



# Vocational education and training policy briefs 2024

## BELGIUM

French-speaking part



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# Contents

1.	Introduction.....	4
2.	National VET context and challenges .....	4
2.1	National VET context.....	4
2.2	Challenges .....	5
3.	National VET policy priorities.....	6
4.	Main policy developments 2020-24 .....	6
4.1	Enhancing professional certification levels .....	6
4.2	Strengthening digital skills of all citizens .....	6
4.3	Advancing work-based learning.....	9
4.4	Improving lifelong guidance .....	11
4.5	Promoting quality assurance in vocational training .....	12
5.	Statistical information in relation to EU targets.....	13
6.	Conclusion.....	15
	Abbreviations.....	17
	References .....	18
	Web pages and websites.....	19

# 1. Introduction

*This VET policy brief <sup>(1)</sup> produced by Cedefop presents a snapshot of vocational education and training (VET) policy developments for the French speaking part of Belgium, between 2020 and the end of 2024. 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 [national implementation plan](#) of the French speaking part of Belgium. This snapshot informs Cedefop monitoring and analysis on 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, French- and German-speaking. Brussels is a specific case, as both systems, the French-speaking and the Flemish VET systems coexist. Compulsory education covers learners aged 5 to 18 and VET is offered at secondary, post-secondary and tertiary levels. Despite the involvement of multiple authorities in VET, there is political consensus in the decision-making process and VET policies involve social partners in a tradition of social dialogue (Cedefop, 2024a).

In the French-speaking part of Belgium, also known as the Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles (Wallonia-Brussels Federation) or French Community, the Ministry regulates formal education in collaboration with school boards. The Walloon and Brussels Regions oversee vocational training and employment, and regional public training providers regulate the vocational training provision. 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.

Upper secondary education in the VET system of the French-speaking part of Belgium spans four years, offering two main branches: general education and VET. The VET branch includes technical and artistic qualification programmes, leading to an upper secondary diploma and direct access to tertiary education, as well as vocational programmes which focus on practical skills for immediate employment. Additionally, post-secondary vocational follow-up programmes, lasting one year, provide specialisation opportunities and tertiary education access. Both upper and post-secondary programmes can be delivered as school-based or dual programmes, with the latter involving a mix of classroom learning and on-the-job training.

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<sup>(1)</sup> See also the previous edition: Cedefop. (2024). [Vocational education and training policy briefs 2023 – Belgium \(French speaking part\)](#). Cedefop monitoring and analysis of vocational education and training policies.

The VET system of French-speaking part of Belgium also includes apprenticeship programmes for individuals aged 15 to 25, managed by the regional dual training providers, the Walloon institute for apprenticeship and entrepreneurial training in small and medium-sized enterprises (IFAPME) in Wallonia and the Training service for small and medium-sized enterprises (SFPME) in Brussels. Upon certification, apprentices can pursue further training in entrepreneurship or leadership or enter the labour market. At tertiary level, the professional bachelor programme offers graduates the possibility to either qualify for the labour market or continue to master degree programmes.

The adult education system offers formal education programmes at all levels, mirroring qualifications in the regular system and providing specific qualifications unique to this pathway. These programmes are modular and flexible, catering to various adult learning needs and serving as a primary mechanism for reskilling, upskilling, and second-chance education. Regional public services organise vocational training for diverse groups, including the unemployed and employees, leading to various qualifications. This system emphasises validation of prior learning, improving opportunities for jobseekers, workers, and learners in adult and higher education (Cedefop, 2024b; Cedefop & Bruxelles Formation, 2023).

## 2.2 Challenges

Between 2020 and 2024 the French-speaking part of Belgium faced several key challenges. The level of professional diplomas and certifications remained low, with nearly 40% of job seekers considered under-qualified. Employers demand skilled workers and expect public employment services to accurately assess job seekers' competences.

The professional certification landscape is fragmented and complex, with multiple certifications causing confusion and inefficiency. As a result, a major challenge lies in promoting the widespread recognition and certification of citizens' skills throughout their education and professional careers, particularly in vocational training and qualifying education. There is a need to simplify the professional certification system and to ensure that it is clearly recognised by all relevant stakeholders.

