



EDUCATION IN FLANDERS

The Flemish educational
landscape in a nutshell / 2008

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Useful addresses



COLOPHON

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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.

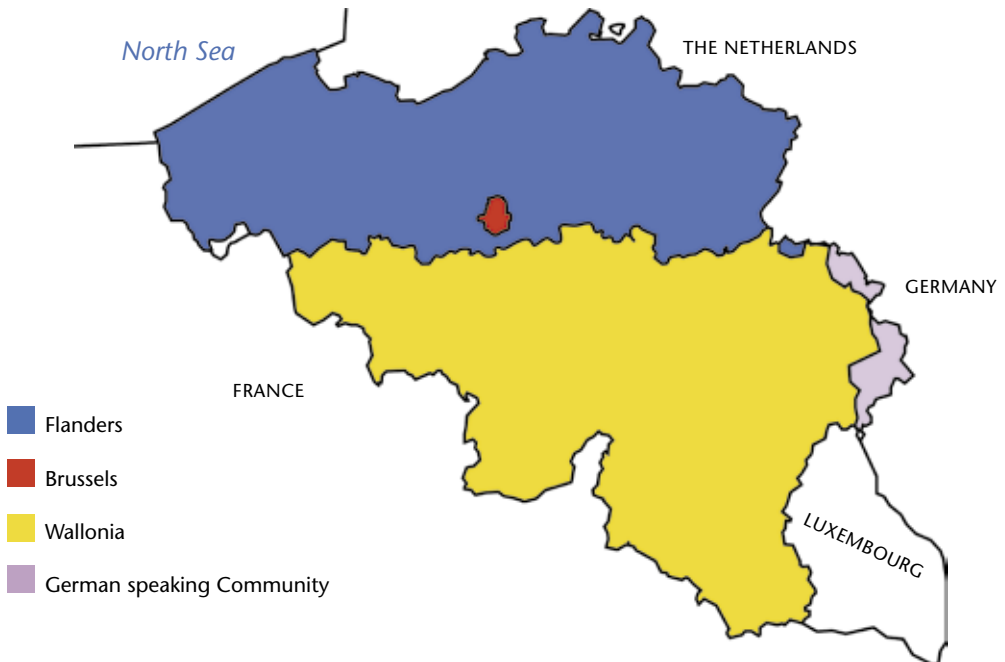
- The **Flemish Region** covers the Dutch language area with the provinces of West and East Flanders, Antwerp, Limburg and Flemish Brabant. The Flemish Region is competent for territorial issues. These policy areas include

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.





1.3 Maximum scope, also for education issues

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 2006, the innovative project called 'Better Administrative Policy' (BBB) was launched. It restructured the Flemish authorities into thirteen homogenous policy areas, each with 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:

- Agency for Educational Services (AgODi)
- Agency for Higher Education, Adult Education and Study Grants (AHOVOS)
- Agency for Educational Communication (AOC)
- Agency for Infrastructure in Education (AGION)

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

www.ond.vlaanderen.be/wegwijz

1.4 Flemish education at regional, continental and global level

Within the three Belgian communities, teachers, pupils and school management teams co-operate through exchanges in the framework of the Prince Philip Fund.

Flemish education policy promotes bilateral and multilateral co-operation with other countries. 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, some forty cultural agreements and co-operation agreements at all levels of education were signed with countries such as Russia, Morocco and South-Africa.

Flanders also promotes participation in the 'Lifelong Learning Programme' (LLP) of the European Union.¹ The implementation of LLP is the key task of EPOS vzw (European Programmes for Education, Training and Co-operation). This national agency for Flanders is financed by the Flemish Government and Europe. EPOS coordinates some other programmes such as Erasmus Mundus and Erasmus Belgica.

