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Belgium

Overview of the Vocational Education and Training System

2008

eKnowVet – Thematic Overviews



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Abstract:

This is an overview of the VET system in the Belgium. Information is presented according to the following themes:

1. General policy context - framework for the knowledge society
2. Policy development - objectives, frameworks, mechanisms, priorities
3. Institutional framework - provision of learning opportunities
4. Initial vocational education and training
5. Continuing vocational education and training for adults
6. Training VET teachers and trainers
7. Skills and competence development and innovative pedagogy
8. Accumulating, transferring and validating learning
9. Guidance and counselling for learning, career and employment
10. Financing - investment in human resources
11. European and international dimensions, towards an open area of lifelong learning

This overview has been updated in 2008 and its reference year is 2007. The latest versions can be viewed from October 2009 onwards at:

http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/etv/Information_resources/NationalVet/Thematic/ where more detailed thematic information on the VET systems of the EU can also be found.

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training system; training policy, initial training, continuing vocational training, training of trainers, skill development, vocational guidance, recognition of competences, validation of non formal learning; financing of training

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0101 - POLITICAL AND SOCIO-CULTURAL/ECONOMIC CONTEXT

POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURES

Belgium, which became a unitary State in 1831, is a parliamentary democracy in the form of a constitutional monarchy and, following successive amendments to the Constitution (1970, 1980, 1988, 1994), has become a federal State. At the time of these amendments, the State transferred many powers to the regions and the communities. For instance, the communities became responsible for education, while the regions are responsible for some aspects of vocational training such as social advancement, redeployment and retraining.

The last amendment of the Constitution in 1994 made Belgium into a completely federal State.

The political and administrative structures can be grouped according to **five** levels: federal, community, regional, provincial and municipal.

A) Federal level

The federal level is represented by the Federal institutions, Chamber of Representatives, Senate, King and federal Government.

B) Community level

As far as the community level is concerned, Belgium consists of 4 communities, namely the Flemish Community or Dutch – speaking Community, French Community, German-speaking Community and the Joint Community Commission (French Community Commission and Flemish Community Commission).

The communities are responsible for issues more specifically connected with the person, such as education and culture. The French Community is responsible for the French-speaking part of Wallonia and for the French-speaking institutions in Brussels. The Flemish Community is responsible for Flanders and for Dutch-speaking institutions in Brussels. The German-speaking Community is responsible for the German-speaking area.

The three communities each have their own legislative assembly (Parliament) and their own government. The French Community Commission (COCOF) is responsible for the issues transferred to it by the French Community (for instance: vocational training for the middle classes) in respect of French-speaking institutions in Brussels. Concerning education, all educational matters have been transferred to the three communities. They are responsible for education within their linguistic area and, as concerns the French and Flemish communities, with regard to

French or Dutch-speaking establishments in bilingual areas (Brussels). The educational responsibilities of the Flemish Community are vested in the Flemish Parliament (legislative power) and the Flemish Community Government and Education Minister (executive power). The educational responsibilities of the French and German-speaking communities are vested in the Councils of respectively the French and German-speaking Community and respectively the French Community Government and Education Ministers and the German-speaking Community Government and Education Minister.

With regard to distribution of powers over placement and vocational training, it is important to underline that since 1st January 2001, the German-speaking Community has had responsibility for employment and vocational training.

C) Regional level

The three regions are based on a territorial division: **Flemish** region, **Walloon** region and **Brussels** region. They are responsible for issues connected with training, employment, the economy or the local area, such as aid for enterprises and town planning. The Walloon region is responsible for Wallonia; the Flemish region is responsible for Flanders and the Brussels region is responsible for the 19 local authorities that make it up.

The three regions have their own legislative assembly and their own government.

D) Provincial level

Equally, there are 5 Walloon provinces and 5 Flemish provinces. On 31 January 1994, the province of Brabant was replaced by two provinces: Walloon and Flemish Brabant. Provincial governments continue to be responsible for enforcing laws, decrees, orders and regulatory orders at provincial level.

E) Municipal level

The state consists of 262 Walloon municipalities, 19 municipalities in Brussels and 308 Flemish municipalities. Municipalities are responsible for those issues which have been assigned to them by law on municipalities.

The financing of education, especially secondary education, may involve all five levels of government, but also enterprises.

The financing of vocational training involves transfers of appropriations between the various public authorities.

0102 - POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHICS

Belgium's surface is 30.528 km². It has borders with four countries: the Netherlands to the north, Germany and the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg to the east and France to the south. To the west it is bordered by the North Sea. The official population of the Kingdom on 1st January 2007 was 10,584,534 inhabitants.

As in most other EU member states, the age pyramid shows a demographic imbalance towards older citizens. The 0-19 age group formulates the 23 % of the total population, the proportion of the 20-64 age cohort is 60 %, while those above 65 are represented by 17%. As far as the medium term demographic projections are concerned, a similar trend of slight increase can be foreseen in Belgium until 2025, which will be followed by stagnation until 2050 (Table 2).

AGE	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
0 -19	2,408,943	2,407,368	2,408,456	2,414,041	2,428,706
20-64	6,154,390	6,186,086	6,207,845	6,232,311	6,273,659
65 +	1,746,392	1,762,390	1,780,120	1,799,500	1,809,017
TOTAL	10,309,725	10,355,844	10,396,421	10,445,852	10,511,382

Source: INS (National Institute of Statistics)

2005	2015	2025	2050
10,4	10,7	10,9	10,9

Source : EUROSTAT

0103 - ECONOMY AND LABOUR MARKET INDICATORS

To help make the European Union the most competitive economy, Belgium has undertaken a large number of structural operations and has worked hard on a long-term approach to measures on the economic, social and environmental front. This was necessary, bearing in mind that in 1993, for instance, Belgium had a budget deficit of 7.5% of GDP, while the national debt amounted to 137.1% of GDP. Representing 137.1% of GDP in 1993, the debt was brought down to 87.7% in 2006 and reduced to 83.9% in 2007.

The Standardised Unemployment Rate (SUR) on annual basis stood at 8,4% in 2005, 8,3 % in 2006 and 7,5 % in 2007 (Table 1). By creating sustainable economic growth in a stable macroeconomic framework, Belgium is striving for more and better jobs, more social cohesion and a healthy environment.

Table 1: The evolution of the Belgian Standardised unemployment rates - [%]								
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
UNEMPLOYMENT RATE	6.9	6.6	7.5	8.2	8.4	8.4	8.3	7.5

Source: EUROSTAT

The overall strategy Belgium was adopted for achieving the Lisbon goals is focused on ushering, in long-term economic growth against the background of a stable macroeconomic context. The strategy involves the consolidation of the economy in general, and more and better jobs, better social cohesion and a healthy environment, in particular. Towards this end the focus of investment in 2007-2010 is primarily on "creating incentives for growth and employment". As a result of ongoing consultations and cooperation between the federal government, the regions and the communities, the various economic and labour market policy measures have been streamlined within the context of a well-balanced policy for the entire country. The Belgian economy is highly sensitive to economic market trends and export-driven.

In 2007, the Belgian government has taken a series of steps to discourage early exits from the labour market and encourage re-entry of those who have stayed out of activity. These measures have included the closing of some early retirement paths, as stipulated in the Solidarity Pact between the Generations. In addition, activation measures have been enacted, notably in the form of individualised road maps for returning to work, follow-up interviews and possible sanctions in case of insufficient job search activities.

The employment rate continues to be lower than the European average but there is reported to be a faster percentage of increase (Table 2). The change in the situation is primarily reflected in a sharp rise in the employment rate in the 55-64 age category. This is chiefly attributed to the requirement for older unemployed people to be available for work longer. The situation, together with an increase in the size of the working population, has nonetheless created several side-effects, such as a mild increase in the rate of unemployment to reach 8.2 % in 2006 (Table 3), although the rate of unemployment fell again in 2007 to 7.5%

Table 2: Employment rates (15-64) - [%]			
	2000	2003	2006
TOTAL			
EU (27)	62.4	62.9	64.4
BELGIUM	60.5	59.6	61.0
BY GENDER - BELGIUM			
MALE	69.5	67.3	67.9
FEMALE	51.5	51.8	54.0

Source: EUROSTAT

Table 3: Unemployment rates (15-64) - [%]			
	2000	2003	2006
TOTAL			
EU (27)	8.6	9.0	7.9
BELGIUM	6.9	8.2	8.2
BY GENDER - BELGIUM			
MALE	5.6	7.6	7.4
FEMALE	8.5	8.9	9.3

Source: EUROSTAT

Table 4: Youth unemployment rates (<25) - [%]			
	2000	2003	2006
TOTAL			
EU (27)	17.4	18.8	17.3
BELGIUM	16.7	21.8	20.5

Source: EUROSTAT

Table 5: Long term unemployment rates (more than 12 months) - [%]			
	2000	2003	2006
TOTAL			
EU (27)	3.9	4.1	3.7
BELGIUM	3.7	3.7	4.9
BY GENDER - BELGIUM			
MALE	3.0	3.3	3.7
FEMALE	4.6	4.2	4.9

Source: EUROSTAT

0104 - EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF POPULATION

In Belgium, 81.3% of the 20-24 year olds graduated in higher education. 83.7% in Flanders, 78.7% in Wallonia and 75.4% in Brussels. The EU-average is 76.8%. Both in the Union as a whole and in Belgium, major efforts must be made to attain the 85% target *.

Tertiary education has been expanded over the past decades, setting Belgium on course towards having a relatively high human capital endowment (See table 1).

TABLE 1: POPULATION AGED 25 TO 64, BY HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION ATTAINED, 2007							
	TOTAL	PRE-PRIMARY, PRIMARY AND LOWER SECONDARY EDUCATION (ISCED LEVELS 0-2)		UPPER AND POST-SECONDARY NON-TERTIARY EDUCATION (ISCED LEVELS 3-4)		TERTIARY EDUCATION (ISCED LEVELS 5-6)	
	TOTAL (1000)	TOTAL (1000)	%	TOTAL (1000)	%	TOTAL (1000)	%
EU27	268116	77859	29	125857	47	62688	23
BE	5723	1834	32	2052	36	1837	32

Source of Data: Eurostat; EU Labour Force Survey;

REGIONAL COMPARISONS

In Brussels, the percentage of low-skilled people (only with the lower secondary education certification) is rather important. In Flanders, 17% of the population aged between 25-29 years have given up secondary education, 25% in Wallonia and 29% in Brussels. Things are quite similar as far as early school leaving (the share of 18-20 year old not being educated and not having completed secondary education) is concerned, with a 12,6% share (+0,7) in Flanders, a 16,3% (+0,2) in Wallonia and a 19,2% share (-3,4) in Brussels**.

The nation's percentage is 12,8%*** (+0,4%) against a 15,9% EU-average. The goal is to bring down this percentage to 10%. Flanders aims at a 50% reduction ****by 2010. The sharp division between the general, technical and professional education also appears to be a rather weak point in the Belgian education policy. In the Flemish and French Community, still quite a lot of students start their education career in general education, "falling back" to technical and professional education (this phenomenon does not occur in the German-speaking Community). It is important though, that a technical or professional training is looked upon as a positive choice.

* The target basically refers to the 22 year olds and not to the complete group 22-24 year olds

** Brussels'figure fluctuates strongly each year, and is therefore to be interpreted with care. Moreover national figures (Statistics Belgium NIS) are not completely comparable with the European (EUROSTAT)

*** Based on EUROSTAT data

SCHOOL LEAVERS

In Belgium there are fewer young school leavers in the working-age population nowadays than in the early 1970s. Their average level of academic achievement has greatly improved and only 11% of young people aged 15-24 leave school without having obtained the diploma equivalent to the upper secondary level.

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
EU (27 COUNTRIES)	17.1	16.6	15.9	15.5	15.2	14.8
EU (25 COUNTRIES)	16.6	16.1	15.4	15.1	15	14.5
BELGIUM	12.4	12.8	11.9 (b)	13	12.6	12.3

Source of Data: Eurostat; EU Labour Force Survey;

02 - POLICY DEVELOPMENT - OBJECTIVES, FRAMEWORKS, MECHANISMS, PRIORITIES

0201 - OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITIES

In the light of the European Youth Pact, the Belgian authorities have implemented measures to promote the integration of young people into the labour market. Initially, the aim was to upgrade technical and vocational education. Heavy investments were made in equipping the schools in question, and via specialised centres, which were set up by the employment services with various partners, high-tech equipment will be made available for education, both for pupils and for teacher training.

In Flanders, sandwich courses were bolstered by increasing the number of places available for work experience; this was done in consultation with the sectors and within the government itself. In addition, the 'full-time commitment' was introduced: pupils in part-time education must be able to gain work experience. For those pupils for whom no job can be found, a special course will be set up with additional training, support in applying for jobs and so forth. This commitment must be achieved in the short term for three quarters of these pupils.

The French Community and the Walloon Region have set themselves the goal of increasing the number of young people in part-time education by improving support and by expanding the system to include the government sector and large companies, thereby simplifying the coordination mechanism. A service has been set up that makes it possible to work with the same vocational standards for 1) the various training systems and 2) the system of recognising acquired skills. This service will also make it possible to strengthen links with the labour market. This will further enhance the readability and consistency of the training pathways.

Sandwich courses have also been bolstered in Brussels, with the French Community and the French Community Commission working on reinforcing connections with education and adult education.

The German-speaking Community, where sandwich courses are firmly rooted, has made plans to introduce an extra year of basic training before pupils can start alternating training. The three Communities are also working on a fully fledged diploma for sandwich courses, which will finally be encouraged - starting with the 2006-2007 school year - by a federal bonus for both employers and pupils. In order to promote the acquisition of work experience in addition to sandwich courses, the options for student work were expanded in 2006 and a website was set up for Wallonia.

Within the framework of a more flexible labour market, entrepreneurship is also encouraged. The average Belgian has not yet sufficiently developed the reflex to create his own job by becoming self-employed. Accordingly, this has been given extra attention in education over the last year. For

instance, pupils in the last three years of French-language secondary education learned about the business world through a visit by an entrepreneur and a government official. In Flanders, pupils were given the opportunity to draw up a business plan (there was even a competition) and the course materials for the certificate of business management were updated and made more interactive.

Training in entrepreneurship was also pursued after school. When beginning self-employment, young people can still receive the benefit allocated for job-seeking school-leavers and will be given longer support when they arrange a start-up loan. In addition, Flanders began systematically screening job-seekers for their entrepreneurial qualities and Wallonia solidified its pilot project, with job-seekers being given the opportunity to test out a project 'in real life conditions' within a protected environment.

Cooperation between the employment services of the Regions and Communities was significantly expanded in 2006. The exchange of job-seekers taking training courses in another Region was also enhanced. A special action plan was devised for Brussels. In that connection, a cooperation agreement was signed between the Regions, the aim being to ensure that the employment services' activities are much more consistent with each other. Both Communities are also investing in extra (career-oriented) language training and language courses in Brussels.

Brussels focused its training offering even more intently on in demand jobs; the employers' federations and other organisations were regularly consulted for their input. Flanders introduced a bonus to encourage training for in demand jobs and Wallonia developed a plan to better fill in demand jobs, consisting of analysing those jobs for which the supply of workers is inadequate, improving the detection of such jobs, screening job-seekers for their skills and developing a specific offering of training courses, the aim being to achieve the best individual match between supply and demand.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR LESS-FAVoured GROUPS

Various groups are lagging way behind on the Belgian labour market. These include, in particular, the disabled, the unskilled, the long-term unemployed and migrants. In addition to guaranteeing equal access to all services, special actions were also undertaken by the employment services.

Flanders is striving for the proportional representation of less-favoured groups on the labour market and is taking steps to rectify the exclusion of these groups within the training provided by the employment service. In 2005, job-seekers who were migrants, work-disabled and unskilled were already positively represented in the courses provided for job-seekers, but the marked under-representation of people aged 50 and over increased.

In order to boost the low employment rate of people of foreign nationality or origin, action was taken through education and within the labour market. Flanders is paying extra attention to dealing with diversity within teacher training; an action plan on truancy was developed. In 2006, French-

language education focused on bolstering lessons in French in the initial years of secondary education.

Special attention is also being paid to integrating into the labour market those individuals who live on a minimum (subsistence) income. The local social welfare services receive a subsidy when they offer an appropriate course of action to an individual who is entitled to the subsistence income.

In Wallonia, these target groups have access to an integrated course and individual support for two years, which also continues after their integration into the labour market. In addition and more specifically, the fight against illiteracy was stepped up.

In Brussels, the employment service developed a partnership with various organisations in order to provide enhanced support for less-favoured groups. Accordingly, the unit that coordinates awareness-raising actions for businesses was bolstered.

MORE JOBS IN NEIGHBOURHOOD AND LOCAL ('PROXIMITY') SERVICES

The 'service cheque' system was further expanded in 2006, meaning that structural efforts to ensure financing are urgently needed. All employment services worked actively to channel job-seekers through this system. For example, the service-voucher professions were introduced in the Flemish ironing shops, mainly targeting the lesser-educated people and the long-term unemployed. The service voucher sector in Flanders has already helped almost 30,000 people to find a job. VDAB is working hard to train people. The service voucher professions are practically used for in demand professions.

Wallonia is organising special training and information sessions for (potential) service cheque workers. The Brussels Region also bolstered information on service cheques for job-seekers and the German-speaking Community encouraged enthusiasm for services cheques in the non-profit sector within the framework of streamlining the social economy sector.

MORE EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IN EDUCATION AND RECOGNITION OF SKILLS FOR EVERYONE WHO PURSUES LIFELONG LEARNING

Within the framework of the open method of coordination for 'Education and Training 2010', the Communities pursued their efforts to guarantee equal access to education and to upgrade technical and vocational education. The French Community worked on implementing its sizeable reform plan that runs until 2013 by bolstering the Community foundation in secondary education. Flanders introduced a bonus system in order to put pressure on the cost of expensive courses of study.

The use of training cheques is enjoying growing success in the three Regions. For instance, Brussels expanded the use of training cheques for job-seekers going back to work, from language training to other areas, such as ICT. Wallonia increased the options for using training cheques, both for

companies and for workers; it boosted its offering by establishing a special 'language cheque' and by increasing the number of cheques that a business can order. Flanders is working on adjusting the system in various ways, including on the basis of the conclusion that certain less-favoured groups, such as unskilled individuals and people aged 50 and over, are significantly under-represented in the group of those people who make use of training cheques. In late 2005, Flanders decided to integrate various instruments in order to support businesses in various areas, including the co-financing of training costs. In doing so, support was more strongly geared to SMEs.

Efforts are also being made to streamline the training on offer. To this end, Brussels enhanced the synergies between the employment service and the organisations that offer training, especially those concentrating on specialist centres and based on a modular approach. In 2006, the first additional centre was started up in the ICT sector. In Wallonia, a few new centres were opened and the surrounding network was strengthened. Wallonia also developed a project whereby an introductory course for job-seekers in ICT and the Internet was organised at the skill centres.

For job-seekers, training combined with work experience leads more easily to a job, which is why Flanders and Wallonia increased the number of work experience places. Flanders is also running experiments in cooperating with private firms (via deployment measures) and temporary work agencies to increase the efficiency and target group reach of work experience programmes. Brussels simplified the associated administrative procedure.

Formal recognition of acquired skills must be the final component in a solid policy on lifelong learning. Once the jobs had been defined and the standards established, the first vocational skills certificates were issued in the French Community. Here, the aim is to give another 1,000 people access to the recognition procedure in 2006. Flanders will begin issuing certificates in the autumn.

INVESTING MORE IN KNOWLEDGE AND INNOVATION

In order to meet the Barcelona objective the Belgian authorities is determined to increase the investment in R&D in order for this to reach 3% of GDP by 2010.

For instance, centres of competitiveness or competency, combining businesses, training centres and public and private research bodies have been developed in the three regions. An additional budget allocation for the competence centres and strategic research centres is increasing every year with € 134 MIO for Belgium.

PRIORITY SPHERES OF ACTION

Belgium is guided by the objective of achieving a targeted approach to working life guaranteeing easy transitions to and within the labour market and making it possible to increase the participation of target groups that have been excluded from it.

In this respect the beginning and end of working life are the chief focus of attention; this is where the main challenges are posed for our country. This is why it is necessary to simplify the transition from school to work and to increase the average age of leaving the labour market.

To ensure efficient entry of young people into the labour market, the first necessity is to strengthen secondary education, in particular the subjects which have a direct bearing on the labour market. With this in view, investments have been allocated for the period 2005-2006 to the basic infrastructures of the technical schools (Flanders: EUR 30 million - French-speaking Community EUR 25.7 million). Brussels (BCR) has, moreover, devoted a budget of EUR 2 million (2005-2008) to support the investments of the two Communities. Furthermore, sandwich training programmes have been strengthened; full time employment is carried out through the creation of specialised centres that benefit from a budget of about EUR 40 million for the 2005-2008 period. Brussels (COCOF) is devoting EUR 264,000 to the promotion of sandwich training courses and the German-speaking Community is providing EUR 2.68 million to fund the creation of sandwich training centres.

Belgium subscribes to the principle of gender equality and for a better work-life balance. It therefore makes investments to increase childcare facilities; to create 13,000 additional places, EUR 72.9 million will be invested (Flanders; EUR 18.1 million, German-speaking Community EUR 0.4 million, French-speaking Community: EUR 54.4 million).

In the context of an approach targeting careers, it seems essential to offer training opportunities. Only those who manage to develop their knowledge satisfactorily can keep and improve their chances on the job market. In order to finance this part of the programme, it is necessary not only for workers but also employers and the authorities to contribute. With this in view, the regions and the communities offer training vouchers; the budget for this amounts to EUR 102.9 million for the period 2005-2008.

Employers for their part have committed themselves to contributing 1.9% of the total wage bill to the training of their workers. This comes to nearly EUR 10.3 billion.

For validation, not only of the training followed but also of the work experience acquired, formal recognition is required. The necessary structures have been developed for this purpose, representing an investment for the period 2005-2008 of EUR 14 million.