At regional level, a polarised qualification structure existed in Brussels between highly qualified individuals and those with low levels of education. Overall, 60% of jobs were held by people with higher education diplomas, but few medium-qualified individuals. In response to challenges from digital and ecological transitions, the region aims to identify and anticipate employers' needs. The Brussels Minister for Employment and Vocational Training planned to collaborate with social partners, to develop training programmes and strategies that address these challenges and support training, qualification, and employment integration pathways. Reducing skills mismatches and increasing participation in lifelong learning - especially among low qualified adults – are critical to adapting to a rapidly changing labour market, characterised by the digital and green transition.

Finally, improving the quality assurance of vocational training to better match labour market needs, increase transparency and foster trust among learners and employers also

represented a significant challenge during this period (Belgium French speaking part, 2022).

### 3. National VET policy priorities

The National implementation plan in VET for the French-speaking part of Belgium was published in 2022 in response to the [2020 Council Recommendation on VET](#) and the [Osnabrück Declaration](#). It identified the following five priorities.

- (a) enhancing professional certification levels;
- (b) strengthening digital skills of all citizens;
- (c) advancing work-based learning;
- (d) improving lifelong guidance;
- (e) promoting quality assurance in vocational training (Belgium, 2022).

### 4. Main policy developments 2020-24

#### 4.1 Enhancing professional certification levels

In the French speaking part of Belgium, some measures have been taken to increase the recognition and certification of citizens' skills throughout their educational and professional careers, particularly in qualifying education and vocational training.

The [Modular vocational educational pathway \(PEQ\)](#) was designed in 2021, approved in July 2022 and is being gradually implemented to replace the previous [Certification by learning outcome](#) system. The training process is organised in learning units that are progressively validated. By 2023, the fourth and seventh-year vocational programmes fully transitioned to PEQ, followed by the fifth-year programmes in 2024. Finally, the sixth-year programmes joined the PEQ system at the beginning of the 2024-25 academic year. These modular programmes aim at improve vocational education by reducing dropout rates, which are closely linked to low qualifications, poor labour market integration, and eventual unemployment (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

Another key objective is to unify the six existing certification systems with a single Certificate of professional competences. This certificate will be jointly recognised by the five authorities responsible for professional certification in the French speaking part of Belgium: Le Forem, IFAPME, Bruxelles Formation, SFPME and the Skills Validation Consortium. Implementing this unified certification presents multiple challenges, as it requires full consensus among stakeholders and legislative updates involving several ministries. After extensive working group discussions, an initial draft agreement was produced in July 2023. This proposal remains under review by the relevant ministries and is pending final approval and completion of this comprehensive initiative (Belgium, 2022).

#### 4.2 Strengthening digital skills of all citizens

Since 2020, several measures were taken to decrease the digital skills divide, which widened during the pandemic outbreak.

In response to the pandemic outbreak in 2020, the Government in the French community has implemented key actions aligned with its [Digital strategy for education](#). The provision of digital equipment was accelerated to ensure that every upper-secondary learner had access to their own device. Additionally, in 2021, a flat-rate subsidy was offered to parents of secondary school learners to help them purchase digital equipment, aiming to guarantee equal access for disadvantaged groups.

Further, through the digital strategy, various measures have been implemented to enhance the [digital skills of teachers](#) in the French Community. In 2020, the HAPPI hybrid learning and teaching platform was launched and made available to all compulsory education establishments in the Wallonia-Brussels Federation, and the deployment of digital learning advisors responsible for supporting teachers and school leaders was accelerated. In 2021, the law reforming continuing vocational training for teachers, which includes provisions for digital training, was introduced and implemented starting from the 2022/23 school year. Since 2023, the education platform 'e-classe' has been providing educational resources and a collaborative working space for teachers, and a self-diagnosis pathway was introduced for teaching staff, consisting of technical, technological, and digital modules. In the same year, a digital skills self-assessment course for learners began as a pilot project with volunteering teachers, aiming to become a standard by the end of 2024. Since the 2023/24 academic year, legal measures require the inclusion of digital skills development in all teachers' initial training, with progressive implementation underway (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

Since 2022, the [Pix platform](#) has been gradually deployed in the public organisations, in education and among all citizens in the French-speaking part of Belgium. Pix is an online service for the diagnosis, development and certification of digital skills, based on the European [DigComp](#) skills framework. In 2024, the Pix Orga (an educational monitoring space) and Pix Certif (certification functionalities) were under development, which will allow institutions to organise and certify completed learning paths. These efforts have led to a [tripling of Pix users in three semesters](#), from 5 900 in early 2023 to 16 200 by the 2024 academic year (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