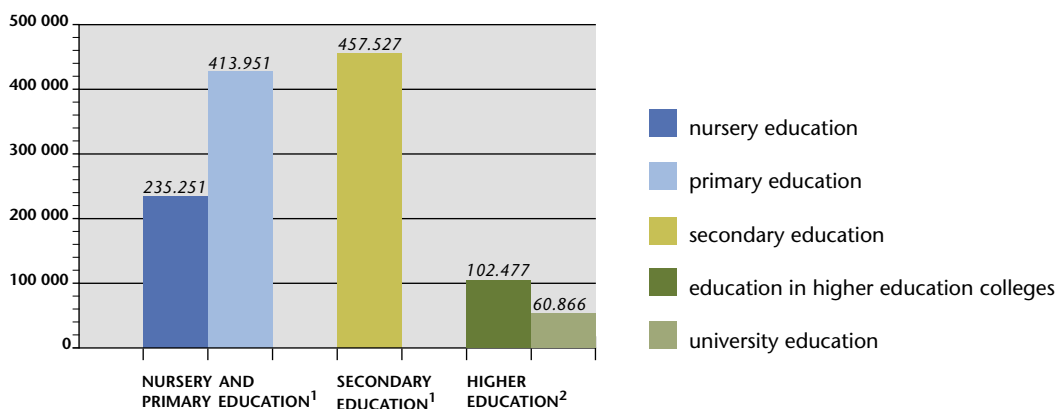
The Ministry also participates in the activities of the Council of Europe, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and UNESCO.

¹ On 15 November 2006, the European Commission decided to continue existing Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci programmes for 2007-2013 under the umbrella of the "Lifelong Learning Programme".

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 adult education.

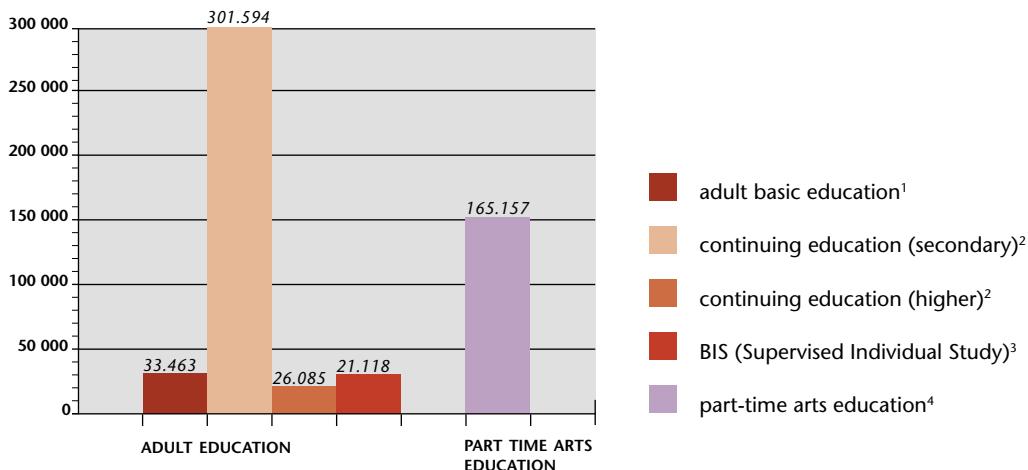
GRAPH 1: School population in full-time education per level of education (2006-2007 school year)



¹ Number of pupils in mainstream and special education.

² Number of students enrolled under a diploma contract in an initial training programme.

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



¹ 2006-2007 year of operation.

² 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.

³ 2006 year of operation.

⁴ 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.

