standards. This portfolio goes by the name of Oscar. Oscar supports the recognition and accreditation of acquired competences (EVC) within socio-cultural youth and adult work.

7.5 Quality assurance

The inspectorate (cf. 1.4) also carries out regular full inspection within **adult education** and **part-time artistic education**. The **VOCVO, Flemish Support Centre for all of Adult Education** supports all

the CBEs and CVOs which do not receive any support from the network-related **pedagogical counselling services**. The VOCVO and the pedagogical counselling services will have to use 20% of the funds they are allocated to jointly develop their knowledge and expertise within adult education.

Since 2009, the new Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Training, AKOV (cf. 1.2) is in charge of the quality assurance of pathways that lead to certificates of recognised qualifications, including **vocational training by VDAB** and the **training courses run by SYNTRA**. Quality assurance within entrepreneurial training has been fully and structurally embedded within the SYNTRA network since 2001. Centres wishing to carry out a thorough internal self-evaluation operate the PROZA quality-assessment tool, VIZO version. The evaluation of this quality-control process is monitored by an internal assessment panel. In addition, there is also an external study bureau which carries out result measurements.

As regards **training in agriculture**, the Division Sustainable Agricultural Development from the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries is responsible for the recognition of the organisers (the recognised centres) and the on-site inspections.

Organisations which are subsidised on foot of the Decree concerning **socio-cultural adult work** are expected to abide by the principles of overall quality assurance and to stand over their professionalization and professionalism. The manner in which this is done forms part of the evaluation of their activities by the administration. The Agency Socio-cultural work for Youths and Adults also evaluates the activities of the organisations, among other things on the basis of the annual justificatory documents and by means of external reviews by a joint committee. **SoCiuS**, the Support Centre for Socio-Cultural Adult Work, monitors the use of quality assurance in this sector. SoCiuS provides advanced training programmes and organises consultation meetings, colleague groups and workshops. Themes such as 'interculturalisation', 'community building and social activation' receive special attention. During the period 2008-2010, SoCiuS gained expertise and knowledge on target groups thanks to the involvement of experience experts and the world of science. It has so far published two documents on educational work geared towards senior citizens and persons suffering from a disability.

7.6 Guidance

Based on the motto that everyone has valuable talents, the Flemish Government and the social partners approved **the 2010 Competence agenda** on 14 May 2007 which focuses on discovering, developing and deploying competences of students, the unemployed and the working population alike. The agenda calls on the shared responsibility of the individual on the one hand and that of the employers, the social partners, the sectors and education in their capacity of training and career-service providers, on the other hand. Specific lines of action were developed for the 10 priorities of the competence agenda for which a total amount of 38 million was set aside.

At the end of June 2005, the Flemish Government ratified a '**Strategic Literacy Plan**'. This led to an operational action plan which included quite a number of partners: the training providers (VDAB, SYNTRA, CBEs, Centres for Adult Basic Education and CVOs, Centres for Adult Education and compulsory education), employers and employees as well as welfare organisations. The plan will come to the end of its lifetime in 2011 and will then be evaluated and serve as a basis for a new one.

On 8/12/2000, the Flemish Government ratified a **strategic plan on assistance and services for detainees** to broaden and improve the assistance and service provision for detainees. As a result of this strategic plan detainees can now bank on a wide range of assistance, non-formal education, vocational training, education, sports and recreational activities. The operational plans for instance provide for individual pathway-to-work guidance.

The **8 Huizen van het Nederlands (Dutch Language Houses)** have charted the entire range of 'Dutch as a second language' (NT2) courses offered within their working area as well as the needs of non-Dutch speakers looking for a course. After a professional and uniform intake procedure they guide the non-native Dutch speakers to the most suitable course Dutch available. Thanks to a specially designed course-participant registration system they advise the government on existing needs, possible waiting lists, progression and drop-out. Only the Dutch Language Houses are entitled to organise and coordinate the intake, testing and referring of course participants who are not in possession of an NT2 proof of study.

Within **adult basic education**, an individual plan is drawn on the basis of course participants' needs and in consultation with individual course participants and their counsellor. CBEs can only allocate 10% of the recognised course-participant periods to individual guidance of course participants within the framework of remedial or logopaedic support or within an open-learning centre. To investigate the educational needs of course participants, to give people an introduction to the contents and methods of the programmes and to stimulate further specialisation of course participants, CBEs may also organise activation and selection-guidance activities. Adult basic education works in conjunction with VDAB on training programmes for basic on-the-job skills or for remedial arithmetic in vocational training. Since 1 January 2008, the CBEs and CVOs have had access to special learning tools (SOLs), notably to support interpreters for the deaf and to adapt course material for the visually impaired.