In 2024, the French Community administration released publications on [Artificial intelligence](#) (Federation Wallonia Bruxelles, 2023a) and [Extended reality](#) (Federation Wallonia Bruxelles, 2023b) to promote the integration of digital technology in education. The Extended reality is accompanied by a [video](#) (Federation Wallonia Bruxelles, 2024) featuring interviews with leading French-speaking scientists, targeting pedagogical teams, learners and wider public.

In February 2024, the French Community launched a [decision-support tool](#), which provides vocational schools with information to support them in planning a coherent and modernised range of training offers, responding to labour shortages (Karno, 2024).

Furthermore, funded by the European Commission's EaSI programme, the [Start digital project](#) (2020-22) aimed to raise the level of basic digital skills in adult education in the French-speaking part of Belgium. The project was led by partnership comprising the main actors of socio-professional integration and targeted learners and jobseekers over 25 with

limited digital skills, especially those with low education, the unemployed and those who are not in employment, education or training (NEETs). The project also strengthened the digital capacity of VET providers and their pedagogical teams by supporting them in adapting format, content, methods and digital tools to learners' needs. It was completed in 2022 and culminated in the launch of the [StartDigital platform](#), which offers educational materials on responsible digital technology. Collaboration among stakeholders continues, while project partners have chosen to follow the European [DigComp](#) framework ([DigComp 2.2](#)), which outlines the digital skills expected of all citizens (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

Moreover, in Wallonia several measures have been implemented to strengthen citizens' digital skills. The [Digital Wallonia 2019-24 strategy](#) aims to enhance infrastructure and digital skills across all demographics by providing training in digital technology in schools and companies. The Walloon region has taken several actions to reduce its digital divide via the digital inclusion plan (*Plan d'Inclusion Numérique*). For example, in 2023 the website '[macartonum.be](#)' was launched to offer an overview of services providing digital assistance. Wallonia also hosted, for the first time, a trade fair in Louvain-la-Neuve in November 2023, which engaged 500 participants involved in promoting digital inclusion. In 2024, Wallonia expanded the offer of digital public spaces in municipalities, providing free or low-cost computer and internet access with professional support to bridge digital divides. The DIGISTART programme, launched under the Recovery Plan, focuses on improving the basic digital skills for jobseekers, aligning with the [DigComp](#) framework. In 2024, 84 accredited providers delivered 182 000 training hours across Wallonia, supported by a budget of EUR 3.5 million (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

Since June 2024, the Digilearn Studio digital learning platform has offered both physical and virtual spaces for professionals in public service education, training, and guidance to share and access resources. This enables them to incorporate digital learning into their teaching practices in innovative, effective, and efficient ways (Karno, 2024).

In 2023, Wallonia enhanced its digital future Industry initiative through the [Digital Future of Industry Programme](#) (*Industrie du future digital Wallonia*), aimed at boosting businesses' adoption of digital technologies. Initially, 370 companies were contacted and introduced to this programme. Support was provided to 104 companies through pre-diagnosis and action plan development, while 32 companies launched digital transformation projects as proof of concept. Additionally, 79 awareness and training events were held. In the same year, Wallonia also established the [Walhub](#) as an European Digital Innovation Hub to accelerate digital transformation in the manufacturing sector.

The Brussels' government approved the [Plan for digital appropriation 2021-24](#) on the 12 February 2021 and its implementation started later that year. The overall objective of the plan was to make Brussels a smart city, increasing citizens' accessibility and basic digital skills. In 2023, [Paradigm](#), the public interest organisation driving digital transformation in the Brussels-Capital Region, strengthened its commitment to digital inclusion in the Brussels Region in line with the plan and launched several initiatives aimed at ensuring that all citizens -regardless of their digital skills or access to technology- can fully benefit from digital opportunities. For example, in 2023, Paradigm accredited six new

Public digital spaces (EPN), providing free access to computers, internet, and basic to advanced IT training to help reduce digital inequality. In 2024, Paradigm released a [White paper](#) examining the main challenges faced in the Brussels-Capital Region and offered recommendations for the next plan, which includes the increasing of funding and professionalisation for EPNs as well as calls for establishing an accessible training and certification system for digital facilitators (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

