



Vocational education and training policy briefs 2024

BELGIUM

Flanders



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Contents

1.	Introduction.....	1
2.	National VET context and challenges	1
2.1	National VET context.....	1
2.2	Challenges	2
3.	National VET policy priorities.....	2
4.	Main policy developments between 2020 and 2024.....	2
4.1	Promoting VET and increase participation in lifelong learning	2
4.2	Modernising VET offer and infrastructure	4
4.3	Supporting the professional development of teachers	6
4.4	Enhancing quality, transparency, recognition and global dimension of VET qualifications.....	7
5.	Statistical information in relation to EU targets.....	8
6.	Conclusion.....	11
	Abbreviations.....	13
	References	14
	Web pages and websites.....	15

1. Introduction

This policy brief ⁽¹⁾ produced by Cedefop presents a snapshot of vocational education and training (VET) policy developments in Flanders, Belgium, between 2020 and the end of 2024 ⁽²⁾. It presents the context and the challenges the country faces, a selection of the latest VET-related statistics as well as the national priorities until 2030 identified in the Flemish national implementation plan. This snapshot informs Cedefop monitoring and analysis of the implementation of the [VET Recommendation](#) and [Osnabrück Declaration](#) and contributes to shaping new EU priorities in VET as of 2026 and informing the mid-term evaluation of the Council Recommendation on VET.

2. National VET context and challenges

2.1 National VET context

Belgium is a federal State comprising three Regions (Flanders, Wallonia, and Brussels) and three Communities (Flemish, French, and German speaking). Citizens have access to three different vocational education and training (VET) systems: Flemish (BE-FL), French-speaking (BE-FR) and German-speaking (BE-DE). Brussels is unique, as both BE-FR and BE-FL systems coexist.

In the Flemish Community, the Flemish Government is responsible for the formal education system, including initial secondary VET. VET strategy, policies and measures are negotiated with social partners, leading to formal sectoral agreements. Consequently, social partners play a key role in organising alternating work and education programmes and continuous vocational training through framework agreements. Compulsory education covers learners aged 5 to 18 (Cedefop, 2024a).

The Flemish VET system is offered at secondary, post-secondary and tertiary levels. Learners can enrol in school-based upper secondary VET programmes from the age of 14, and starting from age 15, they can follow dual learning programmes that combine company-based and school-based learning.

Adults can choose from a wide range of programmes leading to ISCED levels 2 to 4 qualifications, provided through the formal adult education system. This offer includes entrepreneurial training and opportunities to obtain an upper secondary education diploma. Additionally, vocational training outside the formal education system is accessible to jobseekers, employees, and entrepreneurs (Cedefop, 2024b; Cedefop & Bruxelles Formation, 2023).

⁽¹⁾ See also the previous edition: Cedefop. (2024). [Vocational education and training policy briefs 2023 – Belgium \(Flanders\)](#). Cedefop monitoring and analysis of vocational education and training policies.

⁽²⁾ For some developments, the information available until mid-2025 has been included.

2.2 Challenges

Between 2020 and 2024, the main challenges Flanders has faced related to the decreasing attractiveness of VET, the poor ICT infrastructure, the increasing labour shortages and skills mismatches as well as the growing teacher shortage.

Improving the public image of VET was a challenge, as a large share of the population has a negative perception of VET (OECD, 2023; European Commission, 2024d). Special attention is placed on improving the quality of VET and aligning it more closely with labour market needs to better equip learners for employment.

Further, low participation in lifelong learning, especially among lower-educated individuals, remains a challenge for Flanders and in Belgium overall, with a significant gap compared to the EU average (Belgium Flemish government, 2022). Effective collaboration across policy areas is essential to guide early school leavers and youths not in education, employment, or training (NEETs) toward employment or qualifying pathways.

Another main concern for Flanders is the growing shortage of teachers, with some lacking the necessary skills and qualifications for their roles. The 2022 PISA study revealed that 80.1% of learners attended schools where the principals reported that teacher shortages somewhat or greatly affected instruction (compared to 33.9% in 2012), marking the highest rate in the EU (European Commission, 2024d). Moreover, teachers must continuously adapt to new and unpredictable situations, such as online teaching, the integration of new resources and technologies, as well as to an ever-evolving curriculum aligning to the evolving demands on the labour market.