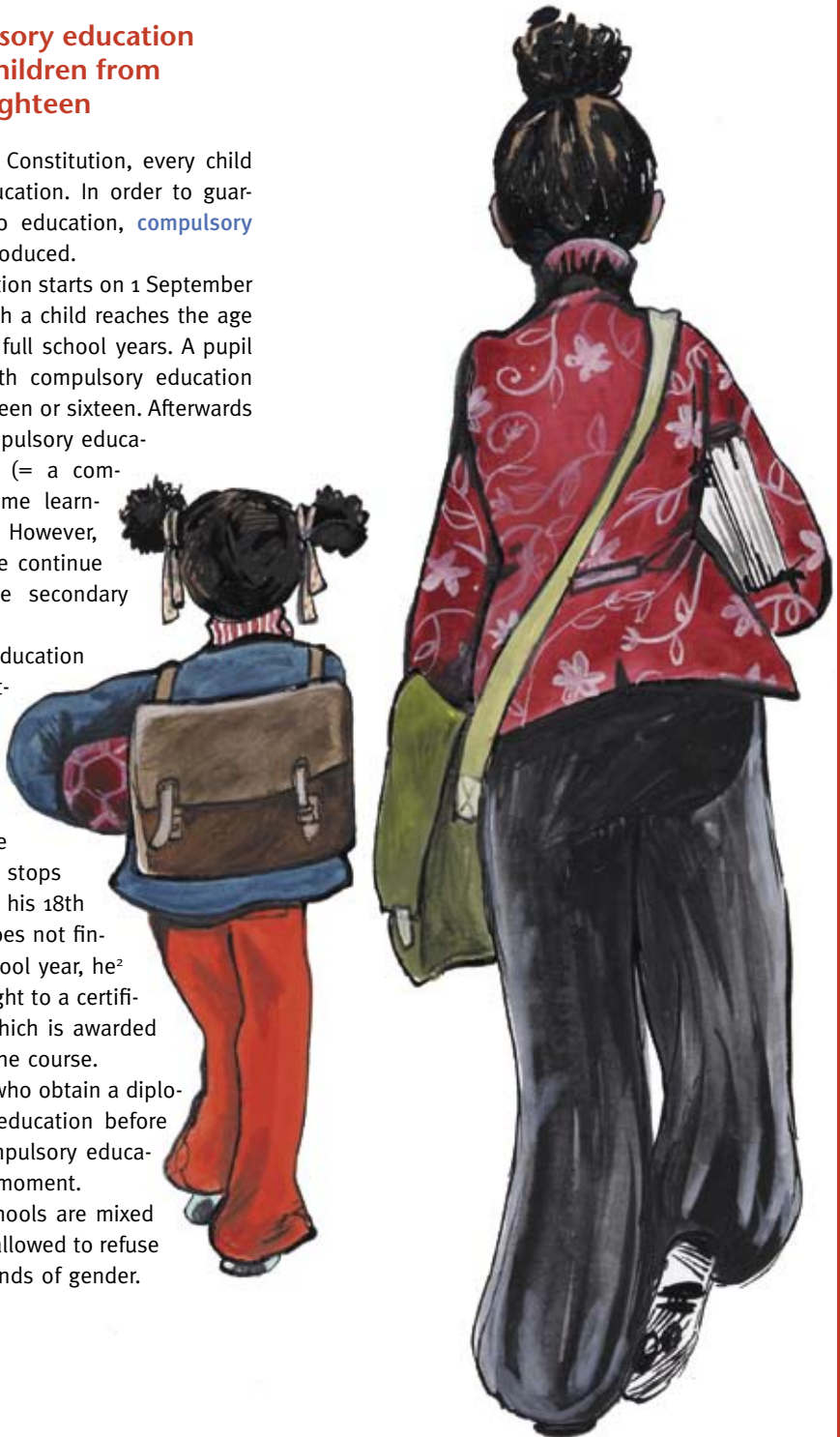
2. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

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, he² 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.



² For the sake of readability, only the male form of address is used in this brochure.



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.

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

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.

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.

For secondary education, school expenses must be effective, demonstrable and justified. They must be in proportion to the characteristics of the target group of secondary education. The list of charges, with possible derogations for financially deprived families must be stipulated in the school regulations. Parents and pupils have a say in advance on these fees through the school council

For further information on school fees:

www.ond.vlaanderen.be/schoolkosten



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 **'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.

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** to ensure amongst others the right of enrolment and to co-operate in implementing a local policy on equal opportunities in education. For more information: www.lop.be
- Extra support for **additional needs provision** in schools with additional teaching periods or additional teaching hours per teacher.

For detailed information on regulations for equal opportunities in education:

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. Concretely, this non-profit organisation promotes four working areas 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.