Bruxelles Formation continuously provides updated digital skills training for jobseekers and early leavers in Brussels through its own [digital training initiative](#). In 2022, its training centres, MolenGeek and BeCode, expanded their digital training offer for Brussels residents. Further, the 35-day Junior Digital Test Engineer (DTE) programme was launched through a collaboration between Sogeti, a technology solutions company specializing in IT services, software testing, and digital transformation, and the Brussels public employment service Actiris, together with Bruxelles Formation. Trainees receive the International Software Testing Qualifications Board (ISTQB) certification upon completion, and Sogeti commits to recruiting at least 80% of them into an individualised in-company training programme, following completion. In the first round, the successful cohort consisted of 11 trainees who secured permanent contracts with Sogeti. The second round, which started in November 2022, included also language courses to better meet Belgian labour market needs. The initiative exemplifies effective public-private collaboration addressing Brussels' digital skills gap (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

In September 2023, the Brussels Region adopted an ordinance requiring the employment service Actiris to assess the language and digital skills of all job seekers, thereby [addressing skills gaps and enhancing their employability](#). This measure addresses the considerable number of jobseekers in Brussels, who lack digital skills and possess only basic proficiency in one of the official languages. Using the assessment data alongside individual aspirations, Actiris works with job seekers to develop personalised action plans that include career guidance, training, and work experience, thereby improving their employability (ReferNet Belgium & Cedefop, 2024b).

Since June 2024, Bruxelles Formation <sup>(2)</sup> has made its [PédaGobox](#), a toolbox for innovation and expanding training practices, available to French-speaking vocational training stakeholders. The toolbox is structured around three key areas covering all aspects of a [hybrid, multimodal training system](#): preparing activities, delivering them, and managing them. Resources for trainers include, for example: 'How do I teach a technical skill face-to-face or remotely?' and 'How can I make my own educational videos?' (ReferNet Belgium & Cedefop, 2024c).

### 4.3 Advancing work-based learning

The Brussels Government and the French Community Commission set as a goal to coordinate employment and vocational training in the context of Go4Brussels 2025 strategy and the 2020 Training Plan. Between 2020 and 2022, several [training and employment](#)

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(2) Bruxelles Formation has two main roles: it serves as a training provider and manages vocational training in the Brussels Region.

centres were set up and developed by public-private partnerships to provide training programmes in ICT, transport and logistics, and construction, including also a work-based learning part (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

Overall, Belgium is committed to enhancing dual learning opportunities. In 2024, the policy declarations for 2024-29 at both the Community and regional levels reaffirmed a strong dedication to [expanding dual learning across all education levels](#). The Steering Committee on Dual Learning in Higher Education, in close collaboration with the [alter4sup](#) project, is currently developing a new legislative framework for dual learning, which is expected to be introduced in the 2026-27 academic year. Supported by funding from the ESF and the government of the French Community, the alter4sup project contributes to promoting and developing dual education in higher education within the Wallonia-Brussels Federation of Belgium, by providing tools and frameworks that enhances its quality, sustainability, and unique identity (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

In Wallonia, several developments took place in the last few years, to enhance work-based learning. In 2020, the [government in Wallonia adopted an action plan](#) to boost vocational training, focusing on the skills needed by companies. The plan coordinated the expertise of participating training providers to develop training courses adapted to current demands. It includes six distinct operational axes focusing on:

- (a) digital and green transition;
- (b) strengthening the link between companies, training institutions and learners;
- (c) creation of new training courses linked to science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM);
- (d) collaboration with third party providers;
- (e) exploitation of their networks and skill centres; and
- (f) strengthening the visibility of lifelong training offer (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

Following severe flooding in the Walloon Region in July 2021, the Walloon Government adjusted the recovery and resilience plan budget, allocating above EUR 737 million to support rebuilding. The construction sector, constituting nearly 13% of jobs in Wallonia, faces a labour shortage intensified by the floods, with around 10 000 vacancies estimated by the Walloon Construction Confederation (Confédération Construction Wallonne, CCW) as of 2022. To address this, the [government boosted dual training in the construction sector](#), by implementing measures such as creating more than 1 000 training positions and offering a maximum [bonus of EUR 2 000 for relevant training \(2021-24\)](#). The IFAPME collaborated with CCW to implement several measures for the construction, wood and electrical engineering sectors to attract more learners, including free tuition, increased monthly wages for learners, modularised certification of training programmes, and enhanced mentor support. A promotional campaign, 'I'm building my future', has helped raise awareness, particularly among young people and women, emphasising the sector's dynamism, innovation, and adaptability to technological challenges (ReferNet Belgium & Cedefop, 2022).