3. National VET policy priorities

In response to the [2020 Council Recommendation on VET](#) and the [Osnabrück Declaration](#), the Flemish national implementation plan in VET was published in 2022 and set the following priorities:

- (a) promoting VET and increase participation in lifelong learning;
- (b) modernising VET offer and infrastructure;
- (c) supporting the professional development of teachers;
- (d) enhancing quality, transparency, recognition and global dimension of VET qualifications.

4. Main policy developments between 2020 and 2024

4.1 Promoting VET and increase participation in lifelong learning

Since 2020, the Flemish government developed several actions to promote VET and stimulate lifelong learning.

In 2020, the Partnership for Lifelong Learning (Partnerschap Levenslang leren) was established (Belgium Flemish government, 2022). The Partnership has representatives from the Socio-Economic Council of Flanders (SERV), the public and private education and

training providers, the Lifelong Learning Committee of the Flemish Education Council (VLOR) as well as a higher education expert from the Vlerick business school. The Partnership prepared the [Action Plan *Setting course to a learning Flanders*](#) (Vlaanderen verbeelding werkt, 2023), which was adopted by the Flemish Government in December 2021, and set the framework for making lifelong learning a reality in Flanders. Its objective is to achieve the EU target of the participation in lifelong learning rate of 60% by 2030. The action plan consists of a 'compass' that includes 10 goals including promoting inclusive learning as well as reinforcing work-based learning. A total of 47 actions are listed under seven 'flagship initiatives', which include guidance and support to LLL providers, as well as LLL incentive strategy based on individual follow-up. Annual reports are following up on the general progress of the action plan (e.g. [annual report 2023](#)). Moreover, in 2023, the Flemish government has launched the [lifelong learning portal](#), providing information and resources about lifelong learning in Flanders to citizen, companies and training providers (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

Through the [STEM agenda 2030](#), published in June 2021, the Flemish Government promotes STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) in VET and lifelong learning. The number of courses and career opportunities in STEM fields should be increased, resulting in a higher number of graduate STEM specialists. Further also the STEM competences in the wider society should be strengthened and a special focus is put on strengthening participation for girls. Every two years, STEM stakeholders - including social partners, STEM providers, and intermediate organisations - are brought together in a state-of-STEM network event. In September 2024, the Flemish Government announced in its 2024-29 Coalition Agreement a commitment of implementing an ambitious STEM Agenda 2030, placing particular emphasis on VET (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025). In June 2025, the [second edition of the STEM monitor - Follow-up education indicators STEM agenda 2030](#) (Department Onderwijs & Vorming, 2025). was published. It emphasises that while the STEM Agenda 2030 in Flanders contains promising strategic directions and recognises critical challenges, further structuring, stakeholder engagement, and concrete implementation steps are essential to achieve meaningful and lasting impact on STEM education and workforce development.

In 2021, the [Higher Education Advancement Fund](#) was adopted by the Flemish Government, with a total of EUR 60 million awarded across 12 grants to colleges and universities in the academic years 2021/22 and 2022/23; the funding concluded thereafter. These grants supported actions to strengthen digital forms of learning, develop flexible pathways for several target groups including disadvantaged learners, in cooperation with social partners. Its purpose was to increase participation in lifelong learning by providing flexible and modular pathways to learners including the development of micro credentials. The actions were finalised in 2023, and a final report was published (Cedefop, & ReferNet, 2025).

Various measures were taken to strengthen the dual learning system. In 2022, the Flemish government adopted a [decree enabling dual learning system in adult education](#). As of September 2022, adult education centres can offer dual tracks with 50% of work-

based learning that eventually led to a professional qualification (Cedefop, & ReferNet, 2025).

In 2023, the Flemish Partnership Dual Learning developed also an action plan that highlights several challenges facing dual learning and outlines corresponding measures. The partnership seeks to improve the previously negative perception through positive messaging and to harmonize with federal frameworks aimed at reducing administrative burdens for both schools and businesses (Karno, 2024).

Moreover, in October 2023, the Ministerial Council assigned the Regional technology centres an additional responsibility to support dual learning by facilitating local workplace learning opportunities between educational institutions and companies. To support this, the Flemish Government granted the centres financial assistance of up to EUR 1 million for the period from October 2023 to August 2024. This funding will also be available in the following years (Karno, 2024).

