

## VET in Belgium (BE-FR)

Belgium is a federal State comprising three Regions (Flanders, Wallonia and Brussels) and three Communities (Flemish, French and German-speaking Communities). Citizens can access three different vocational education and training (VET) systems: Flemish (BE-FL), French-speaking (BE-FR) and German-speaking (BE-DE). In the Brussels Region, due to its bilingual status, both BE-FR and BE-FL systems coexist.

In the BE-FR VET system, the Ministry of the French Community regulates formal education in collaboration with school boards. The Walloon and Brussels Regions are in charge of vocational training and employment, and four regional public training services regulate vocational training provisions. This sharing of competences requires close and regular intergovernmental cooperation with formal and non-formal agreements, to ensure the consistency of the system. At all levels, VET policies involve social partners.

Compulsory education in Belgium covers learners aged 6 to 18. VET starts at the age of 14 as school-based (nationally referred to as full-time education) and from age 15 alternance VET schemes are offered (part-time programmes).

Upper secondary education lasts four years and is offered in two branches: general education (nationally referred to as transition education) and VET (nationally called qualification education). The latter comprises:

- technical or artistic qualification programmes that lead to upper secondary education diploma and a VET qualification such as electronics and automation technician; graduates have direct access to tertiary education and can upgrade their VET qualification by following one-year technical follow-up programmes (called seventh year) at post-secondary level;
- vocational qualification programmes are more practice-based and aim at direct employment. They lead to a VET qualification such as electrician/industrial installer. Graduates can follow one-year post-secondary programmes (called seventh year), providing access to tertiary education and/or a specialisation.

All the above upper and post-secondary programmes can be delivered as school-based or dual programmes. Dual programmes offer alternance between two days learning at school and three-days in a company based on a contract.

Besides these formal VET programmes (offered by schools) regional dual training services organise

apprenticeship programmes to learners aged 15 to 25. These programmes follow the alternance scheme of one day in the training centre and four days in a company based on a contract. These regional training services are:

- IFAPME (*Institut wallon de formation en alternance et des indépendants et petites et moyennes entreprises*) in Wallonia;
- SFPME (*Service formation pour les petites et moyennes entreprises*) in Brussels.

Certified apprentices can progress to entrepreneurial or to leading and coordinating training programmes offered by these public services to adults from age 18 onwards.

An upper secondary education diploma is necessary to enter tertiary education. Professional and dual bachelor graduates can enter the labour market or progress to master degrees. Professional bachelors are school-based, include an end-of-studies internship, and can be followed by a one-year bachelor specialisation programme. Dual programmes are similar to professional bachelor or academic masters, but include an alternance scheme (two to three days in a company) with the signing of a tripartite contract.

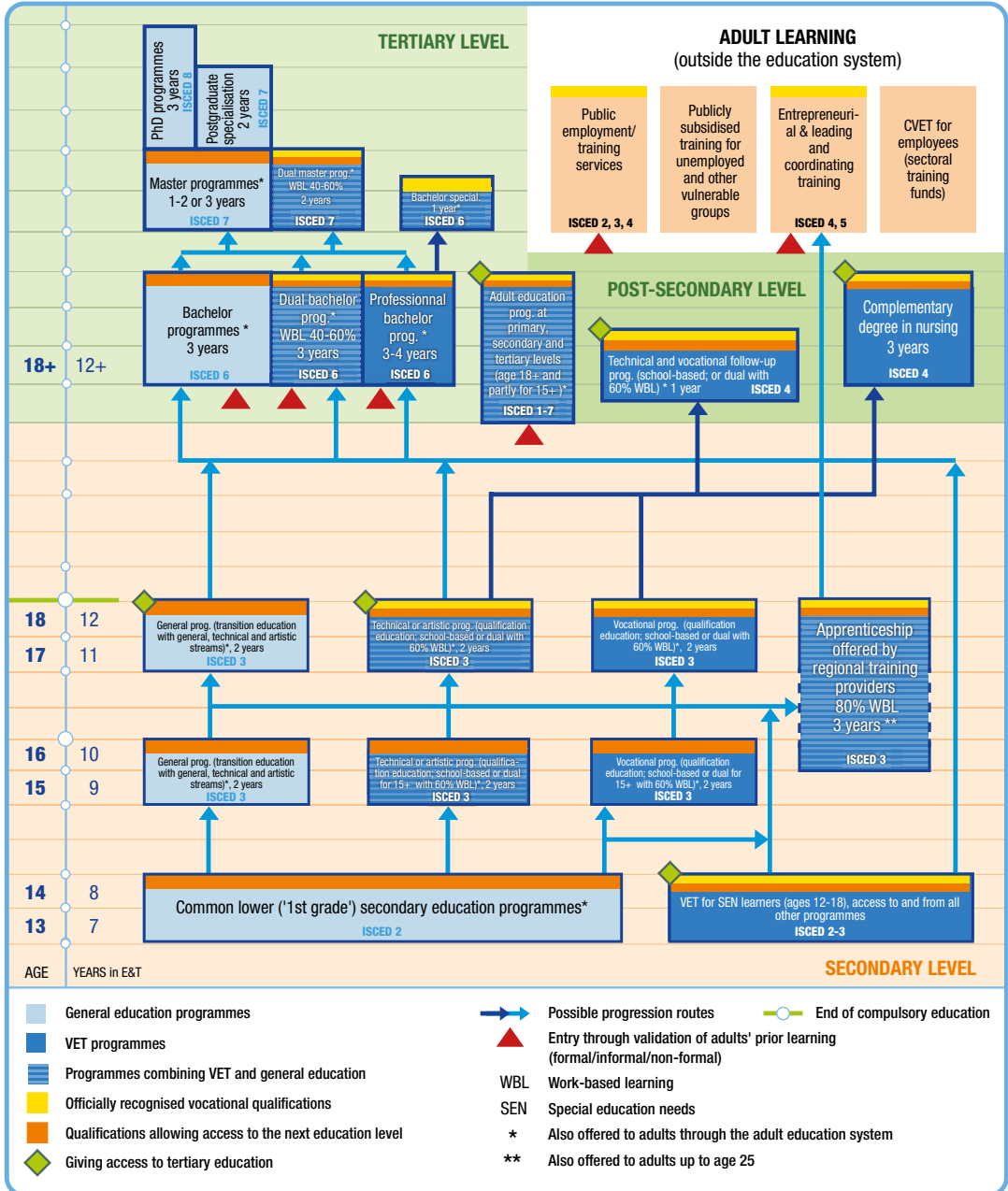
The adult education system offers formal education programmes at all levels and includes the same qualifications as in the 'regular' system. It also offers specific qualifications which are only available in this system. Programmes follow a modular approach and courses offer a flexible time schedule. The adult education system is accessible to all adults irrespective of initial educational career and so is the main reskilling, upskilling and second-chance mechanism of the formal education system.

Regional public employment and/or vocational training services organise vocational training for the unemployed and employees. This leads to partial or full qualifications, or relates to specific subject areas, such as language learning. The public services are:

- FOREM (*Office Wallon de l'emploi et de la formation*) in Wallonia;
- Bruxelles Formation, in Brussels.

Training is organised by their own services or in cooperation with public or private VET providers.

Validation of adults' prior learning (formal/informal/non-formal) is well developed in BE-FR and offered to job-seekers and workers, as well as to adult and higher education learners.



NB: ISCED-P 2011. Assignment of programmes to ISCED classification is under revision, so only the first digit in ISCED coding is displayed. EQF levels on qualifications are being discussed.

Source: Cedefop and ReferNet Belgium.



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