THE NATIONAL REFORM PROGRAMME (NRP) – BELGIUM¹

The target set for 2004 by the social partners, of investing 1.9% of the private sector wage bill in training, has not been achieved (it reached 1.25%). The number of people participating in training decreased slightly to

¹ Source: Belgium - Assessment of National reform Programme

8.4% in 2005. Belgium needs therefore to reinforce efforts on lifelong learning to reach the EU target of 12.5% participation, and the national target of at least doubling the participation rate in lifelong learning among the low-skilled. Apart from incentives for companies to increase the provision of training places, there is no clear approach to increasing participation and investment in training. Measures have been taken for the recognition of Competencies. To develop the training agenda, the government is relying on the forthcoming negotiations among social partners on a new multi-sector agreement. Important reforms were launched recently, such as improving the image and the quality of technical education, but they are too recent to show results. It is important to reinforce the measures taken in order to limit early school leaving and thus avoid young people leaving school with limited skills.

The NRP identifies clearly the employment challenges and reflects the government's determination to increase the employment rate. The implementation of the measures is contributing to progress in employment growth, although the unemployment rate continues to hover around 8.4%. Sustained attention is therefore necessary to tap the employment potential of disadvantaged groups, youth and old people. Vigorous efforts are needed to limit early school leaving and to revitalise the education and lifelong learning system so that the labour market is sufficiently supplied with skills.

OTHER RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

A) Flemish Community

The areas where the most striking progress has been made are:

- 1) the implementation of the Generation Pact to increase employment when starting and ending a career, including via a new and active vision of reform;
- 2) the reassessment of training courses;
- 3) the further development of support for short-term job-seekers and the introduction of a new monitoring and support system for the long-term unemployed; initial results are positive;
- 4) refinements to the structure of financial incentives on the labour market via additional tax cuts, bonuses for employers and the introduction of the work bonus;
- 5) active referral by the employment services to the service cheques system, thus contributing to the system's growing success;
- 6) the enhanced exchange of vacancies between the various employment services and the implementation of an action plan to help the unemployed in Brussels to find jobs on the labour market in the area around the city;
- 7) the implementation of the system for validating acquired skills.

As from September 2006 there is the launching of the IBO-Interim in the Flemish Community With the introduction of the "Meerbanenplan" [job creation scheme], the VDAB and the temporary employment sector launched Individual Professional Training or (Individuele beroepopleiding –

Interim (IBO-Interim). It makes provision for a period of temping with an employer immediately followed by individual vocational training within the same company.

8) First global policy priority for education and training in Flanders (2005-2009) with relevance for VET: equity - equal chances - and target group approach (disadvantaged, low skilled, disabled, migrants and elderly persons) where necessary.

B) Wallonia

There is an urgent need to offer tailored solutions by providing guidance and training to job seekers, including young people, in the various, and constantly changing, technical trades (mechanic, tool-maker, welder, etc.). Hence there is an evolving need to define common objectives and targeted actions in the area of education, training and getting people into employment with an increased involvement of all possible partners (social partners, the Walloon Region, French Community, IFAPME, etc.).

In 2007, in line with the above needs an agreement has been signed between the main parties (including the Walloon Ministers of Education and of the Economy, Employment and Foreign Trade).

The agreement focuses on ten key areas:

1. Promoting and enhancing the image of jobs in the sector;
2. Investment in updating the CCPQ (Professions and Qualifications Agency of the French Community in Belgium);
3. Company work placements;
4. Development of language training;
5. Labour market analysis (will be intensified in response to the qualification shortfalls currently detected through the "Job Focus" plan).
6. Job seeker training;
7. Training of workers in the sector - Due to a number of problems with recruitment linked to a shortage of skills, companies in the sector are significantly increasing investment in continuous training;
8. Involvement of sectors in the development and enhancing of skills centres (20) and advanced technologies;
9. Development of skills validation - It is now possible to have one's skills validated in thirty jobs;
10. Support in finding employment.

03 - INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK - PROVISION OF LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

0301 - LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

ADMINISTRATIVE BACKGROUND

Education is the responsibility of the linguistic communities (Dutch-speaking; French-speaking, and German-speaking communities of Belgium)

A. Flemish Community

The Flemish Community consists of the Flemish Region and the Dutch-speaking institutions of the Brussels-Capital Region. Education policy is the responsibility of the Flemish Minister of Education and the Flemish Administration. The Community subsidises schools governed by other public authorities (the provinces and municipalities), or private persons (schools governed by a private person constitute what is known as the 'independent education system').

B. French Community

The French Community includes the Walloon Region without the German-speaking Region and also the French-speaking institutions of the Brussels Capital Region. The Government of the French Community is the top-level authority for education in the Community. The Community subsidises schools governed by other public authorities (the provinces and municipalities), or private persons (schools governed by a private person constitute what is known as the 'independent education system').

C. German-speaking Community

The German Community covers the German-speaking Region. The Parliament and the Government of the German-speaking Community are the top-level authorities for education in that Community.

The Regions are responsible for vocational training if it is closely related to employment (i.e. employment-finding, re-entry in the labour market, in-service training, etc.) and is used as an instrument for an employment and economic expansion policy. In addition to the management and funding of the public employment services, the Regions also have their own training support system. Usually, these measures imply that the Region picks up part of the training cost or pays a premium to companies that use the training programmes. A number of Community actions contribute to the vocational training policy in the form of education channels funded and organised by Communities. More specifically, this concerns:

- 1) Continuing education, that chiefly targets employees, job-seekers and youngsters who have finished their full-time compulsory education; the aim is that they obtain a higher qualification than the one they already have and refresh their general knowledge;
- 2) Second chance education that prepares people for the exams of the Examining boards of the Communities and that targets adults above the age of 18 who want to obtain their general or technical secondary education degree;
- 3) Distance education (written education) that is organised by the Communities and entitles people to sit the exams of the examining boards of the Communities and
- 4) Initiatives of universities and colleges of higher education regarding life-long learning, particularly the organisation of courses outside normal working hours (evenings and weekends).

In Flanders the Flemish government determines the homogeneous political sectors or departments. Now there are 13 ministries with 13 departments and 70 agencies privatised either internally or externally and 90 coordinating entities. The Flemish Agency for Entrepreneur Education (Vlaams Agentschap voor Ondernemersvorming - SYNTRA Vlaanderen) has now the official legal form of an Externally Independent Agency. Its aim is the development of general and vocational skills necessary to practice an independent profession. SYNTRA Flanders is assisted by the SYNTRA training network for self-employed workers and for small and middle-sized enterprises (SMEs).

LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

Up until 2008 eight inter-professional agreements have been concluded in which the social partners play a leading role in employing and training risk groups: the social partners put the emphasis with regard to financing, and with regard to the educational package, etc. There are also regional regulations and measures with involvement of social partners such as an apprenticeship agreement and vocational training at the Flemish Independent Enterprise Institute in Flanders (Syntra Vlaanderen) and the Institute of continuing vocational training for the small and medium-size enterprises in Wallonia (IFAPME) (Modifications on the Decrees of 1991 for Syntra Vlaanderen and IFAPME) For VDAB there is the Flemish Economic and Social Consultative Committee (VESOC) – agreement, for FOREM (Wallonia): in Training plan – involvement Equipment fund for technical and vocational education;; training cheques (Wallonia and Flanders: Decree of the Flemish (14-11-2001) and Walloon Government (23-07-1998) on training cheques); support for the training in business (Wallonia); language cheques for Brussels training – education (Brussels Capital Region - September 1998). The social partners are represented in the management bodies by the above-mentioned training institutes: VDAB- FOREM , Syntra Vlaanderen- IFAPME.

The 6 inter-sectoral agreements (Inter-professional agreement of November 1988, Inter-professional agreement of December 1990, 1992, 1994, 1998 and 2000, 2003 and 2007-2008 and certain Royal Decrees on the national level deal with financing of training measures for risk groups. Federally there is also the Employment Fund that can also give the sector funds some financial support. Further more there is paid educational leave (recovering law of regional level there are leverage credits (Decree of the Flemish Government of 24-03-1998), the training cheques (Flanders and Wallonia).

About 100 (sub) sectors conclude their own sectoral risk group collective labour agreements. Besides that there are the sectoral educational funds which bring financial input. Educational funds can also conclude their own provincial CAO's on the regional level in addition to the national CAO's where additionally a certain percentage will be collected from employers of the province concerned. The regional governments especially the Flemish government are wishing to transfer the Competencies of paid educational leave, but the decision is up to the federal government and the national social partners. The amending law of 22 January 1985 deals with paid educational leave. It has replaced the former system of credit hours for continuing training of employees. This law has been last modified by the Royal Decree 1998 (access for workers in SME's)and the programme law of December 1999.

0302 - INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK: IVET

The roles and impacts of the key administrative and regulatory bodies can be summarised as follows:

EUROPEAN UNION

The European Union has its impact on the kind of qualifications that are valid in the three communities of Belgium. The European Union has initiated a number of educational and training programmes in view of the promotion of the European dimension and the improvement of educational quality through cooperation between countries. Actions are taken in each Community for following four partial aspects of European cooperation regarding vocational education and training:

- European dimension;
- Recognition of competences and qualifications;
- Transparency, information and guidance;
- Quality control.

CENTRAL OR FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

The federal legislator retained responsibility for establishing the beginning and end of compulsory education as well as setting minimum conditions for the award of diplomas and certificates.

SOCIAL PARTNERS IN IVET IN FLANDERS

In the modular system, every school programme consists of general education and of vocation-oriented modules in which general educational elements are integrated and attention is paid to core skills. This way the pupil is prepared for specific vocations and also for personal and social functioning. The final objectives set up by the government for each stage and each educational form as well as the vocational profiles set up by the social partners are also important. These profiles assure close linkage with the labour market.

SOCIAL PARTNERS IN IVET IN WALLONIA

Similarly to Flanders, the vocational profiles set up by the social partners are rather important. This way the pupil is prepared for specific vocations and also for personal and social functioning is integrated. An agreement was reached between teachers of primary education and the first stage of secondary education on a working document relating to the core competences (*socles de compétences*) to be achieved at ages 8, 12, and 14. These are references designed to determine the notion of education level and to serve as the basis on which to elaborate curricula

0303 - INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK: CVET

The roles and impacts of the key administrative and regulatory bodies can be summarised as follows:

EUROPEAN UNION

The European Union has its impact on the kind of qualifications that are valid in the three communities of Belgium. The European Union has initiated a number of educational and training programmes in view of the promotion of the European dimension and the improvement of educational quality through cooperation between countries. Actions are taken in each Community for following four partial aspects of European cooperation regarding vocational education and training:

- European dimension;
- Recognition of competences and qualifications;
- Transparency, information and guidance;
- Quality control.

SOCIAL PARTNERS IN CVET IN BELGIUM

In recent years, a range of measures has been taken to finance job creation and initiatives to foster training and occupational integration of 'at-risk' groups. The prime role of these measures has been confirmed by the legislator, and all of the social partners, through a federal law dated 5 September 2001. The social partners specify in sectoral or company level collective labour agreements what is to be understood by 'at-risk' groups: long-term unemployed persons, poorly qualified unemployed persons, handicapped persons, persons who receive the minimum social allowance (*minimex*), etc.

SOCIAL PARTNERS IN CVET IN FLANDERS

In the most recent Flemish employment agreement (*Vlaams Werkgelegenheidsakkoord*) the social partners and the government decided that in 2005, 10 certificates were to be worked out and from 2006, 15 every year. Only financial means are allocated for standards development, which form the basis of the certificates, and for the working of the assessment institutions. The agreement concerning the allocation of this financial means is also the outcome of the common decision of the social partners and the government. There is a limited participation cost for the course participants.

The social partners do also have a great influence on the modifications of educational programmes in high schools and at universities. Jobseekers and those attending part-time compulsory education do not have to pay anything. The VDAB sub-regional employment committees connect social partners, the principal training providers, and the occupational sectors. They develop synergies between training and employment. Employment-training-education consultative committees, which have been established at the sub-regional committee level, analyse training needs, develop a directory of education and training offers, and function as employment observatories. The competence centres are the result of partnerships between the Flemish Community, VDAB, VLAO-SYNTRA, the social partners from the professional sector, research centres, and universities.

SOCIAL PARTNERS IN CVET IN WALLONIA

As in Flanders the competence centres are the result of partnerships between the Walloon Region, the FOREM, the IFAPME, the social partners from the professional sector, research centres, and universities. They benefit from the support of European structural funds. The Management Committee, which convenes the public authorities in charge, unions, and management, determines training policy within the framework of a three-year management contract. The majority of amounts are allocated to training. Depending on inter-sectoral agreements, there can be very different approaches with regard to the amount and allocation of the contributions. The Regions have set up various procedures for the approval of training and

occupational integration bodies: non-profit-making associations for occupational integration, on-the-job training enterprises (*Entreprises de Formation par le Travail, EFT*) in the Walloon Region; On-the-job-training workshops (*Ateliers de Formation par le Travail, AFT*) in the Brussels-Capital Region, Socio-occupational integration agencies (*Organismes d'Insertion Socioprofessionnelle, OISP*), etc..

Since 1993, the regions administer vocational education. For example, the policy of the Walloon government includes in its priorities the development of dual vocational education and training (industrial and commercial apprenticeships) and synergies between schools and enterprises. In 1991, a French Community Decree established a permanent structure for dual education and training on an experimental basis for a period of two years. A charter for dual education and training was signed in March 1993 between the Ministry of Education the representatives of the different networks (*réseaux*) that provide education, representatives from the teachers' unions, representatives from the parental organisations, and representatives from the employers' unions. This charter defined the respective roles of schools and companies. In dual vocational education and training, the educational institution and the company work together to fulfil a double educational role: education and vocational training.

The core competences (*socles de compétences*) are defined as a "reference that presents, in a structured manner, both the basic competencies to be taught until the end of the eight years of compulsory education and those, which are to be acquired at the end of each of the stages of the latter; because they are considered necessary for social integration and the continuation of studies". These core skills are a group of reference points, which determine the notion of level of instruction, and around which are structured the curricula devised or approved by the body that regulates and subsidises education. They play the role of learning guides and assessment watchdogs. These general objectives are identical for all schools and they complement the traditional curricula, which in turn outline the learning activities needed to attain these *socles de compétences*.

04 - INITIAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

0401 - BACKGROUND TO THE IVET SYSTEM AND DIAGRAM

The Belgian education and training system has three main levels:

A) BASIC EDUCATION

- Pre-school or nursery: three years from the age of 2 ½ to 5 (NB – almost all children attend school from the first year of nursery education)
- Primary: 6 years from the age of 6 to 12.

B) SECONDARY EDUCATION

Secondary education, from the age of 12 to 18, includes three two-year cycles:

- an initial common (*gemeenschappelijke*) (Flemish Community) or foundation (*observation*) (French Community) cycle;
- a second cycle where education is organised in four streams: general, technical, art and vocational;
- a third two-year cycle (sometimes three years – a seventh class of secondary education is added – especially in the Flemish Community).

In theory there are bridges between streams; in practice, transition generally takes place in one direction: downwards as a result of failure. From the age of 15/16, students can attend *alternance* education.

Alternance education accounts for a minority of young people: from the age of 15/16 after attending two years of secondary education. It is organised in three ways:

- The alternance education and training centres *Centrum voor Deeltijds Onderwijs - CDO* in the Flemish Community. (*Centre d'éducation et de formation en alternance – CEFA*) in the French Community and *Teilzeitunterrichtszenter* in the Germanspeaking Community. Students attend two days of classes at the centre per week and spend three days in an enterprise.
- the industrial apprenticeship contract (*contrat d'apprentissage industriel – CAI*) or *contrat d'apprentissage* (apprenticeship contract) for workers in employment;

- apprenticeship organised for the ‘middle classes’, i.e. self-employed occupations (with practical training, in trade skills, commercial training and training for service occupations).

Special education, taking the form of eight types of education, is available for children and adolescents with physical, mental or instrumental disabilities. It is organised at primary and secondary levels. At the secondary level, students are prepared for social-occupational integration. *Pupil assessment* takes place within the class. Primary teachers are educators, assessors and judges. At secondary level, assessment and guidance are the task of the *Conseil de classe* (Class council) made up of the school’s principals and class teachers. Pupils obtaining the Certificate of Upper Secondary Education may enter higher education (university and non-university). In the Flemish Community, this certificate is called a “*diploma*”.

C) HIGHER AND UNIVERSITY EDUCATION

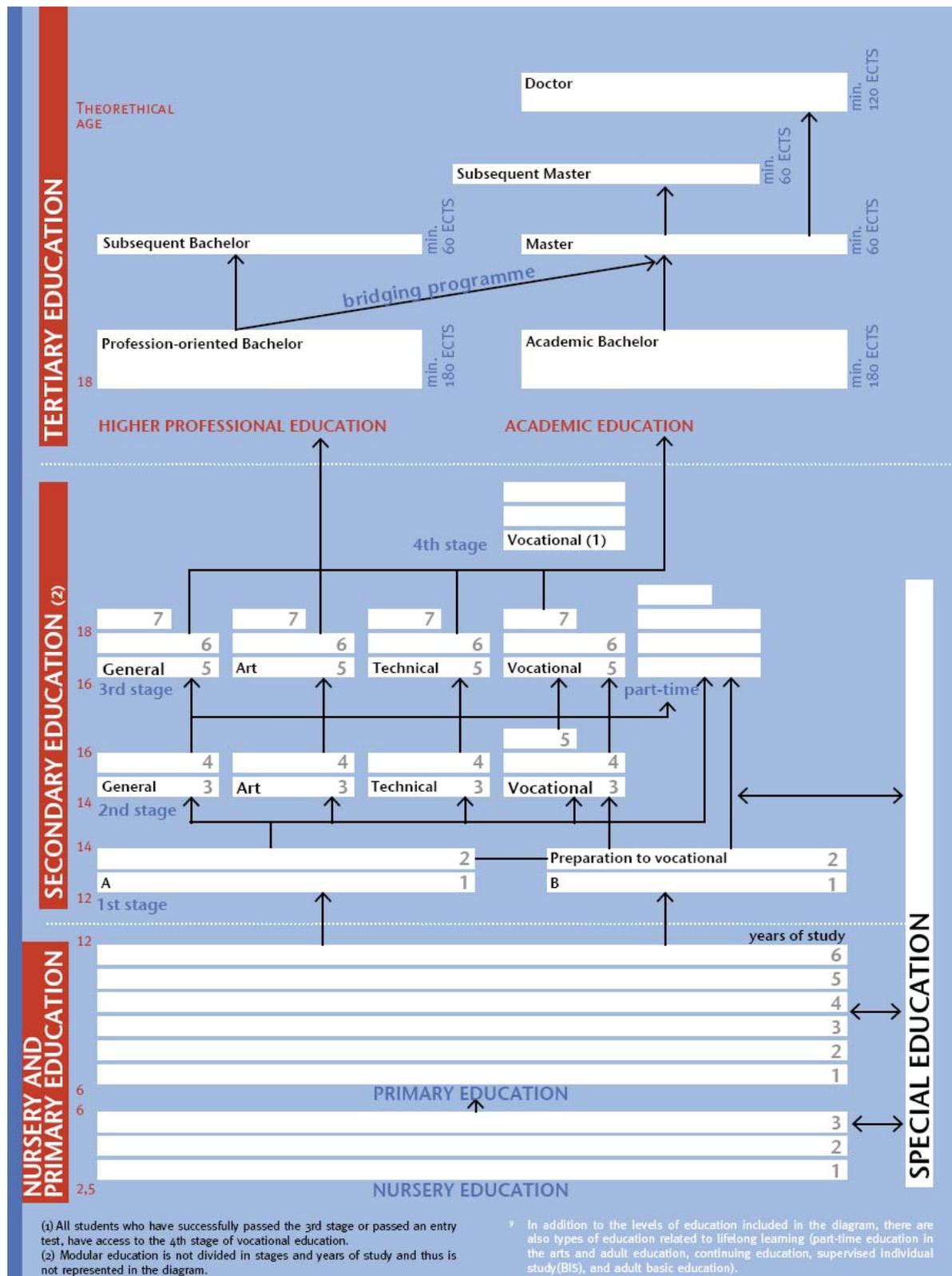
Higher non-university education - is of the short type when it includes one three-year cycle (graduat) and, of the long type, when it has two cycles over four or five years. High Schools are organised in eight streams (in the French Community) and 11 disciplines (in the Flemish Community). High Schools of the long type award baccalauréat and master in the same way as universities. Higher education of the short type is geared towards the practical and prepares students directly for working life. The long type leads to advanced scientific and/or technological qualifications. Graduates holding the various types of higher education qualification are in competition and it would seem that those with qualifications from short higher education are better placed to find jobs.

University education - University education has three cycles:

- Cycle 1: baccalauréat (two or three years), a qualification which opens the door to university cycle 2 or non-university higher education of the long type.
- Cycle 2: master (two or three years with submission of a dissertation), a qualification which opens the door to working life.
- Cycle 3: doctorate (several years with the submission of a thesis which is defended in public).

It is possible to move between the various types of higher education (short, long, university) subject to specific conditions. Universities have an information and guidance service, but colleges do not.

Diagram 1: the Belgian education and training system



0402 - IVET AT LOWER SECONDARY LEVEL

In general, children are aged 12 when they enter secondary education. They can begin their first year of secondary education if they have obtained their certificate of primary education. Secondary education, like primary education forms part of compulsory education. Full-time education may last until the age of 18 or combine full-time education until 15/16 with part-time education from 15/16 to the age of 18. Secondary education consists of three stages lasting two years each.

Parents can freely choose their child's school. Access to compulsory education is free of charge and the costs of some school materials are borne by the educational providers. Nevertheless some items of expenditure are borne by parents, including swimming pool admission costs, purchase of the class task list, and expenditure linked to cultural and sports activities.