Besides, in June 2023, the Flemish Ministry of Education and Training introduced an [online application 'Training Compass'](#) (Opleidingskompas), offering a comprehensive overview of all adult education options along with practical information. Prior to the launch of this app, adults faced challenges in finding suitable courses due to the fragmented nature of adult education provision in Flanders. The development of the [Training Compass](#) is part of the [Edusprong](#) programme, which is included in the Flemish Resilience recovery plan. With a combined budget of EUR 30 million, the programme aims to strengthen adult education through projects. Between 2022 and 2024, Edusprong has funded 192 projects, supporting adult education centres and adult basic education centres (ReferNet Belgium & Cedefop, 2023).

Moreover, starting from September 2023 companies and learners in Flanders have been able to benefit from a [simplified premium system](#) that replaces the previous five measures with just two premiums: the [qualifying workplace learning premium for companies](#) and the [alternating training student premium](#). This system encourages participation in dual learning and apprenticeship programmes by making financial support more accessible through a streamlined application process and reduced paperwork, thereby boosting involvement from companies and learners (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

Finally, in September 2023, Flanders has introduced an [Individual learning account](#) to encourage lifelong learning. This account allows individuals to accumulate and manage entitlements for training and education, facilitating easier access to learning opportunities throughout their careers. The Individual learning account aims to support upskilling and reskilling, particularly addressing the diverse needs of adult learners by providing tailored incentives and guidance (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

4.2 Modernising VET offer and infrastructure

Various initiatives aimed at modernising the VET offer and infrastructure in Flanders have been developed and continue to be implemented since 2020.

Following the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak, multiple initiatives were implemented in Flanders, to promote more equal opportunities and improve access to labour market for

everyone. These initiatives focus on areas such as STEM, Lifelong Learning, the modernisation of secondary education, teacher shortage, adopting a Flemish Youth Work Plan and adopting a green skills roadmap, as well as improving the infrastructure of the [Regional Technology Centres](#) (Regionale Technologische Centra) (Flemish Department of Education and Training, 2024).

In December 2020, the [Digital Action Plan](#) (Digisprong) was approved by the Flemish Government, aiming to make a significant digital leap in education by addressing several challenges: ensuring that all schools in compulsory education have adequate ICT infrastructure, enabling schools to develop and implement tailored ICT policies led by ICT coordinators or teams, improving teacher and school ICT skills along with providing digital learning resources, and establishing a knowledge centre within the Ministry of Education to support schools and roll out the plan.

In 2021 the implementation of the Digisprong flagship activities started, and devices were distributed to every upper secondary learner, while also teachers and schools received better ICT equipment. Moreover, in September 2021 the Knowledge Centre for Digital Education was opened. In 2022, the emphasis was on developing learning materials and platforms for sharing them among teachers and trainers. In 2023, the knowledge centre was incorporated as an integrated unit within the Department of Education and Training of the Flemish Ministry of Education and Training, and thereby its role was expanded, including now new activities such as policy development and implementation, as well as communication campaigns (Karno, 2024). The integration of the Knowledge Centre for Digital Education into the Department of Education and Training has further strengthened policy development and support for the digital transformation in VET. In 2024, Digisprong released a vision paper on the ethical use of AI in education, which provides the foundation for integrating technology appropriately for students, schools and teachers (Cedefop, & ReferNet, 2025).

Besides, in 2021 the [InnoVET](#) programme was approved and is currently implemented to support teachers in aligning school instruction with the needs of the future (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025). The programme was designed by the Flemish government for schools offering technical secondary education (*Technisch Secundair Onderwijs*, TSO) or vocational secondary education (*Beroepssecundair Onderwijs*, BSO) courses. It familiarised teachers and learners with labour market needs through 13 projects during 2019-20 and 18 more from 2020 to 2022. Schools developed and tested innovative tools and methodologies in smaller-scale projects supporting young people during the pandemic and afterwards, to facilitate the transition to labour market. This was achieved using ICT technologies, techniques, and machines, as well as digital materials. Examples of these technologies include Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) tools, SCARA robots (a type of industrial robot characterised by their Selective Compliance Assembly Robot Arm design), and multimedia application, while thorough case studies explored artificial intelligence (AI) and STEM subjects. In 2023 and 2024, nine additional projects were launched, more than half of them were XR-related (ReferNet & Cedefop, 2021; Cedefop, & ReferNet, 2025).