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 Educational Secretariat of the Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities (OVSG) and the Flemish Provincial Education (POV).

- **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 Flemish Secretariat for Catholic Education (VSKO). 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’.



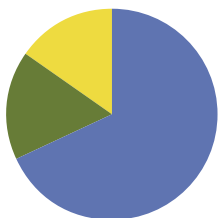
A small number of schools in Flanders are not recognised by the government. These are so-called **private schools**. They do not receive financial support from the government.

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.

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%

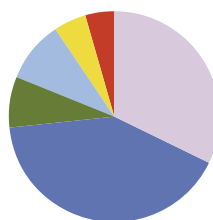
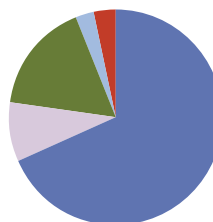


DIAGRAM 3: Education budget for every category of expenditure (2007)

- 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. Through the new funding system the different educational networks are treated on equal footing, with the exception of 7,5% of objective differences.³ This harmonisation is carried through both in mainstream and in special primary and secondary education.

³ 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.

Schools in mainstream nursery, primary and secondary education will then be partly funded according to the social profile of their pupils (= pupil characteristics).

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.

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. Colleges of higher education and universities are further along the way than nursery, primary and secondary schools are.

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, CLBs and boarding schools.

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.

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.

A separate legal position was approved for staff at colleges of higher education and universities.

2.10 Organisation of the school and academic year

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. However, because of the summer holidays (1 July up to and including 31 August), the school year ends on 30 June in practice.

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 **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.⁴ He chooses for the already existing pathway of 60 credits or for a flexible combination of course components (= less than 60 credits per academic year).

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** (VLOR) operates as a 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 **Flemish Interuniversity Council** (VLIR) advises and presents proposals to the Minister with regard to university education. The VLIR carries out research itself or contracts out research.

⁴ Each course component comprises minimum 3 credits. One credit corresponds with 25 to 30 hours of education and other study activities.

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

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

2.11.2 Local participation structures

For GO! education as well as for publicly funded 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.

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.