Secondary education institutions offer 28 to 32/34 lesson periods, each lasting 50 minutes, per week and in some cases up to 36 periods where practical worked linked to vocational training is involved. Classes are theoretically organized by age group and subject. However, due to pupils repeating a failed year, classes often include pupils of different ages.

Each organizing body is free to select the teaching methods of its choice within the limits of the key stages and core skills to be achieved by the end of cycle 1 of secondary education and the final skills required at the end of secondary education.

In lower secondary education, a compulsory common curriculum for the first two years (observation cycle) is primarily intended to provide individual pupils with a broad basic education, enabling them to acquire all the skills they require at their own rhythm. This common curriculum includes the following subjects: religion or ethics, mother tongue, mathematics, history and geography, a foreign language, sciences, physical education, technology, artistic education.

In cycle 1 an additional year is organized for pupils who are seriously lagging behind. This additional year can not under any circumstances be regarded as the equivalent of repeating the previous year.

For pupils who have experienced difficulties in primary school, a first B year with a specially adapted curriculum is organized. This special year concerns around 7.5% of pupils in the first year of secondary education. The objective is to restore pupils' self-confidence and, if necessary, to enable them to come to terms with school and to consolidate their basic knowledge. After the first B year, pupils can either enter first A or second year of vocational education, enabling them to become acquainted with at least two vocational sectors.

After ten years of discussions, the Flemish government reached a political settlement about reforming the care system for pupils with a disability. The

new system, known as the learning disability framework, should ensure that every child in the Flemish education system gets tailor-made care. This includes both special needs and ordinary education. On the basis of in-depth discussions, including with the Flemish Educational Council, the plan has been expanded with extra guarantees for a successful outcome.

0403 - IVET AT UPPER SECONDARY EDUCATION (SCHOOL-BASED AND ALTERNANCE)

Pupils who leave full-time education at the age of 15/16 have to remain in block release training (based on sandwich course arrangements), or undergo apprenticeship or training until they reach the age of 18.

Pupils aged 16 (or those aged 15 who have completed two years of secondary school) may embark on technical education or block release training (sandwich courses), or training covered by the period of compulsory schooling. At this level, education is free (subject to the above-mentioned conditions relating to full-time education) and parents may choose the school or other institution their child attends.

The management of institutions involved in block release training are responsible for their curricula. Courses for pupils receiving this kind of provision combine general education with preparation for employment. Apprentices receive practical three or four times a week, and on other days attend practical or vocational theoretical classes.

Block release training is recognized and may result in the award of a certificate equivalent to the one obtained at the end of full-time schooling. Apprenticeship leads to a "vocational aptitude" certificate and/or a certificate of apprenticeship awarded on the basis of continuous assessment and a final examination. The teaching staff decides which students can receive these qualifications.

In cycle 2 of the transitional stream (general education), in addition to the core education, a certain number of compulsory options may be selected from the following: a second modern language, Latin, Greek, economics, social science, technical and technological education, physical education or art.

In cycle 3 of the transitional stream (general education), an education system incorporating integrated themes (sciences, modern languages, physical education, classics, economics, human sciences, art) or combining options was introduced at the start of the 1993/1994 school year.

In cycles 2 and 3 of the qualification stream (technical or vocational education), in addition to general education, groups of options representing 17 to 25 periods a week in cycle 2 and 23 to 25 periods a week in cycle 3 are organized.

The group options organized within the framework of technique de transition courses, technique de qualification courses and vocational courses cover

the following ten areas: agronomy, industry, construction, hotel and catering, clothing, applied arts, fine arts, economics, social services and applied sciences.

CERTIFICATION

The certificates are awarded by the individual schools.

Since the start of the 1997/1998 school year, a certificate of secondary education - cycle 2 - is awarded to pupils who have successfully completed cycles 1 and 2. In the technical and vocational categories of type I education, a certificate of qualification is awarded at the end of the sixth and seventh years (CQ6 or CQ7). A certificate of upper secondary education is awarded to all pupils who successfully complete the sixth year of secondary education in the general and technical categories. In the vocational category, pupils who opt for a seventh year (type B or C) may apply for a certificate of secondary education. The certificate of secondary education is ratified by the Homologation Committee, which ensures that schools respect the regulations on the organization of education.

These certificates are not obtained on the basis of examinations separate from the overall assessment procedures as defined within the education institution. They are awarded to pupils who have regularly attended and successfully completed the course they chose to follow.

If all forms of VET are considered together, approximately 56% of all young people in upper secondary education are in post-compulsory VET. There are regional differences between the Flemish Community (61%) and the French-speaking and German-speaking Community (50%).

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IN EDUCATION

Within the framework of the open method of coordination for 'Education and Training 2010', the Communities pursued their efforts to guarantee equal access to education and to upgrade technical and vocational education. The French Community worked on implementing its sizeable reform plan that runs until 2013 by bolstering the Community foundation in secondary education.

Flanders introduced a bonus system in order to put pressure on the cost of expensive courses of study.

0404 - APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING

PART-TIME EDUCATION

Under the Law of 29 June 1983 on compulsory education, part-time compulsory education was introduced in 1984 for young people who have

either reached the age of 15 and have already had two years of secondary education or who have already reached the age of 16. Pupils who no longer wish to follow full-time education can study on a part-time basis in a centre for part-time education. Part-time education is a form of lower- or upper-level vocational secondary education. It consists of both general education (including social and personal development) and preparation for employment. Part-time education leads to an attendance certificate, and may also lead to a qualification certificate equivalent to the certificate awarded for full-time study.

APPRENTICESHIP

Apprenticeship is a recognized form of part-time compulsory education. It is available to 15-year-olds who have successfully completed two years of general secondary education or vocational secondary education, or have passed an entrance examination, or to 16-year-olds. The institutions which are responsible for the organization of apprenticeship for the middle classes are: Syntra Vlaanderen in the Flemish Community, IFAPME in the French Community and IAWM in the German-speaking Community.

Apprenticeship lasts for one to three years. There are theoretical and vocational training courses. Apprenticeship contracts may be concluded for occupations related to commerce, trade, small industries, craftsmanship and non-manual occupations in the services sector. According to the apprenticeship contract, a monthly minimum salary is paid to the apprentice by the head of the firm on a progressive basis.

The latest project of SYNTRA FLANDERS / VLAANDEREN started in 2006 and is called: Making Young People More Entrepreneurial through Attractive Training Materials with SABIEN (Successful Apprenticeship Building on ICT and Entrepreneurial Needs).

Those working with young people (aged 15 – 19 years old), in particular young people who have experienced disadvantage and have had negative educational experiences, will be aware of the need to employ alternative approaches to the delivery of education and training. Furthermore, there is a need to recognise the strengths of young people and to build on such strengths.

The SABIEN Project 1 is a transnational partnership with representation from education and training organisations from seven European countries. SABIEN supports the development of new training modules that link social and life skills to personal and entrepreneurial competencies for young people in apprentice training, on alternative education programmes or on vocational training courses. In order to motivate young people and to develop their social and (soft) entrepreneurial skills (further), the focus of SABIEN has been to consider the quality and relevance of course materials and training methodologies for socially oriented educational courses.

INDUSTRIAL APPRENTICESHIP

Since 1983, apprenticeships in occupations exercised by salaried workers are recognized under the "industrial apprenticeship". This type of apprenticeship is intended for young people, aged between 16 and 21, with a poor school record, who have lost interest in attending school. Practical training may take place in several firms successively and theoretical training is provided in school. The apprentice receives an allowance, a percentage of the minimum wage in the chosen sector, from the head of the firm. The apprenticeship leads to a vocational aptitude certificate.

ADVANCED APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING

The '*leerlingwezen voor werknemersberoepen*' (advanced apprenticeship training) targets youngsters between 15/16 and 18 who are subjected to part-time compulsory education. On the one hand, students receive a practical study course in a company and on the other hand follow additional theoretical lessons in part-time education (in a '*Centrum voor Deeltijds Beroepssecundair Onderwijs*' (Centre for Part-time Secondary Vocational education) in the Flemish Community, in a "*Centre d'éducation et de formation en alternance*" in the French-speaking Community or in a "*Teilzeitunterrichtszenter*" in the German-speaking Community or in other types of training institutes (VDAB, FOREM or Bruxelles - Formation, continuing education, etc.). Consequently, students are able to learn a professional skill which - after passing a number of final tests – is certified. The number of current apprenticeship agreements is estimated at approximately 850. The Federal Ministry of Employment is responsible for the administration. Employers pay less employer's contributions (34% of the pay of an employee).

EMPLOYMENT-TRAINING AGREEMENT

Set up in 1986, apprenticeship training is available to all young people between the ages of 18 and 25 who are seeking employment, and do not already possess a diploma of long or short higher education or university education, or of technical upper secondary education. The agreement is signed by the young person and the employer and lasts for a minimum of one year or a maximum of three years. This agreement includes a contract for part-time work of indeterminate duration and training.

SOCIO-OCCUPATIONAL INTEGRATION AGREEMENT

Under this agreement there is alternance between training in enterprise and theoretical training given by a CEFA/CDO. It is targeted at students in part-time compulsory education and students regularly registered in a CEFA/CDO prior to 31 December of the year in which they reach the age of 18. The agreement lasts 12 months but may be renewed in order to enable students to complete their training cycle (2 or 3 years). Theoretical training

and practical training may not exceed 38 hours per week. Students receive pay from the enterprise equivalent to 40% of the guaranteed minimum wage in year 1, 50% in year 2 and 58% in year 3, unless the joint commission decides to align pay with the minimum wage in the industry.

EDUCATION FOR SOCIAL ADVANCEMENT

Students enrolled in Dual Vocational Education and Training Centres and apprenticeship contracts for Independent professions to fulfil their part-time scholastic obligation may also enrol in education for social advancement.

0405 - OTHER YOUTH PROGRAMMES AND ALTERNATIVE PATHWAYS

Successive governments have launched many measures to help low-skilled young people and the long-term unemployed. Many of these initiatives involve a training element.

PROGRAMMES AT FEDERAL LEVEL

At federal level, the first-job agreement ("Convention de Premier Emploi - CPE") took effect on 1st April 2000. The objective of this measure is to offer young people, at the earliest possible stage, a job and vocational training in conformity with European employment guidelines designed to prevent them from sinking into unemployment and to round off their educational training with vocational skills essential for their lasting integration in the labour market.

Characteristics: the employers targeted are public-sector employers (obliged to employ young people to comprise at least 1.5% of their workforce) and private-sector employers (obliged to employ enough young people to make up 3% of their workforce, in the case of businesses with at least 50 employees). The target groups are firstly, young people aged between 18 and 25 who ceased attending courses or participating in employment integration measures within the preceding six-month period; secondly, job-seekers younger than 25; thirdly, job-seekers younger than 30.

PROGRAMMES AT COMMUNITY LEVEL

In Flanders, several priorities of the competence agenda are aiming to recognize and deploy the capacities and competences of students, job-seekers and employees alike:

- Informed choice of studies and profession.
- Entrepreneurial education action plan.
- Youth unemployment action plan.

EUR 38 million is earmarked for these actions in the period 2007-2009.

In the Walloon Region, training courses organized by the IFAPME (Institute of Part-Time Training, the Self-Employed and Small and Medium-Sized-Enterprises) provide for the acquisition of the general and vocational knowledge required to practise a self-employed occupation.

PATHWAYS TO INTEGRATION

Pathways to integration are part of a scheme fulfilling an ESF requirement aimed at a global concept of the processes of hosting, guidance, advice, monitoring, training, job-seeking and employment. These pathways are arranged in stages, which are not necessarily successive, since some training strategies combine several approaches. These pathways comprise different components in Wallonia and Brussels. A number of actors are involved in creating and sustaining them. The aim of this approach is to offer support to all young people (< 25) within three months of their leaving school without upper secondary qualifications. They will also benefit from specific measures designed to improve their chances of labour market integration, particularly in the context of a first-job agreement. Specifically, young job-seekers in the target group are invited to visit the relevant regional employment service before the end of the third month of registration as a job-seeker. An integration agreement is concluded with the young persons concerned, taking account of what they specifically need in order to obtain a first-job agreement.

0406 - VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING AT POST-SECONDARY (NON TERTIARY) LEVEL

In the fourth stage of secondary education consisting mainly of nursing education, no core curriculum is imposed because of the specificity of the training.

For upper secondary school and college graduates there are a number of post-secondary, non-university education pathways in Belgium.

0407 - VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING AT TERTIARY LEVEL

GENERAL OBJECTIVES

Professional Bachelor's programmes are, in the first place, professionally oriented and their objective is a general and specific knowledge level for the student as well as Competencies which are necessary for the independent practice of a profession or group of professions. Being professionally oriented Bachelor's programme provides direct entrance onto the job market.

The main objective of **Academic Bachelor's programmes** is the transition to a master's programme. Their objective is a general knowledge level as

well as the acquisition of competencies for a specific scientific or artistic domain. For these programmes entrance onto the job market is a secondary objective.

Master's programmes aim for an advanced knowledge level as well as for Competencies specific to scientific or artistic functioning in general and Competencies for a specific scientific or artistic domain especially, which is a prerequisite for the autonomous practice of sciences or the arts or for the use of this scientific or artistic knowledge for the independent practice of a profession or group of professions.

Some Bachelor's programmes follow another (professionally oriented) bachelor's programme. This advanced programme aims at the deepening or specialization of the Competencies acquired during the initial Bachelor's programme.

Some Master's programmes follow another master's programme.

Bachelor's programmes link up with secondary education. As a rule, master's programmes link up with (academic) Bachelor's programmes. Master's programmes can also be accessible for professionally oriented bachelors after successful completion of a bridging programme.

A bridging programme is organized for graduates wishing to enrol in a master's programme on the basis of a Bachelor's degree issued through professional higher education.

In case a student does not hold a degree which allows for direct access to the programme he/she wishes to enrol, **a preparatory programme** can be imposed.

Short-type tertiary education provides technical training designed to acquire an occupational skill in a specific field. Short-type tertiary education courses (agriculture, economics, paramedical, and educational, social and technical sciences) are provided as part of education for social advancement.

Long-type tertiary education provides scientific and technological training geared more directly for practical applications e.g. in the field of industrial chemistry, electricity, electro-mechanics, electronics.

05 - CONTINUING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR ADULTS

0501 - BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON CONTINUING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The main differences between initial vocational education and training (IVET) and continuing vocational education and training (CVET) lie in the ages of the learners and their previous educational attainments.

CVET has a long history in Belgium, dating back to the 19th century.

In the past 50 years, the development of CVET has been characterised by the involvement of the national (and then later in the 1980ies) federal and regional governments as well as by employer and union associations. There are various types of CVET in Belgium, initiated by public authorities, enterprises, social partners or individuals.

CVET PROVIDERS

A training provider is any agency offering courses or work experience periods for an adult public. Associations take the form of a whole range of non-profit-making institutions, whose common feature is that they work in direct contact with an adult population with few qualifications who are experiencing problems, including their occupational integration. Continuing vocational training includes initiatives by: enterprise (employers' training see scheme), authorities (training for civil servants), social advancement education, individuals such as workers in employment, jobseekers or people on the minimum income (*Minimex*).

A) Social advancement education

With its more than 600 or so different training schemes, its flexible organisation and its moderate enrolment fees, social advancement education (*enseignement de promotion sociale - EPS / onderwijs voor sociale promotie - OSP*) is the largest operator: around 256.000 adults in the Flemish Community and around 150.000 adults in the French Community.

B) Public institutions

Training and employment services as VDAB - *Vlaamse Dienst voor Arbeidsbemiddeling en Beroepsopleiding* (Flemish Office for Placement and Vocational Training) in the Flemish Community and for Dutch-speakers in the Brussels Region and FOREM - *Office wallon de la formation professionnelle et de l'emploi* (Walloon office for vocational training and employment) in the Walloon Region and Bruxelles-Formation (Bxl-F) - (Brussels-Training) for French-speakers in the Brussels Region are responsible public institutions for training of employees and jobseekers. The *Arbeitsamt der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft* (Employment Office of the

German-speaking Community) has been responsible since January 2000 for placement in the German-speaking Community.

The middle classes institutions (IFAPME – Syntra Vlaandereren – IAWM) also organise two-year training schemes for people who want to set up their own businesses and become the head of an SME, as well as modular continuing and further training schemes for heads of enterprise.

These public institutions are managed on a joint basis by the social partners (employers' and trade union organisations) under the supervision of the Region concerned.

TRAINING SCHEMES

IBO-Interim

As from September 2006, with the introduction of the “*Meerbanenplan*” (job creation scheme), the VDAB and the temporary employment sector launched IBO-Interim. It makes provision for a period of temping with an employer immediately followed by individual vocational training within the same company.

The temp agency notifies the VDAB of the name of the job seeker and the company where individual training (IBO) will be provided, draws up a training plan together with the employer, and provides guidance. The scheme is very specifically targeted towards ensuring a higher level of employment of immigrants, disabled workers and people over the age of 50.

Training for newcomers

Training for newcomers is a relatively new scheme which is as yet little known among employers. However, it offers a number of significant additional opportunities. After completing at least 400 hours' training, the job seeker may further develop his or her skills within a company through this form of on-site learning. Early school leavers may also benefit under the scheme.

Joining the newcomer training scheme is quite simple. The training period under the scheme lasts two months, leading to a fixed job for the trainee. There are therefore a number of similarities with the IBO scheme but there are also some notable differences. For instance, there is no need for compiling a training plan and the financial advantage for the employer remains optimal during the newcomer training period. Once the conditions have been met, the job seeker receives a newcomer card specifying the period of validity. In 2006, 438 newcomer training periods were started up.

New cooperation between VDAB and higher education

The implementation of the Equal project United Colours of Nursing (UCN) started at the beginning of 2006. The project was developed in a Flemish partnership of 15 organisations including the Catholic colleges of higher education for nursing, the Leuven integration service, employers and the VDAB. This project offers skilled immigrant job seekers who hold a diploma in the care sector that is not recognised in Belgium the chance to do fast-track training and get a job as a Bachelor of Nursing. The VDAB provided candidates and organised prior Dutch language training which prepares students for their nursing course.

Skill-based vocational guidance

The skill-based vocational guidance scheme is used as an instrument to better guide job seekers towards a suitable occupation and then to a permanent job. The scheme first requires job seekers to indicate the schooling level for the job they would like to have. Subsequently they try to assess to what extent they master 73 key skills generated from CO.BR.A.

In the framework of the ESF project for e-job guidance, VDAB has developed an online tool for job seekers examining their occupational interests on the basis of the self-evaluation of the own competencies. With the help of this tool job seekers can determine the most eligible occupations for themselves. (<http://www.vdab.be/beroepsorientatie>)

Training and guidance on the shop floor (module 6)

As soon as job seekers have sufficient vocational knowledge, skills and attitudes, they can continue their training on the shop floor. Here they learn how to apply what they have learnt in practice and they can further hone their skills and attitudes. Job seekers may also acquire the necessary work experience and technical skills through training and guidance on the shop floor also without prior technical training at a centre. This module comprises various formulas such as alternating training periods, individual vocational training within the company, integration companies, sheltered workshops and training completion periods.

In-house individual vocational training (IBO)

Individual vocational training within companies is gradually becoming more popular than any other form of traineeship. The in-house individual vocational training scheme offers the employer and the job seeker a number of unique advantages in comparison with other forms of training. By training the trainee on the shop floor, the employer can teach him or her the competencies specific to its work and be sure that at the end of the period the trainee will have a full command of the occupation and can operate as a fully fledged employee within the company. This is because induction in the company will already have been completed through immersion in the company culture during the IBO traineeship. Not only is the job seeker given

an opportunity to learn a new occupation on the shop floor within a real environment, he or she is also assured of a fixed job at the end of training. In 2006, an IBO traineeship was started by 15 466 job seekers. This was a strong increase (11.89%) over 2005.

Other training schemes

Training schemes for disabled people: cooperation between VDAB and the Flemish Fund for Social Integration of disabled people.

Guidance for job seekers: Reception, Guidance and Socio-Occupational Integration Centres (*CA/COISP - Centres d'accueil, d'orientation et d'initiation socio-professionnelle*) for jobseekers are an integral part of FOREM and Bruxelles-Formation. Training schemes in agriculture: these schemes are available for a few hundred people.

Distance learning schemes: a supervised individual study scheme is also available (*Begeleid individueel studeren - BIS*). It supports individual learning of adults via distance learning. The specialty of the scheme is that the course comes to the course participant, hence timing and pace can be set by the individual.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Lifelong learning - Access to learning enhancing the dynamism of LLL

In this respect, the fundamental question is to figure out which instruments the government can implement to enhance the participation in LLL and raise the skills level of the population.

As this is a very complex issue, the following issues are tackled first. Studies are being carried out to analyse systemic characteristics of countries that perform well as to participation in LLL, including the participation of groups at risk of exclusion.

Equal opportunities in education

Within the framework of the open method of coordination for 'Education and Training 2010', the Communities pursued their efforts to guarantee equal access to education and to upgrade technical and vocational education. Flanders introduced a bonus system in order to put pressure on the cost of expensive courses of study. The French Community worked on implementing its sizeable reform plan that runs until 2013 by bolstering the Community foundation in secondary education.

Training and recognition of acquired skills

The use of training cheques is enjoying growing success in the three Regions. For instance, Brussels expanded the use of training cheques for job-seekers going back to work, from language training to other areas, such as ICT. Flanders is working on adjusting the system in various ways, including on the basis of the conclusion that certain less-favoured groups, such as unskilled individuals and people aged 50 and over, are significantly under-represented in the group of those people who make use of training cheques. In late 2005, Flanders decided to integrate various instruments in order to support businesses in various areas, including the co-financing of training costs. In doing so, support was more strongly geared to SMEs. Wallonia increased the options for using training cheques, both for companies and for workers; it boosted its offering by establishing a special 'language cheque' and by increasing the number of cheques that a business can order.

To increase the transparency of the training on offer for workers, the social partners agreed to use a new measuring tool starting in 2006. It was also agreed to produce clear, unambiguous reports on sectoral training. This will be analysed in the autumn.

