



# EDUCATION IN FLANDERS

A broad view of the Flemish  
educational landscape / 2008



# **Education in Flanders**

**A broad view of the Flemish educational landscape**

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## Useful addresses





## COLOPHON

### TEXT

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Agentschap voor Onderwijsdiensten (AGODI – Agency for Educational Services)  
Agentschap voor Hoger Onderwijs, Volwassenenonderwijs en Studietoelagen  
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# 1. **SITUATING FLANDERS**

## 1.1 Flanders in Belgium and Europe

Flanders lies in the northern part of Belgium and is centrally located to major industrial areas in Western Europe. Flanders has a population of slightly over six million. The official language is Dutch. The Flemish capital of Brussels is also the capital of Belgium and of Europe.

## 1.2 Flanders as a federated state

'Flanders' encompasses both the Flemish Community and the Flemish Region.

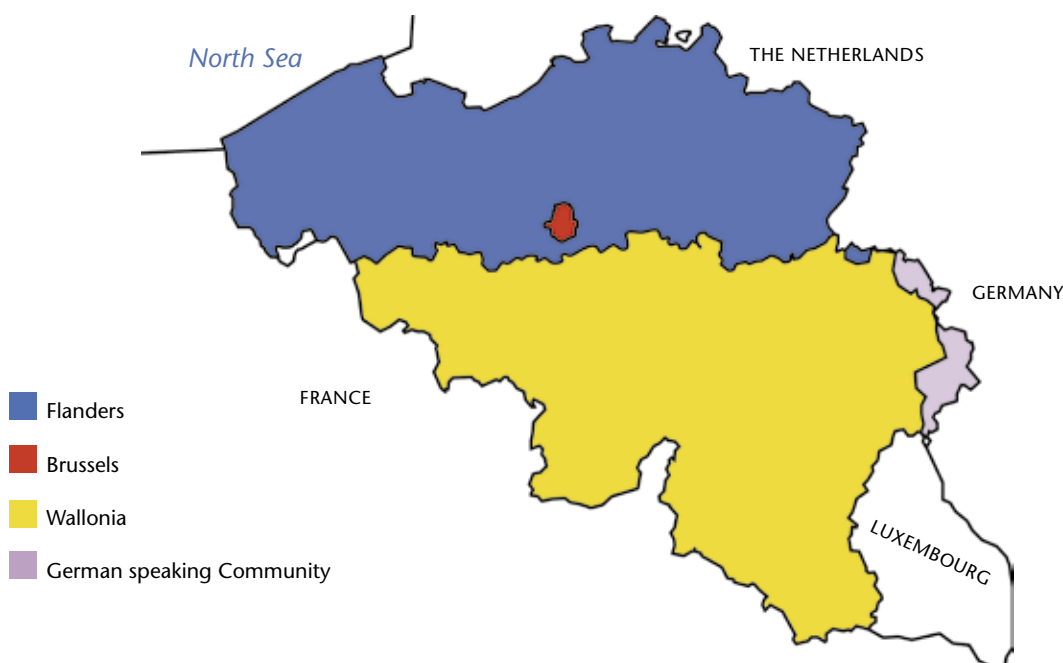
- **The Flemish Region** covers the Dutch language area with the provinces of West and East Flanders, Antwerp, Limburg and Flemish Brabant. The Flemish Region is competent for territorial issues. These policy areas include among others 'agriculture and fisheries', 'environment, nature and energy' and 'work and social economy'.
- **The Flemish Community** comprises the inhabitants of the Dutch-language area and the Dutch speakers in Brussels. The Flemish Community is competent for person-related issues. These are policy areas in which the services to the population are closely related to the language in which they have to be provided. In concrete terms, these policy areas relate to 'education and training', 'welfare, public health and the family' and 'culture, youth, sports and media'.

Flanders opted for merging the parliament and the government of both the Flemish Region and the Flemish Community into a single Flemish Parliament and a single Flemish Government. Therefore in Flanders, one and the same authority exercises both regional and community powers. This simplifies political decision-making. French speakers do have a separate regional and community authority. That is why institutions on the Flemish side are structured differently from those on the French-language side. For this reason, the Belgian federal model is sometimes described as an asymmetrical model.

In addition to the Flemish Community and the Flemish Region, federal Belgium comprises two other communities and regions:

- The **Walloon Region**, which covers the French and German-language areas, with the provinces of Walloon Brabant, Hainaut, Liège, Namur, and Luxembourg.
- The **Brussels Capital Region**, which covers the bilingual area of Brussels Capital where the two languages must be treated equally on constitutional grounds.
- The **French Community**, which includes the inhabitants of the French-language area and the French-speaking population in the Brussels Capital Region.
- The **German speaking Community**, which includes the approximately 70,000 inhabitants of the German-language area.

The federal (= Belgian) authorities are competent for all matters of national importance and have power over a number of important instruments and sectors. These powers comprise 'finances', 'home and foreign affairs', 'social security' and 'unemployment'.





### 1.3 Maximum scope, also for education issues

Federalisation aimed at balanced packages of powers, which would allow for clear and unambiguous policies. In each policy area, only one authority acts as a legislator with maximum autonomy. In principle, the other authority level cannot interfere.

The federal powers exist alongside with the powers of communities and regions. This means that laws (of the federal government), parliament acts (of the communities and regions) and orders (of the Brussels Region) are on equal footing from a legal point of view.

Thus, powers for education lie with the communities. The Flemish, French and German speaking Community each have their own education system. Within the Flemish Government, the Minister of Education is responsible for almost all aspects of education policy, from nursery to university education.

Nevertheless, the federal authorities are competent for some educational issues:

- the start and the end of compulsory education;
- establishing the minimum conditions for obtaining a diploma;
- determining education staff pensions.

In order to make the Flemish authorities more transparently and efficiently, an innovation process referred to as 'Better Administrative Policy' (BBB) was set up in 2006. The most striking change is the new structure of the Flemish authorities. Before, there was one Ministry of the Flemish Community with different Departments, among which the Education Department. As a result of BBB, Flemish authorities were divided into 13 homogeneous policy areas that are built on the same internal structure.

The Education and Training policy area consists of:

- The Education and Training Department, competent for policy preparation

and four agencies that are responsible for policy implementation:

- Agentschap voor Onderwijsdiensten (AgODi - Agency for Educational Services)
- Agentschap voor Hoger Onderwijs, Volwassenenonderwijs en Studietoelagen (AHOVOS - Agency for Higher Education, Adult Education and Study Grants)
- Agentschap voor Onderwijscommunicatie (AOC - Agency for Educational Communication)

- Agentschap voor Infrastructuur in het Onderwijs (AGIO - Agency for Infrastructure in Education)

The Flemish Ministry of Education and Training consists of the above-mentioned entities without AGIO.

For further information on the structure and operation of the educational administration:

[www.ond.vlaanderen.be/wegwijs](http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/wegwijs)

### 1.4 Flemish education at regional, continental and global level

Flemish education policy promotes participation in international programmes. There are three categories:

1. Flemish or Belgian programmes

Exchanges in the framework of the **Prince Philip Fund** are part of the Belgian programme. It supports collaboration and exchanges of pupils, teachers and school management teams of schools in the three communities of Belgium.

Through the **Cross-border Educational Co-operation Project** (GROS), secondary schools can co-operate with schools from neighbouring countries: the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Germany, France and the United Kingdom.

The **'Euroclasses' programme** allows Flemish secondary schools to co-operate with other secondary schools in Europe.

2. Bilateral co-operation

Bilateral co-operation is based, among other things, on the **GENT agreements** (since 1990), concluded between Flanders and the Netherlands with the purpose of organising seminars and promoting co-operation between educational institutions.

Furthermore, there are some 40 **cultural agreements and co-operation agreements** for all levels of education. They contain arrangements and agreements on specialist and research grants as well as exchanges of experts, officials or professors. The Ministry co-operates in different projects with Russia, Morocco and South Africa.

3. Education and training programmes of the European Union

Flanders promotes participation in the “**Lifelong Learning Programme**” (LLP) of the European Union.<sup>1</sup> The LLP fits in with the Bologna process. The purpose of this project is:

- to introduce easily ‘readable’ and comparable academic degrees;
- to promote the mobility of students, lecturers and researchers;
- to guarantee the quality of education;
- to give a European dimension to higher education.

The integrated LLP consists of four sub-programmes:

- **Comenius** caters for nursery and primary education, secondary education, special (nursery, primary and secondary) education as well as teacher training and in-service training.
- **Erasmus** supports European activities of higher education institutions and promotes mobility and exchanges of students, lecturers and members of staff.
- **Leonardo da Vinci** focuses on vocational education and vocational training. It enhances the competitiveness of the European labour market by helping citizens acquire new skills, knowledge and qualifications and have them recognised across borders.
- **Grundtvig** focuses on all forms of non-vocational adult education.

In addition, LLP comprises a **transversal programme** with four key activities:

- policy co-operation
- languages
- information and communication technologies (ICT)
- dissemination (of information)<sup>2</sup>

The activities of this transversal programme relate to more than one major programme (Comenius, Erasmus, Leonardo da Vinci, Grundtvig). An ICT project bridging secondary and higher education is part of the transversal programme while an ICT project aiming specifically at adult education comes under the Grundtvig programme.

Finally, **the Jean Monnet programme** stimulates reflection and debate on the European integration process at higher education institutions worldwide.

The implementation of LLP is the key task of **vzw EPOS** (European Programmes for Education, Training and Co-operation). This national agency for Flanders is fi-

nanced by the Flemish Government and Europe. EPOS also coordinates a number of other programmes such as Erasmus Mundus and Erasmus Belgica.

Within the context of the **Council of Europe**, the Flemish Ministry of Education participates in the activities of various committees. Particular attention is devoted to themes such as human rights, democracy and tolerance.

In the **Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development** (OECD), the Ministry is represented in the “Education Committee” and the “Institution for Management of Higher Education”. Furthermore, the Ministry participates in different projects on education indicators and lifelong learning that are set up by the ‘Centre for Educational Research and Innovation’.

Flanders also participates in various international **UNESCO** initiatives. This UN agency promoting Education, Sciences and Culture organises international education conferences with participants from all over the world. From 2005 to 2014, the United Nations decade of Education for Sustainable Development is running.

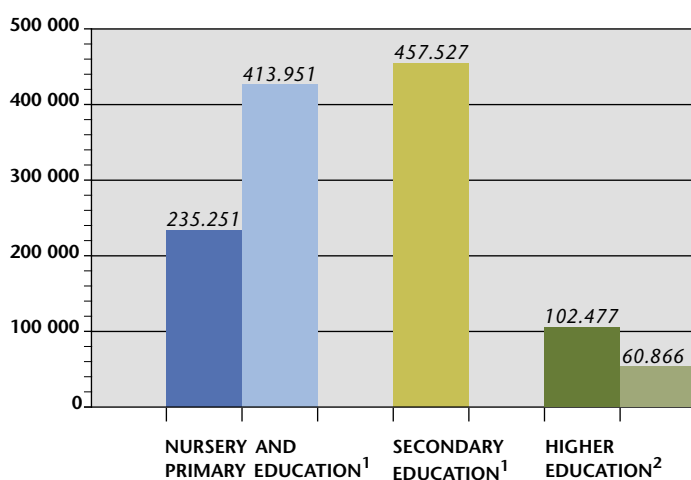
<sup>1</sup> On 15 November 2006, the European Commission decided to continue existing Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci programmes for the 2007-2013 period under the umbrella the “Lifelong Learning Programme”.

<sup>2</sup> The key objective is to create a framework for effective exploitation of the results of the LLP project and of previous generations of programmes at sectoral, regional, national and European level.

## 1.5 A small region with a large school population

The graphs below provide information about the school population in every level of education of full-time education as well as of part-time arts education and of adult education.

**GRAPH 1: School population in full-time education per level of education (2006-2007 school year)**



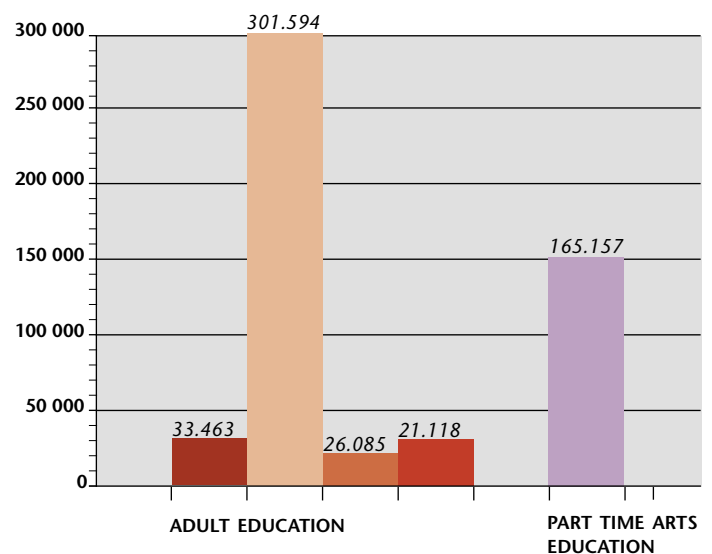
- nursery education
- primary education
- secondary education
- education in colleges of higher education
- university education

<sup>1</sup> Number of pupils in mainstream and special education.

<sup>2</sup> Number of students enrolled under a diploma contract in an initial training programme.

In the young Flemish adults population group (ages 25 to 34), 84 % have at least a diploma or certificate of secondary education. This means that, in 2006, the Flemish Region scores significantly higher than the average OECD country, where 77 % of this age group completed secondary education. Nevertheless, too many young people still finish compulsory education without any certificate or diploma. Attempts are being made at changing this trend through the modularisation project (see 5.2).

**GRAPH 2: School population in adult education and part-time arts education (2006-2007 school year)**



- adult basic education<sup>1</sup>
- continuing education (secondary)<sup>2</sup>
- continuing education (higher)
- BIS (Supervised Individual Study)<sup>3</sup>
- part-time arts education<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 2006-2007 year of operation.

<sup>2</sup> Period of reference 1/2/2006-31/1/2007. The number of single enrolments in a training course is counted: someone who enrolls twice or more in the same training course and in the same system during the same reference period, is only counted once. When he enrolls twice (or more) in the same training programme, but in a different system (once in a linear programme, the other time in a modular programme), then he is counted twice. When he enrolls in two different training programmes –whether or not in the same area of study–, then he is counted twice.

<sup>3</sup> 2006 year of operation.

<sup>4</sup> The counting is based on the number of pupils eligible for funding (1 February). Someone who follows more than one course of study is counted more than once.



## 2. GENERAL PRINCIPLES



## 2.1 Compulsory education for all children from six to eighteen

Under the Belgian Constitution, every child has a right to education. In order to guarantee this right to education, **compulsory education** was introduced.