At the end of 2022, IFAPME launched the [ITSLEARNING platform](#), designed for teaching and bringing together all stakeholders in work-based learning. The platform

focuses on sharing tools, resources, and best practices tailored to work-based learning. By the end of 2023, 172 collaboration calls involved trainers, resulting in a library of educational materials for 76 training modules across various sectors. The platform is centred on learners and their training pathway. The tool effectively improves the work-based learning quality by enriching the current pedagogy with its specificities, including the integration of digital skills (Karno, 2024).

In June 2023, the Walloon Government approved the [Decree on the Internship Agreement](#). This establishes a regulatory framework for training under an internship agreement and for professional practice internships within the IFAPME network, as well as for the granting of associated bonuses (Karno, 2024).

Further, in 2023, the Qualification-Employment Strategy (*Stratégie Qualification-Emploi*) was developed by the Minister for Employment and Vocational Training in consultation with the social partners. It aims to effectively address the qualification needs of jobseekers to ensure their long-term integration into the labour market, while also responding to employers' labour demands and shortages in certain occupations. The strategy defines the objectives for Bruxelles Formation, the public body responsible for the vocational training of French-speaking job seekers and workers in Brussels. These include organising and delivering training courses, with a particular focus on [promoting in-company training schemes](#), in alignment with the 'GO4Brussels 2030' Strategy and the 2021-27 European Social Fund (ESF) Operational programme. In consultation with social partners, the Minister for Employment and Vocational Training developed this strategy (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

The Brussels region aims to support the integration of jobseekers into its local labour market and continued rolling out the '[Training-employment pathway](#)' initiative. The programme aims to equip job seekers with the skills they need to facilitate their integration into the labour market, emphasising technical competencies, soft skills, and practical in-company experience. The collaboration with companies increased from eight in 2023 to ten in 2024. The initiative is a joint effort between Bruxelles Formation, Actiris, VDAB Brussels (the Flemish Agency for Employment and Vocational Training), employers, and private sector partners (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

#### 4.4 Improving lifelong guidance

Choosing the right career path is a challenge for many learners. Without [professional orientation, support and guidance](#), selecting the appropriate training programme and study cycle becomes even more difficult. Since 2020, the following developments took place to support learners in choosing their right career path.

In December 2020, the four governments (Wallonia, the French Community, Brussels Region, and the French Community Commission) adopted a memorandum setting out the terms and conditions for the implementation of the lifelong guidance system (OTLAV, *orientation tout au long de la vie*). It aims at ensuring a centralised service for guidance throughout French-speaking Belgium visible to all citizens; moreover, it aims to design and

implement an action plan for the career guidance centres [Cités des métiers](#) <sup>(3)</sup>. In 2021, 12 priority actions were defined in line with the memorandum, including the establishing of a guidance network. The actions are steered by a lifelong guidance strategic steering committee and several working groups started in 2021 to implement the defined actions. In May 2022, the [Charter for Lifelong Guidance system](#) was signed by the Walloon Region, the French Community, the Brussels Region and other stakeholders to ensure coherence and quality in the guidance service offered. In [September 2023](#), the [guidance centres Carrefours des Métiers](#) were officially designated as associated centres of the *Cités des Métiers* in Wallonia (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

Effective from 1 September 2023, Brussels' Public Employment Service [Actiris](#), began conducting voluntary language and digital skills assessments for job seekers to evaluate their proficiency in the region's official languages and English. This assessment, integrated into the job search process and combined with individual career goals, helps design personalized action plans including training, career guidance, and work experience, with a phased rollout expanding from young job seekers to all registered individuals by 2024. The overall aim is to [address skill gaps and improve employment prospects](#) (ReferNet Belgium & Cedefop, 2024b).

