

Improving dual learning system in secondary education

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

PRACTICAL MEASURE/INITIATIVE

 BELGIUM-FL

Timeline



ID number 28004

Background

Previously, the Flemish education system included two main learning and working alternance schemes: the 'Leertijd' (apprenticeship learning) and the 'DBSO' (part-time vocational secondary education). These schemes aimed to combine education with practical work experience but faced challenges such as inconsistent quality of training and limited integration with the labour market. An evaluation of these existing systems of learning and working highlighted these and other major drawbacks.

Objectives

The dual learning system, which includes a large proportion of work-based learning, aims to close the gap between education and the labour market, and reduce early school leaving and youth unemployment.

Description

In April 2015, the Flemish government approved the resolution for implementing pilot projects on dual learning. Between 2015 and 2019, a series of pilot projects experimented with the concept of dual learning.

Dual learning is an integrated secondary education pathway that consists of general education, vocational training, and work experience at the workplace, leading to a secondary education qualification. The number of days spent on the job depends on the field of study. In dual learning, learners have a contract with their employer and training provider.

In 2018, the Decree on the legislative framework for the full-scale implementation of dual learning was adopted. From 1 September 2019 onwards, the full-scale implementation of the dual learning system in secondary education started, targeting young people until the age of 25 years. This new system aims to replace the two existing learning and working

alternance schemes by 2025-26.

In November 2018, the Flemish government approved a decree that makes dual learning possible within Special Needs Secondary Education (BuSO).

As education and labour market partners are involved, both the Flemish Ministry of Education and Training and the Flemish Ministry of Work and Social Economy are responsible for the development and implementation of dual learning in secondary education in Flanders. The Flemish Partnership dual learning was established in 2016 with the authority to recognise a company as a high-quality workplace in the context of dual and other alternating courses. It is also responsible for monitoring the implementation of the agreements in the workplace, informing companies about dual learning, supporting and mobilising companies according to the supply of workplaces, and providing advice on dual learning, such as through annual monitoring reports.

2015 Pilot
2016 Pilot
2017 Pilot
2018 Approved/Agreed
2019 Implementation In 2019, the dual learning system started to be fully implemented in the secondary education including in the Special Needs Secondary Education (BuSO).
2020 Implementation In 2020, the full-scale implementation phase with minor adaptations as a result of COVID-19 continued.
2021 Implementation On 16 July 2021, the Flemish Government definitively approved the decree setting the conversion calendar. The conversion of the learning and working programmes to dual learning must be completed simultaneously with the modernisation of secondary education in the school year 2025/26.
2022 Implementation In 2022, dual learning in secondary education is operational and ran as regular practice.
2023 Implementation We see steady growth in dual learning in secondary education in various aspects in 2023: the number of programmes that can be offered in a dual format, the number of enrolled students, the effective availability of dual programmes, and the number of closed agreements. The Flemish Partnership for Dual Learning continues its operations.
2024 Implementation Since the school year 2024-2025 the support of dual learning is additionally supported by the Regional Technological Centres (<i>Regionale Technologische Centra</i> - RTCs). These RTCs ensure better alignment of education and training with the needs of the job market in daily practice, bringing together partners from education and the business world.
2025 Implementation

In 2025, the Flemish government approved a Dual Learning Action Plan aimed at optimising and making the system more flexible. This plan also aims to strengthen the image of dual learning in Flanders.

Bodies responsible

- Flemish Department of Education and Training
- Flemish Partnership Dual Learning
- Flemish Department of Work and Social Economy (until 2025)
- Flemish Department of Work, Economy, Science, Innovation and Social Economy

Target group

Learners

Learners in upper secondary, including apprentices
Young people (15-29 years old)

Thematic categories

Governance of VET and lifelong learning

Engaging VET stakeholders and strengthening partnerships in VET
Establishing and developing skills intelligence systems

Modernising VET offer and delivery

Reinforcing work-based learning, including apprenticeships

European priorities in VET

VET Recommendation

VET agile in adapting to labour market challenges

Subsystem

IVET

Further reading

[Codex secondary education - specific provisions on dual structural components in secondary education](#)

[2022 Decree amending the regulations on dual learning, the start-up phase and the system of alternance training](#)

“ ... ” Cite as

Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2026). Improving dual learning system in secondary education: Belgium-FL. In Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2026).

Timeline of VET policies in Europe (2025 update) [Online tool].

<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/timeline-vet-policies-europe/search/28004>