Compulsory education starts on 1 September of the year in which a child reaches the age of 6, and lasts 12 full school years. A pupil has to comply with compulsory education until the age of fifteen or sixteen. Afterwards only part-time compulsory education is applicable (= a combination of part-time learning and working). However, most young people continue to attend full-time secondary education.

Compulsory education ends at the eighteenth birthday or on June 30 of the calendar year in which the youngster reaches the age of 18. If a pupil stops going to school on his 18th anniversary and does not finish the current school year, he<sup>3</sup> does not have a right to a certificate or diploma which is awarded upon completing the course.

For young people who obtain a diploma of secondary education before the age of 18, compulsory education stops at that moment.

In principle, all schools are mixed as a school is not allowed to refuse pupils on the grounds of gender.

All children who reside in Belgium are subject to compulsory education. Thus, also children of foreign nationality are subject to compulsory education. From the sixtieth day of their registration by the local authorities, these children must be enrolled in a school and attend classes regularly. Schools are not allowed to refuse pupils without a residence permit. Pupils who end their training successfully, obtain a diploma.

In order to guarantee the right to education, the Flemish Government made agreements with the Federal Government. A federal circular letter confirms that the police are not allowed to pick up school-age children of illegal migrants during school hours.

In Belgium, compulsory education does not mean compulsory school attendance. It means that children do

<sup>3</sup> For the sake of readability, only the male form of address is used in this brochure.





not necessarily have to go to school to learn. Parents may opt for **home education** and must inform the Flemish Ministry of Education and Training. The authorities check whether all school-age pupils are actually complying with compulsory education. If their children are not complying, parents may be punished by court. In practice, there are very few parents who opt for home education.

A child with special educational needs who is unable to go to school, can be home-educated. The provincial **Advisory Commission on Special Education (CABO)** must give its consent. CABO may also decide to exempt the pupil from compulsory education. This only happens if the child is so severely physically and/or intellectually disabled as to be permanently unable to attend education.

## 2.2 Control of education costs until the end of compulsory education

The Belgian Constitution also provides that access to education is **free of charge** up to the end of compulsory education. Primary and secondary schools that are financed or funded by the government are therefore not allowed to charge an enrolment fee. Although Flemish nursery education does not come under compulsory education, access to it is also free of charge.

- In **nursery and primary education**, parents do not have to pay for school materials and activities which are vital to pursuing developmental objectives and to achieving attainment targets.

From 1 September 2008 onwards, a twofold system of maximum fees referred to as ‘double maximum invoice’ in nursery and primary education is applicable:

1. **A strict maximum invoice** for activities such as theatre visits, sports activities, one-day school trips, ... Also materials children have to purchase through the school, have to be paid under this invoice (e.g. a compulsory magazine subscription) This ‘strict maximum invoice’ amounts to 20 euro for a pre-schooler and to 60 euro for a pupil in primary education per school year. That is how costs are kept down for all parents.
2. **‘The less strict maximum invoice’** corresponds with fees chargeable for several-day journeys, taking place wholly or partly outside school hours (e.g. journeys to the seaside, countryside). This maximum invoice amounts to 0 euro for a pre-schooler and to 360 euro for the whole duration of primary education.

- In secondary education, education fully free of charge does not exist. Certain fees must be legally charged for certain educational activities and for teaching aids. Furthermore, they have to be effective, demonstrable and justifiable costs in proportion to the characteristics of the target group in secondary education. The list of charges, with possible derogations for deprived families must be laid down in school regulations. Parents and pupils have their say in these fees in advance in the school council.

For further information on school fees:

[www.ond.vlaanderen.be/schoolkosten](http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/schoolkosten)

In secondary education, there is a system of pupil grants for parents with a low income. In higher education, there is a student grants system. In order to be eligible for a pupil/student grant, the pupil/student must comply with the nationality requirement and a number of educational and financial conditions. An application for a school/student grant must be submitted by June 30 of the school or academic year at the latest. From the 2008-2009 school year onwards, there are also pupil grants in nursery and primary education (see 6.1).



### 2.3 Freedom of education

Freedom of education is a constitutional right in Belgium. Every natural or legal person has the right to organise education and establish institutions for this purpose. The authorities are not allowed to take preventive measures against the establishment of free schools. Under the constitution, the authorities are obliged to provide neutral education.

The **'governing body'** (or school board) is a key concept in Flemish education. The governing body is responsible for one or more schools and is comparable to a board of directors in a company. The governing body takes the shape of an authority, a natural person or a legal person/legal persons.

Governing bodies enjoy considerable autonomy. They are entirely free in choosing teaching methods and are allowed to base their education on a certain philosophy or educational view. They can also determine their own curriculum and timetables as well as appoint their own staff. However, schools that want government recognition or funding must meet the attainment targets. In addition, schools must have sufficient teaching materials and be established in habitable buildings that comply with safety provisions and hygiene standards.

The constitution also guarantees the parents' freedom of choice. Parents and children must have access to a school of their choice within a reasonable distance from their home.

### 2.4 Equal opportunities in education

The **Act on equal opportunities** in education contains three major provisions:

- **The right to enrolment:** Each pupil has the right to enrol in the school of his/her (parents') choice. Only in a strictly limited number of cases, a school can refuse an enrolment or refer a newly enrolled pupil to another school.
- The establishment of **local consultation platforms** with a threefold task : Local consultation platforms ensure the right of enrolment, act as an intermediary in case of conflicts and co-operate in implementing a local policy on equal opportunities in education. For more information: [www.lop.be](http://www.lop.be)
- Extra support for **additional needs provision** in schools: The support is aimed at schools that have a rather large number of pupils who meet certain socio-economic indicators. This extra support consists of additional teaching periods or additional teaching hours per teacher.

A pupil meeting at least one out of five equal opportunities indicators is a GOK-pupil. The school may obtain extra funds for these pupils. For detailed information on regulations for equal opportunities in education:

[www.ond.vlaanderen.be/GOK](http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/GOK)



## 2.5 Brussels Policy on educational priorities

As to content, the **Brussels Policy on educational priorities** (VBB) is also linked to the principles of equal opportunities in education, but it is geared towards the specific situation in Brussels education. This project shows teachers and schools how to handle pupils with learning and developmental delays in a professional way. In addition, the Brussels Policy on educational priorities also optimizes co-operation and co-ordination with various education actors and strengthens the schools' coordinating capacity.

Concretely, four working areas are promoted in each school :

- language proficiency education;
- coping with diversity (intercultural education) and differentiation;
- co-operation with parents;
- co-operation and co-ordination with other education stakeholders.

in order to attain this, the VBB, a non-profit organisation, uses means and methods that are directed towards the school-based situation of school management, teachers and staff.

## 2.6 Educational networks

An educational network is a representative association of governing bodies and often takes over some of the responsibilities of governing bodies. For example, they draw up their own curriculum and timetables. This means that the governing bodies concerned surrender some of their autonomy to the networks.

There are three educational networks:

- **GO! education** of the Flemish Community is publicly run education organised by the public body called 'het GO! onderwijs van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap' acting under the authority of the Flemish Community. Under the constitution, this GO! education is required to be neutral. Indeed, the religious, philosophical or ideological convictions of parents and pupils must be respected.
- **Publicly funded, publicly run education** (OGO) comprises municipal education (organised by local authorities) as well as provincial education (organised by provincial authorities). The governing bodies of this education network are united in two umbrella organisations: the 'Onderwijssecretariaat van de Steden en gemeenten van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap' (OVSG - Educational Secretariat of the Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities), and the 'Provinciaal Onderwijs Vlaanderen' (POV - Flemish Provincial Education).
- **The publicly funded, privately run schools** (VGO) deliver education organised by a private person or private organisation. The governing body is often a non-profit-making organisation (vzw). Privately run education mainly consists of catholic schools. They are associated in the umbrella body called 'Vlaams Secretariaat van het Katholiek Onderwijs' (VSKO - Flemish Secretariat for Catholic Education). Furthermore, there are also protestant, Jewish, orthodox, Islamic, ... schools. In addition to these denominational schools, there are also schools, which have no affiliation with a particular religion. Examples of such schools are Freinet schools, Montessori schools or Steiner schools, which adopt particular educational methods and are also known as 'method schools'.





A small number of schools in Flanders are not recognised by the government. These are so-called **private schools**. They do not receive financial support from the government.

Education that is organised for and by the government (GO! education and local and provincial education) is known as **publicly run education**. Recognised education founded on private initiative is called **privately run education**.

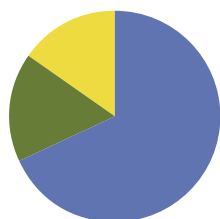




The table below shows the distribution of pupils across the different educational networks. The majority of Flemish pupils attend publicly funded (privately run) education.

**DIAGRAM 1:** Distribution of pupils across the networks in primary and secondary education (2006-2007 school year).

- subsidised privately run education: 68,28%
- subsidised publicly run education: 16,46%
- GO! (community education): 15,27 %



## 2.7 Financial support to education

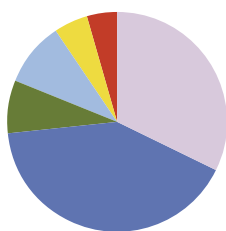
Strictly speaking, the Flemish education budget expressed in terms of available operating appropriations amounted to 8.86 billion EUR in 2007. This accounts for 40% of the total Flemish budgetary means and represents an average nominal increase of 3,75 % per year since 1995. The 2007 budget increased by 4.4% compared to 2006.

GO! education organised by the Flemish Community receives an annual allocation. In addition, the Flemish Community funds provinces, (associations of) local authorities, and other legal persons in public law, or private persons who organise education in accordance with legal standards.

The Flemish Community pays for staffing costs. A number of financing or funding systems are providing financial means to the governing bodies for the operation of schools and boarding schools.<sup>4</sup>

**DIAGRAM 2:** Education budget per level of education (2007)

- Nursery and primary education: 31,99%
- Secondary education: 40,66%
- Education provided by colleges of higher education: 7,61%
- University education: 9,14%
- Adult education and part-time arts education: 5,27%
- Regardless of levels of education: 5,32%

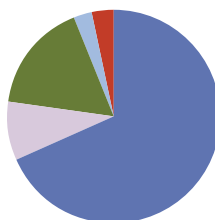


<sup>4</sup> GO! is financed; OGO and VGO are funded by the Flemish Community.

<sup>5</sup> In order to guarantee a free choice of school, GO! gets an extra 3% of operating means per pupil in order to cover the costs. Moreover, GO! is legally required to provide several philosophical subject matters and receives an extra 4.5% to cover the costs incurred for these subject matters.

**DIAGRAM 3:** Education budget for every category of expenditure (2007)

- Salaries: 68,36%
- Operation: 9,07%
- Tertiary education: 16,62%
- Investments: 2,86%
- Others: 3,09%



From the 2008-2009 school year onwards, the operating budget for nursery, primary and secondary schools is divided differently. The new system is based on two important pillars:

- the educational networks are treated on equal footing;
- financing is partly based on the social profile of the school population.

According to an official study, publicly funded education receives 76% of the means of GO! education. In recent years, this proportion was significantly changed by a number of measures. To this end, extra means for the operating budget and support were allocated annually to publicly funded education. This new financing system is intended to completely eliminate the dependence of the networks, notwithstanding a 7,5% objective disparity.<sup>5</sup> This harmonisation is carried through both in mainstream and in special primary and secondary education.

The second pillar of the new financing system, i.e. financing according to the social profile (= pupil characteristics), only applies to mainstream nursery, primary and secondary education. Research led to the conclusion that 4 characteristics can very well predict for which pupils schools have to make additional efforts and thus for which schools get additional funding. These characteristics are:

- the educational level of the parents;
- the home language;
- the family income;
- the neighbourhood where children live.

In order to implement the new financing system, the operating budget for compulsory education is increased to more than 800 million euro from the 2008-2009 school year onwards. For nursery and primary education, an increase of 85 million euro is provided and secondary education gets an additional operating budget of 40 million euro.

## 2.8 **Autonomy**

Flemish policy makers tried to give a new impetus to education by placing greater responsibility on education providers and by making pupils, students and parents accountable as well, as far as possible. In the meantime, this process of local accountability has been introduced at every level of education.

- The Flemish Parliament Act on **nursery and primary education** of 25 February 1997 allows school boards to determine their own curriculum, action plans and school development plans. The schools are also free to choose their own teaching methods and educational methods. However, schools are still required to pursue developmental objectives, achieve attainment targets and comply with strict conditions on funding, allowances for salaries, the operating budget and investments.

- The special Flemish Parliament Act of 1988 on **secondary community education** sets out that local councils are granted decision-making powers with regard to staffing policy, financial and materials policies. In 1989, the organisation of community education was removed from the direct authority of government and autonomous administrative bodies took over. In 1998 schools and schools groups were again assigned more responsibilities.

- The Flemish Act on university education of 12 June 1991 assigned a large degree of autonomy to **universities**. Under this Act, the government provides the funds required. Universities are responsible for the way they use those funds. With regard to staffing policy, the government only determines the framework. Also curriculum content is the responsibility of each university.

- The 1994 Act on colleges of higher education lays down that colleges of higher education are responsible for the annual lump-sum grants allocated to them. The government expects a result-oriented management from the colleges of higher education:

- › the development of a vision;
- › the development of a long-term strategy;
- › the provision of clear operational directives;
- › the development of the curricula.





## 2.9 The legal position of staff

The legal position of staff guarantees their legal security and provides a certain degree of job security. It contains the basic regulations on recruitment, appointment, selection, promotion and discipline. The acts on the legal position of staff in publicly funded education and GO! education apply to staff in nursery, primary, secondary and special education, part-time arts education, adult education, pupil guidance centres (CLBs) and boarding schools. A separate legal position was approved for staff at colleges of higher education and universities.

A member of staff can get a permanent appointment under certain conditions. A **permanent appointment** guarantees job and salary security and gives access to a wide range of leave arrangements, paid sick leave and a state pension. This pension is more advantageous than a pension under the private system because it is seen as a postponed salary.

Flemish schools have relatively limited autonomy in implementing their own personnel policy. However, they are encouraged to conduct an HRM policy based on supervision, encouragement and monitoring. An illustration of this policy is the introduction of job descriptions and evaluations and their impact on the teachers' perception of their role and individual performance. Thus jobs in nursery and primary education are no longer exclusively expressed in terms of teaching times, but describe the overall school-based duties.

Flanders applies the general principle of staff participation :

- In **educational establishments under public law**, there is union bargaining in accordance with dialogue rules between the government and its staff.
- In **educational establishments under private law**, appropriate participation rules apply. School boards are required to discuss in advance decisions that affect staff.

In both systems, staff representatives are protected from dismissal and are given facilities to perform their job autonomously. Participation arrangements were adapted to the upscaling of institutions.

At Flemish level, representative trade unions enter into dialogue with the Flemish Government on all legislative initiatives that affect staff. These negotiations thus are not limited to employment conditions and the applicable collective bargaining agreements resulting from them.