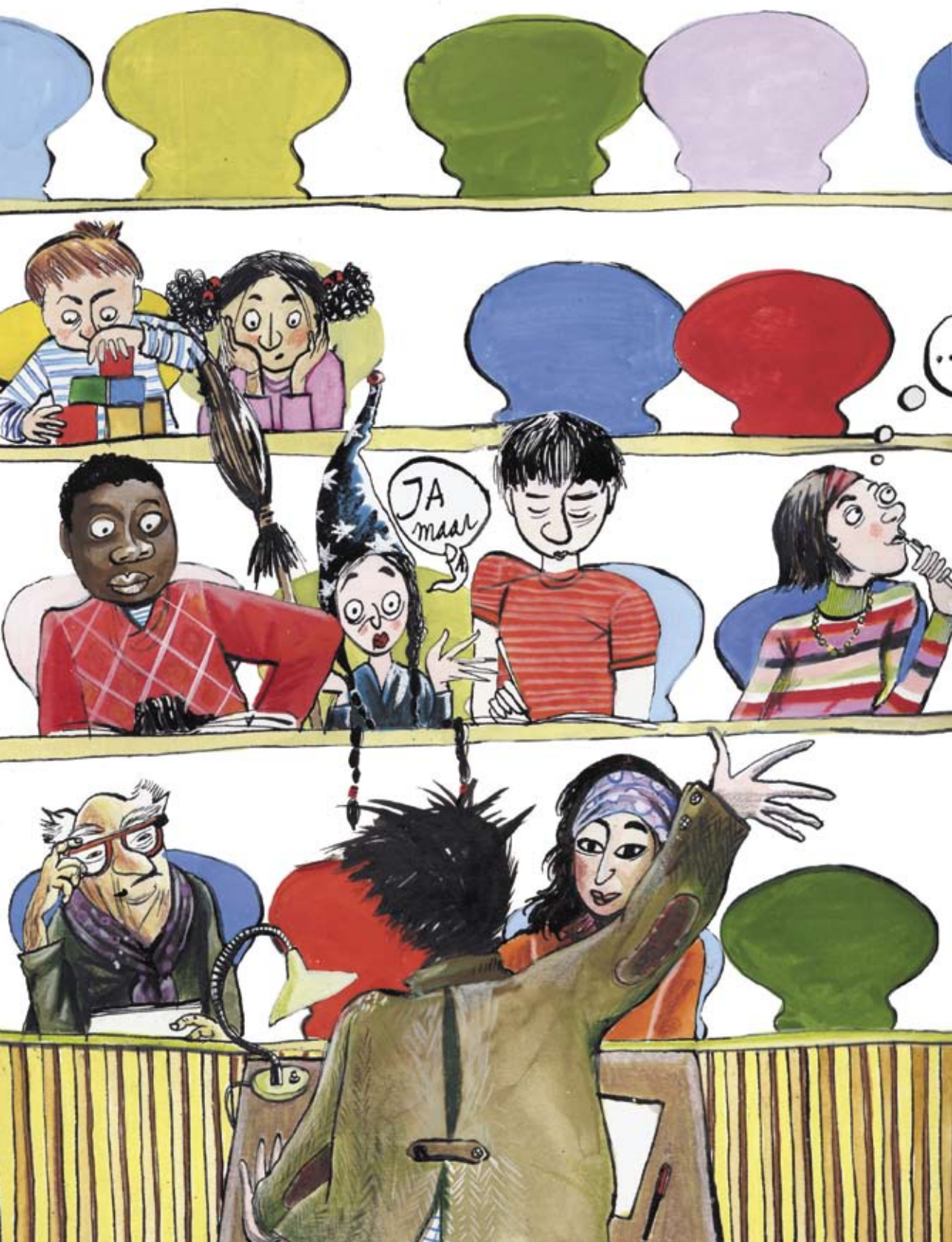
It is also possible to delegate representatives of the educational council, the pupil council or parent council to the school council.

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

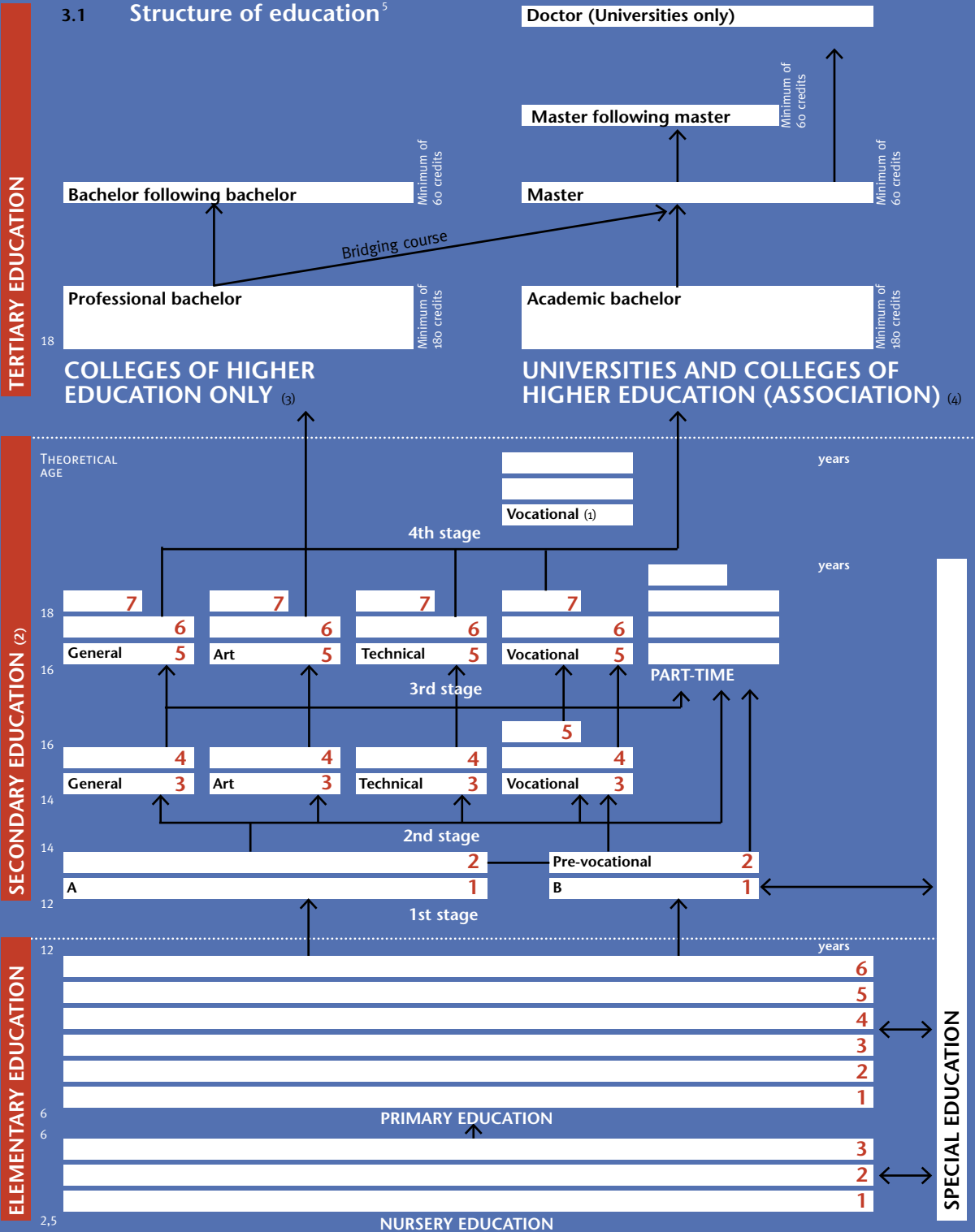
In most nursery, primary and secondary schools, parents set up a **parents' association**.

