

REFERENCE YEAR 2019

UNDERSTANDING OF APPRENTICESHIPS IN THE NATIONAL CONTEXT

Q1. Is there a stable legal basis for apprenticeships in your country?



The legal basis for apprenticeships is secured through 3 decrees:

1. 2008 Decree on the system of learning and working in the Flemish Community (Decreet betreffende het stelsel van leren en werken in de Vlaamse Gemeenschap)[1]. The system of learning and working refers to the two existing “apprenticeship” schemes at that time, namely the part-time vocational secondary education scheme, and the apprenticeship scheme ‘leertijd’ (literal translation: learning time). The decree covers all aspects concerning:

- The learning component (including accreditation, financing, organisation of education and training programmes and providers)
- The workplace learning component

[1] <http://data-onderwijs.vlaanderen.be/edulex/document.aspx?docid=14032>

2. 2016 Decree concerning certain aspects of alternating training schemes (Decreet tot regeling van bepaalde aspecten van alternerende opleidingen), which regulates aspects of the two existing apprenticeship schemes and the new scheme ‘dual learning’. The aspects are:

- The contracts which can be used in the three apprenticeship schemes
- The organization of a Flemish partnership for Dual learning and sectoral partnerships
- The criteria for accreditation of companies.

3. 2018 Decree concerning dual learning and the preparatory programme (Decreet Duaal leren en de aanloopfase). It covers aspects of the three apprenticeship schemes existing in the country at upper-secondary level (i.e. dual learning, part-time vocational secondary education, and apprenticeship ‘leertijd’). It also concerns the preparatory programme which prepares pupils to start dual learning (this is not considered an apprenticeship scheme though).

NB. The terms “scheme” and “programme” are used here as a direct translation of the national legal sources.

Q2. Is there an official definition of 'apprenticeship' or 'apprentice' in your country?



Definition as used in the 2016 Decree concerning certain aspects of alternating training schemes:

An apprenticeship scheme is any training in fulltime secondary education and some forms of special upper secondary education, identified as 'dual' by the Flemish Government. In apprenticeships, school-based education and in-company training are combined. Both components contribute to the realization of one training programme and are therefore intertwined on the level of organization and content.

There are three "apprenticeship" schemes in Belgium-Flanders:

- dual learning
- part-time vocational upper secondary education,
- apprenticeship 'leertijd'.

All but dual learning belong to the system of learning and working. Dual Learning is a separate pathway, with similarities compared to the system of learning and working, but also important differences.

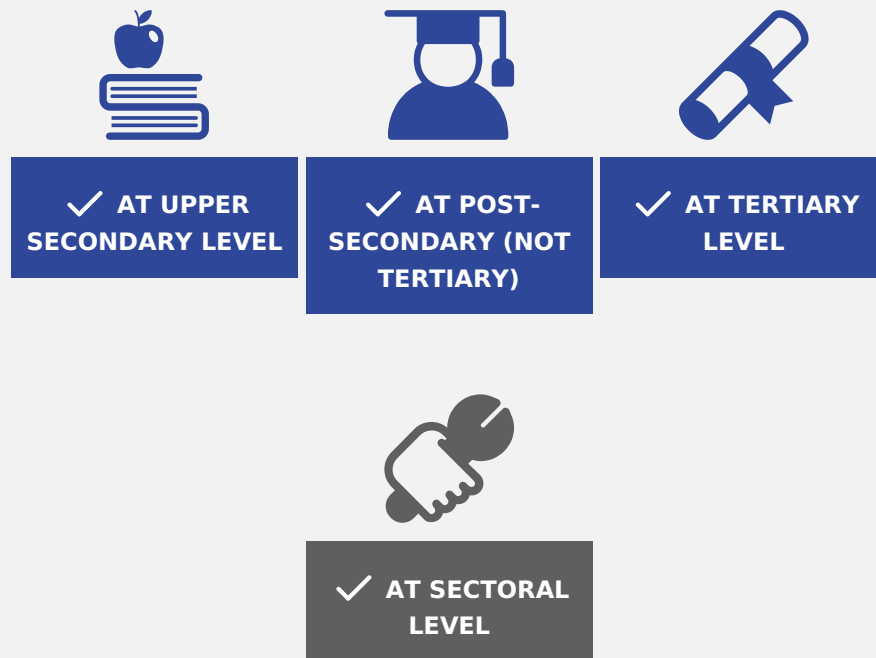
The main differences among the three schemes are:

1. Not all types of contracts can be used in all three schemes. The scheme 'dual learning' is the only scheme in which a specific contract (Alternation internship contract) can be used where apprentices receive a maximum of 20 hours per week of in-company training and are unpaid. That is not possible in the two schemes of the system of learning and working. The other two contracts can be used in all three schemes (depending on the amount of hours of in-company training and the sector).
2. In the scheme 'apprenticeship leertijd' the apprentices receive in-company training 4 days per week, while it is 3 days per week in the other two schemes.
3. The 2 schemes of the system of learning and working are more variable in terms of the duration of the programs.
4. Only under the dual learning scheme, a curriculum is entirely developed based on professional qualifications.

Definition used in the 2018 Decree concerning dual learning and the preparatory programme: dual learning is an apprenticeship scheme, where competences are developed in-company and at a dual learning provider in a balanced way. The goal is the attainment of a general education qualification of upper secondary level, or, in case this proves to be impossible, a professional qualification.

[1] <http://data-onderwijs.vlaanderen.be/edulex/document.aspx?docid=14032>

Q3. At which level do apprenticeship schemes exist in your country?

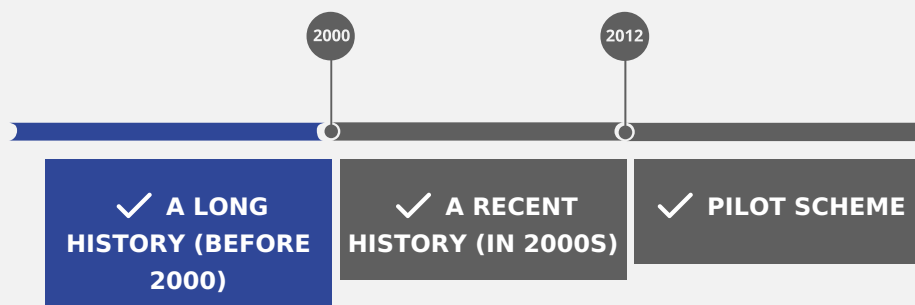


At upper-secondary level: In secondary education, apprenticeships can be organised within the three schemes. In the three schemes, students between 15-25 years old combine a learning experience at school with a learning experience at the workplace. The dual learning scheme offers programs which are based on professional qualifications and is more up-to-date compared to the two schemes of the system of learning and working (apprenticeship 'leertijd' and part-time vocational secondary education). The system of learning and working, thus the two mentioned schemes, will be replaced by the dual learning scheme.

At post-secondary level (under development): this scheme will allow adults (18 years or older) to attain a degree at upper secondary level alternating training at a Centre for adult education and in a company (ISCED 4). This is being piloted: the regulations are under development.

At Tertiary level (under development): this scheme will allow adults to attain a degree at tertiary level in a dual training alternating training at a university/college and in a company (ISCED 5, 6, 7) This is being piloted: the regulations are under development.

Q4. How well-established are apprenticeship schemes in your country?



- Apprenticeships 'Leertijd' have a long history. During the middle ages, professions were taught by guilds. Youngsters could learn a profession under the supervision of a master. After a master-proof test they could become 'gezel'

(journeyman) or master. In 1906, these arrangements were regulated by law. These regulations changed with the introduction of compulsory schooling (1914) and part-time compulsory schooling (1983).

- Part-time vocational secondary education started in 1984, introduced by a decree in 1990, then refined in 2008.
- Dual learning was introduced in 2016 as a pilot scheme, and since 2019 it exists as an official apprenticeship scheme.

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

There are three mainstream apprenticeship schemes with a stable legal basis in Belgium-Flanders: dual learning, part-time vocational schools and apprenticeship 'leertijd'. For reasons of simplicity, the learners enrolled in every scheme will be addressed as "apprentices" in the scheme fiches.

Two schemes (at post-secondary and tertiary levels) are being piloted.

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 6 until 18 years old. This will be changed from the 2020-2021 school year to 5 until 18 years old.