## 2.10 Organisation of the school and academic year

For nursery, primary and secondary education, the school year starts on 1 September and ends theoretically on 31 August. However, because of the summer holidays (1 July up to and including 31 August), the school year ends on 30 June in practice.

In **primary education**, pupils have to attend each week 28 or 29 teaching times of 50 minutes for educational and developmental activities. Lessons are evenly spread over five days from Monday to Friday. Wednesday afternoon is free.

The minimum number of teaching periods in **full-time secondary education** amounts to 28 hours. In **part-time secondary education** there are 15 teaching periods per week. There is also a maximum level of financing by the government. The education provider may exceed this maximum number of periods if it pays for them itself. In practice this seldomly happens. The maximum in full-time secondary education varies between 32 and 36 periods and depends on the type of education and the stage. Nursing training courses are an exception and always comprise 36 periods per week. In part-time education, the maximum amounts to 15 periods, thus equalling the minimum number of periods. In all cases, a teaching period lasts 50 minutes.

In full-time secondary education, courses are spread over nine half course days from Monday to Friday. The school itself defines when the pupils are given a half day off. In part-time secondary education, courses are spread over four half course days.

Courses start at 8 am at the earliest and end between 3 pm and 5 pm. There is always a lunch break of at least 50 minutes.

As is the case with primary and secondary education, the school year in **adult education centres** starts on 1 September and ends on 31 August, taking into account the summer holidays which run from 1 July to 31 August. Classes may take place on all days of the week. In adult education centres, a teaching period is 50 minutes.

Theoretically, the **centres for adult basic education** do not have to respect the division of the normal school year and the holiday periods of primary and secondary education and of adult education centres. Nevertheless, in practice, they organise their provision in this way. In adult basic education, a teaching period lasts 60 minutes.

In adult education, the number of teaching periods per week depends on the provision, the training programme chosen and the needs of the course participant. There is a provision of intensive courses of 9 to 12 hours per week and a provision that is less intensive of 3 to 6

hours per week. Course participants in second chance education – this is secondary adult education focusing on gaining a secondary education diploma (see 3.6) – follow full-time education. The number of classes attended by the course participant, varies from one training programme to another. There are both shorter and longer training courses and a course participant is also free to take one or more modules of a training programme.

In **higher education**, the academic year starts between 1 September and 1 October. The academic year ends on the day before the start of the next academic year.

Colleges of higher education and universities autonomously decide on the actual organisation of the academic year, e.g. on the organisation of education and other study activities, examination procedures and holidays periods for students.

Since the 2005-2006 academic year, the division of academic studies into years of study has been abandoned as a result of the flexibilisation of higher education (see 3.4). The student may now enrol for one or more individual course components. He chooses for the already existing pathway of 60 credits or for a flexible combination of course components<sup>6</sup> (= less than 60 credits per academic year). According to the time the student can devote to his study, he can largely decide himself on the workload of his study programme. Moreover this facilitates the combination of work and study.

<sup>6</sup> Each course component comprises minimum 3 credits. One credit corresponds with 25 to 30 hours of education and other study activities.



## 2.11 Participation

Both at central and at local level, the government promotes participation of and in the world of education.

### 2.11.1 Central participation structures

The **Flemish Education Council** (Vlaamse Onderwijsraad - VLOR) has been operating at the central level since 1991. In the Act on participation at school and the Flemish Education Council of 2 April 2004, the VLOR was transformed into the strategic advisory council for the Education and Training policy area. In the VLOR, all education stakeholders consult one another on education and training policy. On the basis of those consultations, the VLOR gives advice to the Flemish Minister of Education and Training and to the Flemish Parliament.

The VLOR consists of one general council and four sub-councils, one for each level of education:

- the nursery and primary education council;
- the secondary education council;
- the lifelong and lifewide learning council;
- the higher education council.

Within these councils, committees and working groups can be established for specific issues or types and sectors of education.

The VLOR is composed of representatives of:

- school boards from the various educational networks;
- boards of training centres;
- school management teams;
- staff;
- pupils, students, course participants;
- parents;
- pupil guidance centres;
- socio-cultural and socio-economic organisations;
- experts by experience in education.

The VLOR has advisory and consultative powers. The policy agreement between the Minister and the VLOR determines how the VLOR can assume other tasks.

The Minister is required to ask the VLOR for advice on policy memorandums and letters, which he submits to the Flemish Parliament. This obligation also applies to draft Acts and draft decrees on temporary education projects. The VLOR may also give advice on its own initiative.

At the request of the Minister, the VLOR may, in addition to its advisory task, act as a consultative body between the different sections of education.

The **Flemish Interuniversity Council** (Vlaamse Interuniversitaire Raad - VLIR) advises and presents proposals to the Minister with regard to university education. The VLIR carries out research itself or contracts out research. Maximum two representatives of each university sit on this council.

The **Flemish Council for Non-University Higher Education** (Vlaamse Hogescholenraad - VLHORA) has a task analogous to that of the VLIR but was created for the colleges of higher education.

In the **Flemish Negotiation Committee** (Vlaams Onderhandelingscomité - VOC), delegations of the Flemish Government (through the Minister of Education), of personnel (through trade unions) and executive boards (joint proposal of VLIR and VLHORA) deal with all new staff regulations for higher education.

### 2.11.2 Local participation structures

Education institutions in **nursery, primary and secondary education** have a rather high degree of autonomy and responsibility. That is why strong local participation structures are necessary.

Staff members in nursery, primary or secondary schools, pupils in nursery, primary schools and parents of children in nursery, primary and secondary schools can respectively ask for the establishment of respectively an educational council, a pupil council and a parent council. Since the Act on participation of 2 April 2004, the same rules have been applicable to all nursery, primary and secondary schools for educational councils, parent councils and pupil councils, regardless of the educational network.

- An **educational council** is obligatory if at least 10% of the staff members ask for it.
- A **parent council** is obligatory if at least 10% of the parents ask for it.
- In **primary education**, a **pupil council** must be established if at least 10% of the regular pupils of the 11 to 13 age group ask for it.
- In a **secondary school**, a **pupil council** is obligatory in principle.

These three councils have large advisory powers and are composed via elections.

The different parties involved in the school also often organise separate informal committees.

In most nursery, primary and secondary schools, parents set up a **parents' association**.

At present, these committees differ largely as regards vision, philosophy, approach and activities.



In order to strengthen the participation of parents in school policy, the government funds a number of umbrella parents' associations.

For **GO! education**, the **school council** regulates the participation of all education stakeholders. This school council has a general right to information and a well-defined advisory and consultative competence.

The school council comprises:

- three members directly elected by the parents;
- two members co-opted from the local social, economic and cultural sectors;
- three members directly elected by and among the staff.

The head teacher attends the meetings of the school council and has an advisory vote. For every schools group, there is a board of directors in GO! education, in which parents, staff, school management teams, and local social, economic and cultural sectors are also represented. They co-decide on material and financial management of education and staff.

For **publicly funded education** also, consultation and participation is organised via a **school council**.

This council is composed of an equal number of representatives<sup>7</sup> of:

- parents;
- subsidised staff members of the schools involved;
- representatives of the local community co-opted by the above-mentioned groups;
- pupils (only in secondary education).

It is also possible to delegate representatives of the educational council, the pupil council or parent council to the school council. If these three councils do not appoint any representatives to the school council or if one of those councils does not exist, the school council is formed through elections.

The school council in publicly funded education has:

- a general right to information;
- broad advisory powers;
- a clearly defined power for consulting on school policy;
- a communication duty towards staff, pupils and parents about the way in which they use their powers.

The head teacher is lawfully entitled to attend the meetings of the school council and has an advisory vote. Consultations take place in a joint meeting of the gov-

erning body and the school council.

For **higher education**, a **student council** operates in each university, association and college of higher education. The board of the institution must deliberate with the student council on a number of issues. On other issues, the board is only required to consult the student council. The obligation to deliberate or to consult does not apply if the competent board counts at least 10% students. This obligation is neither applicable if less than 10% of the total number of students participated in the elections. In this case, the right to vote of the students in the board of directors also lapses.

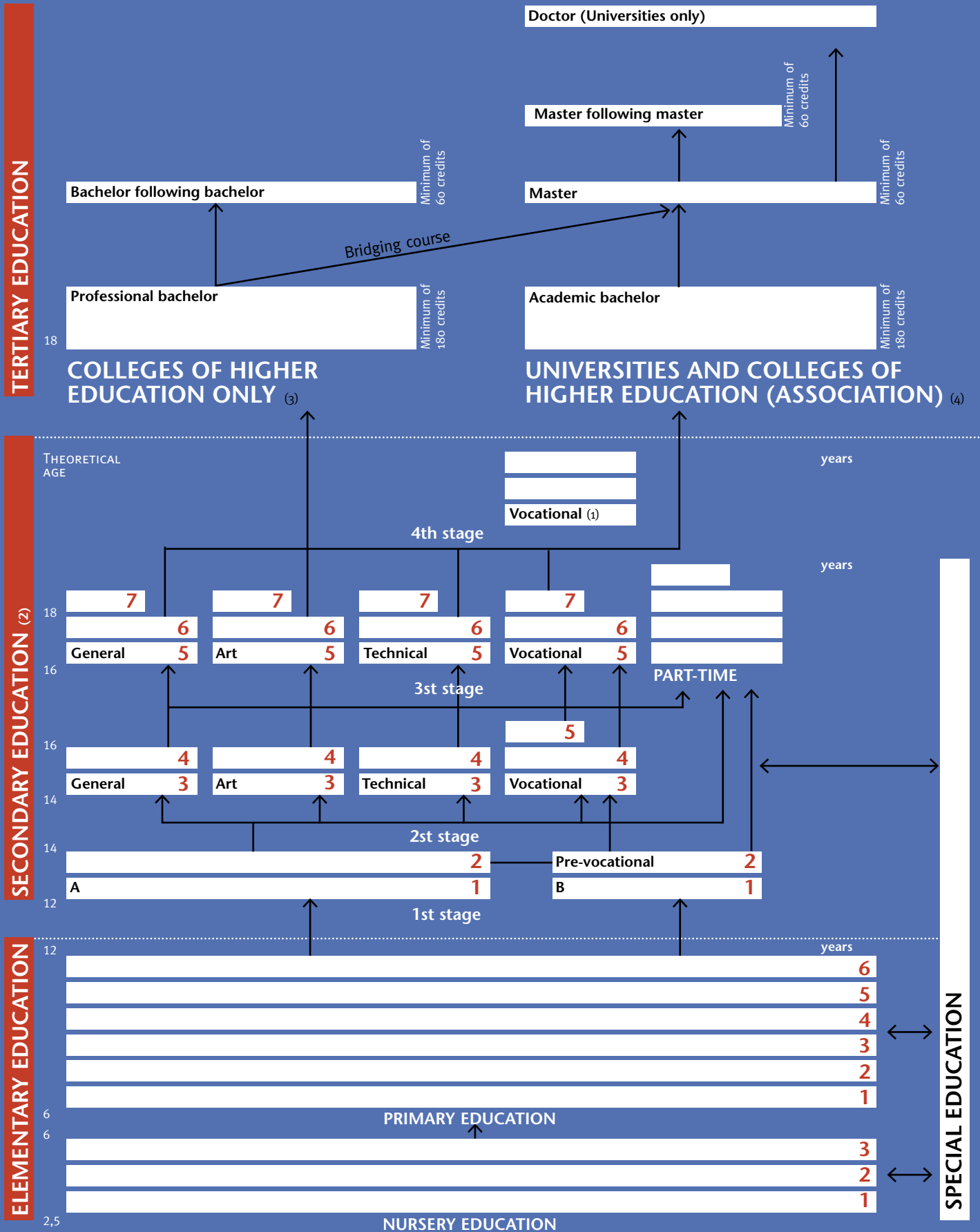
Staff participation is applied differently in universities and colleges for higher education. In principle, there are **negotiating committees** in all colleges of higher education at the level of the college of higher education (HOC) as well as at the level of the department (DOC). Institutions under public law have boards on which mostly elected representatives of staff members have a seat. Privately run institutions have a free choice in this matter. However, in the privately run colleges of higher education there is an academic council which acts as a participation body of staff and students. In the privately run universities, there is a works council which acts as a participation body of staff and students.

<sup>7</sup> Three to five representatives..

### 3. **LEVELS OF EDUCATION**



### 3.1 Structure of education<sup>7</sup>



(1) All students who have successfully passed the second year of the 3rd stage or passed an entry test, have access to the 4th stage of vocational education.  
 (2) Modular education is not divided into stages and years of study and thus is not represented in the diagram.  
 (3) The former training programmes of one cycle provided by colleges of higher education are transformed into professional bachelor courses from the 2004-2005 academic year onwards.  
 (4) The two-cycle training courses of the colleges of higher education and academic training courses of the universities are transformed into academic bachelor and master courses from the 2004-2005 academic year onwards. These training courses are transformed from an at least two-year candidate's course and an at least two-year licentiate course into a three-year academic bachelor and an at least one-year master course. Candidate degrees are not considered equal to bachelor degrees.

<sup>7</sup> In addition to the levels of education included in the diagram, there are also part-time arts education and adult education.



## 3.2 Nursery and Primary education

'Basisonderwijs' comprises both nursery and primary education. There is **mainstream and special nursery and primary education**.

### 3.2.1 Mainstream nursery and primary education

Nursery education is available for children from 2,5 to 6 years.

Between the ages of 2,5 and 3 years, children can start **mainstream nursery education** at 7 times: on the first school day after each holiday period and the first school day in February.

Once the young child has reached the age of 3, he can start school at any time in the school year.

School start dates don't apply to special nursery education.

In the 2006-2007 school year, 233.344 pre-schoolers were enrolled in mainstream nursery education. Publicly funded, privately run education accounts for almost 63,12 % of all pre-schoolers.

Children who are not yet ready to move up to primary education at the age of 6 can spend another year in nursery education. This applies to mainstream nursery education. In special nursery education, the transition to primary education can be postponed for 2 years.

**Mainstream primary education** is aimed at children from 6 to 12 and comprises 6 consecutive years of study. A child usually starts primary education at the age of 6 and thus when he is subject to compulsory education. This is also the age at which the few children who did not attend nursery education, (normally) start primary school.

A child spends at minimum four and at maximum eight years in mainstream primary education. In exceptional cases, the authorities can allow a derogation from the minimum duration.

In the 2006-2007 school year, the number of pupils in mainstream primary education was 387.157. Publicly funded, privately run education accounts for almost 63,62 % of the pupils.

### 3.2.2 Special nursery and primary education

Special nursery and primary education is aimed at children who need special help, temporarily or permanently. This may be due to the children's physical or mental disability, serious behavioural or emotional problems, or serious learning difficulties.







