

## REFERENCE YEAR 2026

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# UNDERSTANDING OF APPRENTICESHIPS IN THE NATIONAL CONTEXT

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### Content updates and contributors

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#### **Q5. Relevant information that is essential to understanding the specificity of apprenticeships in the country.**

In the Belgian constitution, freedom of education is an important principle, which means:

- Free access to provision for any child in BE territory from pre-primary to end of compulsory
- Freedom of choice of school (parental rights)
- Freedom to provide education (high number of publicly funded private schools, high autonomy of school boards in curriculum, organization of the school and allocation of resources)

The start and end of compulsory education is from 5 until 18 years old.

The secondary education system has 3 stages, each one lasting 2 years. The third stage also has a specialisation year (3rd year of the 3rd stage, or often referred to as 7th year). There are two vocationally-oriented pathways, starting from the 2nd stage: technical education (which combines a labour market and higher education orientation) and vocational education (which has a labour market orientation). Dual learning can happen in both pathways: in technical education is available only in the 3rd stage, while in vocational education it is also available in the 2nd stage.