Since the end of 2019, the Brussels Centre for the Validation of Tertiary Professions, the Vocational Training Centre of the Braille League and the Consortium for the Validation of Skills have established a partnership aimed at developing and contextualising the skills validation test for visually impaired people for the profession of [reception agent](#). In June 2023, [the first four candidates obtained their qualification for this trade](#), marking a successful pilot that can be adopted by other partners and extended to support people with other disabilities in Brussels (ReferNet Belgium & Cedefop, 2024a).

#### 4.5 Promoting quality assurance in vocational training

Since 2020 few but significant measures were taken to foster a culture of quality assurance across both IVET and CVET systems.

The 2020 Council Recommendation on VET for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness, and resilience calls for fostering a culture of quality assurance within national VET systems. In response, the [National Quality Assurance Reference Point \(NRP\)](#) was established in 2022 in the French-speaking part of Belgium. The NRP acts as a central coordinating body to promote quality assurance practices across the vocational training sector, ensuring alignment with European standards and enhancing transparency and trust in VET provision. In March 2023, the NRP conducted its first peer-led reflection session. It focussed on improving collaboration with stakeholders and better coordinating existing processes in French-speaking Belgium to more effectively address the training and skills demands of the labour market. Recognising the importance of this collaborative approach,

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<sup>(3)</sup> The 3 *Cités des Métiers* in Wallonia, alongside the 12 *Carrefours des Métiers*, is a multi-partner system bringing together stakeholders in guidance, training, integration to the labour market and employment. Since 2014, the *Cités des Métiers* started to bring together qualified staff and documentation to help people build their professional career while providing lifelong guidance.

the partnership agreement was extended for the period 2023-26 (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

**FORMAFORM** was originally established as a partnership between the vocational training actors Le Forem, Bruxelles Formation and IFAPME. Its mission is to support professionals in training, guidance and social professional integration, as well as to provide training for the trainers from these partner institutions. In 2022, FORMAFORM became an autonomous public service, following an agreement between the French Community Commission Cocof and the Walloon Region. Since then, in addition FORMAFORM has also taken on the responsibility of acting as the quality assurance audit authority for vocational training in Wallonia and Brussels (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 <sup>(4)</sup> 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, 2024b).

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 p.p. 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 p.p. 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 p.p. 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 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.

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<sup>(4)</sup> This section presents and discusses mostly the statistical data for the whole country, as available at the European level.

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

Type of indicator <sup>(5)</sup>	Indicator	Last available year	BE	EU-27	Policy Document	EU target (year)
<b>VET for developing a lifelong learning culture</b>						
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 (%) <sup>(*)</sup>	2022	12.5	18.4	Skills Agenda	30% (2025)
Progress	Unemployed adults with a learning experience in the last 4 weeks (%)	2024	17.1 <sup>b</sup>	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 <sup>b</sup>	9.3	Council Resolution on EEA	<9% (2030)
Context	NEET rate for 15-29 year-olds (%)	2024	9.9 <sup>b</sup>	11.0	ESPR Action Plan	9% (2030)
<b>VET for Resilience, transitions, sustainability and excellence</b>						
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 <sup>b</sup>	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 <sup>e</sup>	2030 Digital Compass	20 million, with convergence between men and women (2030)
<b>VET for the European Education Area</b>						
Progress	Learners in IVET who benefitted from a learning mobility abroad (%)**	2021	0.4	2.1 <sup>dv</sup>	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 <sup>d</sup>		

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 Covid19 pandemic

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

<sup>(5)</sup> Definitions on the type of indicators is available at <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/european-vet-policy-dashboard/methodology>

## 6. Conclusion

The priorities defined for the French-speaking part of Belgium have been actively addressed through comprehensive strategies, reforms and projects implemented between 2020 and 2024. These efforts targeted both systemic transformation and improved access, while ensuring coherence among regional authorities and training providers.

Increasing certification levels and strengthening professional pathways remains a priority. The reform of vocational programmes through the PEQ modular structure has further supported individual learning paths and reduced dropout rates. The objective to replace the fragmented certification systems by a single certificate of professional competences marks another important step but is still under review. These developments contribute to improving labour market integration, especially for learners who might otherwise disengage from formal education and training. For the coming years, it will be important to accelerate the full implementation of the single certificate of professional competences and to complete the modularisation of VET programmes.