There are eight types of special nursery and special primary education, tailored to the educational and developmental needs of a particular group of children:

- type 1: children with a mild mental disability
- type 2: children with a moderate or severe mental disability
- type 3: children with serious emotional and/or behavioural problems
- type 4: children with a physical disability
- type 5: children admitted to hospital or in quarantine for medical reasons
- type 6: visually impaired children
- type 7: children with a hearing impairment
- type 8: children with serious learning difficulties

A school for special nursery and primary education can organise one or more of these types of education. Type 1 and type 8 are not organised in special nursery education.

The authorities are currently preparing an educational reform for the purpose of improving tailored education: **learning support**. It is being developed for nursery, primary and secondary education. Learning support gives a clearer description of the provision in mainstream and special education and better matches the provision to the individual needs of every child (see 6.6.).

In the 2006-2007 school year, there were 1.907 pre-schoolers in **special nursery education**. 0,81 % of all pre-schoolers (mainstream and special education together) are in special education.

**Special primary education** lasts seven years. Normally, the transition from special primary education to secondary education takes place at the age of 13 and a

child can spend maximum 9 years in special primary education. Children who reach the age of 15 before 1 January of the current school year cannot continue in primary education any longer. Pupil numbers in special primary education are increasing each year. In the 2006-2007 school year, 26.794 pupils were enrolled in special education. In primary education, 6,47 % of pupils attend special schools.

**Integrated nursery and primary education** (Geïntegreerd basisonderwijs - GON) results from co-operation between mainstream and special nursery and primary education. Disabled children or children with learning or educational difficulties attend classes or activities in a school for mainstream education, with assistance from special education. This may be temporary or permanent and may concern some of the lessons or all subject matters. Just like other measures such as additional needs provision and special educational resources, GON is intended to give as many pupils as possible the opportunity to attend mainstream schools. In the 2006-2007 school year, 1.103 pupils attended GON in nursery education and 3.617 pupils in primary education.

### 3.2.3 Structure and organisation

Nursery and primary schools provide both nursery and primary education, but autonomous nursery schools only provide nursery education. In an autonomous primary school, only primary education is organised. From a structural point of view, nursery and primary education are separate. To facilitate a smooth transition, new schools for mainstream education must organise both nursery and primary education from 1 September onwards.



Since 1 September 2003 a new structure has been operational: **the schools cluster**. This structure has existed in secondary education for some time now. A schools cluster is a collection of different schools of the same level of education (nursery, primary and secondary education), which work together at various levels (logistics, education provision, ...). The schools may belong to the same or different governing bodies and belong to the same or different educational networks.

The number of teachers in nursery and primary education depends on the total number of **teaching periods allocated for funding purposes**. This means the total number of teaching periods organised in a school that is financed or funded by the government. These teaching periods are calculated on the basis of the numbers of pupils on a particular count date and the supplementary teaching periods. There are supplementary teaching periods for:

- religion and non-religious ethics or cultural awareness;
- integration of non-Dutch speaking newcomers;
- pursuit of an equal opportunities policy;
- physical education;
- support of non-Dutch-speaking pupils in Dutch language schools in the peripheral and language border municipalities and in schools in municipalities adjacent to the language border municipalities and/or the Brussels Capital Region.

In special nursery and primary education there may be additional teaching times for:

- integrated education;
- continuing home tuition (for children who cannot go to school);
- schools in a specific situation (e.g. with a specific expertise in working with seriously disabled children or children with multiple disabilities).

In special nursery and primary education, paramedical, medical, social, psychological and remedial support (hours) is added to educational support (teaching times/teachers).

In addition, there may be supplementary teaching times for schools, which have voluntarily merged, and for temporary home tuition for the long-term sick.

Apart from the teaching times, schools in mainstream nursery education receive a **number of hours** to call in child carers. They support nursery teachers and optimise the way in which the young child is taken care of.

Finally, the government allocates to each school a **funding envelope** for management and support staff. These funding envelopes are meant for:

- the care policy;
- the co-ordination of ICT policy (only if the school participates in a co-operation platform);
- the development of administrative support.

Indeed, a schools cluster has a right to a funding envelope in support of its operation and can use it for its management and support staff.

Schools belonging to a co-operation platform are entitled to teaching times for tutorship which can be used for supporting a trainee teacher, a beginning teacher and induction teacher (LIO)(see 6.7).

The government does not impose any minimum or maximum numbers with regard to the number of pupils per class. The schools decide for themselves how they divide the pupils into groups. Although there are other possible ways of organising, most nursery and primary schools choose a **year group system**. In most cases, every class has its own (nursery) teacher.

### 3.2.4 Contents

Although **nursery education** is not compulsory, almost all children attend nursery education in Flanders. Nursery education works on a multifaceted education of children and encourages their cognitive, motor and affective development.

In mainstream **nursery education**, the educational provision covers at least, and if possible, in a co-ordinated way, the following subject areas:

- physical education
- expressive education
- Dutch
- environmental studies
- initiation into mathematics

Since 1 September 1998 **developmental objectives** have been introduced for each subject area in mainstream nursery education. Developmental objectives describe what young children learn at school.

Mainstream **primary education** builds on the educational provision of nursery education and works on the same subject areas, again in a co-ordinated way, where possible. However, ‘mathematical introduction’ is replaced by real ‘mathematics’ and from the fifth year onwards also ‘French’ as a second language is obligatory. In mainstream primary education, attention is focused on **cross-curricular themes** such as ‘learning to learn’, ‘social skills’ and ‘ICT’. Since 1 September 1998, **attainment targets** have been applicable in mainstream primary education. Those are minimum objectives, which the government considers necessary



and attainable for primary school children. For detailed information on attainment targets and developmental objectives, see 4.4.

To special nursery and primary education developmental objectives apply. Currently, developmental objectives have already been drawn up for types 1, 2, 7 and 8.

At the end of primary education, pupils who have achieved the curriculum targets receive a certificate of primary education. Also in special primary education children can obtain, in certain cases, a certificate that is equivalent to the certificate gained in mainstream primary education.

### 3.2.5 Parents' rights

In nursery and primary education, parents have a number of explicit rights set out in Flemish Parliament Acts. For example, parents are given free choice of school for their child (see 2.3 and 2.4).

At each moment in the course of the school year, parents can make their child change schools.

Furthermore, school regulations define the relationship between the school and the parents.

A special school statement is required for all admissions to special education. This must avoid all unnecessary referrals to special education. However, parents have the right to send their child to a mainstream school although it was referred to special education.







### 3.3 Secondary education

Secondary education is aimed at young people aged 12 to 18. Just like in nursery and primary education, there are schools clusters in secondary education. A schools cluster is a collection of different schools of the same level of education (nursery, primary or secondary education), which work together at various levels (logistics, education provision, ...). The schools may belong to the same or different governing bodies and belong to the same or different educational networks.

#### 3.3.1 Mainstream secondary education

Secondary education is attended by 457.527 pupils (2006-2007 school year). Three quarters of the pupils attend school in publicly funded, privately run education.

Since 1989, **full-time secondary education** has been organised in a **uniform system**.

This uniform structure comprises stages, types of education and courses of study. Pupils only make a final choice of subjects in the second stage so that they are first introduced to as many subjects as possible.

The majority of teaching periods in the **first stage** is devoted to the core curriculum and consists of:

- Dutch
- French and possibly English
- mathematics
- history
- geography
- education in the arts
- sciences
- technology
- physical education
- religion or ethics

From the **second stage**, we distinguish four different education forms:

- **General secondary education** (aso) places an emphasis on broad general education. Pupils are not prepared for a specific profession. aso provides a very firm foundation for passing on to tertiary education and that is why most pupils choose to continue studying after aso. 39,9 % of pupils attend aso (2006 - 2007 school year).
- **Technical secondary education** (tso) places a special emphasis on general and technical/theoretical subjects. After tso, young people can exercise a profession or pass on to tertiary education. This education also includes practical classes.  
31,3 % of pupils attend tso (2006-2007 school year).

- **Secondary arts education** (kso) combines a broad general education with active arts practice. After kso, young people can exercise a profession or go on to tertiary education. 1,9 % of pupils attend kso (2006-2007 school year).
- **Vocational secondary education** (bso) is a practice-oriented type of education in which young people learn a specific occupation in addition to receiving general education.  
26,9 % of pupils attend bso (including pupils in the fourth stage of bso and modular education) (2006-2007 school year).

Within one of these education forms, the pupil opts for a particular course of study. A number of these courses only start in the third or even the fourth stage.

In the second and the third stage, there is a common and an optional specific part. In the optional part, the core curriculum is supplemented with a broad range of possible subjects. In the **third stage**, the specific training component can be narrowed down again with a view to facilitate the ultimate career choice or the possible educational pathways in higher education.

In the **fourth stage** consisting mainly of nursing training programmes, no core curriculum is imposed because of the specificity of the training.

A pupil gains the diploma of secondary education after successfully completing six years of aso, tso, or kso or seven years of bso.<sup>8</sup>

As a holder of a diploma of secondary education, the young person has unlimited access to higher education. Neither the school, nor the type of education and course of study play a part in this. Exceptions are the degrees in dentistry or medicine for which the young person has to sit an entrance examination.

The **class committee** decides whether or not a pupil has passed. It decides whether or not a pupil has sufficiently achieved the objectives of the curriculum. The class committee consists of the headteacher and all the teachers who teach the pupil concerned. Every year is supported with an orientation certificate, a certificate, a study certificate or a diploma.

Governing bodies are free to choose their evaluation methods. With the exception of a few basic rules, the authorities do not impose any standards with regard to pupil assessment. The inspectorate does control the quality of the evaluation in the school audit (see 4.4).

<sup>8</sup> For further details: see the diagram of the educational structure (p.25).



### 3.3.2 Special secondary education

Some young people are hampered in their physical, psychological, social or intellectual development by a disability or by learning or behavioural difficulties. They temporarily or permanently need special assistance and education tailored to their needs. For this help, they can go to **special education**. Special education provides an educational provision tailored to the needs of the pupil. The years in special secondary education (buso), rarely coincide with the school years in mainstream secondary education. Indeed, a pupil only passes on to the next 'learning stage' when he is ready for this. The types of education that exist in special nursery and primary education (see 3.2.2) are the same as those in secondary education. The exception is type 8, which is not organised at the level of secondary education. In special secondary education, types of education are organised in accordance with the type of disability and the possibilities of the pupil:

- **Education type 1** provides social education aimed at the integration of the pupil in a sheltered environment.
- **Education type 2** provides general and social education, and training for work aimed at the pupils' integration in a sheltered living and working environment.
- **Education type 3** provides general social and vocational training aimed at the pupils' integration in an ordinary living and working environment.
- **Education type 4** prepares for studies in higher education and aims at the pupils' integration in active life.

Within every type of special education, the organisation and provision is adapted to the specific educational and training needs of every individual.

In full-time secondary education, 3,98 % of pupils attend special schools. As in other types of education, the privately run network attracts most pupils, i.e. 64,63 %.

The government is devising a means to further improve education tailored to the pupil's needs: **learning support**. It is being developed for nursery, primary and secondary education. Learning support gives a clearer description of the provision in mainstream and special education and better matches the provision to the individual needs of every child (see 6.6).

**Integrated secondary education** (Geïntegreerd secundair onderwijs - GON) results, just like in nursery and primary education, from co-operation between mainstream and special education. In this way, disabled children or children with learning or educational difficulties can

attend classes or activities in a school for mainstream education. They are helped by experts from special education. This may be temporary or permanent and may concern some of the lessons or all subject matters. In the 2006-2007 school year, 2.522 pupils received integrated secondary education.

### 3.3.3 Part-time learning and working

From the age of 15 or 16, pupils can transfer to **part-time education**. Part-time learning is available in three ways:

- through part-time vocational secondary education (dbso);
- through apprenticeship (organised by Syntra Vlaanderen);
- through part-time training programmes.

The **dbso** is organised in a part-time education centre. Pupils attend 15 teaching periods per week and supplement those periods with a work experience that corresponds to the training. Through this type of education, young people can gain a qualification certificate or a certificate of the second stage of secondary education. However, these certificates are not equivalent to the diploma delivered at the end of full-time vocational secondary education. In the 2006-2007 school year, 6.577 pupils were enrolled in dbso. 52% attend privately run education.

The **apprenticeship system** (or the 'apprenticeship contract') offers young people the opportunity to attend a practice-oriented training programme in order to become a self-employed entrepreneur or an employee. They can conclude an apprenticeship agreement with the head of company/trainer. The apprenticeship agreement provides for 4 days of practical training in a small or medium sized business (SME), or with a self-employed person and 1 day of theoretical training per week. At the end of the training, successful trainees receive an 'apprenticeship' certificate.

Personal development and individual guidance are especially focused on in **part-time education centres**. Indeed, this system is oriented towards young people who are temporarily not able to work or participate in education.

The government is preparing a new Act on learning and working which sets out that, from the 2008-2009 school year onwards, all young people in part-time education must learn and work for at least 28 hours a week. Furthermore, a better harmonisation of the three existing learning systems is aimed at. In the 'new' part-time education system, young people will be able to attain a



vocational qualification through an individually tailored learning pathway.

### **3.3.4 Participation of pupils and parents**

Since the 2004-2005 school year, schools must establish an educational council and a parent council if respectively 10% of the teachers/parents ask for it.

Secondary schools are also required to create a pupil council, except when they offer another way of involving pupils in school policy making. But if 10% of the pupils explicitly request the establishment of a pupil council, the school is obliged to set up a pupil council anyhow.

The educational council, the parent council and the pupil council each appoint their representatives to the school council. Through this school council, staff, parents, pupils and members of the local community participate in school policy (see 2.11).

In recent years, the legal position of the pupil has improved substantially. For example, all secondary schools must establish school regulations. School regulations contain the mutual rights and duties of parents and pupils, on the one hand, and the school board, on the other hand. In addition, they state the rules for order and discipline and the appeal procedure for students who want to contest examination results. The school council discusses these regulations beforehand.

### 3.4 Higher education

In Flanders, the following higher education courses are provided:

- Bachelor courses
  - Professional bachelor courses
  - Academic bachelor courses
- Master courses
- Further training programmes
- Postgraduates and updating and in-service training courses
- Doctoral programmes

**Higher professional education** exclusively consists of professionally oriented bachelor courses, which are only organised at colleges of higher education. In 2006-2007, 78.526 students were enrolled in professionally oriented higher education.

**Academic education** comprises bachelor and master courses, which are provided by universities. Also colleges of higher education belonging to an association are allowed to provide academic education. In 2006-2007, 84.817 students were enrolled in academic education.

An association is inter-institutional co-operation between one university and one or more colleges of higher education. Associations improve interaction between education and research. There are five associations in Flanders:

- the K.U. Leuven Association
- the Ghent University Association
- the Antwerp University Association
- the Brussels University Association
- the University and Colleges of Limburg Association

In the higher education register are recorded all programmes of study provided by universities and colleges of higher education:

[www.hogeronderwijsregister.be](http://www.hogeronderwijsregister.be)





### 3.4.1 Bachelor courses

There are professional and academic bachelor courses.