4.3 Supporting the professional development of teachers

VET teacher contribution is key to improving the VET provision and addressing the national priorities. Since 2020, Flanders is introducing several initiatives to tackle the teacher shortage, aimed at retaining current teachers and attracting newcomers by enhancing the profession's social standing and improving working conditions. At the same time, discussions with education providers and trade unions are centred on identifying effective strategies to recruit and retain skilled teachers and school leaders (Eurydice, 2025).

In May 2021, the [Extended Reality \(XR\) action plan](#) was adopted by the Flemish Government. It focuses on the use of innovative technologies and aims at supporting teachers acquire specific skills in the domains on AR, VR and mixed reality. The plan provides the necessary equipment to secondary VET schools, both software and hardware, alongside training materials increasing in this way staff professionalisation and XR knowledge in Flemish schools (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

As part of Digisprong, efforts to further enhance ICT skills among teachers and school teams in compulsory and adult education were strengthened, by expanding in-service training resources and providing funding for IT bootcamps targeting teachers and ICT coordinators. Additionally, since 2023 the Digisnap tool, allows teachers to scale their digital skills and is linked to a training database (Eurydice, 2025).

Further, in 2023 an XR lending service was set up by the Department of Education and Training within the Flemish Ministry of Education and Training, coordinated by the RTCs, offering schools the possibility to rent out XR materials. Since September 2023, professional training in XR was provided to teachers and ICT coordinators through the XR Academy and following such courses was prerequisite to loan out XR material. Further, a 'Learning Network XR', which is a collaboration between five universities of applied sciences, promotes the integration of XR into the classroom in Flanders, e.g. through workshops and demo sessions, while also evaluating XR in education to enhance its effectiveness (Karno, 2024).

Since June 2024, the Digilearn Studio platform has facilitated innovative integration of digital learning for public service educators by providing a combined physical and virtual space where they can collaboratively design, share, and explore digital teaching resources and methods. The platform supports educators in embedding digital learning into their pedagogical practices in an effective and efficient manner, fostering innovation through resource creation, sharing of best practices, and discovery of new tools and approaches tailored to their needs. By enabling collaboration and access to diverse digital resources, Digilearn Studio enhances educators' capacity to adopt and adapt digital learning strategies that improve learner engagement and outcomes (Karno, 2024).

Since 2023 the teacher bonus is offered staff members who are teaching in primary and secondary education but do not yet have a pedagogical qualification certificate and are undergoing teacher training to obtain this certificate. The bonus takes the form of a weekly reduction of up to 3 hours from their teaching assignment while maintaining full pay. The institution where the teacher benefits from the bonus is then entitled to a replacement teacher according to normal replacement rules. This teacher bonus allows individuals to

combine teaching duties with teacher training, helping to retain and attract teachers, especially those in training or career changers. Since 2025, career changers will also be able to have up to 15 years of prior work experience recognised. Further, newly qualified teachers will dedicate 80% of their working hours to teaching and 20% to receiving induction support during their first year of employment (Eurydice, 2025).

4.4 Enhancing quality, transparency, recognition and global dimension of VET qualifications

All changes which are implemented in the VET system in Flanders require thorough evaluation, continuous monitoring, and the establishment of clear quality standards. In 2019, the Flemish government approved a decree that sets out common principles to [ensure the quality of training and validation pathways outside the formal education system](#). The quality assurance framework targets five key areas: learning objectives, the design of the learning process, learner guidance, evaluation of learning process and internal quality assurance procedures. Following the adoption of this decree, several validation standards for professional qualifications were developed.

Since 2020, approximately 40 private and public education and training providers have been accredited as assessment centres, entrusted with validating non-formal and informal learning. Furthermore, by 2024, 45 training pathways leading to professional qualifications outside formal education, along with 15 validation pathways, have been recognised in line with the quality assurance framework. Together, the decree and the associated agreed procedures form the foundation for the ongoing quality assurance of non-formal VET in Flanders, making it a routine and integral part of the system (Cedefop and ReferNet, 2025).