Significant progress has been made in strengthening citizens' digital skills. Legally, digital training is now mandatory for initial teacher training and needs to be considered in continuing training of teachers and school leaders. Additionally, a wide range of digital initiatives have been implemented across Wallonia and Brussels, targeting learners of initial VET, adult learners as well as pedagogical staff. These initiatives include the expansion of the Pix platform, large-scale investment in training for the unemployed and NEETs, support for teachers' digital competences and business digital transition, the opening of public digital spaces and the launch of innovative tools such as Digilearn Studio and PédaGobox. National strategies and public-private partnerships have helped reduce the digital divide and enhance digital readiness across regions, supported by EU funding instruments. For the coming years, it will be important to continue scaling up digital learning initiatives across formal education, adult learning and training centres, while ensuring inclusive access for all learners and citizens, particularly those in vulnerable situations.

Work-based learning has been promoted and substantially expanded through coordinated action plans, pilot programmes, dual learning schemes and incentive measures in both regions. These include targeted measures for the construction and green sectors and improved cooperation with employers. Moreover, work-based learning was further promoted through the Qualification-employment strategy and ITSLEARNING platform, facilitating work-based learning by sharing tools, resources, and best practices. For the coming years it will be important to further strengthen work-based learning in education, while continued collaboration with social partners, financial incentives, and sectoral strategies responding to labour market shortages might be needed.

Lifelong guidance has been reinforced by formal agreements and institutional partnerships. The national charter and strategic roadmap for guidance, strengthened cooperation through the increasing of the *Cités des métiers* network, and targeted support for vulnerable groups, such as jobseekers or persons with disabilities, help to ensure inclusive and coherent lifelong guidance services. For the coming years, further strengthening of the lifelong guidance systems might be needed, as well as reinforcing

cross-regional coordination and outreach to diverse user groups, with particular attention to digital tools and inclusion.

Quality assurance across IVET and CVET has advanced through the establishment of the National Reference Point and the transformation of FORMAFORM into a public service with enhanced auditing and coordination capacities. These reforms aim to increase transparency, effectiveness and responsiveness in the delivery of IVET and CVET, supporting alignment with European standards.

Overall, there is a growing alignment between VET policy design and labour market needs. Encouraging progress has been made in reducing early school leaving and NEET rates as well as ensuring higher employment among IVET graduates. However, challenges persist. There is still a need to increase of the adult participation in lifelong learning - particularly among low-qualified individuals- as well as to raise the proportion of VET learners with a work-based learning experience. Ongoing efforts are required to expand outreach, provide tailored support, and further integrate digital, green and inclusive dimensions into the VET system.

Labour shortages in Belgium rank among the highest in the EU, with a job vacancy rate of 4.6% in 2023. The majority of these vacancies are in technical fields, including healthcare and STEM roles, which are crucial for advancing the green transition. These shortages pose a challenge to Belgium's competitiveness. Addressing them requires increasing the number of STEM graduates, which is much below the EU average and enhancing the labour market relevance of VET in technical professions (European Commission, 2024a).

By building on recent achievements and addressing further these policy priorities, the French-speaking part of Belgium can strengthen its VET system, support economic competitiveness, and ensure that all learners are equipped for the challenges and opportunities of the future.

## Abbreviations

CCW	Confédération Construction Wallonne [Walloon Construction Confederation]
DTE	Digital Test Engineer
EPN	Public digital spaces
ESF	European Social Fund
IFAPME	Institut wallon de formation en alternance et des indépendants et des petites et moyennes entreprises [Walloon institute for apprenticeship and entrepreneurial training in small and medium-sized enterprises]
ISTQB	International Software Testing Qualifications Board
NEET	Not in employment, education or training
NRP	National Quality Assurance Reference Point
OTLAV	<i>Orientation tout au long de la vie</i> [the lifelong guidance system]
PEQ	<i>Parcours de l'enseignement qualifiant</i> [Modular vocational educational pathway]
SFPME	Service de la Formation des Petites et Moyennes Entreprises [training service for small and medium-sized enterprises]
STEM	Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics
VET	Vocational education and training
VDAB	Vlaamse Dienst voor Arbeidsbemiddeling en Beroepsopleiding [Flemish Agency for Employment and Vocational Training]

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