For **higher education**, a student council operates in each university, association and college of higher education. Staff participation is applied differently in universities and colleges for higher education.

3. LEVELS OF EDUCATION



3.1 Structure of education⁵



(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.

⁵ 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.

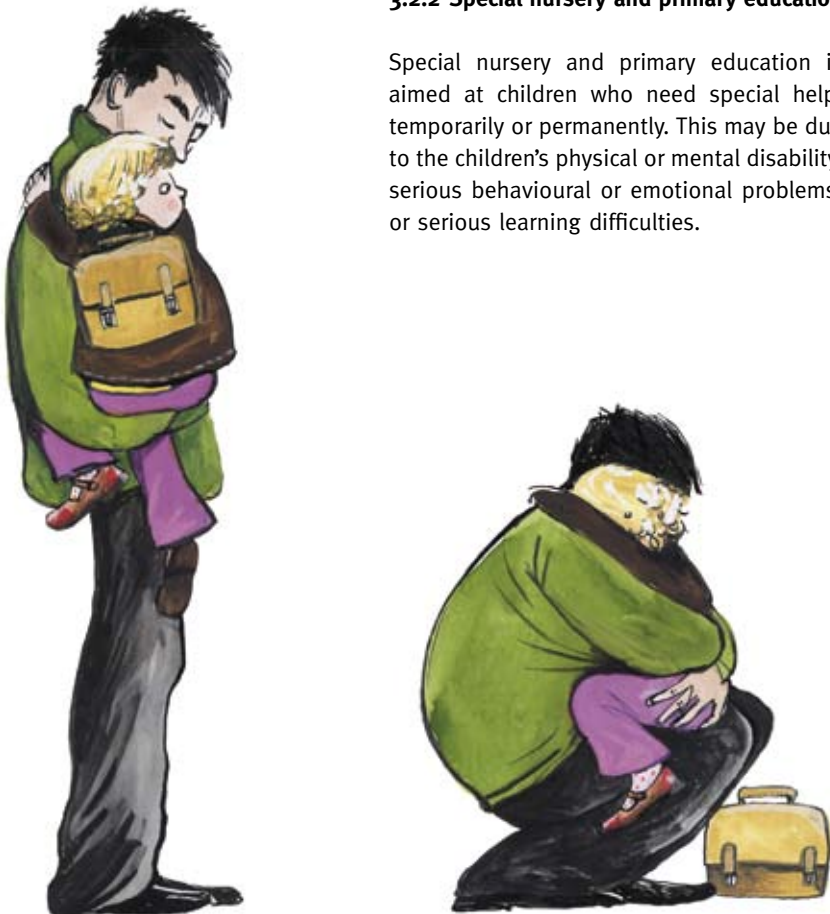
Once the young child has reached the age of 3, he can start school at any time in the school year.