For job-seekers, training combined with work experience leads more easily to a job, which is why Flanders and Wallonia increased the number of work experience places. Flanders is also running experiments in cooperating with private firms (via deployment measures) and temporary work agencies to increase the efficiency and target group reach of work experience programmes. Brussels simplified the associated administrative procedure.

Formal recognition of acquired skills must be the final component in a solid policy on lifelong learning. Once the jobs had been defined and the standards established, the first vocational skills certificates are issued. Here, the aim is to give more and more people access to the recognition procedure. Flanders started issuing certificates in 2007.

0502 - PUBLICLY PROMOTED CVET FOR ALL

The responsibilities for publicly promoted CVET are divided among the federal government, the communities and the regions.

Continuing vocational training includes initiatives by enterprise (employers' training schemes), authorities (training for civil servants), social advancement education, individuals [workers in employment, jobseekers or people on the minimum income (*Minimex*)]

SOCIAL ADVANCEMENT

The social advancement education (*onderwijs voor sociale promotie OSP - enseignement de promotion sociale - EPS*) - is the largest operator. Together with secondary and higher education, social advancement

education is the only agency able to award recognised qualifications. It is organised at the same levels as secondary and higher education and offered on a part-time basis. Social advancement education involves a whole range of partnerships with the public and private sectors.

Training and employment services (VDAB) - *Vlaamse Dienst voor Arbeidsbemiddeling en Beroepsopleiding* (Flemish Office for Placement and Vocational Training) in the Flemish Community and for Dutch-speakers in the Brussels Region.

FOREM - *Office wallon de la formation professionnelle et de l'emploi* (Walloon office for vocational training and employment) in the Walloon Region.

Bxl-F - *Bruxelles-Formation* (Brussels-Training) for French-speakers in the Brussels Region.

ADG - *Arbeitsamt der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft* (Employment Office of the German-speaking Community) has been responsible since January 2000 for placement in the German-speaking Community.

These public institutions are managed on a joint basis by the social partners (employer and trade union organisations) under the supervision of the Region concerned.

MIDDLE CLASSES (SYNTRA VLAANDEREN IFAPME – IAWM)

The Middle Classes also organise two-year training schemes for people who want to set up their own businesses and become the head of an SME, as well as modular continuing and further training schemes for heads of enterprise. Increasing numbers of people are attending these training schemes, especially in the Brussels Region.

SECTORAL INITIATIVES

At the outset, three sectors played a significant role: construction, Agoria (formerly Fabrimétal) and textiles. Growing numbers of initiatives have been launched in recent years in chemicals, printing industries, temporary work agencies, insurance, gas, electricity, wood industries and by the Commission paritaire nationale auxiliaire pour employés - CPNAE / Aanvullend Nationaal Paritair Comité voor Bedienden - ANPCB (Auxiliary national joint commission for white-collar workers). CPNAE/ANPCB's members include 5 000 enterprises in several areas of activity. Under sectoral agreements, it has launched the ambitious formula of a personal right to vocational training: two days per year, per employee, the content being decided by the employer. This has paved the way for training in very dynamic and booming small enterprises (52% of member enterprises).

As from June 2007 there is extensive cooperation between the sector and the educational market through educational agreements. The aim is to make

the educational and employment market better attuned to one another (education-sectors and VDAB are involved as cooperation partners).

THE COMPETENCE AGENDA

The competence agenda is a joint project of the Flemish government and the social partners for a comprehensive approach to the development of talent. It gives Flanders an extensive networking and the development of a Flemish training policy.

A great deal of talent is lost as young people fail unnecessarily, older people are excluded prematurely and immigrants have few opportunities on the labour market. Better integrating learning and working has become one of the key points of the competence agenda which should turn Flanders into “a learning society”. Agreement has been reached on that agenda with the social partners.

At the core is the agreement with the sectors of trade and industry that 75,000 traineeships will be made available to enable every pupil and teacher in technical and vocational education to do a period of practical training.

Large sums have been invested in equipment in technical and vocational education. Each year, an action plan for science information and innovation will be drawn up.

Investment in talent (over EUR 50 million) and the ESF appeal this time strongly focus on “the implementation of the competence agenda”.

The Flemish government and the European Social Fund (ESF) have earmarked EUR 50,344,847 for calls to start up actions under the competence agenda in 2007 and 2008. With these resources, applicant companies and sectors can organise training for their employees and develop a policy around their personnel’s knowledge and skills. Resources have also been made available again for further developing the grant of experience certificates and career guidance (two other spearheads of the competence agenda). The social partners are mobilising companies to move towards 30,000 traineeships per five-year period for teachers and 75,000 a year for pupils.

A new aspect is the extra attention given to people in employment, in the framework which more than EUR 38 million is set aside to mobilise literally everyone to discover, develop and use talents. 101 examples of broad-based competence management within companies should inspire Flanders. Together with a broader approach to tackle youth unemployment, these are some of the highlights from the competence agenda.

Six calls have already been issued to all employers in the profit and non-profit sectors, other sectors, career guidance centres, testing centres for the experience certificate.

0503 - TRAINING FOR UNEMPLOYED PEOPLE AND OTHERS VULNERABLE TO EXCLUSION IN THE LABOUR MARKET

The main actors involved in the training for unemployed people are training centres, i.e. VDAB in the Flemish Region, FOREM in the Walloon Region, and the "Bruxelles-Formation in the Brussels Capital Region.

COMMUNITY LEVEL: STEP-IN TRAINING FOR RAPID EMPLOYMENT AFTER TRAINING IN FLANDERS

The links between schools and the labour market

As of 1 September, 2005, job seekers and low skilled school leavers can go straight into a step-in training. They must have followed a training or have been in compulsory education in the previous four months. The Flemish Government decided this in accordance with the proposal made by the Minister of Employment and Education. Step-in trainings are attractive for the employer (the National Service for Work Provision (Rijksdienst voor Arbeidsvoorziening – RVA) pays most of the wages for the first two months) and for the job seeker (after the step-in training he or she must be given an employment contract).

Target groups

Step-in trainings are possible for:

- job seekers after having taken a professional training lasting a minimum of 400 hours (regardless of age);
- low skilled school leavers with a maximum diploma of first degree of in general secondary education (Algemeen secundair onderwijs – ASO); second degree in technical, professional or art secondary education, the training of the self-employed, part-time professional secondary education, alternating professional education or extraordinary secondary education, and for youths who have attained a diploma of technical or professional education.

The longer that job seekers and school leavers remain unemployed, the further away they get from what they have learned. Employers are therefore less interested in them, even for job vacancies with too few candidates. The Flemish government and the social partners want to approach this problem via step-in trainings. This was already agreed at the start 2005 in the Flemish Employment Opportunity agreement. This has been made possible via the Youth Unemployment plan (2004) set up by the federal Minister of Employment.

PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION OF LESS-FAVOURLED GROUPS IN FLANDERS

The Flanders region is striving for the proportional representation of less-favoured groups on the labour market and is taking steps to rectify the exclusion of these groups within the training provided by the employment service. In 2005, job-seekers who were migrants, work-disabled and unskilled were already positively represented in the courses provided for job-seekers, but the marked under-representation of people aged 50 and over increased.

In order to boost the low employment rate of people of foreign nationality or origin, action was taken through education and within the labour market. Flanders is paying extra attention to dealing with diversity within teacher training; also an action plan on truancy was developed. In 2006, French language education focused on bolstering lessons in French in the initial years of secondary education.

Diversity plans have an important place in labour market policy. In diversity plans, businesses draw up a personnel policy that does justice to the diversity within society. The Regions made arrangements on this with the various sectors, too. These plans are supported by the employment services, including through the provision of diversity consultants.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR LESS-FAVOURLED GROUPS IN THE REGIONS

Various groups are lagging way behind on the Belgian labour market. These include, in particular, the disabled, the unskilled, the long-term unemployed and migrants. In addition to guaranteeing equal access to all services, special actions were also undertaken by the employment services.

Flanders is striving for the proportional representation of less-favoured groups on the labour market and is taking steps to rectify the exclusion of these groups within the training provided by the employment service. In 2005, job-seekers who were migrants, work-disabled and unskilled were already positively represented in the courses provided for job-seekers, but the marked under-representation of people aged 50 and over increased. In Wallonia, these target groups have access to an integrated course and individual support for two years, which also continues after their integration into the labour market. In addition and more specifically, the fight against illiteracy was stepped up.

In Brussels, the employment service developed a partnership with various organisations in order to provide enhanced support for less-favoured groups. Accordingly, the unit that coordinates awareness-raising actions for businesses was bolstered.

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language education focused on bolstering lessons in French in the initial years of secondary education.

0504 - CVET AT THE INITIATIVE OF ENTERPRISES OR SOCIAL PARTNERS

FLEMISH COMMUNITY: SPECIFIC POLICY IN SUPPORT OF VOCATIONAL TRAINING

1. Exemption of training cost for some employees

To encourage companies to improve the qualifications of certain groups of employees, the VDAB sometimes pays the training of these employees. However, during the training period, the company may not dismiss the employee and must continue to pay him. This measure is aimed at employees belonging to risk groups as well as employees whose employment is directly threatened by an individual resignation, a collective dismissal or a company reorganisation.

2. Exemption of training cost in favour of small and medium-sized enterprises

For small and medium-sized enterprises, the VDAB applies a degressive exemption of the training cost in light of the number of employees. In some cases (companies with less than 10 employees) the training cost is paid in full by the VDAB.

3. Investment support: Training vouchers and the former Vlamivorm

Vlamivorm's goal was to encourage investments in vocational training and comprises a reduction of the advance levy on property for companies who are able to prove they have gone to great lengths to train their staff. The benefit needs to be used for vocational training programmes of employees (internal or external training). In 2000, more than 24,000 employees in Flanders came into consideration for the measure in the context of the vocational training programmes.

4. Training and advice vouchers incorporated into the Budget for Economic Advice (BEA)

As from 22 May 2006, in Flanders, advice and training vouchers have been incorporated into the Budget for Economic Advice (BEA) and two new subsidy options added, namely mentorship and knowledge acquisition in Flemish knowledge centres. Support of up to 5,000 euros per business can be applied for, for a period of three years. The business pays for 65% of the service itself and the Flemish government makes up the remaining 35%. In February 2006, Brussels launched a study to chart the support structures available for businesses.

FRENCH –SPEAKING COMMUNITY SPECIFIC POLICY IN SUPPORT OF VOCATIONAL TRAINING

Training-integration programme (PFI).

The PFI remains one of FOREM Conseil's most successful initiatives. The principle is simple : with this service, a company can provide an unemployed person with on-the-job training, and in exchange, take advantage of reduced labour costs for the duration of the training period. The implementation of the PFI is geared towards a practice that is really in tune with the needs of Le FOREM's clients, and is meant as a truly "tailor-made" service, conditioned by the specific relationship between a company, a job-seeker and Le FOREM.

Training Vouchers for small and medium-sized enterprises

Training vouchers should be viewed in a system of vocational training funding by the Region in favour of small and medium-sized enterprises with less than 50 employees. These vouchers can be used as an instrument of payment at the recognised training centres and are offered to the companies in question at a lower price than the nominal value of the voucher.

Encouraging the collective reduction of working hours in the company

For a number of companies, a reduction of working hours implies an in-depth reorganisation of the work which may warrant the use of vocational training programmes.

Regional level: Brussels, Occupational transition grant

This grant is given to small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) who hire long-term unemployed people with a contract for an indefinite period. At all times, an in-house vocational training needs to be provided which must be approved by the Brussels Regional Service for employment (ACTIRIS) and an in-house vocational training agreement needs to be reached (Royal Decree no. 495).

Guardianship support (*Voogdijsteun*)

This concerns a guardianship agreement between the company, the employee in training and the ACTIRIS. In pursuance of this agreement the guardian supervises the integration and training of the employee in the company.

Individual training in a company

This measure implies a training agreement between a company and the ACTIRIS regarding the training of a job-seeker for the specific needs of a

company provided that a shortage exists of qualified personnel for these jobs (offered by the company) and the ACTIRIS does not provide a suitable training. The agreement stipulates a certain training programme that is monitored by the ACTIRIS.

According to the third CVT Survey, around 63 % of all Belgian enterprises provided any type of continuing vocational training to their employees in 2005, which is 7 % less than the 1999 VET provision.

	SIZE CLASS (NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES)							
	TOTAL (%)		10 TO 49 (%)		50 TO 249 (%)		250 OR MORE (%)	
GEO	CVTS3	CVTS2	CVTS3	CVTS2	CVTS3	CVTS2	CVTS3	CVTS2
EU27	60	:	55	:	78	:	91	:
EU25	61	61	56	56	80	80	92	95
BE	63	70	58	66	86	93	99	100

Source: Eurostat; Continuing Vocational Training Survey (CVTS2, 1999 and CVTS3, 2005)

0505 - CVET AT THE INITIATIVE OF THE INDIVIDUAL

Individual adults have different motivations to engage in CVET activities. Both job-related and non-job-related motives are of relevance and often hard to distinguish.

According to the report "Lifelong learning, citizens'views in close-up" (CEDEFOP - 2005), motivations to take part in education and training tend to be of a mixed nature. The source of decision to participate in education and training is extrinsic for a majority of respondents. Personal benefits outweigh work-related benefits. Compared to initial motives, the benefits that people draw from their training are more likely to be personal.

06 - TRAINING VET TEACHERS AND TRAINERS

0601 - TYPES OF TEACHERS AND TRAINERS IN VET

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN TEACHERS AND TRAINERS

The main difference between Belgian VET teachers and VET trainers is their workplace. Generally spoken, teachers are employed in IVET and trainers are employed in CVET. This distinction is linked to the distinction regular versus non-regular education. In Belgium, most teachers are employed in regular education while trainers are employed in the non-regular system.

Differences between VET teachers and VET trainers in terms of entry requirements, professional experiences and background and qualifications can be reduced to the difference between regular and non-regular education. In regular education entry requirements and qualifications are defined by the Ministries of Education.

In non-regular education, entry requirements and qualifications are not defined by the Ministries of Education. Every type of education belonging to the non-regular education system has its own regulations. An overall discussion is not possible because of the lack of uniformity.

DEVELOPMENT OF POLICIES FOR VET TEACHERS, VET TRAINERS AND OTHER LEARNING FACILITATORS

Foundation of colleges of higher education

The pre-service training of secondary education teachers is provided at three types of institutions: colleges of higher education, centres for adult education (social advancement education) and universities. Scaling-up by mergers has been in recent years one of the main developments affecting institutions offering teacher education programmes, especially colleges of higher education. As a matter of fact a few years ago all formal higher teaching education institutions have been integrated in the newly formed colleges of higher education. Recently the debate on setting up a unified structure for teacher education provisions, integrating all types of teacher training was re-opened.

Re-structuring of apprenticeship and entrepreneurship training

Recently, both in Flanders and Wallonia, the organisation of the training provisions for apprenticeship and entrepreneurship has been restructured.

The two main tracks in non-regular education are the in-service training provisions offered in the para-regional bodies in the field of adult vocational

training and guidance (VDAB and LE FOREM) and the in-service training offered by regional or local training centres co-ordinated by the institutions (Syntra Vlaanderen and IFAPME) working in the field of apprenticeship and the training for independent entrepreneurs and for small & middle class enterprises. In Flanders the management of the provisions have been relocated at provincial level, where a Syntra-network organisation supervises and streamlines the provisions at local and regional level. In French speaking Belgium, the para-regional body IFAPME has recently been split up in a Walloon body and one for the Brussels region.

Innovations in curricula and learning

Modularisation is an important topic in current innovation debate in the non-regular education system. Besides, developing e-learning strategies is becoming a key issue for programme designers. E-learning is being implemented in many new programmes according to a blended learning format.

The role of teachers and trainers has changed and become more complex in many regards: professional skills and pedagogy, guidance of young people, cooperation with colleagues, cooperation with local industry, international cooperation, communication with parents and society as a whole.

Different roles apply according to the place of employment, in the regular or the non-regular education system.

In IVET (regular education), the role of teachers in the educational system is closely linked to the increasing autonomy of schools. In Flanders for example, the Ministry of Education only formulates 'developmental objectives and final goals (this means the core curricula for primary, secondary and adult education and for initial teacher training). Schools have a great autonomy in the organisation of their education, on the condition of reaching the developmental objectives and final goals, which is subject of evaluation by the Inspectorate. The curricula are mostly developed by the different umbrella organisations. Teachers are responsible for the chosen pedagogy and they draw up the examinations. Deliberation of the students is under the authority of the class council.

The role of trainers in the CVET system (non-regular education) is difficult to describe. Due to the lack of uniformity in CVET, every organisation has other roles for their trainers. The influence of trainers on curriculum, pedagogy and quality assessment varies from organisation to organisation. Nevertheless, there are some global tendencies in CVET, concerning the role of trainers. Firstly, every CVET-organisation emphasises the professional development of trainers. Secondly, every CVET-organisation promotes the participation of trainers in policy development (through representation in sectoral commissions). And finally, the different curricula and the examinations for the students are mostly developed in close co-operation with the relevant sectors.

0602 - TYPES OF TEACHERS AND TRAINERS IN IVET

In Belgium IVET is provided in various types of schools and training centres. Most of these schools and training centres belong to the educational provisions for children and young people in the age from 12 till 18 years. Only the "block release training for self-employed operators and small and medium-sized enterprises" and the "industrial apprenticeship" do not resort under the "regular" educational system.

In the table below a distinction is made between regular and non-regular education. The "industrial apprenticeship" however is not listed in this table because it is categorized as CVET under the stream "sectoral training initiatives".

The table below offers a general overview of the types of teachers and trainers in IVET according to the type and level of education, as well as their place of work.

TYPES OF TEACHERS AND TRAINERS IN IVET	TYPES AND LEVELS OF EDUCATION	WORKPLACE
REGULAR EDUCATION		
General subject teacher (FL: Leraar algemene vakken; W: Professeur de matières générales) Technical subject teacher (FL: Leraar technische vakken; W: Professeur de matières techniques) Practical teacher (FL: Praktijkleraar; W: Professeur de cours pratiques/ d'atelier)	lower sec. technical ed.	School for secondary education
	lower sec. vocational ed.	
	upper sec. technical ed.	
	upper sec. vocational ed.	
	complementary vocational ed.	
	special sec. education	School for special education
	part time education	Centre for part time education
Teacher (FL: lector; W: chargé de cours) Practical teacher (FL: praktijk-lector; W: maître de formation pratique)	one cycle higher education	College of higher education
NON-REGULAR EDUCATION		
Teacher (FL: lesgever; W: formateur)	block release education for apprenticeship and entrepreneurship	Training centre In-company
Entrepreneur-trainer (FL: ondernemer-opleider ; W: patron- formateur)		

PRE-SERVICE TRAINING FOR IVET TEACHERS

A distinction must be made between the training of teachers for the regular education system and for teachers in the other systems of vocational education.

In the non-regular educational systems, there is no particular structure for IVET teacher training; in the regular educational system, an elaborated structure for the training of teachers is in place. However, depending on the type of qualification pursued, one can follow different training formats in order to become a teacher within the regular educational system.

IN-SERVICE, CONTINUING TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT FOR IVET TEACHERS

Again one must distinguish provisions for teachers working in the regular education system from provisions in the non-regular educational system.

REGULAR EDUCATION SYSTEM

There are no particular regulations for in-service training of IVET teachers: the same regulations apply for the whole regular education system.

In Flanders in-service teacher training is ruled by the Decree on teacher education and continuing education (16-04-1996). The Decree states that the organising authority (network) of the school in which the teacher works, is also responsible for supporting all the teachers in their quest for further professionalism. It breaks with the traditional supply-driven in-service training.

The general principals are: increase responsibility of schools; decrease of centralised, supply-driven training; more demand driven; promoting active participation and reflective behaviour. Four categories of in-service training are identified: required by schools; on the initiative of the umbrella organisations from the education networks; commissioned by the Flemish government; free market.

Although in-service training can be considered as voluntary based, school principals can put some pressure on their teachers to attend in-service training programmes, but there is no legal obligation for teachers to participate. Attending in-service does not lead to any advantages with regard to salary, but may have some influence on appointment for some particular jobs within the school (special educational tasks; special educational tasks, e.g. remedial teaching, mentorship, counselling and drug prevention). The contents of in-service training can be anything in the domain of a specific subject knowledge, educational theory, classroom management, school management and administration.

Recently, new ideas have been developed with regard to subjects, based on the teacher's needs of professional development. Schools today have local

autonomy in choosing in-service training. Each school gets a budget allocated for in-service training and need to identify its own needs. They can deal directly with all in-service training providers including the network specific in-service training centres.

As for the in-service training commissioned by the Flemish government, this enables the authorities to promote and straighten their policy making with regard to some educational innovations. Each year a tender with some particular in-service training subjects is launched to all institutions willing to provide in-service training financed by the government.

After a selection procedure a number of in-service training programmes are made available to the target groups free of charge. Last years the Flemish government promoted subjects in the field of caring for well being at school.

Also the network specific in-service training centres are providing courses.

Subjects tackled can be anything in the domain of a specific subject knowledge, educational theory, classroom management, school management and administration. However, recent new subjects include competency based learning, new assessment methods and use of portfolio.

Special attention should be paid to the Certificate of teaching qualification at higher education level. It is provided at universities (for the candidates holding a university degree), colleges of higher education offering 2 cycle economy degrees (for candidates graduated in this type of college) and institutes offering social advancement education at higher education level (for all other types of candidates).

NON-REGULAR EDUCATION SYSTEM

FLANDERS

In the regional or local training centres providing block release education, periodic continuing training courses are organised for teachers, according to the following: Teachers with an annual teaching load of at least 480 hours are required to undergo at least 24 hours of continuing training every three years. Teachers with an annual teaching load of at least 240 hours are required to undergo at least 12 hours of continuing training every three years. Other teachers can undergo this continuing training on a voluntary basis, provided that their numerical presence does not necessitate additional training courses. The training is organised by Syntra Vlaanderen and IFAPME in co-operation with one or more training centres and is delivered in three hours modules. Its coverage is integrated, extending to both pedagogic and subject-specific matters. The training staff members are required to have the necessary educational or professional qualifications.