As stipulated by the regulations, each recognised professional qualification programme undergoes a review after its initial cycle. This review takes place through an on-site quality inspection conducted by an independent supervision team, which was first implemented in 2022. In 2023, a total of 11 inspections were carried out, nine for training programmes and two for validation programmes. Four of these programmes were reassessed during follow-up inspections after receiving initial remediation recommendations in 2022 (Karno, 2024).

In 2021, the Flemish Community established its [Quality Assurance National Reference Point](#) (NRP) and set up its 2021-23 implementation plan. The NRP is based at the Flemish Agency for Higher Education, Adult Education, Qualifications and Study Grants (AHOVOKS). In March 2023, the Flemish NRP hosted a peer review on the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET), focusing on the organisation of quality assurance in VET in Flanders.

In 2023, the VDAB launched the '*Leerjobs*' pilot project, funded by the ESF, enabling unqualified young jobseekers to participate in a work-based programme that incorporates recognition of prior learning for obtaining professional qualifications. The VDAB collaborates with partners such as the education and training providers SYNTRUM and SYNTRA vzw (vereniging zonder winstoogmerk, non-profit organisation), which focus on

entrepreneurship and the labour market, as well as with relevant industry sectors (Kimps, 2024).

In 2023, the regulations of the common quality framework for professional training (*Gemeenschappelijk kwaliteitskader voor beroepskwalificerende opleidingen*) were revised to permit non-educational providers, such as private training companies, industry associations, and other non-traditional education providers, to organise professional qualification programmes based on partial qualifications rather than full professional qualifications. This change enables the providers to offer more tailored and customised learning opportunities (Karno, 2024).

In Flanders, cross-educational network cooperation was promoted by participating in projects such as ErasDU (Erasmus Duaal), aiming at increasing [internationalisation and mobility](#) in VET. The ErasDu project is funded by Erasmus and organises short-term international work placements for students from various Flemish VET schools. Since 2021, also learners from full-time technical and vocational education (including special secondary education), as well as teachers and staff from technical and vocational education can participate in this mobility project (Cedefop, & ReferNet, 2025).

5. Statistical information in relation to EU targets

In 2023, 59.4% of Belgians aged 16 to 74 had at least basic digital skills, exceeding the EU average of 55.6%. Digital skills in Belgium ⁽³⁾ are improving rapidly at 4.6% annually, well above the EU growth rate of 1.5% (Digital Skills Jobs Platform of the European Union, 2023). That year, ICT specialists made up 5.4% of Belgium's employed population, surpassing the EU average of 4.8% (Eurostat, 2025a). However, in 2022, only 3% of Belgians were enrolled as ICT students, slightly higher than in 2021 but below the EU average of 4.5%. Belgium also faces technical labour shortages and had the lowest share of women graduating in STEM fields at tertiary education level in 2021, with 27.4%, compared to the EU average of 32.8% (European Commission, 2024d).

Besides, Belgium's initiatives to reduce early school leaving and NEETs are yielding positive results, as shown in the table below. In 2024, the early leaving rate fell to 7%, which is 2.3 pp below the EU-27 average and already lower than the EU target of 9% for 2030. The NEET rate for 15 to 29-year-olds was 9.9% in 2024, which is 1.1 pp below the EU-27 average and close to the EU target of 9% for 2030.

Concerning the share of adults aged 25 to 64 who participated in learning activities over the past 12 months, the most recent data from 2022 indicates a participation rate of 34.9%, which is 4.6 pp below the EU-27 average and substantially lower than the EU target of 50% by 2030.

Furthermore, the proportion of low qualified adults who engaged in learning within the last 12 months was 12.5% in 2022, well below the EU-27 average of 18.4% and the 2025 EU target of 30%. Meanwhile, the share of unemployed adults who participated in learning

⁽³⁾ This section presents and discusses mostly the statistical data for the whole country, as available at the European level.

activities in the last 4 weeks rose significantly from 9.9% in 2020 to 17.1% in 2024, reflecting the positive result of various measures taken for this target group.

In 2024, only 48.8% of recent IVET graduates aged 20-34 had work-based learning experience as part of their VET. This is considerably below the EU-27 average of 65.3%. The overall employment rate of IVET graduates was 63.9% in 2024, still considerably below the 70% EU target for 2025.