The **professional bachelor courses**, which are only provided by colleges of higher education, are oriented towards professional practice. They comprise general and specific knowledge courses and competencies that are necessary for an autonomous exercise of one specific profession or a group of professions. The professional bachelor is trained to immediately enter the labour market.

Both colleges and universities offer **academic bachelor courses**, which prepare students for master courses. Academic courses centre on general training and focus on the acquisition of academic or artistic knowledge. They make students acquire competences, which they must have in order to function in the field of sciences or the arts. Academic courses are founded on research. The student workload of a bachelor course is at least 180 ECTS credits which correspond to three years of full-time study.<sup>9</sup>

In order to start a bachelor course, the student must be holder of:

- a diploma of secondary education;
- a diploma of full-time higher education of one cycle;
- a diploma of the 'General Education' area of study of secondary adult education;
- a diploma or certificate that is recognised equivalent under a law, an act, a European directive or another international agreement.

If the diploma or certificate is not recognised, the college of higher education or university can still decide to admit the student. This may be the case for a student who has gained a diploma or a certificate outside the European Union that provides access to higher professional or academic education in that country.

Moreover, candidates who do not meet the above-mentioned entry conditions may be granted admission to a bachelor course by colleges of higher education and universities because of:

- humanitarian reasons;
- medical, psychological or social reasons;
- the general level of qualification, merits or competencies.

An admission test designed to gauge the students' artistic talents is mandatory for the disciplines of visual and audio-visual arts, music and performing arts. The college of higher education where the student wants to enrol, administers this test.

A diploma is issued to students having completed the bachelor course.

### 3.4.2 Master courses

Master courses are offered by universities and colleges of higher education participating in an association. Master courses are always academically oriented but some have also a professional orientation (doctor, engineer, pharmacist, translator, interpreter,...).

Master courses are intended to bring students to an advanced level of knowledge and competencies that they can use both for general and specific scientific or artistic functioning. This knowledge and these competencies enable them to practise sciences or the arts in an autonomous way. Students can also use this knowledge for independently exercising a profession or group of professions. A master course is concluded with a master's thesis.

The student workload of a master course is at least 60 ECTS credits which correspond to one year of full-time study.

A diploma of an academic bachelor course is a general prerequisite for entry to a master course. But a professional bachelor can take a master course after completion of a **bridging programme**. Colleges of higher education and universities autonomously set up this programme. This bridging programme amounts to a minimum of 45 credits and a maximum of 90 credits. Qualifications and competencies acquired elsewhere can reduce the bridging programme to 30 credits or less. The executive board autonomously decides on this matter.

Students proposing to enter medicine or dentistry have to sit an entrance examination.

### 3.4.3 Further training programmes

Students who have completed a professional bachelor course, can take a **bachelor after bachelor course**. In this further training programme, students strengthen their competencies or attain specialised expertise in the competencies acquired during the bachelor course. A master course can be followed by a **'master after master course'**. (**second or subsequent master**). Just like with the 'bachelor after bachelor course', the competencies acquired during the master course are further developed. The courses each have a load of at least 60 credits and a diploma is awarded upon completion.

At least a higher education diploma is required for entering a bachelor after bachelor course. Colleges of higher education decide autonomously which higher education diplomas grant admission to a specific bachelor after bachelor programme.

At least a master diploma is required for entering a master after master course. Colleges of higher educa-

<sup>9</sup> ECTS stands for European Credit Transfer System. This is the European credit transfer and accumulation system and an important tool in building one European Space for Higher Education.

tion and universities decide for themselves which master diplomas give entry to a specific master after master course.

#### **3.4.4 Postgraduates and updating and in-service training courses**

Both colleges of higher education and universities can organise postgraduate courses. A postgraduate degree is delivered after a course corresponding with education and study activities of at least 20 credits. These training pathways focus on the strengthening and/or the deepening of competences acquired after the bachelor or master programme for the purpose of further professional training. Thus, in order to be eligible for a postgraduate course, a bachelor or master diploma is required. The institutions autonomously decide which diplomas give entry to a specific postgraduate course. A certificate is issued to students having completed the postgraduate course.

Furthermore, higher education institutions can offer a wide range of updating and in-service training programmes. The student workload of those courses is not laid down and is defined, just like the entry conditions, by the institutions themselves. Upon completion of the courses, students are awarded a certificate.

#### **3.4.5 Doctoral programmes**

The doctoral programme trains the researcher to autonomously contribute to the development and growth of scientific knowledge. To this end, the researcher prepares a doctoral thesis. The thesis must prove that the researcher is able to create new scientific knowledge in a certain discipline or across disciplines. And it should also result in scientific publications. After public defence of this thesis, the researcher is awarded a doctoral degree. Only universities are allowed to deliver this doctorate degree.

### **3.5 Part-time arts education (dko)**

Part-time arts education is education which supplements school education and is aimed at children, young people and adults. Participants enrol voluntarily and pay an enrolment fee. Part-time arts education focuses on the artistic education of children and adults. In this way, it contributes to their personal development. Pupils become familiar with art in all its forms. They learn to critically approach and experience all art forms and can practise them themselves. They do so individually or in group (e.g. in an orchestra, dance group, or theatre company). Part-time arts education thoroughly prepares young people for a professional artistic career in higher education in the arts. Moreover, it improves the quality of social and cultural life in Flanders.

In part-time arts education there are four different courses of study:

- visual arts
- music
- wordcraft
- dance

Every course of study has its own structure, with levels and options that are laid down by law.

Children can start dance and visual arts education from the age of 6. For the disciplines of music and wordcraft the starting age is 8.

Every discipline comprises different levels : a lower level, an intermediate level and an upper level. It is only in the visual arts discipline that a specialist level is organised. Upon successfully completing every level, a final certificate or a certificate indicating the level achieved is awarded to the student.

Part-time arts education is provided in 80% of the municipalities in Flanders and the Brussels Capital Region. It is obvious that this is a widespread form of education.

The sector currently comprises 167 colleges: 101 are for music, wordcraft and dance, and 66 for visual arts. 88 % of the colleges fall under urban and municipal education.

165.157 pupils eligible for funding were enrolled in dko in the 2006-2007 school year. Music, wordcraft and dance courses are attended by 107.612 course participants; for visual arts, they number 57.545. For the collection of data, pupils attending more than one discipline are counted more than once. Most pupils are under the age of 18.





### 3.6 Adult education

Adult education is entirely apart from the initial educational pathway. Courses delivered in this type of education may lead to a recognised diploma, certificate or qualification. Adults aged 18 and over and young people who have complied with full-time compulsory education, may enrol. Depending on the course chosen, there may be specific entry requirements.

The new Flemish Parliament Act on Adult Education of 15 June 2007 thoroughly reorganizes adult education and contains the following key goals:

- the full integration of adult basic education into (adult) education;
- the introduction of higher vocational education (see 5.4);
- the establishment of 13 regional partnerships (= consortiums of adult education);
- the choice for modular courses;
- a new support structure for adult education.

#### 3.6.1 Structure and organisation

Adult education consists of three levels of education:

- adult basic education;
- secondary adult education;
- higher vocational education.

**Adult basic education centres** are pluralist centres, established as not-for-profit organisations. The general assembly consists for at least one quarter of representatives of local authorities, provinces, inter-local authority partnerships, public centres for social welfare or districts. From 1 September 2008, the existing 29 centres merge into 13 centres. So there is one centre for each operating area of an adult education consortium.

**Adult education centres** are established as privately run centres or as publicly run centres. Currently, there are 117 centres for adult education. They offer secondary adult education and higher vocational education.





From 1 September 2008, the 13 **consortiums of adult education** have been operating. These regional partnerships will optimise and harmonise the training programmes provided by the centres for adult basic education and the centres for adult education. They will also co-operate with other publicly run adult education providers. In addition, the consortiums are charged with the task of improving the provision of services to course participants.

**Dutch Language Houses** do not offer adult education themselves but work closely together with actors of adult education. All centres of adult basic education; all centres of adult education providing courses in Dutch as a second language (NT2); VDAB centres; Syntra; university languages centres; provincial authorities; the Flemish Community Commission and the local authorities of Antwerp and Ghent are partners of the Dutch Language Houses.

There are eight Dutch Language Houses: one for each Flemish province and each time one for the cities of Antwerp, Brussels and Ghent. The houses are not-for-profit organisations focusing on non-Dutch-speaking adults. They organise and co-ordinate the intake, testing and referral of applicants for, and participants in, the NT2 provision. Therefore they map out the NT2 provision in their operating area and look into the needs of non-Dutch speakers in search of a course.

The Dutch Language Houses are spread in the same way as are the welcome offices with which they co-operate closely in order to integrate non-Dutch-speaking newcomers.

### 3.6.2 Provision

Adult education offers **modular courses**. The subject matter is subdivided into a number of modules. The centre is free to spread a module over part of the year or the entire year. So modules can start at different times throughout the year and the course participant can compose his own study programme and fix the length of his study.

The modules can be organised as **contact education** or as **combined education**. In contact education, all lessons are taught in the centre. As for combined education, part of the module is taught in the classroom and part of the module can be learned autonomously, at home or in an open learning centre.

Until the 2011-2012 school year, **linear courses** with one or more years of study are still being organised.

The **adult basic education** courses are subdivided into the following disciplines:

- Dutch as a second language literacy
- Dutch as a second language (NT2)

- Dutch
- mathematics
- social orientation
- information and communication technologies (ICT)
- introduction in English and French

In the 2005-2006 year of operation, 31.838 course participants were enrolled in a course of adult basic education. 50% of them attended a Dutch as a second language course.

The courses in **secondary adult education** are organised at the level of full-time secondary education, with the exception of the first stage, and are subdivided into the following courses of study:

- general education
- car
- special educational needs
- bookbinding
- construction
- chemistry
- decorative techniques
- diamond manufacturing
- graphic techniques
- commerce
- wood
- education in household skills
- information and communication technologies (ICT)
- jewelry
- lace
- heating and cooling
- agriculture and horticulture
- leather-working
- care of the body
- maritime courses
- mechanics and electricity
- fashion
- construction of musical instruments
- Dutch as a second language (NT2)
- personal care
- forging
- languages level 1 and 2
- languages level 3 and 4
- textile
- tourism
- food

Within the 'general education' discipline, courses of the former 'second chance education' are also offered. By attending those courses, adults can still gain a certificate of secondary education. The adult education centres organise the exams themselves and award the secondary education diploma.

In 2006-2007, 302.113 course participants were enrolled in secondary education. 59,74% were women. The majority of enrolments related to the modular courses: 89,84%.

The courses of **higher vocational education** are subdivided into the following courses of study:

- industrial sciences and technology
- commercial sciences and business studies
- health care
- education
- social and community work
- biotechnology

In 2006-2007, there were 26.879 enrolments in this level of education. 57,93% of the course participants were women. 58,70 % of the enrolments were for modular course components.

Higher vocational education was introduced for the first time in the Act on adult education but is extended with a 7th specialist year in tso and kso and the fourth stages of bso, which are organised by institutions of mainstream full-time secondary education. Also colleges of higher education will get the opportunity to organise higher vocational education courses (see 5.4).

### 3.6.3 Support to adult education

The **Flemish Support Centre for Adult Education** (Vlaams Ondersteuningscentrum voor het Volwassenenonderwijs - VOCVO), is a new organisation, which receives a yearly grant for the support and guidance of the adult basic education centres and the adult education centres, which do not call on an education counselling service. This support can be given in the form of investments or financing of staffing costs. The same amount is divided among the education counselling services for the support and monitoring of the affiliated adult education centres.



# 4. SUPPORT AND QUALITY CONTROL



## 4.1 Pupil Guidance Centres (CLBs)

The Pupil guidance centre or CLB is a service financed by the government. In Flanders, there are 73 centres, which each belong to one of the three educational networks. But a CLB works across the networks and thus can also accompany schools belonging to another educational network.

Pupils, parents, teachers and school management teams can call on the CLB for information, help and guidance. CLB guidance is free of charge and is based on four key pillars:

- learning and studying
- the school career
- preventive health care
- social and emotional development

So CLBs provide multidisciplinary guidance. To this end, a CLB co-operates with welfare and health institutions. In a CLB, doctors, social workers, educationalists, psychologists, psychological assistants and nurses are employed. Depending on the local needs and on the circumstances, also speech therapists and physiotherapists are active in CLBs. Each team member has a number of specific tasks, but he always collaborates with the other team members.

The welfare of the pupil is central and guidance is based on trust and dialogue. Therefore the guidance only starts when a pupil or parent has taken an initiative in this respect. If a school asks the CLB to supervise a pupil, the centre will always first expressly ask for the parents' consent (for a pupil under the age of 12), or the pupil's consent (from the age of 12). Guidance by a CLB is only compulsory in the case of truancy. The CLB also organises medical examinations that are mandatory in some years of study. In the framework of preventive health care, the CLB doctor administers a number of vaccinations. If a contagious disease breaks out at school, the CLB takes measures together with the school in order to prevent the disease from spreading.

The CLB provision focuses particularly on pupils at risk of dropping out due to their social background and problematic living conditions. The CLB guarantees confidentiality of pupil data and works independently. In this way, the CLB works towards equal opportunities in education for all young people. The CLB is also the body, which refers young people to special education if necessary.

The CLB has a pivotal function and signposts young people to appropriate assistance. That is why the CLB is a major partner of Integrated Youth Assistance. Apart

from the CLB, Integrated Youth Assistance consists of 6 major youth assistance sectors, which co-operate for the purpose of harmonising their provision.

The co-operation between the school and the CLB is set out in a policy plan or contract. In order to ensure quality, the CLB must draw up a quality handbook and a quality plan. An independent CLB inspectorate supervises their implementation.

## 4.2 Information and communication technologies (ICT)

In our knowledge society, dealing with ICT has become a key skill. This societal evolution requires new skills from children and adults and influences learning and teaching methods. The new cross-curricular attainment targets and developmental objectives for ICT have been applicable in nursery and primary education and in the first stage of secondary education as of 1 September 2007. In order to achieve these attainment targets for ICT, the Flemish Government designed a five-pillar policy:

1. Strengthening the policy-making power of education institutions at the level of the institution.

Since the 2002-2003 school year, schools have been receiving resources for the co-ordination of their ICT policy. These resources are calculated on the basis of a 'backpack' per pupil. Education levels with higher needs get more funds. Among other things an ICT co-ordinator may be recruited with these funds. He is responsible for the technical and educational ICT support within the partnership of schools or within a single school.

2. Improving the expertise of the education staff.

**Training through REN Vlaanderen<sup>10</sup>:** The key task of this regional network of experts is to give teachers an in-depth training in the educational use of ICT. REN Vlaanderen provides both supply- and demand-driven in-service training. In addition, it organizes each year in-service training and study days on three specific themes. Moreover, REN Vlaanderen develops supporting material such as "pICTos". This is an electronic planning tool allowing schools to check their progress in achieving the attainment targets for ICT and to examine how to improve the integration of ICT in school activities.