VDAB career-guidance counsellors help people make a career choice and draw up a personal development plan. For people who are out of work, VDAB offers pathway-to-work guidance which a.o. includes a qualifying intake, a profile assessment, job-application training, training and guidance. For the long-term unemployed, VDAB also calls on external organisations to provide pathway-to-work guidance and in that case VDAB only draws a pathway-to-work plan. Aside from pathway-to-work guidance, the unemployed person looking for a suitable position can, via the VDAB website, access the CO.BR.A. (Competence and Professions Repertory for the Labour Market) database which contains filing cards on 550 professions.

7.7 Teachers and trainers

Henceforth, the members of staff of the **Centres for Adult Basic Education** will come under Education but are employed as contract workers. However, a specific collective labour agreement on their conditions of service is in place.

The staff working at the **CVOs, Centres for Adult Education** are governed by the decrees on the legal status of teachers. As adult education must become fully modular by 2012 this legislation will be adapted to the modular structure. They will also enjoy a considerable increase in administrative staff and will be able to appoint managerial and support staff on the basis of a lump sum based on points.

VDAB trainers ("instructors") are usually recruited from amongst professionals in the world of enterprise but VDAB also hires trainers who have followed a teacher-training programme. Other than by instructors, VDAB also offers its course participants guidance by client consultants, job-interview coaches and Dutch-as-a-second-language trainers. VDAB has its own training service which looks after the initial and continuing training of its instructors.

Apprenticeships organised within **entrepreneurial training** are followed up by learning pathway counsellors. SYNTRA Flanders organises 120 hours of initial advanced training for its trainers which mainly focuses on pedagogical and didactical matters. It also organises regular and periodical advanced training (see also 4.2.6).

Teachers employed within **DKO** need to be holders of a specific required qualification. For most of the subjects taught within DKO, these required qualifications have been defined. These are specific basic diplomas of artistic programmes, supplemented by teacher training.

The trainers providing **training in agriculture** are encouraged to follow completion days, subsidised by the Flemish Region. And aside from that centres also call on the services of trainers with a teaching degree. The Division Sustainable Agricultural Development carries out on-site inspections.

Educational staff working within **socio-cultural adult work** do not need to have a specific diploma. SoCiuS, the support centre for socio-cultural adult work, provides advanced training programmes and organises consultation meetings, colleague groups and workshops. Special attention is paid to the themes 'interculturalisation' and 'community building and social activation'. In conjunction with the quality-assurance cell Kwasimodo the Centre sees to quality assurance within the sector.

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- LOPs, Local Consultation Platforms: <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/GOK/lop/>
- GOK, equal educational opportunities policy: <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/GOK/>
- School/study allowances: <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/studietoelagen/>
- Elementary education: <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/basisonderwijs/>
- Secondary education: <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/secundair/>
- Higher education: <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/>
- Study allowances for higher education:
<http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/werken/studentadmin/mededeling-gegevensbeheer/md20090325studiegeld0910.htm>
- Part-time artistic education: <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/dko/>
- Education / labour-market reports: <http://onderwijs.vlaanderen.be/beleid/personeel/>
- OBPWO, Pedagogical Policy and Practice-Oriented Scientific Research:
<http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/obpwo/>
- 'Study and School Career' Centre (Steunpunt SSL): <http://www.steunpuntloopbanen.be/>
- ADIOV education-literature database: <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/adiov/>
- CLBs: <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/CLB/>

VLOR, Flemish Education Council: <http://www.vlor.be/>

Educational networks and umbrella organisations

- GO!, Education of the Flemish Community: <http://www.gemeenschapsonderwijs.be>
- Subsidised official education - cities and municipalities, OVSG, 'Secretariat of Education of the Cities and Municipalities of the Flemish Community': <http://www.ovsg.be>

- Subsidised official education - provinces, Provincial Education Flanders: <http://www.pov.be>
- Subsidised private Catholic education, VSKO, Flemish Secretariat of Catholic Education: <http://ond.vsko.be>
- Dutch-language education in Brussels, VGC, Flemish Community Commission: <http://www.vgc.be/onderwijs>
- IPCO, Organising Bodies of Private Protestant-Christian Schools: <http://www.ipco.be>
- VOOB, Flemish Schools' Forum: <http://www.voop.be>
- Federation of Rudolf Steiner schools: <http://www.steinerscholen.be>
- FOPEM, Federation of Independent Pluralist Emancipatory Alternative Schools: <http://users.skynet.be/fopem>
- OKO, Forum for FOPEM, VOOB, Federation of Rudolf Steiner Schools, IPCO: <http://www.oko.be/>