Table 1. **European vocational education and training policy dashboard: Belgium**

Type of indicator ⁽⁴⁾	Indicator	Last available year	BE	EU-27	Policy Document	EU target (year)
VET for developing a lifelong learning culture						
Progress	Adults (25-64 year-olds) with a learning experience in the last 12 months (%) [*]	2022	34.9	39.5	Skills Agenda Council Resolution on EEA ESPR Action Plan	50% (2025) 47% (2025) 60% (2030)
Progress	Low-qualified adults with a learning experience in the last 12 months (%) ^(*)	2022	12.5	18.4	Skills Agenda	30% (2025)
Progress	Unemployed adults with a learning experience in the last 4 weeks (%)	2024	17.1 ^b	15.3	Skills Agenda	20% (2025)
Context	Employment rate for 20-64 year-olds (%)	2024	72.3	75.8	ESPR Action Plan	78% (2030)
Context	Early leavers from education and training (%)	2024	7 ^b	9.3	Council Resolution on EEA	<9% (2030)
Context	NEET rate for 15-29 year-olds (%)	2024	9.9 ^b	11.0	ESPR Action Plan	9% (2030)
VET for Resilience, transitions, sustainability and excellence						
Progress	Adults (16-74 year-olds) with at least basic digital skills (%)	2023	59.4	55.6	Skills Agenda ESPR Action Plan	70% (2025) 80% (2030)
Progress	Employment rate for recent IVET graduates (20-34 year-olds) (%)	2024	63.9 ^b	80.0	Council Rec on VET	82% (2025)
Progress	Recent IVET graduates (20-34 year-olds) with a work-based learning experience as part of their vocational education and training (%)	2024	48.8	65.3	Council Rec on VET Council Resolution on EEA	60% (2025)
Context	25-34 year-olds with tertiary attainment (%)	2024	50.7	44.2	Council Resolution on EEA	45% (2025)
Context	Gender employment gap (%)	2024	8	10.0	ESPR Action Plan	To be halved (2030)
Context	People at risk of poverty or social exclusion (1000s)	2024	2 121	93 333	ESPR Action Plan	15 million decrease (2030)
Context	Employed ICT specialists (1000s)	2024	287.5	10273.6 ^e	2030 Digital Compass	20 million, with convergence between men and women (2030)
VET for the European Education Area						
Progress	Learners in IVET who benefitted from a learning mobility abroad (%) ^{**}	2021	0.4	2.1 ^{dv}	Council Rec on VET	8% (2025)
					Skills Agenda Council Rec Europe on the Move	12% (2030)
Context	Average number of foreign languages learned in IVET	2023	1.4	1.2 ^d		

Available flags: *b* – break in time series, *d* – definition differs, *e* – estimated, *V* – Cedefop estimate.

^{*} Eurostat data (Adult Education Survey, special calculation excluding guided on-the-job training)

^{**} Provisional estimates affected by the COVID-19 pandemic

Source: Cedefop. (n.d.). [European VET policy dashboard](https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/european-vet-policy-dashboard).

⁽⁴⁾ Definitions on the type of indicators is available at <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/european-vet-policy-dashboard/methodology>

6. Conclusion

Between 2020 and 2024, Flanders has taken various steps to implement its priorities set in their National implementation plan.

Promoting VET and increasing participation in lifelong learning has been prioritised in Flanders. Key achievements include the establishment of the Partnership for Lifelong learning with its Action plan making lifelong learning a reality, the launch and ongoing implementation of the STEM Agenda 2030, the expansion of dual learning pathways to adult, and the introduction of innovative tools such as the Individual learning account and the Training Compass app. Moreover, the simplified premium system offered to companies and learners encourages participation in dual learning and apprenticeship programmes.