[www.renvlaanderen.be](http://www.renvlaanderen.be)

<sup>10</sup> REN = Regional Network of Experts



### 3. Providing a high quality infrastructure.

In order to teach ICT skills, a robust computer infrastructure is needed. Under the **ICT infrastructure programme**, extra means are awarded to education institutions allowing them to purchase hardware, software and training packages. Through the **I-line programme**, all levels of education of educational institutions can use a fast internet connection at reduced cost. All universities and colleges of higher education can surf with a **Gigabit Ethernet connection**. In this way, the Flemish Government encourages higher education institutions to choose for e-Research and develop a digital infrastructure to this end.

### 4. Designing an appropriate policy on teaching resources.

Under the authority of the Flemish Ministry of Education and Training and together with Klas cement, an educational portal site providing various teaching materials was developed.<sup>11</sup> It makes the results of govern-

ment projects available to a wider range of educational stakeholders.

At regular intervals, the government organises awareness-raising campaigns and support projects for several aspects of ICT use. Guidelines and teaching resources on **safe ICT use** were developed and teaching resources with **free software** were distributed. Furthermore, several projects are financed in the framework of **ICT use and learning support**.

[www.klascement.net](http://www.klascement.net)

### 5. Encouraging research and ICT monitoring.

The authorities stimulate the development and dissemination of knowledge on various aspects of ICT policy: ICT skills of pupils, course participants, students and teachers; ICT infrastructure; ICT training... The universities of Ghent and Louvain are developing a monitoring tool that provides information on various ICT indicators. These data are useful for future evaluations of the policy.



### 4.3 Communication

In order to achieve quality education based upon equal opportunities for all, a strong involvement of schools, teachers and pupils, parents, local authorities, ... is necessary. The creation of such a broad social support asks for integrated communication with the different target groups. The communication (what and how) must be adapted to the target group. Moreover it is important to also attract those target groups that are theoretically more difficult to reach: individuals who do not have access to the Internet, people with low reading abilities, people with a limited command of the language... Many initiatives have already been taken to better adapt the communication to vulnerable groups. Klasse XTR Strong, for example, is a free monthly e-letter for those working with vulnerable groups in education. Klasse XTR Strong compiles examples of good practice and extra tips for communication such as for writing letters to parents with low language abilities.

**Klasse** is a multifaceted publication. Klasse comprises four magazines that are monthly published by the Agency for Educational Communication and are distributed free of charge among teachers, parents and pupils. Moreover, there are relating websites, e-letters, a teacher and student card... which form an inextricable part of the project (see diagram).

Although the four Klasse magazines have different target groups they constantly link up with each other by covering similar topics (e.g. drugs, choice of study, learning to learn, aggression....). By exchanging information between the different target groups, everyone's involvement in the world of upbringing and education is enhanced. Klasse co-operates with a wide network of organisations.

**TV.Klasse** Klasse now also provides video coverage of classroom or school events for the Internet.

In addition to the Klasse magazines, the Ministry publishes several other publications which often are also electronically available on

[www.ond.vlaanderen.be/publicaties](http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/publicaties)

The [onderwijs.vlaanderen.be](http://onderwijs.vlaanderen.be) website is a portal to all on-line information and services of the Ministry. This site clearly responds to information needs : in 2007 an average of 20,000 visitors were counted daily.

Electronic communication is thus of paramount importance because of the following advantages:

- The information is available in real time and 24 hours a day.
- The contents is easily updated and disseminated on a large scale.
- The communication may be customised to the specific needs of target groups (e.g. e-letters).
- Target groups such as the visually impaired can be reached.

Nevertheless direct interaction with the education sector and the broad public remains important. That is why information events are held at regular intervals. At Information Days for Prospective Students ('SID-ins'), final year students of secondary education can obtain information on possible educational and professional choices. The annual Tours of Flanders at the end of the school year are dedicated to inform school management teams and school secretarial staff about the new legislation on education.



Title	Target group	Scope
<b>Klasse</b>	Monthly magazine sent to teachers, school management teams, CLB staff, administrative staff, trainee teachers.	100 % (= 200.000 copies)
<b>Klasse for parents</b>	Monthly newsletter presented (via the schools) to parents having children between the ages of 2,5 and 14.	95 % (= 700.000 copies)
<b>Yeti</b>	Magazine for teens (distributed via the schools) for pupils between 10 and 12 (= 3rd stage of primary education).	96 % (= 140.000 copies)
<b>Maks!</b> (Klasse for young people)	Newspaper for young people (distributed via the schools) for pupils between 14 and 18 (= 2nd and 3rd stage of secondary education).	91 % (= 200.000 copies)
<b>www.klasse.be</b>	Via klasse.be, the visitor can surf to all Klasse magazines. The contents of these sites is carefully tailored to the target group's environment. Parents keep blogs and help each other. Young people conduct debates in a safe environment. Teachers and school management teams quickly find appropriate professional information.	(Approx. 600.000 visitors per month)
<b>E-letters</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Schooldirect and Lerarendirect give clear information on important educational news topics respectively to school management teams and teachers.</li> <li>The electronic newsletters Klasse XTR, Ouders XTR, XTR Strong, Rambo en Maksupdate provide extra information to the readers of the different Klasse magazines.</li> </ul>	Schooldirect: all school management teams + 14.000 free subscriptions Lerarendirect: 27.000 teachers
<b>Teacher card</b>	Official identification card issued to teachers giving them free entry or sharp reductions when they visit museums, theatres, nature reserves, cultural centres, etc... in view of preparing their lessons and extra-curricular activities.	(=180.000 cards)
<b>Student card</b>	A card for secondary education students to which are linked actions and advantages.	(=400.000 cards)





#### 4.4 Quality control and quality promotion

A new Act on ‘quality management’ is in preparation. This Flemish Parliament Act creates a general and comprehensive framework to continuously guarantee quality education and an adapted pupil guidance at all levels of education. If this Act is adopted, the text below will be outdated. For information on changes to legislation, please consult the next websites

[www.ond.vlaanderen.be/wetwijs](http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/wetwijs)

[www.ond.vlaanderen.be/edulex](http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/edulex)

##### 4.4.1. Quality control in nursery, primary, secondary education, part-time arts education, adult education and CLBs.

Schools decide autonomously on their educational methods, curriculums, timetables and the recruitment of their personnel. Nevertheless, the government ensures quality education by imposing conditions to be met by the schools in order for them to become accredited and receive financial support. This system of quality control and promotion is built on 3 pillars:

1. The attainment targets and developmental objectives.

**Attainment targets** are minimum goals which the government considers necessary and achievable for a par-

ticular group of pupils. In concrete terms, this concerns knowledge, insight, attitudes and skills. There are both subject-related attainment targets and cross-curricular attainment targets.

An example of an attainment target for ‘technology’ in primary education is:

“When assembling or disassembling a construction, pupils can functionally apply their knowledge of materials as well as their knowledge of the principles of construction and movement.”

For nursery education and the first year B as well as the preparative class for secondary education, no attainment targets but **developmental objectives** were laid down.<sup>12</sup> Developmental objectives are aims. They do not have to be achieved but aimed at. Developmental objectives are also applicable in special education so that the special educational needs of disabled pupils can be catered for in a flexible way. An example of a developmental objective in nursery education for the subject area ‘environmental studies’ is:

“In a concrete situation, pre-schoolers can make the difference between giving, receiving, swapping, borrowing, buying and selling.”

In **nursery education** there are developmental objectives in five subject areas: ‘physical education’, ‘expressive education’, ‘Dutch’, ‘initiation into mathematics’ and ‘environmental studies’. **Primary education** has attainment targets for the same subject areas. In primary education, there are also **cross-curricular attain-**

<sup>12</sup> The first year B is a bridging class between primary and secondary education. It is intended for young people who have already experienced learning delays in primary education or are less able to attend a type of education that is largely theoretical. Afterwards, they can attend the preparative class for vocational education or the first year A.





ment targets for 'learning to learn' and 'social skills'. In **secondary education** subject-related and cross-curricular attainment targets for the **first stage** have been identified.

The **cross-curricular attainment targets (VOETen)** are formulated on the basis of a number of themes. For the first stage, they are: 'learning to learn', 'social skills', 'citizenship education', 'health education' and 'environmental education'. New themes in the second and the third stage are 'expressive and creative education' and 'technical and technological education'. The latter cross-curricular attainment targets are only applicable in aso. Schools are allowed to rearrange those themes in a creative way into useful wholes. Cross-curricular attainment targets can be perfectly associated with subject-related attainment targets. If a teacher uses an article on the French revolution, he not only makes learning French more tangible but also contributes to 'citizenship education'.

From the **second stage** in secondary education, attainment targets are subdivided in four types of education:

- general secondary education (aso)
- vocational secondary education (bso)
- secondary education in the arts (kso)
- technical secondary education (tso)

**Specific attainment targets** currently only exist in the second and third stage of aso. Specific attainment targets are associated with skills, specific knowledge, insights and attitudes which the pupil must have to start higher education.

At present, attainment targets specifically designed for vocational courses of study such as administrative work, mechanics, bakery etc. are being developed. This specific provision is needed to keep in touch with industry.

Every governing body or school board must include the attainment targets or developmental objectives in the curriculum. A curriculum sums up the objectives and contents to be achieved in a subject or course of study, and describes the educational methods used for this purpose. An educational method is the way in which one teaches something. For example, a teacher may teach a certain subject matter by actively conducting experiments or by making pupils watch a demonstration on dvd.

## 2. The inspectorate:

The **educational inspectorate** of the Flemish Ministry of Education and Training acts as a professional body of

external supervision by assessing the implementation of these attainment targets and developmental objectives.

It comprises five inspection teams:

- the inspection team for nursery and primary education
- the inspection team for secondary education
- the inspection team for part-time arts education
- the inspection team for adult education and adult basic education
- the inspection team for pupil guidance centres

There is a separate quality control system for philosophical subject matters.

Key tasks of the inspectorate include controlling the quality of education and **recognising** educational institutions and CLBs.

The inspectorate conducts **school audits or centre audits** (for CLBs and adult education) to evaluate the actual implementation of attainment targets and developmental objectives. It also examines whether other legislative obligations, such as applying a timetable based on the core curriculum, are respected. While auditing, the inspectorate acts as a team and inspects the operation of the whole school/centre in one go. Such an audit is conducted once every six years in all institutions. The inspectorate uses the CIPO instrument<sup>13</sup>, which is each time adapted to the level of education. With this instrument, the inspection teams gain a fairly accurate picture of the strong and weak points of the school or the centre.

After the audit, the inspectorate gives advice to the minister with regard to the continued recognition of the establishment. Their advice is often a recognition under certain conditions, so that schools and centres are stimulated to improve their quality.

The inspectorate submits a report on the audits to the Flemish Parliament so that policy makers can follow up on the quality assessments. Since 2007, the inspection reports have been made available to the public on the Internet.

## 3. Educational guidance.

Each educational network has its own **educational guidance service** ((pedagogische begeleidingsdienst - PBD), which ensures professional internal support to schools and centres.

Schools can call on them for educational and methodological advisory services (innovation projects, self-evaluation projects, support initiatives). Educational guidance works across schools for the in-service training and support of schoolheads. Educational guidance also

<sup>13</sup> CIPO: Context - Input - Process - Output.

plays an important part in establishing new curriculums and supports their implementation. If the inspectorate establishes shortcomings in schools, the educational guidance service may be called on to address them. Anyway, the educational guidance service focuses above all on prevention.

#### 4.4.2 Quality control in higher education

There is one single system of (internal and external) quality control for the whole of tertiary education. Colleges of higher education and universities carry out their own **internal quality control**: they permanently and independently ensure the quality assessment of their educational activities.

The process of **external quality control** starts with a self-evaluation. Furthermore, a committee of external experts holds a **visitation**. This happens once every eight years for all bachelor and master courses. It concerns one course or a cluster of related courses. Related courses in colleges of higher education and universities can be reviewed together. The Vlaamse Interuniversitaire Raad (VLIR - Flemish Interuniversity Council) and the Vlaamse Hogescholenraad (VLHORA - Flemish Council for Non-University Higher Education) largely coordinate these visitation committees. The results of the visitations are included in a public report.

The Higher Education Reform Act of 4 April 2003 introduces an additional dimension to quality control, i.e. the **accreditation**. An accredited course officially meets the international minimum quality standards. The accreditation of a course is a condition for carrying the higher education label and for awarding bachelor and master degrees. In Flanders it is the Nederlands-Vlaams Accreditatieorgaan (NVAO Dutch-Flemish accreditation agency) which delivers accreditations. This independent body of experts grants accreditations on the basis of visitation reports of the courses. The accreditation can possibly also be granted by an accreditation body recognised by the NVAO.

Since the 2004-2005 academic year, quality control in colleges of higher education and universities has been carried out in three steps:

- internal quality control;
- external visitation which results in a public report;
- accreditation.

The Higher Education Reform Act gives transformed courses a temporary transitional accreditation which expires at the end of the 2012-2013 academic year. Thus all courses must have gone through the above-mentioned three-step process before that.

5. **MATCHING EDUCATION  
TO LABOUR MARKET NEEDS**



### 5.1 Development of talents: testing grounds

All pupils have talents and must have equal opportunities to develop themselves to the greatest possible extent. If pupils can develop their talents, they improve their chances on the labour market. But it is not always evident to identify talent. Indeed, tracking talent not only requires education to carry out structural changes but also asks for a cultural switch that cannot be imposed by the central level. That is why the government launched the system of **testing grounds**.

It is about projects of local schools or schools groups on talent development. For a limited period of time,

schools can ‘experiment’ in an environment with few regulations. The themes of these testing grounds are: ‘technology’, ‘learning differently’ and ‘choosing differently’. Another group of testing grounds are related to study and career choice on the one hand and workplace learning on the other hand. These are two themes from the Competence Agenda (see 5.3).

These testing grounds are not only interesting examples of good practice which other schools can learn from but also contain a lot of information for the legislator. The experience in part-time education centres with testing grounds was for example very inspiring for the new Flemish Parliament Act on ‘learning and working’ (see 3.3.3).



## 5.2 Modularisation

The **modularisation** experiment is designed for pupils attending vocationally-oriented training courses (bso, dbso, buso OV3).

It focuses in the first instance on vocational training courses leading to an occupational qualification. The contents of the modules are derived from the job descriptions drawn up by the social partners.

Vocational training courses are organised for individual study areas and are independent of stages or years of study. Within an area of study, the pupil chooses from the different vocational courses (learning pathways) defined by the government. The learning pathway consists of one or more modules. For each module that the pupil completes, he receives a modular certificate recognised by the government. Once the learner has successfully completed the training, he will be issued with a certificate.

Modular vocational courses are a first step in the elimination of barriers between the education forms as courses are identical in content for bso, dbso and buso OV3. Moreover, the replacement of years of study and stages by learning pathways that are identical to all education forms, makes the education provision more transparent.