Higher education

- Higher Education Register <http://www.hogeronderwijsregister.be>
- NARIC, National Academic Recognition Information Centre: <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/naric/>
- VLIR, Flemish Interuniversity Council: <http://www.vlir.be/>
- VLHORA, Flemish Council of University Colleges: <http://www.vlhora.be/>
- NVAO, Dutch-Flemish Accreditation Organisation: <http://www.nvao.net/>

Alternance training

- <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/secundair/lerenenwerken/>
- <http://www.lerenenwerken-dbo.be/>
- <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/werkplekieren/>
- SYNTRA: <http://www.syntra.be/>

Vocational training

- DBO, Vocational Education Service: <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/dbo/>
- Vocational training VDAB: <http://vdab.be/>
- SYNTRA Flanders entrepreneurial training: <http://www.syntra.be/>
- Competento, Knowledge centre for entrepreneurial competences: <http://www.competento.be>
- RTCs, Regional Technological Centres: <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/rtc/>
- SERV, Flemish Social and Economic Council: <http://www.serv.be/>
- Sector covenants: http://www.werk.be/beleid/sectoraal_beleid/sectorconvenants/
- ESF Agency Flanders: <http://www.esf-agentschap.be>
- Training in agriculture: <http://lv.vlaanderen.be/nlapps/docs/default.asp?fid=36>

Adult education

- Adult education: <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/volwassenenonderwijs/>
- Adult basic education: <http://www.basiseducatie.be/>
- VOCVO: <http://www.vocvo.be>
- ERSVs, Recognised Regional Collaborations: [http://www2.vlaanderen.be/werk/ersv_index"ERSV"](http://www2.vlaanderen.be/werk/ersv_index)

Socio-cultural adult work

- Agency for Socio-Cultural Work for Youths and Adults: <http://www.sociaalcultureel.be/>
- SoCiuS: <http://www.socius.be/>
- Training offer: <http://www.prettiggeleerd.be>
- Strategic plan on assistance and services for detainees: <http://wvg.vlaanderen.be/welzijnjustitie/gedetineerden/stratplan.htm>

Competences

- 'My career' portfolio: <http://www.my-digital-me.be/>

- <http://www.wordwatjewil.be/>
- CO.BR.A. (Competence and Professions Repertory for the Labour Market) database: <http://vdab.be/cobra/>
- Competence Agenda: <http://www.werk.be/beleid/competentiebeleid/competentieagenda/>

EVC

- EVC portal site: <http://www.vlaanderen.be/evc>
- EVC knowledge centre: <http://www.kenniscentrumevc.nl/>
- EVC within socio-cultural adult work: http://www.socius.be/?action=publicatie_list&thema=165
- Socio-cultural adult work OSCAR: <http://www.oscaronline.be/>
- <http://www.ervaringsbewijs.be/>

Literacy

- Strategic Literacy Plan: <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/geletterdheid/plan/default.htm>
- Dutch Language Houses: <http://www.huizenvanhetnederlands.be/>

Study and vocational guidance

- CLBs, pupil guidance centres: <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/clb/>
- Annual SID-ins <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/sidin/>
- Beroepenhuis <http://www.beroepenhuis.be/>
- SERV study-choice tool <http://www.durvers.be>.
- Online study and professional career portfolio <http://www.my-digital-me.be/>
- Online database featuring all the training and non-formal education providers <http://www.wordwatjewil.be/>

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

LOP: Lokaal Overleg Platform = local consultancy platform
BaO: Basisonderwijs = elementary education (pre-primary & primary education)
SO: Secundair Onderwijs = secondary education
HO: Hoger Onderwijs = higher education
ASO: Algemeen Secundair Onderwijs = general secondary education
TSO: Technisch Secundair Onderwijs = technical secondary education
BSO: Beroepssecundair Onderwijs = vocational secondary education
KSO: Kunstsecundair Onderwijs = artistic secondary education
DBSO: Deeltijds Beroepssecundair Onderwijs = part-time vocational secondary education
CVO: Centrum voor Volwassenenonderwijs = centre for adult education
CDO: Centrum voor Deeltijds Onderwijs = centre for part-time education
CDV: Centrum voor Deeltijdse Vorming = centre for part-time training