

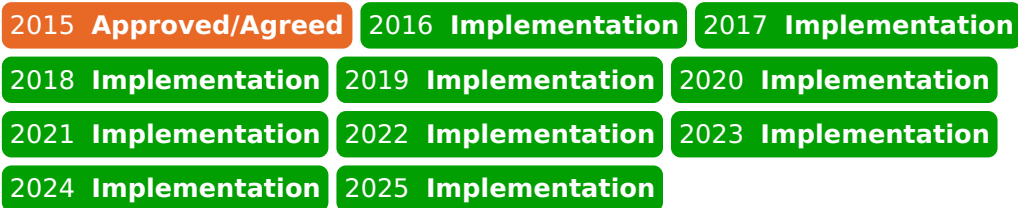
Incentives for work-based and lifelong learning

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

PRACTICAL MEASURE/INITIATIVE

 BELGIUM-FL

Timeline



ID number 43776

Background

Participation in lifelong learning is low in Flanders, as stated in several studies (e.g. Labour force study, 2020). Several incentives have been developed in the context of VET and lifelong learning, aiming both at learners and enterprises. These incentives have been redesigned through the years for simplification, transparency, digital accessibility and to evolve to future proof and labour market-oriented competence policy.

Objectives

To evolve to an innovative knowledge society a resilient and (re-)skilled workforce is needed. By offering (financial) support to individuals and enterprises, the Flemish government wants to increase the participation rate in lifelong learning. Incentives for learners and companies aim to promote work-based and lifelong learning and encourage the provision of quality guidance in the workplace.

Description

Incentives for work-based learning

In 2015, the federal incentives for VET became Flemish, due to a State reform. Since then, young people (below the age of 18) and the training companies, which offer work-based learning, receive a bonus each school year (starting bonus for learners, internship bonus for companies). In addition, training companies receive a reduction in employer's social security contribution paid by companies for employees who are low-educated young people, apprentices in alternating learning, part time working young people in vocational secondary education. Companies receive a bonus in case they have qualified mentors in their company who accompany trainees in VET-programmes (reduction for mentor).

Incentives for employees/employers for lifelong learning

In 2015 the federal incentives for employees/employers for lifelong learning during working hours were regionalised in a State reform. In 2018, these incentives were redesigned in the

Decree on Flemish educational leave, containing various provisions regarding the policy area Work and Social Economy, adopted on 12 October 2018. The main objective of the reform was to make the training courses that are eligible for the Flemish training incentives more labour market-oriented and to publish them transparently in a training database, as well as to digitise and simplify the administrative procedures.

2015 Approved/Agreed

2016 Implementation

2017 Implementation

2018 Implementation

2019 Implementation

Training incentives for employees: since September 2019, Flemish employees have been encouraged to follow labour market related or career-oriented training during the working hours through three incentives: Flemish educational leave (for up to 125 hours per year, employers are reimbursed a lump sum); Flemish training credit (supplementary benefit for employees on top of federal benefit); training vouchers for employees to cover at least partly training costs.

2020 Implementation

Training incentives for employees: in 2020, the 'common right of initiative' for educational leave was introduced, offering employers the option to suggest a training to their employees. If employees follow both a training on their own initiative as well as a training suggested by the employer, their entitlement to training leave doubles.

Incentive for work-based learning: an additional lump sum for internship bonus for companies was paid for the school year 2020-21 to assure the continuity of training places in VET during the COVID-19 pandemic.

2021 Implementation

Incentives for work-based learning: since 2021, companies have received an internship bonus for VET learners of any age if they undertake an internship in their company; this was previously restricted to learners up to the age of 18.

2022 Implementation

Incentives for work-based learning: in December 2022, a decree was approved to simplify and redesign the existing measures for learners and companies. The five existing measures are harmonised into two premiums: the qualifying workplace learning premium (*premie kwalificerend werkplekleren*) for companies and the alternating training learner premium (*leerlingenpremie alternerende opleiding*) for learners. This reform aims to make financial support more accessible by streamlining the application process and reducing paperwork. As a result, more companies are encouraged to offer dual learning positions, and more learners are motivated to enrol in these programmes. The changes are intended to boost participation and strengthen the connection between education and the labour market.

2023 Implementation

Incentives for work-based learning: in line with the 2022 decree, starting from September 2023, companies and learners were eligible for these two simplified premiums:

The qualifying workplace learning premium is awarded to companies per learner participating in workplace learning and amounts to:

- (a) EUR 600 if the learner does not receive any compensation from the company (as

- determined by the regulations on dual learning);
(b) EUR 1000 if the learner does receive compensation from the company (as determined by the regulations on dual learning).

The premium is paid once per school year. The company can receive the premium a maximum of three times per learner. Previously received internship bonuses for the same learner are counted.

The alternating training learner premium amounts to EUR 500. The premium is paid out once per school year. The learner can receive the premium a maximum of three times. Previously received starting bonuses are included.

Training incentives for employees: to inform citizens and increase the uptake of training incentives, the Flemish government also launched an online portal that provides citizens with a clear and personalised overview of the training incentives to which they are entitled. The Flemish Individual Learning Account (*Opleidingstegoed*) was launched in September 2023. It currently consists of training incentives of the Flemish Department of Work, Economy, Science, Innovation and Social Economy and we aim to incrementally expand the overview with other relevant training incentives.

2024 Implementation

Incentives for work-based learning: in 2024 the measure is monitored and its use is analysed (which learners in which trainings, which companies and which economical sectors benefit).

Training incentives for employees: in 2024 the training incentives for Flemish employees and the visualisation in the Flemish individual learning account (ILA) are continued. A annual report was published in June 2024. It includes a general monitoring of the Flemish training incentives, namely Flemish training leave, training vouchers and Flemish training credit and a policy evaluation. The 'common right of initiative' was evaluated. Since 2020, the common right of initiative has been extended yearly through temporary legislation. In the end of 2024, following a positive evaluation, it was permanently established by decree.

2025 Implementation

Incentives for work-based learning: in 2025 the measure has been amended so that students and companies involved in dual training in the 7th year of secondary education can continue to benefit from these premiums. Since September 2025, the study certificate for these courses changed in line with the Modernisation of the Flemish secondary education. Amendments on the conditions for this premium assure that these students and companies may still be eligible for the premium.

Training incentives for employees: some temporary adjustments were made to the Flemish training leave. For school year 2025-26 only employees who work at least 80% are entitled to training leave and the compensation that employers receive was temporarily lowered.

Bodies responsible

- Flemish Department of Work and Social Economy (until 2025)

Target group

Learners

Learners in upper secondary, including apprentices
Young people (15-29 years old)
Learners at risk of early leaving or/and early leavers

Adult learners
Persons in employment, including those at risk of unemployment
Low-skilled/qualified persons

Entities providing VET

Companies

Thematic categories

Modernising VET offer and delivery

Reinforcing work-based learning, including apprenticeships

Supporting lifelong learning culture and increasing participation

Financial and non-financial incentives to learners, providers and companies

European priorities in VET

Osnabrück Declaration

Establishing a new lifelong learning culture - relevance of continuing VET and digitalisation

Subsystem

IVET CVET

Further reading

[Decree for reformed incentives bonus for companies and students who engage in quality work-based learning](#)

[Decision of the Flemish Government on the continuation of 'common right of initiative' for educational leave for schoolyear 2021/22](#)

[Decree on Flemish educational leave and containing various provisions regarding the policy area Work and social economy](#)

[Flemish Individual Learning Account](#)

[Annual report on Flemish training incentives](#)

“ ... ” Cite as

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<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/timeline-vet-policies-europe/search/43776>