A modular structure makes it possible for the interim successes of learners to be expressed in (modular) certificates, thus enhancing their chances of entering the labour market. This combats unqualified school-leaving and at the same time the experiences of success give pupils strong motivation for lifelong learning.

In the modularisation experiment, elements of general education are integrated as far as possible in the vocational context. In addition to a vocational certificate, all pupils may gain one or more of the following certificates/diplomas:

- a certificate of the 2nd stage of secondary education;
- a study certificate of the 2nd year of the 3rd stage of secondary education;
- a diploma of secondary education.

Modularisation is also linked to the integration of innovative visions of education and new education methods such as 'integrated teaching', 'differentiated teaching' and 'team teaching'.

## 5.3 The Competence Agenda

The Competence Agenda 2010 contains ten action programmes mobilising literally everyone to discover, develop and deploy talents. Four out of the ten action programmes focus specifically on a smooth transition from education to employment.

A first action programme concentrates on guiding pupils in making a **study and career choice**. Both the schools and the pupil guidance centres will join their forces with the Flemish Public Employment Service (VDAB) in order to thoroughly inform pupils and parents. This action programme includes the following concrete measures:

- A structural financing of the 'Beroepenhuis' (House of Professions) from 2008 onwards. The Beroepenhuis offers information on professions and courses of study that mainly lead to technical or practical professions.
- An investment programme for the renewal and security of basic equipment in technical schools. This not only enhances the quality of this type of education but also improves its image.
- A budget for the promotion of high-demand professions. Pupils who choose a training leading to a high-demand profession, receive a grant.

A second action programme aims at the systematic and structural development of **workplace learning**. The social partners committed themselves to providing annually 75.000 work placements for pupils of technical secondary education and vocational secondary education. From the 2006-2007 school year, all pupils in bso complete a work placement in the sixth year. The intention is to also provide work placements for tso training courses. At [www.stageforum.be](http://www.stageforum.be) offer and demand of regulated work placements and of workplace learning jobs can find each other under supervision. Not only pupils but also teachers will get the opportunity to participate in 'workplace learning' for practical and technical courses.

Furthermore, the Regional Technological Centres are called on to mobilise 'bridge builders' for better tailoring the provision of schools to the needs of the business world. Finally, the different systems of alternate learning and working (part-time vocational secondary education, apprenticeship and part-time training) are harmonised in order to ensure full engagement of all pupils.

Improving the process of making a good study and career choice and implementing workplace learning is achieved in 41 testing grounds (see 5.1).



A third action programme aims at the improvement and development of **a sense of entrepreneurship**. The virtual knowledge centre for entrepreneurship training of the Flemish Government, Competento, was established in 2006 within Syntra Vlaanderen. It contains an inventory of existing tools and techniques to cultivate a sense of entrepreneurship and enterprise in education.

In conclusion, a fourth action programme focuses on strengthening the **accreditation of experiential learning (APEL)**. APEL expands the available talent pool by validating competencies, independently of the place where or the way in which they were acquired. In order to underpin the APEL policy on the labour market and in education, the following actions are planned:

- The further introduction and strengthening of the policy on APEL in tertiary education.
- The launch of certificate supplements. The certificate supplement is a document, which the individual receives together with the certificate (proof) of the vocational courses he has attended and goes with the European portfolio Europass. It comprises a description of the competencies, which the holder of the qualification certificate has acquired.
- The promotion of APEL practices in adult education through the provision of better services by the adult education centres for shorter learning pathways. The adult education centre will also act as a test centre for the acquisition of a certificate of experience.
- Optimisation of the APEL policy of public education providers (VDAB, Syntra) and harmonisation with education.
- The recognition of the certificate of experience and the counselling of a test centre in APEL practices of education and training providers.

A Flemish Parliament Act is in preparation that will introduce a co-ordinated **Flemish qualification structure**. The key goal is to ensure transparency in qualifications. In a univocal way, a description is made of the competencies required for access to a particular profession or for transition to a particular training. It is a tool, which promotes communication between education and work because the same framework is used for the needs of the labour market and the objectives of a training programme. If people seek a job or consider changing jobs or starting a training programme, the qualification structure will show which competencies are needed to that end. On the basis of a portfolio and/or competency examination, it can be checked which competencies the candidates have and which are still lacking for obtaining a qualification. That is why the qualification structure will play a role in guiding study and career choices and later careers of people.

#### 5.4 Higher vocational education (HBO)

Previously, higher vocational education comprised those training courses of adult education (see also 3.6) but is extended with a 7th specialist year in tso and kso and the fourth stages of bso. All those courses are very important for the labour market.

In future, not only adult education centres but also secondary schools and colleges of higher education will be allowed to organise such courses of higher vocational education. Typical of those courses is the close co-operation with the professional sectors. Moreover, work-place learning plays a key role in these courses. Those courses will also distinguish themselves by creating transparent and flexible pathways (see also 5.5). The courses of higher vocational education do not only focus on immediate employability on the labour market. Higher vocational education can also be a step towards a professional bachelor.



## 5.5 Lifelong learning

Lifelong and life-wide learning is a continuous process in which the learners acquire the necessary knowledge and competencies to better cope with their professional, social and cultural tasks in a fast changing society. As the needs of the labour market are changing at a rapid pace, lifelong learning is needed to meet those requirements.

The government stimulates the desire to learn by providing learning contents and learning situations from primary up to higher education, which cultivate the skills for lifelong learning. In order to develop and maintain a positive attitude to lifelong learning, it is essential to have experiences of success on the way.

Therefore, attention is being paid to the continued modularisation (see 5.2) of education at all levels. Also **higher education** is placing a more explicit emphasis on the lifelong learning perspective by a flexible organisation of education.

In Flanders, various forms of flexibilisation have already been laid down by law: including transition between courses through bridging or transfer programmes, recognition of competencies acquired earlier on in life, distance learning, ICT integration, evening courses, mobility programmes, dual learning pathways,... Educational institutions are taking more and more initiatives for the purpose of creating a more flexible education system.



One of the main objectives of **open distance education** for example is making the educational provision accessible to as many adults as possible by taking their way of living and world of experience into account to the maximum extent. Open distance education is organised in a very flexible way.

Various combinations of learning and working, whether in part-time or in an alternating form, can also facilitate the transition from learning to working and vice-versa. Some Flemish educational institutions have made concrete efforts to introduce **dual learning pathways** in the education provision, e.g. the master course in information technology. This new learning trajectory consists of a broad specialist academic training linked to a considerable and relevant work experience. Students work and study at the same time. In consultation with the student, the company and the training provider, the

work done in the company can be valorised for obtaining a diploma. In addition, the student has to pass a limited number of tests. Such a learning trajectory has the advantage that the graduate has achieved a high entry level and is better qualified to start to work immediately at academic level. The 'Training for trainers of adult learners' project is another example of how dual learning pathways can better tailor the educational provision to the demands of the labour market. Aiming at the continued professionalisation of trainers of adults, dual learning pathways are offered allowing course participants to acquire competencies, both by classroom and on the job training.

Many valuable experiments have been developed in which part-time pathways in combination with the recognition of qualifications and competencies acquired elsewhere lead to a full-fledged diploma in education, nursing or social work.



**6. EDUCATION POLICY  
AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENTS**



In view of the social challenges, education policy makers place varying emphases, the connecting thread being the implementation of equal opportunities in education.

### 6.1 Pupil grants and student grants

The Flemish Community gives financial support to pupils and students who come from financially deprived families. Naturally, study financing is not new. But legislation on it is regularly updated. Those adjustments ensure that all young people are given full opportunities in the field of training and intellectual development, regardless of their origin, financial situation or social and cultural environment.

In 2007, legislation was adjusted. A distinction is made between the term 'pupil grant' and the term 'student grant'. A **pupil grant** is awarded to pupils in nursery, primary and secondary education, while a **student grant** is awarded to students in higher education. The Flemish Parliament Act includes the following innovations:

- the same income limits for higher, secondary and nursery and primary education

The financial conditions for access to study financing in nursery, primary, secondary and higher education were brought into line. If an older brother or sister in higher education is entitled to a grant, also possible younger brothers and/or sisters in secondary, nursery or primary education are eligible for a grant. In the past, this was not always the case. As the legal basis is now identical, parents can submit a single family file for all children.

- increase of the grant amounts

Due to the relaxation of the financial conditions for access, more people will be eligible for study financing and, in addition, the amounts are increased.

- pupil grant and regular school attendance

What is new is that the right to a pupil grant is now being linked to school attendance. A pupil playing truant a lot for two years in a row, can lose his right to a pupil grant. This measure is included in the Anti-truancy campaign (see 6.2).

- extension of the pupil grants to nursery and primary education and part-time vocational education (from the 2008-2009 school year).

From 15 August 2008 onwards, a pupil grant for pre-schoolers and primary pupils may be applied for. Just like in secondary education, pre-schoolers and pupils must attend classes regularly in order to be awarded a pupil grant. From the same date, also pupils in part-time vocational education are eligible for a pupil grant.

- changes in the nationality condition

Not only Belgians are eligible for study financing. Pupils and students with a residence permit living in Belgium for some time or recognised refugees, can apply for study financing from now on.

- Changes in educational conditions

Young people who have become of age (and as a result are no longer subject to compulsory education) continue to be entitled to a pupil grant, even if they did not pass the previous year. But they have to be enrolled in full-time education. This right applies up to and including the school year in which the pupil reaches the age of 22. This age limit is not applicable to the fourth stage of vocational secondary or special education.

An adjustment of educational conditions is also needed in higher education. As a result of the continued flexi-





bilisation of higher education, students can change the course or training leading to a degree more often and more easily than before. A physics student, for example, can switch to a pharmacy training course without any problem. But, in that case, students benefiting from a student grant must use their “joker” grant because such a change in studies is seen as a delay in graduation. A new Flemish Parliament Act on this matter is in preparation. It stipulates that study progress will from now on be determined by the number of study credits which the student gained in the previous academic year. If this Act is adopted, students will only have to use their joker grant if they have not passed their exam.

For up-to-date information on this future legislation, please consult: [www.studietoelagen.be](http://www.studietoelagen.be)  
In addition, the site offers comprehensive information on the conditions and procedures to apply for study financing.

Annually, the Study Grants Division receives approximately 150.000 applications, of which nearly one third for higher education and the rest for secondary education. Each year, the government spends some 69 million euro to study financing. Of this, almost 57 million euro is allocated to higher education. Study expenses in higher education are considerably higher than in secondary education. The new act will lead to an increase in numbers of applications: there is a potential growth from 123.000 files to 273.000 family files.

In order to simplify administrative processing of applications, a new software programme was launched which allows the integration of information from central databases, such as the dwellings database containing data on family composition... The citizen only has to deliver the information that cannot be found in central databases. Both for higher and secondary education, applications can be made online. From the 2008-2009 school year, this will also be possible for nursery and primary education.

## 6.2 Anti-truancy campaign

Young people playing truant are less likely to have a successful educational career with a qualification on completion of their course of study.

Truancy also interferes with the effective operation of a school. If parents are late in enrolling their children at the start of the school year (and thus do not respect regulations on compulsory education), class groups have to be reshuffled and pupils need to catch up on lessons. Moreover, truants are often socially deprived pupils and/or pupils having learning difficulties at school. Precisely these pupils have the most to gain from a diploma. The integrated anti-truancy campaign tackles this ‘inequality of chances’. These efforts are sustained through a close co-operation between various actors and sectors. The truancy problem is indeed the shared responsibility of young people and parents, but also of schools and CLBs. The many actors outside education, such as the welfare sector, the medical sector, the local authorities, police and justice...can also contribute their mite.

The campaign encompasses the whole continuum from awareness-raising and providing information on prevention and guidance to sanctions.

On [www.ond.vlaanderen.be/leerplicht](http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/leerplicht), a lot of background information can be found about truancy, the anti-truancy campaign and the role of different actors.



### 6.3 Participation of pre-schoolers

A comparative study of the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) expressly praises the Flemish nursery school as a 'model' for other countries. In comparison to other countries, participation of pre-schoolers in education is very high in Flanders.

However, there are still children who are not enrolled in a nursery school or who do not attend school regularly. They are often deprived children who are not reached by care providers. These children in particular have an extra need for educational stimulation provided by education. Children starting primary education without having attended nursery school often are disadvantaged in learning or in language skills. Participation of pre-schoolers is needed in order to guarantee equal opportunities in education for each child.

The government stimulates the participation of all pre-schoolers in education by:

- Raising awareness in co-operation with different partners, such as 'Kind en Gezin'.
- The introduction of a maximum invoice system (see 2.2) and pupil grants (see 6.1).
- An improvement of the system of pre-school entry classes, so that schools are more quickly eligible for a pre-school entry class.
- The organisation of more GOK teaching periods in schools attended by high numbers of pre-schoolers meeting the equal opportunities indicators (see 2.4).
- Recruitment of a care\* staff member per schools cluster. This staff member designs a policy on pre-schooler participation, aiming at young children who are not enrolled as well as on enrolled pre-schoolers who attend school on an irregular basis.
- Second line support offering support for the educational and didactical actions of pre-school teachers who have a lot of non-Dutch speaking pre-schoolers in their classgroup.

### 6.4 Health policy

Children can be stimulated to healthy living at school. The school's role is essential, in particular for deprived children. Health is no new theme at Flemish schools. Developmental objectives and attainment targets define what pupils must know about health and which competencies they must have in order to live in a healthy and fit way. But in health promoting schools, children not only learn what is healthy, they also do things that are healthy. By taking various purposeful actions and measures, a health promoting school ensures that healthy choices are obvious. Broad support is necessary for the implementation of an effective health policy. This asks for involvement of pupils, parents and other partners. For example, the smoking ban was only introduced following a broad consensus and the unanimous advice of the Flemish Education Council (in which pupils and parents have a seat) to the government. The smoking ban applies as of 1 September 2008 and is applicable to pupils, teachers, parents, users and visitors of the schools and CLBs.

A health promoting school involves different partners in its health policy. By giving pupils a say, they learn to assume responsibility for their own health and for the health of others. The participation of parents in the health policy increases the support for pursuing a healthy lifestyle.

A school itself determines its health policy but it is supported in this respect by different partners such as the CLBs. CLBs are intended for individual problem situations and can help analysing data that are important



for the health policy to be conducted. CLBs may design a provision promoting health in order to support parents, pupils and school staff. CLBs are legally obliged to facilitate networking and thus are best placed to refer pupils to specialised services (see 4.1).

[www.gezondopschool.be](http://www.gezondopschool.be)

## 6.5 Aiming high for languages

As a rule, children who master the school language well because they speak it at home, perform better at school. A correct and clear language use is at the basis of clear thinking and precision in formulating ideas. Both are extremely important for the learning process. Someone who speaks fluently will be able to develop himself in various fields and has sufficient resources available to find a job or enter into higher education. In order to create equal opportunities in education, schools must work on language skills both in Dutch and in foreign languages.