Participants are awarded a certificate of attendance at the end of the course.

In addition to this, entrepreneur-trainers are also urged to participate in training sessions organised by the respective responsible vocational committee of Syntra Vlaanderen and IFAPME in order to update their vocational knowledge and technical background.

WALLONIA

Teachers are obliged by law to attend the meetings for teachers, as well as courses organised in order to update their pedagogical skills necessary for the educational practice. These meetings and educational and vocational skills update programmes are organised on a regular basis. However the number and the duration of these update programmes are variable. Teachers and trainers also are obliged to update themselves on the techniques and the vocational knowledge necessary to get access to the vocation. The same requirements also hold when teachers or trainers want to maintain their teacher's or trainer's job

0603 - TYPES OF TEACHERS AND TRAINERS IN CVET

There is no general framework in Belgium for continuing vocational training. To make clear how CVET has been structured, one needs to make a distinction between different types of education and training schemes:

- 1) Social advancement education (FL: Onderwijs voor sociale promotie; W: Enseignement de promotion sociale);
- 2) Adult vocational training and guidance (FL: Bedrijfsopleidingen voor volwassenen, VDAB; W: Formation professionnelle pour adultes, LE FOREM);
- 3) Training for independent entrepreneurs and for small & middleclass enterprises (FL: Middenstandsopleidingen; W: Formation Permanente pour les classes moyennes et les petites et moyennes entreprises);
- 4) Training in agriculture (FL: Permanente vorming in de landbouwsector; W: Formation professionnelle en agriculture et secteur connexe);
- 5) Sectoral initiatives (FL: Sectorale initiatieven; W: Initiatives de formation sectorielles);
- 6) Training in the profit and non-profit sector;
- 7) Training for disabled people (FL: Training ter bevordering van de sociale integratie van personen met een handicap; W: Formation à l'avancement de l' integration des personnes handicapées) and
- 8) Distance education (FL: Afstandsonderwijs; W: Enseignement à distance, EAD).

THE MAIN TYPES OF CVET IN BELGIUM

1. SOCIAL ADVANCEMENT EDUCATION

Social advancement education (FL: *Onderwijs voor sociale promotie*; W: *Enseignement de promotion sociale*) employs general subject teachers, technical subject teachers as well as practical teacher. They work at Centres for adult education (in Flanders 124 such centres are operating, in Wallonia 165).

2. ADULT VOCATIONAL TRAINING AND GUIDANCE

In Belgium there are two main institutions (two para-regional bodies) providing adult vocational training and guidance: the '*Vlaamse Dienst voor Arbeidsbemiddeling*' (VDAB) in Flanders and the '*Office Wallon de formation professionnelle et de l'emploi*' (LE FOREM) in Wallonia (2). Trainers employed by these institutions are practical subject trainers, technical subject trainers or workplace trainers. They are all called instructor (VL: *instructeur*; W: *instructeur*). They are active in the regional training centres (14 centres in Flanders and 10 centres in Walloon). The activities of VDAB and LE FOREM are regulated by decree and management agreements with the government. VDAB-instructors are recruited through a 'comparative recruitment examination'. This examination includes assessment of the theoretical and general knowledge; test lesson (optional) and psychological test. A selection commission is appointed to conduct these examinations. Experts from the concerned field are invited as commission members.

3. TRAINING FOR INDEPENDENT ENTREPRENEURS AND FOR SMALL & MIDDLE-SIZED ENTERPRISES

The training for independent entrepreneurs and for entrepreneurs of small & middle-sized enterprises takes place in regional or local training centres, called "*Syntra*" in Flanders and "*Centre de Formation PME*" in Wallonia. All together there are 22 *Syntra* and 14 *Centres de Formation PME*.

The global outlining of all vocational training packages and the quality control of the services offered at the regional or local centres belongs to the duties of two para-regional bodies, namely: *Syntra Vlaanderen* /VLAO in Flanders and IFAPME -in the Walloon region. The training for independent entrepreneurs and for entrepreneurs of small & middleclass enterprises can be divided into two separate streams: The education and training to become an independent entrepreneur (usually 2 years). With respect to content this educational and training provision runs parallel with the "block release education for apprenticeship" also organised by these centres. Minimum age required for involvement into this programme is 18 year. Short in-service training modules for independent entrepreneurs and their collaborates.

In the first stream, the regional or local centres employ teachers for the coaching in general education and technical knowledge courses (organised in the centres) as well as workplace trainers who work on an in-company training basis (workplace practice). In the second stream the coaching mainly is in hands of independent entrepreneurs working in the vocational field, or - when it is necessary to outline innovative aspects of a vocation - the best known

experts in the sector are hired to introduce the innovation to the independent entrepreneurs in the sector.

4. TRAINING IN AGRICULTURE

In Flanders, the training for people working in agriculture is co-ordinated by the Flemish Agricultural Centre (FL: VAC - *Vlaams Agrarisch Centrum*). This centre organises courses within the Flemish area in order to reach as many persons as possible working as independent farmer. All the training programmes organised by the centre are approved by the Ministry of Flanders - section: Administration Agriculture and Horticulture (FL: *Ministerie van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap - Administratie Land- en Tuinbouw - ALT*).

In Wallonia, the situation differs from Flanders. Because of the lack of a co-ordinating centre in the field of agriculture, trainers and/or training centres must candidate for approval from the Walloon Ministry for Employment (F: *Ministère de l'Emploi de la Région Wallonne*) in order to get financial support for organising the training in agriculture (5).

The table below offers a general overview of the types of teachers (regular education) and trainers (non-regular education) in CVET according to the type and level of education, as well as their place of work.

Table 1: Overview of the types of teachers and trainers in CVET		
TYPES OF TEACHERS AND TRAINERS IN CVET	TYPES AND LEVELS OF EDUCATION	WORKPLACE
TEACHERS (REGULAR EDUCATION)		
- General subject teacher - Technical subject teacher - Practical teacher	1. social advancement ed. (upper sec.)	Center for adult education
- Practical subject teacher - General subject teacher	3. training for independent entrepreneurs and for small & middleclass enterprises	Training center
TRAINERS (NON-REGULAR EDUCATION)		
- Instructor	2. adult vocational training and guidance	Training center
- Workplace trainer	3. training for independent entrepreneurs and for small & middleclass enterprises	In-company
- Trainer	4. training in agriculture	Jointly managed training center
- Trainer - Training staff	5. sectoral initiatives	Jointly managed training center
- Trainer or instructor - Training staff	6. training in the profit and non-profit sector	Profit organization Non-profit organization
- Trainer or instructor	7. training for disabled people	Center for vocational training

PRE-SERVICE TRAINING FOR CVET TEACHERS

Contrary to what applies for teachers in social advancement education, there is no particular educational structure for training CVET teachers or entrepreneur-trainers employed in block release education. This is one of the reasons why teachers working in social advancement education are not listed as a type of CVET teacher.

New basic competencies and professional profiles for teachers in the Flemish Community

In April 2007, based on the decision of the Minister of Education, Frank Vandembroucke, the basic competencies and professional profiles has been defined.

Basic competencies describe which skills and attitudes a new teacher is expected to have. Professional profiles do the same for teachers who have already worked in education for some time. The four earlier professional profiles have been replaced by one single common professional teacher profile. The basic competencies and the professional profile are more closely aligned with the policy of objectives and the needs of the Community. The focal point is language skills, including that all teachers should be able to speak Dutch correctly. Furthermore, they should be able to deal with diversity in the classroom and have adequate computer skills.

Teacher training should therefore lay sufficient emphasis on the policy objectives, including equal opportunities and language. At the same time, the decision provides more clarity through one single common professional profile for all levels of education (from kindergarden to higher secondary education). This reform introduces one single professional title: no distinction is made between teachers who have studied at a college of higher professional education, a university or in adult education courses. A common set of basic competencies for teachers in secondary education has now also been developed. The distinction between an SO1 teacher (formerly teachers with a diploma of secondary teacher training, lower level) and SO2 (formerly teachers qualified for higher secondary education) no longer exists.

Another major focal point is the fact that teachers have to be thoroughly prepared for challenges typical of large conurbations, e.g. dealing with diversity.

IN-SERVICE, CONTINUING TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT FOR CVET TRAINERS AND LEARNING FACILITATORS

Many bodies in Flanders offer education and training for adults. As well as in educational institutions, adults are also taught by the VDAB, Syntra Flanders, on an inter-sectoral level, in the social sector, in driving schools, etc. In total, it amounts to many thousands of trainers.

Teachers in Centres for Adult Education must have a certificate of pedagogical competence (bewijs van pedagogische bekwaamheid – BPB). The training leading up to this certificate is being integrated in the updated specific teacher training due to start at the beginning of the next school year. This remodelling will make the training considerably more extensive, with plenty of emphasis on practical experience. The workload in the updated training amounts to 60 study points, 30 of which are for practical training.

The Flemish Employment and Vocational Training Service - VDAB

The training for new VDAB instructors is organised in a modular approach including 6 training modules (2 intro modules and 4 specific modules). The two intro modules are compulsory; the 4 specific modules are optional for experienced instructors but compulsory for beginning instructors. However, a beginning instructor with a pedagogical certificate and/or pedagogical experience can be exempt from the specific modules. The technical in-service training courses are organised in close collaboration with the different labour sectors.

The Walloon vocational training and employment office - LE FOREM

LE FOREM's trainer training unit, 'Formation des formateurs' provides continuing vocational training for beginning and experienced instructors, at both the didactical and technical level.

The continuing vocational training for LE FOREM instructors includes five parts:

1. Pedagogical in-service training for new instructors (for practical subject trainers as well as for workplace trainers);
2. Technical in-service training for instructors;
3. Pedagogical in-service training for instructors ('la gestion-évaluation');
4. Training concerning administrative and computer skills
5. In-service training for the executive staff

This training programme is compulsory for every new FOREM instructor. Objectives of the programme are twofold:

1. To inform the instructor about his/her new working environment; and
2. To train the instructor with regard to the basis of the pedagogy of adults.

Objectives are translated into an modular based in-service training course including:

1. Working environment and the mission of FOREM FORMATION;
2. Adult education;
3. Human resources.

In-service training for experienced FOREM instructors (technical and pedagogical)

FOREM-instructors have 15 credit days per year to be used as educational leave. Yearly, every trainer has the opportunity to participate 15 days in continuing (technical, pedagogical or didactical) training courses. This measure is in line with the lifelong learning policy of the organisation. Instructors have to fill in a special application form for this kind of training where they motivate why to take a training course. After a favourable decision of FOREM FORMATION instructors can take the training at the expenses of LE FOREM. A recent study (1) points out that on the average instructors only take up 5 of the 15 credit days (2043 days in 2002 and 5505 days in 2003).

Exchange programmes and quality assurance

There is no exchange programme (multinational) for FOREM instructors. Nevertheless every year a small number of instructors (10 to 15) can participate in study-visits organised by CEDEFOP.

LE FOREM is also partner in a lot of international projects (such as SOCRATES, Leonardo da Vinci and ESF). LE FOREM handles in accordance with the quality assurance system of ISO. At the first of March 2004, FOREM FORMATION received the ISO 9001 certificate (version 2000). Next to this external quality assurance system, LE FOREM has also its own quality manual.

07 - SKILLS AND COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT AND INNOVATIVE PEDAGOGY

0701 - MECHANISMS FOR THE ANTICIPATION OF SKILL NEEDS

In Belgium, the anticipation of skill needs is a responsibility of employers, public employment services, education, research and training institutions.

As far as anticipation is concerned, the approach developed by Belgium is based on a contractual policy with the social partners, giving preference to an inter-sectoral and regional approach. Anticipation is given high priority. Actions include forecasting studies of the employment market, of qualifications and of needs with regard to vocational training. These studies are repeated on a regular basis to monitor any change or evolution. Support is also provided to the functioning of anticipatory structures. The results of the studies will help define the content of training measures aimed at the adaptation of workers. Training measures have to be accompanied by prospective and strategic thinking, in terms of development of skills and qualifications. In the same way, measures relating to the development of training systems have to demonstrate how they meet the anticipated needs.

At the Federal level, accreditation of individuals is overseen by Belcert17, the body responsible for accrediting organisations that certify products, quality systems and individuals. Belcert uses ISO/IEC 17024 (former EN 45013) on certifying individuals as a reference and certification organisations have been accredited in a number of sectors, including construction and catering.

ACTIONS TAKEN AT SECTORAL LEVEL TO IDENTIFY AND ANTICIPATE COMPETENCE AND QUALIFICATION NEEDS

Some sectors develop initiatives directly geared towards identification and anticipation of competence and qualification needs: In 2003, Cefora (training centre of the national auxiliary bilateral committee for employees) examined the structure of professions in the wholesale sector. For companies, this is a practical instrument for describing vacancies in more specific terms and for refining their internal training policy. It should also be recalled that the social partners are associated with the skills centres which can direct jobseekers towards the skills in demand in the sectors.

MECHANISMS FOR THE ANTICIPATION OF SKILL NEEDS IN THE FLEMISH COMMUNITY

In the Flemish Community there are several cooperation platforms that are useful to identify skill needs of the labour market:

- at 'national' level: the Flemish Social Economic Council (SERV), which among other things is responsible for designing professional profiles;

- the expertise network 'Steunpunt WSE' that is responsible for qualitative and quantitative monitoring of the labour market;
- the yearly report of VDAB on labour market developments and mismatches between vacancies and available skills/certificates;
- at regional level: the ERSVs (Recognised Regional Collaboration Associations) and RESOCs (Regional Social Economic Consultation Committees) that collect and study the socio-economic data of regions

RECENT REFORMS AND CURRENT POLICIES

Flemish Community

NEW QUALIFICATION STRUCTURE

The Flemish minister for work and education launched a Decree regarding a new qualification structure in the Flemish Community. In July 2008 this Decree has been approved by the Flemish government. It is now linking both training and professions with qualification levels. The aim is to have a common language which brings together all stakeholders regarding education and work. It would facilitate the cooperation between schools, employers, students, parents and other stakeholders.

HIGHER PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

A new decree concerning higher professional education has also been approved by the Flemish government (see <http://www.vandenbroucke.com>). For educational policy in Flanders it will be an important bridge between secondary and the higher education. In first place it focuses on students who want to acquire a professional qualification after secondary education. This short training includes existing training which is now clearly aimed at the labour market: training of the higher education for social promotion (HOSP), the seventh year of Technical Secondary Education and the fourth degree of vocational secondary education (until now very unclear in the educational landscape). This new Decree was necessary to enhance and to facilitate a better cooperation between all the concerned stakeholders of (initial and continuing) education.

RECOGNITION OF SKILLS

The Flemish Community encourages the inclusion of "core skills" in educational curricula at all levels, the development of differentiated and flexible learning pathways, the division into modules, the skills recognition, the development of basic, social and civic skills, through study of multidisciplinary topics, the spread of new ICTs in schools (new basic competencies), the development of flexibility and distance education through new skills.

The Flemish government is also awarding 'Experience Certificates' to people who have professional experience, but do not have a diploma. "Via the Experience Certificate, people can literally cash in on their competencies, no matter where they gained them. For the employer who is looking to recruit someone, the Experience Certificate provides the same guarantees as a diploma," states the Flemish Minister of Education. Many people have learned a trade 'on the job' and so have clear professional competence. But they cannot prove that in black and white because they have never had the chance to get a diploma. That is why the Flemish government had launched the Experience Diploma. In the Flemish Community employees or job-seekers can acquire an 'experience diploma' if they demonstrate that they have acquired certain skills needed to exercise an occupation (Decree of the Flemish Government on experience diplomas - April, 2004).

COMPETENCE AGENDA

The "Competence agenda" gives Flanders an extensive networking and the development of a Flemish training policy. The competence agenda is a joint project of the Flemish government and the social partners for a comprehensive approach to the development of talent. A great deal of talent is lost as young people fail unnecessarily, older people are excluded prematurely and immigrants have few opportunities on the labour market.

Better integrating learning and working has become one of the key points of the competence agenda which should turn Flanders into "a learning society". Agreement has been reached on that agenda with the social partners.

At the core is the agreement with the sectors of trade and industry that 75 000 traineeships will be made available to enable every pupil and teacher in technical and vocational education to do a period of practical training. Large sums have been invested in equipment in technical and vocational education. Each year, an action plan for science information and innovation will be drawn up. To provide support for success in studies and research, a new funding system has been set up for higher education which encourages institutions to pass more youngsters. Another key point of the policy is to encourage diversity in studies and work.

Investment in talent (over €50 million) and the ESF appeal this time strongly focus on "the implementation of the competence agenda".

The Flemish government and the European Social Fund (ESF) have earmarked €50 344 847 for calls to start up actions under the competence agenda in 2007 and 2008. With these resources, applicant companies and sectors can organise training for their employees and develop a policy around their personnel's knowledge and skills. Resources have also been made available again for further developing the grant of experience certificates and career guidance (two other spearheads of the competence agenda). The social partners are mobilising companies to move towards 30 000 traineeships per five-year period for teachers and 75 000 a year for

pupils. A new aspect is the extra attention given to people in employment. Over €38 million is set aside for the actions.

French Community

A) Public sector initiatives:

In French-speaking Belgium, debate about the validation of non-formal and informal learning has centred on the concept *validation des compétences*, within the framework of a *bilan de compétences* or individual record of achievement. A law on the *bilan de compétences* was passed in December 2001 and, following the approval of implementation legislation, officially entered into force in September 2002. This legislation grants every worker a right to a *bilan de compétences* and to be assessed to identify and validate skills gained outside the formal education system.

Since this time, the policy has been developed by a “consortium” of the four most important public sector training providers in French-speaking Belgium:

- *Enseignement de Promotion Sociale* (Adult Education Provider in the ‘communauté française’ – i.e. Wallonia and Brussels-Capital Regions);
- The *Institut de Formation des Petites et Moyennes Entreprises* (Training Agency for the Self Employed and SMEs in the Communauté Française);
- *FOREM* (the Walloon Employment and Professional Training Service, equivalent to the Flemish VDAB) and;
- *Bruxelles Formation* (Public sector training agency in the Brussels-Capital region).

This consortium is responsible for the definition of common standards (*référentiels*) for use in the French-speaking part of the country and the establishment a network of validation centres that will carry out certification by provided *titres de compétences*. These certificates will not, on their own, be equivalent to standard diplomas, but are designed to facilitate access to further training courses and can be accumulated to obtain a qualification, if the sum of the individual titres satisfies appropriate criteria. The validation centres will be established training providers run by the consortium partners.

Policy developments on the validation of skills follow on from earlier restructuring in the adult education sector. Since the adoption of new legal framework, adult or continuing education (*enseignement de promotion sociale*) in the French Community has been progressively restructured to create a more coherent, modular structure with transferable credit units and more flexible timetables. For each module or “training unit/ *unité de formation*”, teaching and learning outcomes have been established, together with prerequisite levels of knowledge or experience for individuals wishing to undertake the course in question.

OBJECTIVES OF *VALIDATION DES COMPETENCES*

The Consortium in charge of implementing the validation of skills policy has defined competency in terms of the set of measurable skills necessary to undertake certain tasks in a workplace situation. In other words, the system envisaged will be geared towards measuring skills of direct relevance to specific job profiles. The system will make use job profiles developed by the French ROME system and by the Commission *Communautaire des Professions et des Qualifications* (CCPQ)

CURRENT SITUATION

Although the law on the *bilan des compétences* was due to enter into force towards the end of 2002, the need to develop appropriate validation and assessment structures meant that the system was not operationalised until the beginning of 2004. Even now, the websites of the main players (such as the Consortium partners) make little explicit reference to the validation of skills and it is not always clear to potential users whether the system is up and running.

B) Private Sector initiatives

PROFESSIONAL PROFILES

A number of initiatives in the field of professional skill profiling and accreditation have been undertaken in Belgium. Although these initiatives have been led by public sector organisations, they have involved close co-operation with representatives of the private sector and social partners.

In French-speaking Belgium, the Commission *Communautaire des Professions et des Qualifications* (CCPQ) has developed a set of qualification and training profiles (see: http://www.enseignement.be/prof/info/documentation/profils_menu6.asp), in close consultation with sector representatives and the unions. These profiles specify the competencies required for each professional profile, together with associated indicators. These profiles, together with the French system ROME, are being used also in Flanders as a basis for validation standards (*référentiels*) in the development of the new validation system.

ACTIVITIES

The role of skills or competencies in Human Resources Management has become a significant issue in many private sector organisations in Belgium. Research has shown that many companies have undertaken analysis of the activities, roles and job and person specifications within their businesses, leading to the establishment of standards or *référentiels* related to specific jobs. These developments are generally used within businesses to feed into remuneration decisions (linking pay to skills), mobility within the firm and recruitment policies and requirements.

The importance of recognizing skills gained through non-formal and informal learning is very well established in Belgium and formal legal frameworks have been put in place in both the French and Dutch speaking parts of the country. The concept of validation adopted in both communities relates mainly to vocational skills (gained through informal learning) although it does allow for the recognition of skills gained outside work in, for example, voluntary activities. The scope of validation and recognition of non-formal and informal skills is not currently as broad as that set in place by the most recent French legislation on the *Validation des Acquis de l'Expérience*, in so far as it will not cover such a wide range of qualifications or form the basis for the award of full diplomas of qualifications.

As noted, the systems in both the French and Flemish Community are still being developed and implemented. As such, it will be important to monitor progress.