These are important initiatives, and their full impact might take time to become visible. Considering the latest statistics, continuous or even enhanced effort for this priority is needed. In 2023, the Belgian labour market still faced severe labour shortages and skills mismatches, which were among the highest in the EU, while in 2022, the participation rate of adults in lifelong learning remained low. In 2024, the job vacancy rate was 4.3%, much higher than the EU-27 average rate of 2.4% (Eurostat, 2025b) with significant shortages in both low- and high-skilled jobs across all regions, largely due to the low number of STEM graduates. Migrant background is a significant factor influencing performance. Nearly half of all foreign-born students underperform in mathematics, compared to only one in five students without a migrant background, resulting in a gap of more than 25 pp. Enhancing activation policies to better integrate migrants and other disadvantaged groups into the labour market might be effective to further address skill shortages (European Commission, 2024d; European Commission, 2024b).

The modernisation of VET infrastructure has been accelerated through the adoption of the Digisprong Digital Action Plan in 2020. In 2021 the implementation of the action plan's flagship activities started, which aims to provide schools and learners with enhanced ICT resources and digital learning environments. The integration of the Knowledge Centre for Digital Education into the Department of Education and Training has further strengthened policy development and support for the digital transformation in VET. The adoption of the InnoVET programme, along with the multiple projects implemented under its umbrella, aims to better align the VET offer with labour market needs. Important measures were already taken for this priority, which might have also positively influenced the basic digital skills level in Belgium. In 2023, 59.4% of Belgians had at least basic digital skills, exceeding the EU average of 55.6%. Belgium is advancing rapidly in this area, with digital skills improving by 4.6% annually, well above the EU average growth rate of 1.5%. At this rate, Belgium is on track to meet its national digital skills target before 2030 (European Commission, 2024d).

The professional development of teachers for the digital transition was supported since 2021 through the Flemish Government's Extended Reality (XR) action plan. It provides schools and teachers with necessary equipment, training materials, and professional development opportunities through the XR Academy and an XR lending service. A 2022 collective agreement enhanced induction and ICT support to make the teaching profession

more attractive. Since June 2024, the Digilearn Studio platform further supports educators by offering a collaborative space to design and share digital learning resources, fostering innovation and effective integration of digital teaching methods. Moreover, the introduction of the teacher bonus, the possibility to recognise prior work experience for career changers as well as an improved induction phase for novice teachers, increases the attractiveness of the teaching profession. While these initiatives are significant, their full effect might only become evident in the coming years. Continuous efforts and additional measures may be necessary to further strengthen the teaching profession, enhance its attractiveness, and ensure a sufficient number of qualified teachers for the future (European Commission, 2024d; 2024b).

The priority of quality assurance, transparency and recognition was further enhanced through measures which are based on the comprehensive quality assurance framework for training and validation pathways outside formal education. Between 2020 and 2024, numerous professional qualification programmes and validation pathways have been accredited, with around 40 providers authorised as assessment centres for validation. The Flemish NRP for quality assurance, established in 2021, oversees these processes. In 2023, the VDAB launched the '*Leerjobs*' pilot to support unqualified young jobseekers through work-based learning combined with recognition of prior learning. Additionally, regulations were revised to allow non-formal education providers to offer professional qualification programmes based on partial qualifications, enabling more flexible and tailored learning opportunities. Cross-border cooperation and mobility have been further promoted through the ErasDu project, enriching the learning and professional development of both learners and staff.

Overall, important initiatives were taken between 2020 and 2024 in line with the priorities set in the national implementation plan, while the full effect of some measures will become only visible in the coming years. By maintaining a strong focus on these measures intensifying efforts in certain areas, Flanders is well-positioned to achieve the objectives set in their national implementation plan, and in line with the Council Recommendation on VET and the Osnabrück Declaration.

Abbreviations

AI	Artificial Intelligence
AR	Augmented Reality
BSO	Beroepssecundair Onderwijs [Vocational Secondary Education]
EU	European Union
EQAVET	European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
MR	Mixed Reality
NEETs	[Youths] Not in Education, Employment, or Training
NRP	National Reference Point
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
RTCs	Regionale Technologische Centra [Regional Technology Centres]
SCARA	Selective Compliance Assembly Robot Arm
SERV	Socio-Economic Council of Flanders
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
TSO	Technisch Secundair Onderwijs [Technical Secondary Education]
VDAB	Vlaamse Dienst voor Arbeidsbemiddeling en Beroepsopleiding [Flemish Employment and Vocational Training Service]
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VLOR	Flemish Education Council
VR	Virtual Reality
VZW	Vereniging zonder winstoogmerk [non-profit organisation]
XR	Extended Reality

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