A good language policy is the concern of each teacher, each school staff, each school. Not only the teacher of Dutch but also the teacher of history, accountancy, mechanics, ... devotes attention to the Dutch language by using clear definitions and describing assignments in a clear way. In order to guarantee quality education at all levels of education, language skills were integrated in the basic competencies of all teacher training programmes (see 6.7).

In this multilingual country, schools must also promote the knowledge of foreign languages. A sound knowledge of foreign languages enhances the chances of professional success of pupils on the strongly globalised labour market and stimulates them in their personal development.

From EUROSTAT figures it appears that general secondary education in Flanders already offers a wide range of foreign languages in comparison with other EU countries. However, the provision of foreign languages is not limited to the level of secondary education. Awareness-raising on foreign languages already starts in nursery school through songs and rhymes. Nursery and primary schools can work on a playful initiation into French and prepare in this way the French courses of the third (in Brussels) and the fifth form (elsewhere in Flanders). By learning a language at school, pupils do not only gain language proficiency but also the skills to learn a language. A good command of Dutch and of one or more foreign languages is a solid basis to learn other foreign languages later in life. The EU also promotes 'Content and Language Integrated Learning' or CLIL: pupils learn a subject through the medium of a foreign language. Nine Flemish secondary schools embarked upon this project from the 2007-2008 school year. Approximately 15% of the total number of teaching periods are provided in a CLIL language (French or English).

## 6.6 Learning support

Learning support reforms education provided to pupils having special educational needs. Learning support aims at better defining the existing special needs provision in mainstream and special education. Learning support creates more opportunities for pupils with special educational needs to attend classes in an ordinary school. Learning support also enhances the provision in special education. The current typology is often too narrow and the provision is unequally spread throughout Flanders. Pupils often have to spend a long time on the bus to get to school and back home again, therefore parents 'choose' boarding school in some cases.



Young people do not always get the care they need but have to adapt themselves to the provision. **The learning support matrix** creates a tailored provision to meet the needs of particular pupils.

The learning support concept has two angles: **levels of learning support** and **clusters/target groups** of special educational needs.

The **4 levels of learning support** describe how the educational environment adapts itself to the pupils' needs.

The first two levels of learning support are provided in mainstream schools. Pupils function within the joint curriculum and obtain the mainstream diploma or certificate. At learning support levels III and IV pupils receive an individualised curriculum and schools work on the basis of an individual education plan for the pupils. Individual goals are focused on and pupils are granted an alternative certificate. At the learning support level III pupils can follow both mainstream and special education. In this, schools in mainstream education receive the same support as schools in special education. At learning support level IV pupils in principle follow special education. It is intended for pupils with serious or multiple problems who cannot be taken care of by ordinary schools.

The second dimension of the learning support matrix consists of **clusters**. They are related to child characteristics, to disorders or impairments with which the child or the young person is confronted. Four clusters, comprising different target groups, replace the eight existing types of special education.

**Cluster 1** includes both all pupils without participation problems in education and those pupils with participation problems resulting from temporary situations, personal characteristics (e.g. non-native speaking children) or origin. It concerns pupils who have no inherent disorder or impairment.

**Cluster 2** includes pupils with learning impairments. It concerns two target groups:

- children with a mild mental disability;
- pupils with a learning disability.

**Cluster 3** includes pupils with functional impairments. It concerns the following target groups:

- pupils with a moderate, severe or profound mental disability;
- pupils with a motor disability;
- pupils with a visual impairment;
- children with a hearing impairment;

**Cluster 4** comprises pupils who have participation problems in education. Those participation problems reveal themselves in social interaction. Within cluster 4 the following target groups can be distinguished:

- pupils with a behavioural and/or emotional disorder;
- pupils with a pervasive development disorder (e.g. autism).

By combining levels and clusters of learning support, a 'matrix' is created with fields which make different forms of tailored learning support possible.

The process of choosing the most suitable support level of the matrix for a pupil is done by the CLB in close consultation with the school, the parents and the pupil him.

The implementation of the learning support matrix starts from 1 September 2009. The full implementation is scheduled for 2015-2016.

For more information on learning support:

[www.ond.vlaanderen.be/leerzorg](http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/leerzorg)

## 6.7 Teacher training reform

In order to give all pupils equal opportunities to access high quality education, good teachers are needed. That is why teacher training was radically reformed.

There are two types of teacher training courses:

- The three-year training programme for nursery teacher, primary teacher or lower secondary teacher is the **integrated teacher training** of 180 credits. One credit corresponds with 25 to 30 hours of student load. A complete academic year comprises 60 credits. In this training, a work placement of 45 credits is included. This training programme is provided as a professional bachelor course by colleges of higher education.
- In addition, there is a **specific teacher training course** of 60 credits, of which 30 credits are spent on the work placement. This training is meant for students who have already gained a diploma in higher or adult education and who only need educational/pedagogical training in their discipline. These courses are provided by universities, adult education centres and for the first time also by colleges of higher education.

The content of the training courses was reinforced. In the integrated secondary teacher training, students must specialise now in 2 instead of in 3 subject matters. This allows a more in-depth study and creates room for new centres of interest such as the care for pupils with special needs, familiarisation with other





cultures and linguistic skills. For specific courses the curriculum is reinforced and extended by increasing the student workload to 60 credits.

Both the integrated and the specific teacher training are based on the same set of basic competencies a teacher should have (e.g. linguistic skills). They also lead both to the same diploma, namely of teacher.

The reform pays a lot of attention to the **practical experience** of future teachers as for both teacher training programmes the work placement becomes more important. Colleges of higher education organise the practical component in co-operation with schools, centres or institutions in the form of **pre-service training**. The work placement is thus accomplished without a statutory relation with the school, institution or the centre.

In specific teacher training, the practical component is provided as pre-service training or **in-service training**. The in-service training takes the shape of an induction period (a LIO job) and takes place in one or more institutions of secondary education, part-time arts education or adult education.

In order to guarantee the tutoring of trainee teachers and newly qualified teachers, schools clusters can appoint tutors. They are experienced teachers who can spend part of their teaching assignment on the support of trainee teachers, induction teachers (LIOs) and beginning teachers.

Colleges and/or universities can conclude an agreement with adult education centres on the organisation of teacher education: education and study activities, quality control and the use of infrastructure. These co-operation networks are called networks of experts or regional platforms and are financially supported by the government.

## 6.8 Study credits

From the 2008-2009 academic year, each student of a Flemish college of higher education or university starts with a study credit of 140 credits. This study credit is decreased by the number of credits for which the stu-

dent enrolls. In principle, an enrolment in a full academic year consists of a number of training components valuing 60 credits. At the end of the year, the number of credits which the student gained are added again to the study credit. The first 60 credits earned by the student, are doubled.

The study credit is meant to slow down the classical cascade effect (aiming high and possibly adjust expectations downwards) and stimulate young people to make an informed study choice. If the study credit is zero, an enrolment is only possible with the consent of the institution and the institution is allowed to increase the enrolment fee (at maximum doubling of fee). The introduction of study credits fits in with the new financing scheme of higher education. From 2008 onwards, funding is not only based on the number of enrolled students. It also takes the number of successful students and the number of graduates into account (=output). Just like for study credits, study progress of students is central to this output funding. Study credits and output funding stimulate both students and educational institutions to take their responsibility for choices and success of studies.

Once the student is awarded a master degree, 140 credits are deducted from the study credit. A student who wants to obtain a master or bachelor diploma afterwards, must do so at his own expense. In this way, the government, despite its limited budget, wants to give everyone the chance to obtain a master diploma. The study credit system does not apply to bachelor-after-bachelor or master-after-master courses. It is only applicable to initial courses under diploma contract and credit contracts. However, the introduction of study credits is also related to the new funding system for colleges and universities. Previously, institutions were funded according to the number of enrolled students (=input). From 2008 onwards, funding is not only based on the number of enrolled students but also on the number of successful students and the number of graduates (=output).





## 6.9 Rational energy use (REG)

Rational energy use is important for schools and centres as in this way more resources can be spent on the content of education. Moreover, schools and centres fulfil an exemplary role. If schools want to imbue their pupils with the importance of rational energy use, then they must apply it themselves.

A solid policy on rational energy use asks for a balanced mix of investments and organisational measures. An energy saving heating installation is not useful if it is still turned on in empty classrooms. That is why the government promotes the development of an effective policy on rational energy use. Existing schools are awarded more resources to invest in renovation and in adaptation of infrastructure. The aim for schools is to appoint an energy coordinator to ensure the continuity of REG measures. Moreover, the government promotes, through awareness-raising campaigns and grants, those measures, which are relatively cheap but lead to important savings in the short run:

- keeping an energy bookkeeping;
- the execution of an energy audit;
- the correct adjustment of heating systems;
- ...

For new school buildings, the recent E70 directive on energy efficiency is applicable. Passive schools take things a step further than E70 schools. Passive schools are so energy efficient that they hardly need any heating at all. Undoubtedly, passive schools are the schools of the future. That is why Flemish education will conduct a number of pilot projects in the field of passive schools. Due to the construction of these exemplary projects, the market for passive building products expands. Also the experience of architects, study bureaus and contractors in the field of passive building will strongly increase. The total construction price of passive schools and other passive buildings will therefore be reduced.

See [www.agion.be](http://www.agion.be) and [www.energiesparen.be](http://www.energiesparen.be)



For more information on the themes dealt with in this brochure, please consult [www.ond.vlaanderen.be](http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be) or contact the Education Infoline by dialling 1700.

In addition to this brochure, the Flemish Ministry of Education and Training publishes several other publications. Please visit the website of the Educational Publications Unit for an overview: [www.ond.vlaanderen.be/publicaties](http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/publicaties)

## USEFUL ADDRESSES

### **Flemish Ministry of Education and Training**

[www.ond.vlaanderen.be](http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be)

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### **Education Infoline**

Koning Albert II-laan 15 - 1210 Brussels  
tel 1700 (free of charge) or from abroad +32 2 553 1700 -  
fax +32 2 553 96 55  
e-mail: [www.ond.vlaanderen.be/infolijn](http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/infolijn)

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### **Support Centre for parents and children in nursery and primary education**

#### **Agentschap voor Onderwijsdiensten (AGODI – Agency for Educational Services)**

Koning Albert II-laan 15 - 1210 Brussel  
tel +32 2 553 04 15 - fax +32 2 553 93 85  
e-mail: [scholen.basisonderwijs.agodi@vlaanderen.be](mailto:scholen.basisonderwijs.agodi@vlaanderen.be)  
[www.agodi.be](http://www.agodi.be)

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### **Information Centre for parents and children in secondary education Agentschap voor Onderwijsdiensten (AgODi)**

Koning Albert II-laan 15 - 1210 Brussel  
tel +32 2 553 87 29 - fax +32 2 553 87 25  
e-mail: [marleen.callaert@ond.vlaanderen.be](mailto:marleen.callaert@ond.vlaanderen.be)

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### **Study Grants Division**

#### **Agentschap voor Hoger Onderwijs, Volwassenenonderwijs en Studietoelagen (AHOVOS - Agency for Higher Education, Adult Education and Study Grants)**

Koning Albert II-laan 15 - 1210 Brussel  
tel 1700 (gratis)  
e-mail: [studietoelagen@vlaanderen.be](mailto:studietoelagen@vlaanderen.be)  
[www.studietoelagen.be](http://www.studietoelagen.be)

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### **CLB Unit**

#### **Departement Onderwijs en Vorming (Department of Education and Training)**

Koning Albert II-laan 15 - 1210 Brussel  
tel + 32 2 553 86 94 - fax + 32 2 553 86 85  
e-mail: [clb@vlaanderen.be](mailto:clb@vlaanderen.be)  
[www.ond.vlaanderen.be/clb](http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/clb)

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### **Het Spijbelteam (The Anti-truancy Team) Departement Onderwijs en Vorming (Department of Education and Training)**

Koning Albert II-laan 15 - 1210 Brussel  
tel +32 2 553 86 83 - fax +32 2 553 86 85  
e-mail: [spijbelen@vlaanderen.be](mailto:spijbelen@vlaanderen.be)  
[www.ond.vlaanderen.be/leerplicht](http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/leerplicht)

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### **Cel Publicaties Onderwijs (Educational Publications Unit) Agentschap voor Onderwijscommunicatie (AOC - Agency for Educational Communication)**

Koning Albert II-laan 15 - 1210 Brussel  
tel +32 2 553 66 53 - fax +32 2 553 66 54  
e-mail: [onderwijspublicaties@vlaanderen.be](mailto:onderwijspublicaties@vlaanderen.be)  
[www.ond.vlaanderen.be/publicaties](http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/publicaties)

### **Klasse**

Koning Albert II-laan 15 - 1210 Brussel  
tel +32 2 553 96 86 - fax +32 2 553 96 85  
e-mail: [red.leerkrachten@klasse.be](mailto:red.leerkrachten@klasse.be)  
[www.klasse.be](http://www.klasse.be)

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### **Coördinerend Inspecteur-generaal (Coordinating General Inspectorate)**

Koning Albert II-laan 15 - 1210 Brussel  
tel + 32 2 553 98 31  
e-mail: [onderwijsinspectie@vlaanderen.be](mailto:onderwijsinspectie@vlaanderen.be)  
[www.onderwijsinspectie.be](http://www.onderwijsinspectie.be)

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### **Curriculum**

#### **Departement Onderwijs en Vorming (Department of Education and Training)**

Koning Albert II-laan 15 - 1210 Brussel  
tel + 32 2 553 88 31  
e-mail: [curriculum@vlaanderen.be](mailto:curriculum@vlaanderen.be)  
[www.ond.vlaanderen.be/DVO](http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/DVO)

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### **EPOS vzw - Nationaal Agentschap LLP (National LLP Agency)**

Koning Albert II laan 15 - 1210 Brussel  
tel +32 2 553 98 67 - fax +32 2 553 98 80  
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[www.epos-vlaanderen.be](http://www.epos-vlaanderen.be)

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### **Voorrangsbeleid Brussel vzw (npo Brussels Policy on educational priorities)**

Koning Albert II-laan 15 - 1210 Brussel  
tel +32 2 553 93 62  
e-mail: [vbb@ond.vlaanderen.be](mailto:vbb@ond.vlaanderen.be)

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### **Vlaamse Onderwijsraad (VLOR - Flemish Education Council)**

Kunstlaan 6, bus 6 - 1210 Brussel  
tel +32 2 219 42 99 - fax +32 2 219 81 18  
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[www.vlor.be](http://www.vlor.be)

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### **Vlaamse Interuniversitaire Raad (VLIR - Flemish Interuniversity Council)**

Ravensteingalerij 27 - 1000 Brussel  
tel +32 2 792 55 00 - fax +32 2 211 41 99  
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### **Vlaamse Hogescholenraad (VLHORA - Flemish Council for Non University Higher Education)**

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