0702 - BRIDGING PATHWAYS AND NEW EDUCATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

REINFORCING LINKS BETWEEN VET AND LABOUR MARKET

Flemish Community

In the Flemish Community we have several **cooperation platforms** that are useful to identify skill needs of the labour market:

- at 'national' level: the Flemish Social Economic Council (SERV), which among other things is responsible for designing professional profiles; the expertise network 'Steunpunt WAV' that is responsible for qualitative and quantitative monitoring of the labour market; the yearly report of VDAB on labour market developments and mismatches between vacancies and available skills/certificates;
- at regional level: the ERSVs (Recognised Regional Collaboration Associations) and RESOCs (Regional Social Economic Consultation Committees) that collect and study the socio-economic data of regions

TRANSITION FROM SCHOOL TO WORK

In Flanders, sandwich courses were bolstered by increasing the number of places available for work experience; this was done in consultation with the sectors and within the government itself. In addition, the 'full-time commitment' was introduced: pupils in part-time education must be able to gain work experience. For those pupils for whom no job can be found, a special course will be set up with additional training, support in applying for jobs and so forth. This commitment must be achieved in the short term for three quarters of these pupils.

The French Community and the Walloon Region have set themselves the goal of increasing the number of young people in part-time education by

improving support and by expanding the system to include the government sector and large companies, thereby simplifying the coordination mechanism. A service has been set up that makes it possible to work with the same vocational standards for 1) the various training systems and 2) the system of recognising acquired skills. This service will also make it possible to strengthen links with the labour market. This will further enhance the readability and consistency of the training pathways. Sandwich courses have also been bolstered in Brussels, with the French Community and the French Community Commission working on reinforcing connections with education and adult education.

The German-speaking Community, where sandwich courses are firmly rooted, has made plans to introduce an extra year of basic training before pupils can start alternating training

The three Communities are also working on a fully fledged diploma for 23 sandwich courses, which will finally be encouraged - starting with the 2006-2007 school year - by a federal bonus for both employers and pupils.

In the light of the European Youth Pact, the Belgian authorities have implemented measures to promote the integration of young people into the labour market. Initially, the aim was to upgrade technical and vocational education. Heavy investments were made in equipping the schools in question, and via specialised centres, which were set up by the employment services with various partners, high-tech equipment will be made available for education, both for pupils and for teacher training.

French Community

Increasing the number of young people in part-time education

The French Community and the Walloon Region have set themselves the goal of increasing the number of young people in part-time education by improving support and by expanding the system to include the government sector and large companies, thereby simplifying the coordination mechanism. A service has been set up that makes it possible to work with the same vocational standards for 1) the various training systems and 2) the system of recognising acquired skills.

This service will also make it possible to strengthen links with the labour market. This will further enhance the readability and consistency of the training pathways. Sandwich courses have also been bolstered in Brussels, with the French Community and the French Community Commission working on reinforcing connections with education and adult education. The German-speaking Community, where sandwich courses are firmly rooted, has made plans to introduce an extra year of basic training before pupils can start alternating training. The three Communities are also working on a fully fledged diploma for sandwich courses, which will finally be encouraged - starting with the 2006-2007 school year - by a federal bonus for both employers and pupils.

In order to promote the acquisition of work experience in addition to sandwich courses, the options for student work were expanded in 2006 and a website was set up for Flanders and Wallonia where potential interns and companies offering internships can find each other. Both websites will come on line in the autumn of 2006. A similar initiative will also be launched in Brussels and the French Community Commissions will fund internships for job-seekers linked to a training initiative or to studies in technical or vocational education.

The development of a national qualification framework is also a priority.

0703 - RENEWAL OF CURRICULA

In Belgium, educational and public authorities as well as researchers, teachers, trainers, social partners are very widely involved in profiling occupations and drawing up the qualification profiles on which training profiles are based. It is relevant to underline the role of the advisory and supervisory bodies. For instance, the Education and Training Council (*Conseil de l'Education et de la Formation*) includes representatives from education and training. Its main task is to promote the training and education organized or subsidized by the Community. It gives opinions on various issues. Another major task of this Council is to issue opinions on the relations between education, training and employment and on the theme of training for employment. Another example is the role of the Community Commission for Occupations and Qualifications. The main task of this body is to draw up education profiles, i.e. the set of competencies to be acquired for the award of the qualification certificate at the end of secondary education. The aim was to correct the evident mismatch between the level of training given in technical and vocational education and employers' increasingly demanding requirements. This Commission comprises various partners (education, enterprise, trade union organizations sitting on the National Labour Council and professional bodies) and may call upon experts.

It set up 9 advisory committees chaired by representatives from the world of enterprise. Each committee corresponds to one of the nine current sectors of secondary qualification education. The task of each advisory committee is to draw up profiles for the jobs in its sector.

In order to work more efficiently, the advisory committees have set up working parties whose role is to draw up and propose particular profiles. The working parties draw up qualification profiles describing completely as possible the tasks of and skills mobilized by workers in enterprises. Interviews with representatives from enterprises are very important. The working parties draw up education profiles describing the set of competencies to be acquired for the award of the qualification certificate in technical and vocational education (training providers and practitioners play an equal role in exchanging proposals) and structures and reference frameworks for training describing the ways in which the various training objectives are linked, formulating training contents and learning strategies

and specifying the organization of certification and the competence credits that higher education or other training providers can use (training providers play a very important role during this stage).

As regards the curricula development, it is interesting to describe initiatives, programmes or projects developed in the three Communities of Belgium.

FLEMISH COMMUNITY

The Flemish Community strengthens the ability to learn to learn from primary education onwards. It plans to encourage the inclusion of "core skills" in education curricula at all levels. They include attitudinal, cognitive and psychomotor skills which, besides being relevant to following an occupation at a later stage, also contribute to the general personal development of pupils or students and, in some cases, may be facilitate progress towards a succession of different kinds of occupational activity. The new policies to be implemented will encourage the development of differentiated and flexible learning pathways adapted to the different starting points and rates of learning of schoolchildren and students. The learning pathways for vocational secondary education, special education and education for social advancement are gradually becoming distinct from each other as a result of the project for modularized courses.

Modularization is an important tool in reducing the number of people leaving compulsory education with no qualifications. When learners obtain certificates, even if partial, they gain recognition of their knowledge that increases their chances of finding a job or attending further training. Modularization is therefore intended to provide a bridge between initial education and continuing training in order to encourage lifelong education. A further aim of these experiments is to adapt training to the qualifications being demanded in the labour market with a view to improved transparency. Modules are designed on the basis of the occupational profiles drawn up by the social partners under the coordination of the Economic and Social Council of Flanders (*Sociaal-Economische Raad van Vlaanderen*). In order to optimize the training opportunities provided by this system, bridges have been created between study areas and the various training schemes offered, for instance, by VLAO /SYNTRA and VDAB. It will not be possible to measure the impact and efficiency of modularization until 2007, when the trial period will have been long enough for two age cohorts to have completed full cycles in normal full-time secondary education and for students to have completed at least a full cycle in the other training schemes. Modularization is part and parcel of new approaches to education, which include integrated work, differentiated work and team teaching.

As from September 1st 2007 a new Decree of April 2007 on centrally agreed modularisation applies within the Flemish Adult Education and Training. The Flemish Adult Education and Training organisation henceforth geared to the wishes of the occupational sectors

Seventy-four training courses from the adult education and training programme are geared to the occupational profiles of the sectors concerned. The "modular system" that ensures this alignment was approved by the Government of Flanders on 31 May 2006. The training courses fall under six fields of study, including construction, mechanics/electricity and the care of persons. Thanks to this alignment, employers can rest assured that a graduate will have learnt precisely what they want. Flemish Minister for Education Frank Vandenbroucke assumes that this will motivate more people to attend training refresher courses.

All the training courses offered by the Adult Education and Training Centres are now organised within a centrally agreed modular system. Each such course will as a result be subdivided into smaller units that will have the same content in each school. Those who have successfully completed a module will be issued a sub-certificate, and those who have successfully completed all the modules of a training course will receive a certificate.

Centrally agreed modularisation has a number of advantages: students can attend a course to measure, the contents of each module are clear for everyone, those who drop out before the entire course is completed can still get a certificate for the modules that they completed successfully.

The Flemish Minister for Education cites modularisation for a precise alignment of training courses to occupational profiles. With these profiles, the social partners of a sector spell out the knowledge and skills needed to be able to carry out a certain job. Those taken on after a training course geared to the occupational profile can in theory get down to work immediately.

The decree approved provides for the modularisation of such fields of study as bookbinding, construction, graphic techniques, trade, cooling and heating, electrical engineering, care of persons, Dutch as a second language, languages, and textiles. The offer therefore includes fields of study that are not geared specifically to certain occupations. All centres have applied the new curricula by 1 September 2007.

The Flemish Community has also drawn up aims for teaching and development of basic, social and civic skills through study of multidisciplinary topics.

On the other hand, from the standpoint of lifelong learning, educational authorities also offer grant support to innovation projects in high education via the STIHO (Programme for the Encouragement of Innovation in Higher Education). These projects provide for cooperation agreements between two or several universities, two or several higher schools, or between at least one university and one higher school for the following activities: creation and development of efficient flexible quality learning environments, creation and development of new teaching methods and techniques, etc.

GERMAN-SPEAKING COMMUNITY

In the German-speaking Community, the aim of continuing education and training is to develop vocational, social and socio-cultural integration, and in particular : the development or acquisition of basic knowledge, ranging from acquisition of the language to courses in computer sciences, the preparation of students for second chance education examinations, the acquisition of knowledge and skills, which have been somewhat overlooked (up to the "university for senior citizens' stage), the updating of knowledge and acquisition of further qualifications with a view to full personal development, or to take advantage of greater equality of opportunity on the job market, diversifying the provision of education and training and adapting it to demand, the cooperation with FOREM as regards measures for the unemployed. As far as the pilot projects, these are based on core skills (learn to learn), new information and communication technology (teacher training, school equipment and materials and future projects), new methods of organization and learning in full-time compulsory education.

FRENCH COMMUNITY

In the French Community, an interesting action programme is the development of Technological Innovation Centres (*Pôles d'innovation technologique – PITech*). They are special centres for training, information and documentation for pupils, students and teachers. Their purpose is to intensify cooperation between the different levels of education (as regards the education and training of students and teachers, but also the use of highly effective teaching tools and equipment), to strengthen the various stages of partnership between the worlds of education and business, and to adapt educational provision to the course of economic development. There are also skill centres (cf. supra). Following an original teaching approach, focused on the constant inter-activity of each participant, the skills centres offer a wide choice of courses adapted to the job market

08 - ACCUMULATING, TRANSFERRING AND VALIDATING LEARNING

0801 - ACCUMULATING, ACCREDITING AND VALIDATING FORMAL LEARNING

In a context of a flexible labour market as well as technological, industrial, cultural and social changes, the capacity of the citizen to integrate into working life depends on other factors than the only possession of a certificate.

Therefore, all the competencies of the citizen must be recognized and enhanced. A cooperation agreement between the French-speaking entities aims at creating a consortium charged to work out a system of validation of competencies, which certifies the competencies resulting from the work experience, vocational training and life and which validates competencies whatever the place or the circumstances in which they were acquired.

This legal system, in addition to the school system of certification delivers "Titles of competencies" giving access to the school certificate of the French Community by an effect of capitalization of competencies acquired and corresponding to the requirements of the school certificate for occupations or training courses. This system makes it possible for workers to give concrete expression to their right to the assessment of competencies. The validation of competencies acquired apart from the school system plays a major role in professional and geographical mobility.

In the Flemish Community, a technical group composed of representatives of education, enterprise and social partners, has determined a political framework project. This project has determined a minimal framework of work related to the validation of experiences gained out of initial education. In 2002, on the basis of this frameworks, concrete projects will be implemented. On the basis of their results, a legal framework will be proposed and developed by the Government. In 2002, Flanders has developed a reference system of key competencies.

Finally, it is worth noting that the social partners (Flanders and Wallonia) are involved with the public actors in the definition of systems of references within the framework of the validation of competencies.

SOME EXAMPLES FOR INSTRUMENTS FACILITATING THE RECOGNITION OF QUALIFICATIONS:

In Belgium, the creation of professional centres of references is a significant tool of development and recognition of competencies of the workers. Such centres must become places of reference as regards testing and validation of competencies acquired through training modules or professional experiences.

NARIC: The NARIC is a network of National Centres created in 1984 to help in regulating title recognition and facilitating the integration of national educational systems. Three main levels of recognition can be considered,

as well as the instruments attached to them: recognition of qualifications, including prior learning and professional experience, allowing entry or re-entry into higher education; recognition of short study periods in relation with student mobility. The instrument attached to it is ECTS (transferable credits); recognition of full degrees. The instrument attached to it is the Diploma Supplement. In Belgium : NARIC Flanders, NARIC Centre of the French Community.

0802 - ACCUMULATING, ACCREDITING AND VALIDATING NON-FORMAL/INFORMAL LEARNING

While existing institutions and laws in Belgium acknowledge, to a certain degree, the importance of non-formal learning in the overall educational setting, the emphasis on and interest in questions related to assessment and recognition of non-formal learning has been relatively weak. In comparison with other European countries, the Belgian vocational education and training system is weakly linked to the workplace as exemplified by the small proportion of young people receiving vocational training through apprenticeships. The predominantly school-oriented approach to training may have led to a somewhat weaker focus on the issues of recognising non-formal learning than in comparable countries. However, this seems to be changing and in both the Flemish and French Communities, there is a growing interest in the topic followed by new initiatives.

'EXPERIENCE DIPLOMA'

The Flemish Government recognizes non-formal and informal learning via the Decree on experience diplomas of 30-04-2004. Employees or job-seekers can acquire an 'experience diploma' if they demonstrate that they have learned or acquired certain skills needed to exercise an occupation.

PROFESSIONAL TITLE

In 2005 the Flemish Government finished the union-making process on the acquisition of a professional title. With this aim, in 2006, a user-friendly service was set up. As this is an enormous challenge it will be established in stages, one for a group of professions every year. The Social-Economic Council of Flanders (SERV) - in close cooperation with the sectoral social partners - advises on this list of professions every year and frames the uniform "standards" that outline the competences, derived from the occupational profiles.

In September 2006, a number of assessment bodies began to recognise and assess the competences linked to 6 different professional titles. At the end of the process, the assessment body provides a recommendation to the Flemish Government, which in his turn awards the professional titles to the people who have successfully passed the assessment procedure.

MODULARISATION

Within the reform of the vocational training system Flemish authorities have worked on the implementation of a modularised, output-based training model. In this context, the issue of assessment and recognition of non-formal learning has been raised. This reform is an effort to link the different providers of vocational training in Flanders (Department of Education and Training, Department of Labour and Department of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises). The modularisation project aims at establishing such a link through the development of a common set of competence standards. The social partners are heavily involved in this work. Modularisation is an important tool in reducing the number of people leaving compulsory education with no qualifications. When learners obtain certificates, even if partial, they gain a recognition of their knowledge that increases their chances of finding a job or attending further training.

Modularisation is therefore intended to provide a bridge between initial education and continuing training in order to encourage lifelong education. A further aim of the modularisation is to adapt training to the qualification being demanded in the labour market with a view to improved transparency. Modules are designed on the basis of the occupational profiles drawn up by the social partners under the co-ordination of the Economic and Social Council of Flanders.

In order to optimise the training opportunities provided by this system, bridges have been created between study areas and the various training schemes offered, for instance by VLAO/SYNTRA and VDAB. The Flemish work has leaned strongly towards the experiences gained in the Netherlands. Both the Dutch system of qualification standards and the APL methodologies developed over recent years are important points of reference. Agreements between the Ministry of Education in the Netherlands and the Flemish Department of Education gives priority to the exchange of information on the issue of identification, assessment and recognition of non-formal learning. The aim is that steps should be taken towards co-operation, co-ordination and learning from each other.

STREAMLINED TRAINING

Efforts are also being made to streamline the training on offer. To this end, Brussels enhanced the synergies between the employment service and the organisations that offer training, especially those concentrating on specialist centres and based on a modular approach.

In 2006, the first additional centre was started up in the ICT sector. In Wallonia, a few new centres were opened and the surrounding network was strengthened. Now, the introduction of a variety of measures to identify, assess and recognise non-formal learning poses a challenge to the role and status of traditional certificates and diplomas. While a lot of experience has been gained over the past 10 to 15 years (France and Belgium), non-formal learning pathways do not represent any serious alternative to the formal

education and training system. The role of the "bilan de compétence" is strictly formative; an offer of guidance and feedback rather than an official recognition of competencies. The Belgian initiatives may lead to an approach developed independently from formal education and training but more on the basis of the needs and practices of working life.

TRAINING AND RECOGNITION OF ACQUIRED SKILLS

For job-seekers, training combined with work experience leads more easily to a job, which is why Flanders and Wallonia increased the number of work experience places. Flanders is also running experiments in cooperating with private firms (via deployment measures) and temporary work agencies to increase the efficiency and target group reach of work experience programmes. Brussels simplified the associated administrative procedure. Formal recognition of acquired skills must be the final component in a solid policy on lifelong learning. Once the jobs had been defined and the standards had been established, the first vocational skills certificates were issued in the French Community.

ALTERNATIVE EXAMINATIONS

Individuals having acquired competencies at work or elsewhere, may get exemption from at least parts of formal education and training. The system of boards of examiners of the French Community (Jury de la Communauté française) operated by the Ministry of the French Community, provides alternative examinations for those who have followed other "learning routes" than formal schooling. These examinations are intended for "autodidacts" or for "those having given up study" (Eurydice 1998). To prepare for these examinations, candidates have access to necessary facilities in public or private schools and through arrangements for distance learning. Executive orders (arrêtés de l'Exécutif) determine the rules and regulations governing the organization and functioning of the assessment boards. These boards are responsible for organizing examinations. In secondary education, a number of qualifications may be obtained through this route:

- 4th year of secondary education certificate (Certificat d'enseignement secondaire du deuxième degré) in general, technical, artistic or vocational forms of secondary education;
- upper secondary education certificate (Certificat d'enseignement secondaire supérieur) in either general, technical, artistic or vocational forms of secondary education;
- DAES (Diplôme d'aptitude à accéder à l'enseignement supérieur) for students having completed the 7th year of vocational training, and foreign students having obtained official recognition of their national diploma equivalent to the upper secondary education certificate, which only grants access to short-term tertiary education;
- diploma for admission to the examination in civil engineering.

Moreover, it is still possible, in accordance with the provisions of former regulations, to sit preparatory examinations leading to admission to training as a hospital care assistant (vocational supplementary education). Particularly relevant are the procedures organised by the acknowledgement committee (Commission d'homologation) responsible for examining certificates gained through partial studies or qualifications acquired in secondary schools abroad. Before taking any decision, the committee is supplied with all students' documents on the basis of which they can verify whether the curricula followed are set and approved by the minister or equivalent standards; the standard level of instruction was provided; the student meets the legal requirements relating to the duration of studies and admission.

The upper secondary education certificates (CESS) form the basis upon which decisions are taken. The committee includes members from public schools and private (grant aided) schools in equal numbers. In the Flemish Community, a certain degree of flexibility has been built into the system. By taking special examinations, adults can – on the basis of individual learning at work or elsewhere – obtain the same qualification as those having followed traditional pathways. This applies to primary education, lower and upper secondary school and higher education. Another option for adults is to follow the continuing education schemes set up by the Flemish Department of Education and Training. These schemes give adults the possibility to follow courses in the evenings and weekends leading to the same qualifications as upper secondary schools (and parts of higher education).

0803 - IMPACT OF EU POLICY COOPERATION

Validating and identifying non-formal and informal learning has been at the heart of many EU initiatives and are included both in the Maastricht Communiqué and in the Helsinki Communiqué on the Future Priorities of Enhanced European Cooperation in VET. The common European principles of validation and mechanisms such as Europass have been established to meet these priorities and work continues on establishing a European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and a European Credit system for VET (ECVET). If a foreign qualification is recognised on the basis of a Flemish decree, a Belgian law, a European directive or an international convention, the holder will have direct access to Bachelor programmes. Admission may also be granted to foreign students, after individual assessment of their secondary education diploma, if it gives access to higher education in the student's country of origin. The higher education institution boards are also allowed to admit people who do not meet the general admission requirement.

A new kind of educational pathway, the so-called "higher professional education" (to be compared with the so-called "short degrees") has also been introduced. It offers short professional programmes to achieve a relevant labour market qualification at EQF-level five. This new educational pathway will enable early school leavers to obtain an official diploma of secondary education.

0804 - FACILITATING EU MOBILITY

A non governmental association has been created by the 3 public employment services, *Synerjob* to develop common referential system for future databank to increase mobility between the different Regions.

The Belgium's five public employment and training bodies from all three regions - VDAB, FOREM, ACTIRIS, Bruxelles-Formation and ADG - concluded a cooperation agreement in 2007 aimed at developing greater mobility on the Belgian employment market, to the benefit of both job-seekers and companies. Several common measures were adopted: the organisation of language modules; language exchanges for trainees; trans-regional training courses; and cooperation on ad hoc events such as job fairs and recruitment following collective redundancies. Initiatives of this kind will be stepped up in future between regional public services in Flanders, Wallonia and Brussels.

The future relation of the Flemish Qualifications Structure to the EQF will facilitate transnational mobility. The biggest challenge at this moment is to realise a Flemish ("national") Qualification Structure including a comprehensive Flemish ("national") Qualification Framework so that Flemish ("national") qualification levels can be linked to EQF.

Afterwards, concentration will be needed with the awarding bodies to implement the second objective: to introduce a reference to EQF levels on each certificate and diploma, promoting the comparability of qualifications between different national, regional or sectoral contexts and ensuring their future compatibility with EQF. By linking general education qualifications, higher education qualifications and professional qualifications to one comprehensive Flemish Qualification Framework, the permeability between the qualification systems in general education, VET and higher education should improve. The procedures for description and levelling of qualifications will be prescribed by a Flemish Decree. It concerns both general education qualifications and professional qualifications

The professional qualifications are defined by the social partners of the professional sectors. These qualifications will be the standards for the professional education and training systems. The future relation of the Flemish Qualifications Structure 2009 to the EQF will facilitate transnational mobility.