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

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.

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.

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.).

Special primary education lasts seven years.

Integrated nursery and primary education (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.

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.

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 educa-

tion, 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

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. 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.
- **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.
- **Secondary arts education** (kso) combines a broad general education with active arts practice. After kso, young peo-

ple can exercise a profession or go on to tertiary education.

- **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.

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.⁶ 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.

⁶ For further details: see the diagram of the educational structure (p.21).

Every year is supported with an orientation certificate, a certificate, a study certificate or a diploma.

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 are the same as those in secondary education. In special secondary education, types of education are organised in accordance with the type of disability and the possibilities of the pupil.

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 (GON) results, just like in nursery and primary education, from co-operation between mainstream and special 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 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

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.

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.

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.

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

www.hogeronderwijsregister.be



3.4.1 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.⁷

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.

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.

⁷ 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.



3.4.4 Postgraduates and updating and in-service training courses

Both colleges of higher education and universities can organise postgraduate courses. A postgraduate certificate is delivered after a course corresponding with education and study activities of at least 20 credits. In order to be eligible for a postgraduate course, a bachelor or master diploma is required.

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. 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.

In part-time arts education there are four different courses of study, each with 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.

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.

3.6.1 Structure and organisation

Adult education consists of three levels of education: adult basic education, secondary adult education, higher vocational education (see 5.4).

Adult basic education centres are pluralist centres, established as not-for-profit organisations.

Adult education centres are established as privately run centres or as publicly run centres. 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.

Dutch Language Houses do not offer adult education themselves but work closely together with actors of adult education. 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 provision of courses for 'Dutch language as a second language' (NT2). 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. 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 7 disciplines. The courses in **secondary adult education** are subdivided into 31 courses of study, the courses of **higher vocational education** are subdivided into 6 courses of study.



4. **SUPPORT AND QUALITY CONTROL**

4.1 Pupil Guidance Centres (CLB's)

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.

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. 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.

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. Education levels with higher needs get more funds. Among other things an ICT co-ordinator may be recruited with these funds.

2. Improving the expertise of the education staff.

The key task of the regional network of experts [REN Vlaanderen](#)⁸ is to give teachers an

⁸ REN = Regional Network of Experts.



in-depth training in the educational use of ICT. REN Vlaanderen provides both supply- and demand-driven in-service training.

www.renvlaanderen.be

3. Providing a high quality infrastructure.

Under the **ICT infrastructure programme**, extra means are awarded to education institutions allowing them to purchase hardware, software and training packages.

4. Designing an appropriate policy on teaching resources.

Under the authority of the Flemish Ministry of Education and Training and together with Klascement, an educational portal site providing various teaching materials was devel-

oped. It makes the results of government 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.

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... 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. 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... 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).

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

www.klasse.be

In addition to the Klasse magazines, the Ministry publishes several other publications which often are also electronically available on www.ond.vlaanderen.be/publicaties

The onderwijs.vlaanderen.be website is a portal to all on-line information and services of the Ministry.

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.



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. When 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

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.

1. The attainment targets and developmental objectives.

Attainment targets are minimum goals which the government considers necessary and achievable for a particular 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.

For nursery education and the first year B⁹ as well as the preparative class for secondary education, no attainment targets but **developmental objectives** were laid down. 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.

