

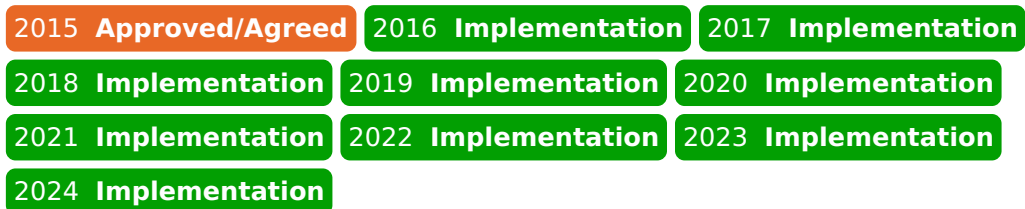
# Incentives for work-based and lifelong learning

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**

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**

In 2020, the 'common right of initiative' for educational leave was introduced, offering employees and employers the right for education leave to follow training.

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 redesign the bonuses for learners and companies.

### **2023 Implementation**

Incentives for work-based learning: starting from September 2023, companies and learners were eligible for a simplified premium: the qualifying workplace learning premium ('premie kwalificerend werkplekleren') for companies and the alternating training learner premium ('leerlingenpremie alternerende opleiding').

These simplified premiums, previously existing as five different measures, aim to make financial support more accessible by streamlining the application process and reducing paperwork. This encourages more companies to offer dual learning positions and more learners to enrol in these programmes by making it easier to obtain financial incentives. The changes are designed to enhance participation and bridge the gap between education and the labour market.

The qualifying workplace learning premium for the company amounts to per learner:

- (a) EUR 600 if the learner does not receive any compensation from the company;
- (b) EUR 1000 if the learner does receive compensation from the company.

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.

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 department of Work and Social Economy and we aim to incrementally expand the overview with other relevant training incentives.

### **2024 Implementation**

Incentives for work-based learning: the measure is monitored and its reach is mapped.

The training incentives for Flemish employees and the visualization in the Flemish 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.

## **Bodies responsible**

- Flemish Department of Work and Social Economy

## **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](#)

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

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

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[Flemish Individual Learning Account](#)

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[Annual report on Flemish training incentives](#)

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[Two new workplace learning premiums](#)

### “ ... ” Cite as

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