0901 - STRATEGY AND PROVISION

Until recently, guidance policies and systems focused separately on target groups like pupils, unemployed people or employed people. With the elaboration of the Skills Agenda, study and career guidance initiatives will be better co-ordinated and aligned strategically toward a lifelong guidance approach. For example: pupils, teachers and parents must be better informed about the world of work and its opportunities; a portfolio, useful for all policy domains and for the whole lifecycle, will be developed. The employment services in the three regions (VDAB, FOREM, ACTIRIS and Bruxelles-Formation) also offer opportunities for information, guidance and skill reviews for young people and adults.

In Belgium mainly the two eldest employment services VDAB and FOREM provide a platform for job-seekers and employers. To perform this important social task as well as possible, the VDAB and FOREM provide a relatively accessible, high quality and free service to all job-seekers and employers. VDAB's and FOREM's mission is to exercise an impact on the labour market in keeping with the economic situation and society.

VDAB and FOREM need to find a way to reconcile economic and social goals. Economically, job vacancies need to be filled quickly and correctly. Socially, VDAB and FOREM want to guarantee a smooth integration of job-seekers in the labour market and help anyone who has difficulties finding a job. In this way, for the Flemish Community VDAB plays a part in boosting the Flemish employment level to 65% in 2004 and to 70% in 2010, increasing the participation of under-represented sections of the population in the labour market and aspiring to more individual and social development for everyone. To achieve these goals, the VDAB and FOREM contribute to improving the balance between demand and offer on the labour market; pay attention to the proportional participation of all sections of the population; take the necessary measures to counteract every form of direct or indirect discrimination on the labour market; encourage and stimulate life-long learning for job-seekers and employees and makes its range of tools more transparent, efficient and effective. In November 2002, a specific Task Force on information and guidance, in which the social partners were represented, delivered an advice to the Flemish government for the implementation of a right to career counselling. Through co-financing from the European Social Fund (and some sectors) a network of centres for career counselling of workers will be developed. Some of these centres are being developed by trade unions for their members and by VDAB, the Flemish public employment service.

On 22 January 2003, the Flemish social partners agreed that in Flanders the system of training vouchers should be developed for adult workers, in order to raise the participation of adults to lifelong learning. With these vouchers, the worker can buy training or career guidance (including recognition of prior

learning), with some restrictions: only training or career guidance in institutions recognised by the Flemish government or the sectoral social partners; only general training; out of working time or during education leave; only for the payment of direct costs (not child care or transport). Furthermore non-profit-making associations offer information on trades, education and young people's rights: the information service on education and occupations (*Service d'information sur les études et les professions – SIEP*) and Infor-Jeunes (*Info Jeugd in the Flemish Community*). Belgium is also a member of the network of national vocational guidance resource centres (Euroguidance) of the Leonardo da Vinci programme.

0902 - TARGET GROUPS AND MODES OF DELIVERY

FLEMISH COMMUNITY

There is more emphasis put on entrepreneurship training. Interested job seekers can be screened electronically on their entrepreneurial competencies at the VDAB. Those who pass will be given the opportunity to follow a free business management training course with Syntra. The Union of independent entrepreneurs in Flanders (*Unie voor zelfstandige Ondernemingen – Unizo*), Syntra Flanders, cities, and VDAB work together to address more immigrants. Bottleneck professions are also addressed among entrepreneurs.

Job-seekers who require more intensive and personal assistance are referred to the pathway-to-work principle. In this route job-seekers receive tailor-made guidance taking into account the person's opportunities and requirements.

The so called opportunity groups (job seekers, immigrants) are targeted via several, specific projects and actions (Table 1).

Table 1: Overview of projects for opportunity groups for 2007 - 2008

TARGET GROUP	EXPECTED STUDENT POTENTIAL
<p style="text-align: center;">Job seekers</p> <p>Expansion of business management paths, preliminary paths and guidance, in permanent cooperation with VDAB, for both higher-educated and lesser-educated people. For the lesser-educated, an additional preliminary path will be developed and tested.</p>	<p>Objective: 400 new business management students via this path work. A preliminary path and extra guidance are provided for 25% of the students.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Immigrants</p> <p>Further expansion of transition courses on the one hand and courses with interpreters on the other hand, to meet the demand. The initiatives already developed will be continued and evaluated. New projects will be developed as required. These projects run in collaboration with UNIZO and in close consultation with the cities involved and the organisations on the spot.</p>	<p>Objective: reach 250 students (immigrants) who are currently not being reached.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Disadvantaged groups</p> <p>Job seekers and immigrants will certainly be represented in this target group, but so will other groups (benefit claimants, lesser-educated people). Additional paths will also be provided for these groups, lowering the threshold and raising the chances of successfully completing the business management course and starting a business.</p>	<p>Objective: Reach 150 students via specific preliminary paths and guidance.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Caravan residents Business management</p>	<p>Objective: 15 students</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Non demanded professions</p> <p>In cooperation with (among others) sectors, customised paths will be provided to help professions that currently attract few people to attract more. In line with this, a network management initiative has already been started with SYNTRA, in which day training courses are provided for unemployed people. Initiatives have been provided for a minimum of 3 sectors in 2006.</p>	<p>Objective: at least 100 students in Flanders to follow training courses for bottleneck professions. The students will subsequently be monitored to measure effectiveness.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">With regard to new market segments, in line with entrepreneurship Cultural sector – artists Employment agency sector Non-profit Social Economics</p>	<p>Objective: 100 students, primarily experimental projects in line with a strategic approach.</p>

FRENCH – SPEAKING COMMUNITY

Youth unemployment remains a major concern in the Walloon region. To break the vicious spiral of hopelessness, Le Forem has adjusted the programme of support for young people aged under twenty-five. Job Tonic is now arranging for every young person under twenty-five to be supported from the moment they register as a job-seeker.

Between March 2006 and March 2007, the number of young people in a waiting position went up by 6.2 % and in March 2007 the under twenty-five group represented 22.7% of unemployed job-seekers. Fifty per cent of this number did not hold their certificate of upper secondary education. These young people are then trapped in a vicious circle – no qualifications, so no job experience, and that means joining the long-term unemployed. 24.3% of unskilled people aged under 25 have been jobless for over two years.

Three priority areas

Job Tonic has three priority areas: more frequent follow-up, instant action, and speedy contact with the job market in its widest sense. In real terms this means that during the first week in which the young people register, they will be invited to Le Forem for a personal interview/assessment and will be given a description of the services offered by Le Forem and its partners. There will be a specialist youth counsellor also allocated. This professional will be the young person's contact during the entirety of the process. In week two the young people will be invited to take part in a group module where they will be coached in writing a CV and an introductory letter, initiated into the techniques of job-finding and if they need it, in how to present themselves to an employer. Following this they will take their place in a jobs panel on a fortnightly basis to receive job offers, fine-tune their search procedure, and draw up and polish an action plan

Tackling work in a practical way

Too many young people approach job-seeking negatively without having an idea about their real abilities. Le Forem is encouraging job applicants to face the reality, take courses and take on temporary jobs. In other words, applicants are encouraged to dive into the work pool as fast as possible.

All the young people will be issued with a “unique integrated passport”, showing all the support they or an employer can get. If it turns out that the jobseeker has serious problems (such as drug addiction) their counsellor will draw up, with their help, an appropriate action programme along the lines of a Social/Occupational Inclusion Programme (DIISP): the aim of this is to re-motivate the individual, point them in the right direction and where appropriate offer them pre-qualification and qualification options.

Young people with qualifications

The Job Tonic plan aims to include 33,000 newly registered job-seekers, and priority goes to the 8,300 who never made it to the secondary school leaving certificate. But young persons with qualifications (school examination certificates or some further education qualification) will be offered their own personal balance sheet, plus information about the state of the job market and will be directed towards the tools freely available to all. If they wish, they, too, will be slotted into the support system offered to those with no qualifications. Young people who remain jobless after three months will be invited to come to the office and offered the chance of taking part in a personalised remedial programme.

Partnership pilot projects are to be launched in some of the larger centres and areas seen as suffering most in the employment field, with the aim of developing special approaches targeting the young people (job coaching, frequent backup contacts) through the structures where they are to be found most often.

0903 - GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING PERSONNEL

FLEMISH COMMUNITY

Personnel in the pedagogical counselling services

The personnel in the pedagogical counselling services consist of (promotion) offices of pedagogical advisors and pedagogical advisor-coordinators. The latter leads the Pedagogical Counselling Service. Both offices of pedagogical advisor and advisor-coordinator can be full-time or part-time positions.

As regards the admission requirements for an office within the Pedagogical Counselling Service, small differences can be detected between the departments for guidance in subsidized education and those in Community education. Generally the candidate needs to have at least 10 years of seniority to be eligible for a temporary or permanent appointment. The Flemish government may always define additional diploma requirements (Decree of 17 July 1991).

A counselling function can also be appointed to educational staff by means of special duty leave.

Personnel of the pupil guidance centres

The personnel of the pupil guidance centres (CLB) consists of a number of permanent offices, from governor (promotion office), over physician, consultant, psycho-pedagogical consultant, social worker, administrative employee, paramedical worker, psycho-pedagogical worker, to collaborator.

Since 1 September 2000 each new governor of a CLB – except for the permanent support group (*permanente ondersteuningscel*) – is appointed with a mandate (Heyvaert and Janssens). The administrative employees and the collaborators form the administrative staff of a CLB whereas the remaining offices form the technical staff of a CLB.

Learning path counsellor

The learning path counsellor arranges the learning path guidance for the apprentice. This is a new job. Unlike apprenticeship officers (who currently work independently), learning path counsellors will be in the employment of the Flemish Institute for Independent Entrepreneurship (Syntra Vlaanderen). The aim is to strengthen their independent position.

Career guidance

Examples of jobs directly involving career guidance include: VDAB consultant, process counsellor, learning path counsellor, job shop consultant and Eures consultant (internationally oriented).

FRENCH-SPEAKING COMMUNITY

PMS Centres

In the PMS Centres, the categories of staff are laid down by law: they are psychologists (educational psychologists), social workers and doctors or nurses. The technical staff shall consist at the minimum of: a director, an educational psychology counsellor, a social worker and a paramedical worker.

FOREM

The people working in the vocational guidance counselling units in Conseil are vocational guidance counsellors.

Public vocational training service

In the public vocational training service in the Brussels Region the staff consists of training counsellors, skills audit counsellors and trainers in a vocational guidance and initiation centre.

NGOs

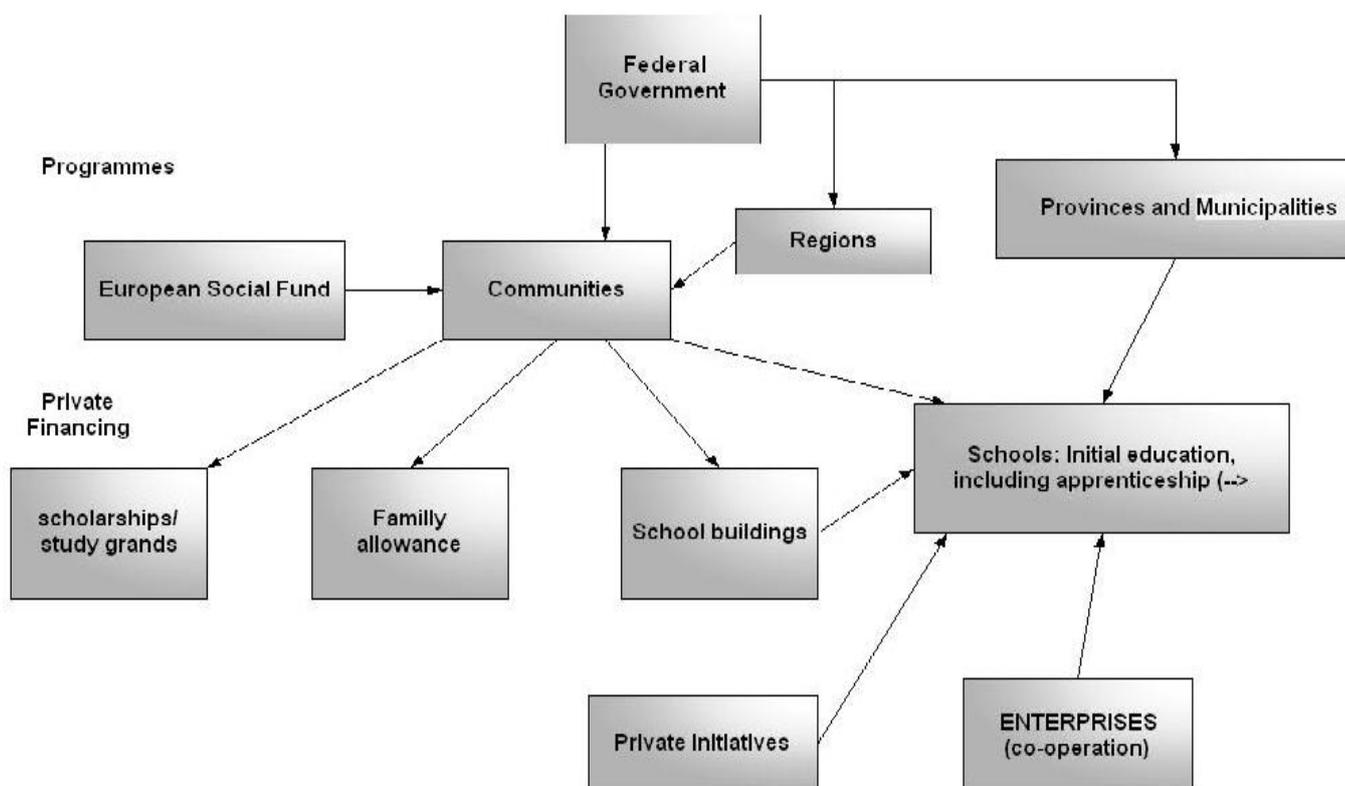
In the non-profit-making associations the designations "*agent de guidance et d'orientation*", "*intervenant social*" and "*agent de guidance et d'intégration*" are used.

10 - FINANCING - INVESTMENT IN HUMAN RESOURCES

1001 - BACKGROUND INFORMATION CONCERNING FINANCING ARRANGEMENTS FOR TRAINING

DIAGRAM 1: FLOW OF FUNDING OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN BELGIUM

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The federal government has its financial income from the social security resources. This financial income of the federal government is transferred to the other governing levels being the Regions, the Communities, the Provinces and Municipalities and it (this financial income) represents the public expenditure for education by student in Belgium. The public expenditure for education by student refers to an educational principle stipulated in the Belgian Constitution.

The Belgian constitution stipulates that access to education is free until the end of the compulsory education age (Initial Education and Training). This means that primary and secondary schools that are funded or subsidised by the Community government (organizing of education became a community

matter with the revision of the Belgian Constitution Law of 1980) are not allowed to charge any registration fees.

The federal government also concludes educational agreements with the communities and the regions concerning the transition from school to work (Continuing Education and Training).

For these educational agreements there is a flow of funding from the federal government to the other governing levels. It concerns all the policy makers of all the governing levels. Examples of this are:

- the learning agreement with Flemish Community and the Flemish region;
- agreements with the French and German Community, the revaluation agreement concerning education with the Walloon region and the agreement for promoting alternating learning with the French Community.

All this explains the educational flows from the federal government to the other governing levels being the Regions, the Communities, the Provinces and Municipalities.

Since the revision of the Belgian Constitution Law of 1980 with its specific regional laws and community laws of 1980 education became a Community matter. This means that education is organised by the Communities for which they receive an annual contribution coming from the federal government and the respective regions.

The Communities, the Provinces, Municipalities or other public law bodies or private bodies also subsidise the people who organise education in accordance with statutory standards.

The communities are paying for the personnel cost, for scholarships and study grants, for family allowance, for school buildings and for Initial education, including the apprenticeship until the age of 18.

Traditionally a distinction is made between three educational networks within each community.

1) Community education is education organised under the authority of the Communities by the public bodies that are called the Flemish Community education, The French – speaking Community education and the German – speaking Community education;

2) the subsidised publicly run schools comprise municipal education organised by the municipalities and the provincial education organised by the provincial administrations and

3) the subsidised privately run schools deliver education organised by a private person or private organisation on private initiative. Privately run education mainly consists of catholic schools.

Hence, the competent authority receives financial means for the operation of the schools through funding or subsidies.

The Communities in Belgium also receive financial means for the financing of educational and training projects from the European Social Fund. (Initial and Continuing Education and Training).

1002 - FUNDING FOR INITIAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

FLEMISH COMMUNITY

Education budget

The Flemish education budget per education level: primary education receives 28.6% of this budget, secondary education 41.5%, higher education 7.9%, university education 8.9 %, non-education level related education 9.2 % and continuing education 3.9%.

Table 1: Evolution concerning the division of the Flemish education budget in % for the years 2000-2004 and 2006			
TYPE OF EDUCATION	% IN 2000	% IN 2005	% IN 2006
LOWER SECONDARY EDUCATION	40.4%	34.6%	32.7%
HIGHER SECONDARY EDUCATION	33%	35.2%	36.8%
HIGHER EDUCATION	15.3%	17.4%	17.9%
UNIVERSITY EDUCATION	11.3%	12.8%	12.6%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%

Sources: General Entity Statistics / Algemene Directie Statistiek EAK

<http://aps.vlaanderen.be/statistiek/publicaties/pdf/vic/vic2007.pdf>

Table 2: Number of pupils /students the Flemish education important for the distribution of the budget for the years 2000-2005 and 2006			
TYPE OF EDUCATION	YEAR 2000	YEAR 2005	YEAR 2006
NURSERY EDUCATION	240,654	234,963	234,530
PRIMARY EDUCATION	434,272	420,678	415,726
SECONDARY EDUCATION	431,027	452,441	457,351
HIGHER EDUCATION	98,536	101,185	102,367
UNIVERSITY EDUCATION	56,740	57,005	59,172
TOTAL	1,261,229	1,266,272	1,269,146

Source: Flanders in figures 2007, 7p

Other data on the financing of secondary education, 2006:

The budget for secondary education: 3,422,785 thousand euro.

The share of secondary education in the overall education budget is 40.77%.

The budget for regular secondary education is 3,156,365 thousand euro of which 11.28% for operation, 2.68% for investment and 85.41% for salaries paid directly by the Education and Training policy area.

The budget for special secondary education was 266,420 thousand euro of which 7.60% for operation, 2.00% for investment and 90.41% for salaries paid directly by the Education and Training policy area.

FRENCH-SPEAKING COMMUNITY

In the Walloon provinces (French-speaking and German-speaking Community) the distribution of students in the Community education system is the following:

- Education organised by the Communities - 25.18%
- Public education - 16.8%
- Private education - 54.36%

In the 2001-2002 school year, there were 470,230 primary education students, 341,072 secondary education students, 78,831 higher education students and 61,611 university education students.

In 2000, the Walloon education budget amounted to EUR 4.33 billion. The adjusted 2001 budget amounted to EUR 4.47 billion which is a 3.6% increase compared to 2000.

The distribution of this budget between the different levels of education was as follows: primary education 27%, secondary education 41%, higher education 10%, special and artistic education 9% and distance education and continuing education 3%. Besides, 7% was allocated to special education, 2% to artistic education and 1% to "psycho - medical social centres" (centres for student guidance in Flanders), medical school inspection and the school building fund.

Industrial training courses

The '*leertijd*' (an apprenticeship system) (*Syntra Vlaanderen* - IFAPME) or initial vocational training allows apprentices from the age of 15-16 to learn the basics via an apprenticeship contract with a manager -trainer to work as an employee in a company. This apprenticeship comprises a practical training course in a company or with a self-employed person for a period of

4 days a week and 1 day of theoretical training in a centre. The manager - trainer gives a learning fee to the apprentice. For youngsters under 18, this amounts to EUR 247.42 for the first year, EUR 329.90 for the second year and EUR 409.02 for the third year. For apprentices older than 18, the amounts are EUR 329.90, EUR 371.15 and EUR 409.02 a month respectively. These amounts are indexed every year.

The financial means of the *Syntra Vlaanderen* (approximately EUR 50 million a year for all *Syntra Vlaanderen* courses) are chiefly spent on subsidising the syntra-centres or regional centres and a network of recognised training institutes. In the context of the apprenticeship, a co-operation agreement has also been reached with the education department in order to guarantee the equality of certificates. The target groups are the apprentices older than 15 and all future or already established entrepreneurs in the context of the entrepreneurship training.

1003 - FUNDING FOR CONTINUING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING, AND ADULT LEARNING

FOR PUBLICLY PROVIDED CVT

Pass premium

As from the 1st of August 2004 Flemish government earmarks 3 million euro for job-seekers following a training that results in a bottleneck profession. Pass premium directs job-seekers to the right training. Job-seekers receive a premium from 150 to 250 euro. The social partners decide which courses entitle applicants to a premium.

Supported training courses

The Flemish Service for Employment and Vocational Training (VDAB) and FOREM organise a number of vocational training courses for which companies are eligible for support. Besides, Syntra Vlaanderen and IFAPME provide complete courses for all development stages of a company. These courses are typically theoretical courses alternating with practical tasks in the companies. In addition to apprenticeships, Syntra Vlaanderen also offers entrepreneurship training for starting entrepreneurs, where a trade can be learned and they are taught how to start and run a business. The courses have a modular nature; hence, they aim to include all apprenticeship and entrepreneurship training courses in modular entrepreneur courses. The course participant is following an alternance training (combination of learning in the workplace with a boss - teacher and lessons in the SYNTRA school, or gets practical experience by reaching a traineeship agreement and/or through employment).

In July 2006 the Entrepreneur Training Platform was founded for more and better enterprises for the period of 2006-2007. Within the Platform an amount of EUR 600,000 has been allocated to make the training offers for

entrepreneurs and future entrepreneurs broader and more comprehensive. In the framework of the programme places for an extra 1,300 students has been created in the period of 2006-2007.