Every governing body or school board must include the attainment targets or developmental objectives in the curriculum.

⁹ 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.



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.

After the audit, the inspectorate gives advice to the minister with regard to the continued recognition of the establishment.

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 (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).

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**. 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 Dutch-Flemish accreditation agency (NVAO) 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

If pupils can develop their talents, they improve their chances on the labour market.

Testing grounds are 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.

5.2 Modularisation

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

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. The contents of the modules are derived from the job descriptions drawn up by the social partners.

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.

5.3 The Competence Agenda

Four out of the ten action programmes of the Competence Agenda 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**. 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 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.

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.

A Flemish Parliament Act is in preparation that will introduce a co-ordinated **Flemish qualification structure**. 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. 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, workplace 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. Educational institutions are taking more and more initiatives for the purpose of creating a more flexible education system. 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.

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,...

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.

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.

**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.

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. 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

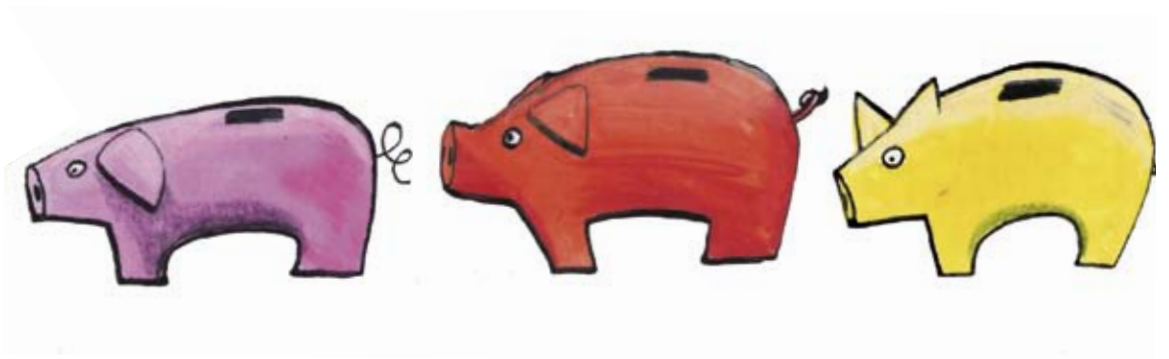
What is new is that the right to a pupil grant is now being linked to school attendance. A pupil playing truant a lot for two years in a row, can lose his right to a pupil grant. This measure is included in the Anti-truancy campaign (see 6.2).

- 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 flexibilisation 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

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. 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 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 stimula-

tion 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 school itself determines its health policy but it is supported in this respect by different partners such as the CLBs.

www.gezondopschool.be

6.5 Aiming high for languages

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).

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.

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).

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 Lan-

guage 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 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.

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 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.

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





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. The content of the courses was reinforced and a lot of attention is paid to the practical experience of future teachers.

- The three-year training programme for nursery teacher, primary teacher or lower secondary teacher is **the integrated teacher training** of 180 credits, which is offered as a professional bachelor training programme at colleges of higher education. In this training, a work placement of 45 credits is included.
- **The specific teacher training** is meant for students who have already obtained a diploma in higher or adult education and is provided by universities, adult education centres and for the first time also by colleges of higher education.

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

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.

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 student 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. The study credit system is only applicable to initial courses under diploma contract and credit contracts.



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.

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.

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.

See www.agion.be and www.energiesparen.be

For more information on the themes dealt with in this brochure, please consult www.ond.vlaanderen.be or contact the Education Infoline by dialing 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

USEFUL ADDRESSES

Flemish Ministry of Education and Training

www.ond.vlaanderen.be

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Education Infoline

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e-mail: www.ond.vlaanderen.be/infolijn

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Support Centre for parents and children in nursery and primary education

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Information Centre for parents and children in secondary education

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Study Grants Division

Agency for Higher Education, Adult Education and Study Grants (AHOVOS)

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CLB Unit

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The Anti-truancy Team

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Educational Publications Unit

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Curriculum

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npo Brussels Policy on educational priorities

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