Training cheques

Syntra Vlaanderen is recognised as a training centre where training cheques can be cashed (see section 1004, too). The Syntra Vlaanderen's financial means amount to approximately EUR 50 million a year for all SYNTRA courses.

FOR ENTERPRISE-BASED CVET

Under the 1999-2000 multi-sectoral agreement, the social partners undertook (at federal level) to bring Belgium to the same level as its three European neighbours (France, the Netherlands and Germany). For this purpose, the wage bill levy had been increased from 1.2 to 1.4%.

According to the Eurostat CVTS-2, costs for CVET account for 1.6% of the total costs for employees (Table 1). This seems relatively low compared to other countries (cf. UK: 3.6%, Denmark: 3%, EU-15: 2.3%). However, it must be taken into account that the CVTS-2 does not include the smallest businesses, employees in the public sector, the entire agricultural sector and potentially a portion of the professional workers.

Table 1: Total cost of CVT courses as % of total labour cost (all enterprises) (2005 vs. 1999)								
	SIZE CLASS (NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES)							
	TOTAL (%)		10 TO 49 (%)		50 TO 249 (%)		250 OR MORE (%)	
GEO	CVTS3	CVTS2	CVTS3	CVTS2	CVTS3	CVTS2	CVTS3	CVTS2
EU27	1.6	:	1.1	:	1.4	:	1.9	:
EU25	1.6	2.3	1.1	1.5	1.4	2.4	1.9	2.5
BE	1.6	1.6	0.9	1.0	1.2	1.6	99	100

Source: Eurostat; 2nd and 3rd continuing vocational training survey in enterprises (CVTS2 and CVTS 3)

1004 - FUNDING FOR TRAINING FOR UNEMPLOYED PEOPLE AND OTHER GROUPS EXCLUDED FROM THE LABOUR MARKET

In Belgium (in the three regions) unemployed people and other groups excluded from the labour market are entitled to welfare benefits. Instead of this benefit, the employment services VDAB, FOREM, BGDA-ORBEM and ADG can also offer mandatory training in order to find an appropriate job. Employment Funds for unemployed people and other groups excluded from the labour market is a measure to finance job creation and vocational training and vocational integration initiatives for risk groups among jobseekers.

EMPLOYMENT FUNDS - GROUPS AT RISK

The objective of this measure is to finance job creation and vocational training and vocational integration initiatives for risk groups among jobseekers.

Financial resource: Supplementing the national agreement of 1989-1990, the Finance Law of 30.12.1988 obliges employers to conclude a collective contract of employment for 1989 and 1990 that sets aside 0.18% of their wage bill for employment promotion for risk groups among jobseekers. For 1991 and 1992, this rate was raised to 0.25% of the wage bill. In 2008 this rate is 0.10% of the wage bill. Enterprises which were not bound by such collective contracts had to pay a corresponding amount to the Employment Fund. Other initiatives promoting vocational integration of risk groups were granted subsidies from the resources accumulated in this way.

SUPPORT PLAN FOR THE UNEMPLOYED (VDAB/FOREM/ACTIRIS)

The Support Plan for the unemployed serves two aims: long-term jobseekers are to be given more intensive support and their labour market situation improved at the moment when their job search motivation appears to be decreasing; and the availability to the labour market of unemployed persons with entitlement to benefits is to be verified more closely.

The Support Plan is financed by employer contributions equal to 0.05% of the wage bill. It should be added that the resources available from the Employment Fund have also been used to finance support for the unemployed since 1.2.1995.

TRAINING CHEQUES

Training cheques are payment means that a company can use in purchasing educational services. A company buys the training cheques from the Flemish Community and must pay half the value of these cheques itself. The other half is subsidised by the Flemish Community. These training cheques have a value of 30 euros each. Every company can order up to a maximum of 200 cheques per year. These cheques remain valid for a period of one year. <http://vdab.be/opleidingscheques/werknemers.shtml>

1005 - PERSPECTIVES AND ISSUES: FROM FUNDING TO INVESTING IN HUMAN RESOURCES

As from 2007, European resources allow the continuation of diversified training actions, giving priority to the improvement of the qualifications and skills of poorly qualified job seekers. These actions are set out as follows:

- The development of training programmes to meet the needs of sectors where there is a manpower shortage so as better to respond

to the expectations and needs of poorly qualified populations who are least able to compete in the labour market;

- Measures favouring the learning of Dutch will be strengthened, in particular those concerning the learning of job-oriented Dutch as well as Dutch for finding work, aimed at poorly qualified job-seekers;
- Programmes to combat illiteracy and the learning of French as a foreign language will be strengthened;
- Information on training possibilities in Brussels will be expanded, notably through the improvement and development of on line information tools as well as the organisation of actions to raise awareness of technical jobs;
- The connections between occupational training mechanisms and the occupational sectors, notably via private sectoral funds for the detection, development and implementation of new training provision to meet the needs of job growth sectors in the Brussels-Capital Region, for a concerted participation in the regional reference centres as well as for the placing and supervision of trainees in businesses;
- The arrangements for the validation of the skills acquired will take off fully with the approval of new validation centres and new validation criteria in the prioritised sectors of the economy of the Brussels-Capital Region;
- The National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) gives concrete expression to the strategic dimension of the cohesion policy (concerning the use of the European Structural Funds for the period 2007-2013). It relates to Objective 2 Regional Competitiveness and Employment and constitutes the framework for a mixture of political measures to do with growth and employment.

Aspiring to a maximum impact of the Lisbon objectives, the support of the European Social Fund for Flanders is particularly quantifiable in the following fields:

- Increasing the employment rate, in particular that of older workers, people of foreign origin, people suffering from occupational disability, and those with little education;
- Increasing the effective retirement age of the job market;
- Increasing the employment rate of the long-term unemployed;
- Doubling the number of Flemish employees who follow a continuing training scheme, career accompaniment or an EVC procedure (= previously acquired skills) on their own initiative;
- Increasing the number of firms investing in continuing training, diversity and socially responsible entrepreneurship;
- Increasing the employability rate.

11 - EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL DIMENSIONS, TOWARDS AN OPEN AREA OF LIFELONG LEARNING

1101 - NATIONAL STRATEGIES RELATED TO POLICY PRIORITIES, PROGRAMMES AND INITIATIVES AT EU LEVEL

FLEMISH COMMUNITY

Lifelong learning policy

Since 1999 the subject of 'life-long learning' has become important to the different authorities. The Flemish coalition agreement referred to the introduction of an entitlement to life-long learning. The Flemish Minister for Education and Training, the Minister for Employment and the Economy Minister devoted considerable attention to the matter in policy documents and papers.

A turning point arrived with the Flemish Action plan 'Life-long learning in good jobs', an alliance between the three (and subsequently four) authorised ministers. The emphasis is placed on education and the labour market formulated in 9 (and subsequently 10) guidelines:

- (1) the monitoring and enhancing of education,
- (2) the determining of a development pattern relating to life-long learning,
- (3) the development of training credit,
- (4) the bolstering of individual careers,
- (5) giving users a voice,
- (6) the development of an incentives policy for companies,
- (7) recognition of competencies acquired elsewhere,
- (8) the ensuring of coherence in the education world,
- (9) Flanders on the fast track of the knowledge economy and
- (10) the repositioning of socio-cultural training in the context of informal learning.

Besides the action plan, the Flemish Government launched a 'colour paper' on 11 July 2000: a framework for thought to develop a long-term vision for Flanders. The SERV responded with a platform text '*A long-term vision for Flanders: a hand outstretched to the Flemish social partners*'. The combination of both initiatives led to the establishment of five crossroads, including 'Flanders as a crossroads for learning'. Their activities resulted in

specific goals, formulated as '21 goals for the 21st century'. The first two propositions exclusively relate to the subject of life-long learning. For the first time clear target figures were set concerning participation in life-long learning activities, the number of functionally literate people, people with ICT skills and qualified school-leavers. Finally, in recent years the Flemish Government commissioned a number of policy-supporting investigations relating to life-long learning, including on literacy projects, leaving school prematurely, competencies acquired elsewhere, funding, and the analysis of life-long learning policy plans.

The regional level is undoubtedly an extremely important platform for the concrete realisation of lifelong learning: it is the place where offer and demand are coordinated and where all actors involved in the implementation negotiate and define the policy priorities. The socio-cultural sector needs to be fully represented in the regional policymaking in order to guarantee life-wide learning and to place lifelong learning in a context which is broader than just a mere synchronisation from the educational offer with the employment.

Database of private and public training in Flanders as from 2005

At the moment a number of initiatives already exist to pay more attention to opportunity groups, but up to now none of them has been sufficient, according to the various players asked. Therefore education database and website were developed in March 2005. The database contains all 'study activities' of education providers (OSP, Part-time Art Education, Basic Education and BIS), VDAB, Socio-cultural work and SYNTRA, but an expansion is also being prepared to include the private training operators.

FRENCH-SPEAKING COMMUNITY

Lifelong learning concept

The Walloon view of the concept of life-long learning is based on the principle of the individual entitlement to training, and therefore the guarantee of:

1. access to information on the training available,
2. advice and orientation,
3. equality with regard to the training offered,
4. the recognition of results achieved,
5. the constant development of training provisions and content by the permanent evaluation of the parties involved and
6. no charges for individual participants in courses aimed at avoiding of the obsolescence of qualifications.

The Region took various action to contribute to the achievement of the objectives set, in particular: To increase accessibility to the training on offer by encouraging operators to lengthen their opening hours, to provide the training in a modular fashion, to develop supervised self-learning and remote learning, and the restructuring of the physical network of centres. To increase equality for the training on offer, 23 *Centres de Compétence* (Competencies Centres) have been set up since 1998. These centres include several partners, target groups and a 'quality label', all brought together in a network structure. The centres are aimed at economic market sectors with promising perspectives and are responsible for technological supervision.

Following on from Lisbon, the Walloon Region is also involved with the development of international databases, while researching the feasibility of the on-line linking of job offers and competencies based on classifications of international scope.

Increasing investments in training

To this end, since 1998 the Region has been developing cheque systems (training, advice, formation, reading) so companies or private persons can choose a recognised provider. A *Fonds d'équipement* (Equipment Fund) was also set up to modernise both technical and vocational education in contributing to the permanent training of teachers.

Special attention is devoted to the high priority fields (ICT's and languages) and to the target groups requiring specific support. As regards this second point, the unemployed are given the guarantee of free access to public service vocational training, and from 2002 they have 'once-only/unique' training contract with an operator with an additional financial inducement (e.g. for childcare facilities). Finally, resources are granted for literacy initiatives and courses for immigrants, some of which will fully exploit the cultural advantages of these people.

Also in this spirit, all people must be able to obtain government advice in the course of the development of their careers (that are less and less determined by one single contract for a full career), both for 'self-service' provisions for people with a high degree of independence (*Espaces ressources emploi*) and for training initiatives.

Finally, there is another approach of encouraging the transfer of competencies of the oldest to the youngest by initiatives such as support when seeking work and 'mentor/tutor/coaching' during training at the workplace. Increasing the effectiveness of private and public initiatives by encouraging partnerships where the energy and expertise are shared (*Centres de compétences, Carrefours Emploi formation* and - in 2002 - *Maisons de l'emploi*), by a review of the '*Parcours d'insertion*' (Insertion pathway) with the objective of making entry as quick and smooth as possible, and by providing support for the modernising of the SPE (method and structure of management). With the better matching of education and

the labour market in mind, the French-speaking Community set up the 'Community Commission for Occupations and Qualifications' (CCPQ). The purpose is the revaluing of technical and vocational training courses by making them more operational. A total of 114 qualification profiles have already been developed by the different study groups of the CCPQ.

1102 - IMPACT OF EUROPEANISATION/INTERNATIONALISATION ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING

EU mobility programmes have been an important driver in introducing the European dimension in Belgian education and training. For instance, legal obstacles for recruiting foreign teaching staff in all levels of education have been lifted. In higher education, the implementation of Socrates/Erasmus has accelerated the process of establishment of specialised international relation offices in each higher education institution. The Leonardo da Vinci programme has been instrumental in organizing mobility of Dutch-speaking and French-speaking students and teachers within the EU and VET schools have made partnerships with other VET schools in Europe.

I) JOINT MEASURES COVERING ALL BELGIAN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

THE BELGIAN SOLIDARITY PACT

Common objectives of three initiative-taking regional organisations, i.e. the Flemish Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Voka), the Brussels Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Walloon Union of Companies (UWE) have for the first time been set jointly in the Belgian solidarity pact. The Union of Independent Entrepreneurs (UNIZO), the Belgian Federation of Employers (VBO-FEB) and the Walloon Union of the Self-Employed (UCM) are also involved as co-signatory organisations.

The purpose of this pact is to maintain well-being and solidarity through 500,000 new jobs by 2020, create an active talent market and fight against illiteracy so as to bring Belgium to a healthy European level.

NECESSARY STRUCTURAL REFORMS

Certain, including major, structural reforms are a *conditio sine qua non* for promoting innovation, for international entrepreneurship and for stimulating entrepreneurship to give this pact form. This can be done in particular by bolstering regional means and resources that can stimulate excellence in talent development, innovation and international entrepreneurship. For Flanders, this can be done with the "Flanders in Action Plan;" for Wallonia with the Marshall Plan, and for Brussels with "Contract for the Economy and Employment." There is an urgent need for an active talent market geared to: future-oriented education, putting jobseekers to work and attracting foreign talent, permanent competition development for all workers, and more effective transitions from work to work. An active, flexible and competitive

talent market and a quality talent development system, but also improved employability through better knowledge of Dutch, French, English and German among the population, as well as openness to foreign talent, are key to this effort.

MODERNISATION OF THE WAY THE LABOUR MARKET FUNCTIONS

The structural position of the Belgian labour market is still problematic. The unemployment rate forecast for 2007 is 22.1% for the Brussels-Capital Region, 19.3% for Wallonia and 8.9% for Flanders. The employment rate among young people, especially in Brussels and Wallonia, and for older workers and migrants, especially in Flanders, is below the European average. Although all regions have difficulties in filling certain situations vacant, Flanders is gradually having problems filling all situations vacant. The reason for this is the limited number of jobseekers, the limited mobility on the labour market and that fact that many people over fifty opt for early retirement. Brussels and Wallonia have also a sizeable group of jobseekers, many young people, who often do not have the required education and training, are not very mobile and are stuck in an unemployment trap (incongruous ratio between gainful employment and unemployment benefit). This unemployment trap applies also to many other social benefit recipients in Belgium.

EMPLOYMENT RATE – ACTION PLANS AND INTER-REGIONAL LABOUR MOBILITY FOR EMPLOYMENT CREATION

Differentiated objectives have also been set to achieve a 70% employment rate (number of gainfully employed persons between the ages of 15 and 65, from the perspective of the worker's place of residence).

Each of the authorities has decided to increase the employment rate through the aforementioned action plans ("Flanders in Action," the "Marshall Plan" and the "Contract for the Economy and Employment").

To achieve the goal of "Flanders in Action" (the action plan of the Government of Flanders), i.e. to become a top European region, Flanders must create 250,000 new jobs by 2020, or 100,000 more with a view to a 70% employment rate. The target for Wallonia is also 250,000 new jobs, and for Brussels 125,000 in order to attain a 70% employment rate.

Inter-regional labour mobility must be strengthened through the following actions: cooperation between the VDAB, Forem and Actiris to guide jobseekers to a job in other regions; additional language training for jobseekers; widening of the concept of 'suitable employment'; cooperation between educational institutions with exchange projects for students and teachers; cooperation between public transport companies for appropriate shuttle services (commuting from home to work); a simple and flexible labour market legislation.

FIGHT AGAINST ILLITERACY (11% OF BELGIANS ARE ILLITERATE)

Owing to the tension on the labour market, areas of tension round the education issue, and the importance of diversity on the labour market, all Belgian employers' organisations (federal and regional) have for the first time thrown their lot with this plan, which can, in a manner of speaking, be referred to as a community agreement. In Flanders, the ageing of the population is a particular problem. In Wallonia, it is unemployment among young people; while in Brussels half of the unemployed are of foreign origin. The underlying idea of this pact in Flanders can set the example for guidance and for putting people to work. There is a high drop-out rate in French-speaking education in Belgium, and an important yet intolerable consequence is that the illiteracy rate is far too high. The primary school knowledge is lacking making it difficult for companies to organise their own training schemes. Major investments in education and training and schools of sufficient quality (in terms of content but also of motivation) are the only remedy. There is also the problem of mobility, for which the inter-regional mobility plan has been drawn up.

The underlying global objective of the Belgian solidarity pact is to streamline the government apparatus by 8% and to increase efficiency by 8%. All the aforementioned proposed, measurable and concrete objectives (benchmarks), such as the creation of 500,000 new jobs by 2020, and the fight against illiteracy must function as tools to help achieve these goals and to bring Belgium on a healthy European level against the background of Lisbon 2000, Stockholm and Barcelona 2001, Copenhagen 2002, Bologna 2003, the Maastricht Declaration 2004 and the Helsinki declaration 2006.

I A) – ATTEMPTS TO ENCOURAGE THE INTEGRATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE ON THE LABOUR MARKET

Attempts are being made to encourage the integration of young people on the labour market by means of a re-evaluation of technical and vocational education (investment in equipment in schools and specialised centres such as the regional technological centres in Flanders, the Centre de Compétences in collaboration with the Centres de Technologies Avancées in Wallonia and the professional reference centres in Brussels.

The employment services - The Flemish Public Service provider for Employment and Vocational Training (VDAB) – Office wallon de la Formation professionnelle et de l'Emploi – Walloon Office for Vocational Training and Employment (FOREM) BGDA and the Employment Office of the German-speaking Community, Arbeitsamt der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft (ADG) together with various partners (schools of the various communities) have invested in equipment in schools and specialised centres. For instance, they made the very latest technological equipment available for educational purposes for both pupils and for the training of teachers. The transition from school to work is thus much smoother.

I B) FULL DIPLOMA AND FEDERAL SUBSIDY FOR “ALTERNATING TRAINING” IN THE THREE COMMUNITIES

The three communities are also working on a full diploma for alternating education or sandwich courses. This was supported by the offer of a federal subsidy for both employer and trainee as from the 2006-2007 school year.

I C) EXPANSION OF STUDENT EMPLOYMENT

Another important aim is the expansion of student employment in 2006 to support work experience and more traineeships for young people via websites. Apart from alternating education, to gain work experience the possibilities for student employment was expanded in 2006 and websites were set up in both Flanders (<http://www.aandeslag.be>) and in Wallonia (<http://www.autravail.be>) where not only employees, job seekers and employers and potential trainees and companies offering a traineeship can seek each other out. Both websites have been operational since the autumn of 2006. A similar initiative is also being developed in Brussels.

I D) CREATION OF START-UP JOBS WITH SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON TRAINING/VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL SECONDARY EDUCATION CLOSELY GEARED TO LABOUR MARKET NEEDS

Socially valuable projects contribute to the integration of young people on the labour market. The federal government has created extra start-up jobs including those within the social economy. In this way, the Flemish Community is enhancing the approach to youth unemployment and job creation for young people in the social economy via a range of agreements with the centre cities and municipalities. Flanders works with educational agreements (linking and gearing to labour market needs with vocational and technical secondary education and with the various sectors). The Brussels Capital Region is using start-up jobs within the public sector but lays particular emphasis on training in order to realise sustainable integration within the sector or by moving on to the private sector. The French-speaking and German-speaking Communities support recruitment by SMEs and spin-offs of low-skilled school leavers in order to integrate and train them on the labour market. Lastly, the German-speaking Community works closely with the construction sector in the field of training of construction workers who are desperately needed on the labour market.

I E) EXCHANGE OF PUPILS, TEACHERS AND SUPERVISORS ACROSS THE LANGUAGE BORDERS

As from the 2007-2008 school year, pupils, teachers and heads of primary and secondary schools of the Flemish, French-speaking and German-speaking communities will be temporarily exchanged for language courses, an ideal instrument to expand pupils' knowledge of languages and other cultures. On the initiative of the Prince Philippe Fund (www.prins-filipfonds.org) schools can submit pupil exchange projects.

II) RECENT MEASURES OF THE FLEMISH COMMUNITY

II A) – STRENGTHENING ALTERNATING LEARNING (SANDWICH COURSES) IN FLANDERS

By increasing the number of work experience places, Flanders intends to expand the offer of sandwich courses. This has been done in close consultation with the business and industry sector and within the Flemish government itself.

II B) INTRODUCTION OF FULL-TIME COMMITMENT IN PART-TIME EDUCATION IN FLANDERS

A full-time commitment in part-time education means that the complementary aspect, gaining experience at the work place, has been achieved. For those pupils for whom no employment can be found, a special project has been started which includes additional training, help in job applications, etc. This must in the short term be achieved for 75% of these pupils.

III) RECENT MEASURES OF THE FRENCH-SPEAKING COMMUNITY

III A) STRENGTHENING ALTERNATING EDUCATION IN THE FRENCH-SPEAKING COMMUNITY

The French-speaking Community and the French Community Commission are working on improved linkage of education and adult vocational training.

III B) FUNDING OF TRAINING COURSES IN THE FRENCH-SPEAKING COMMUNITY

Training courses for job seekers that are linked to an educational initiative or to attendance of technical or vocational education courses are financed by the French Community Commission as part of an educational initiative or technical or vocational education. The French-speaking Community and the Walloon Region aim at increasing the number of young people in part-time education by improving the framework and by expanding the system to include the government sector and large companies which should make the coordination mechanism less complex. A department has been set up which will enable the various training systems and accreditation of prior learning to work with the same professional standards. In addition, this department will enable the links with the labour market to be strengthened. This should ensure greater clarity and coherence with regard to educational projects.

IV) RECENT MEASURES OF THE GERMAN -SPEAKING COMMUNITY

IV A) STRENGTHENING ALTERNATING EDUCATION IN THE GERMAN-SPEAKING COMMUNITY

The German-speaking Community, where sandwich courses are completely accepted, is planning an extra year of basic training before pupils can start alternating education.

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