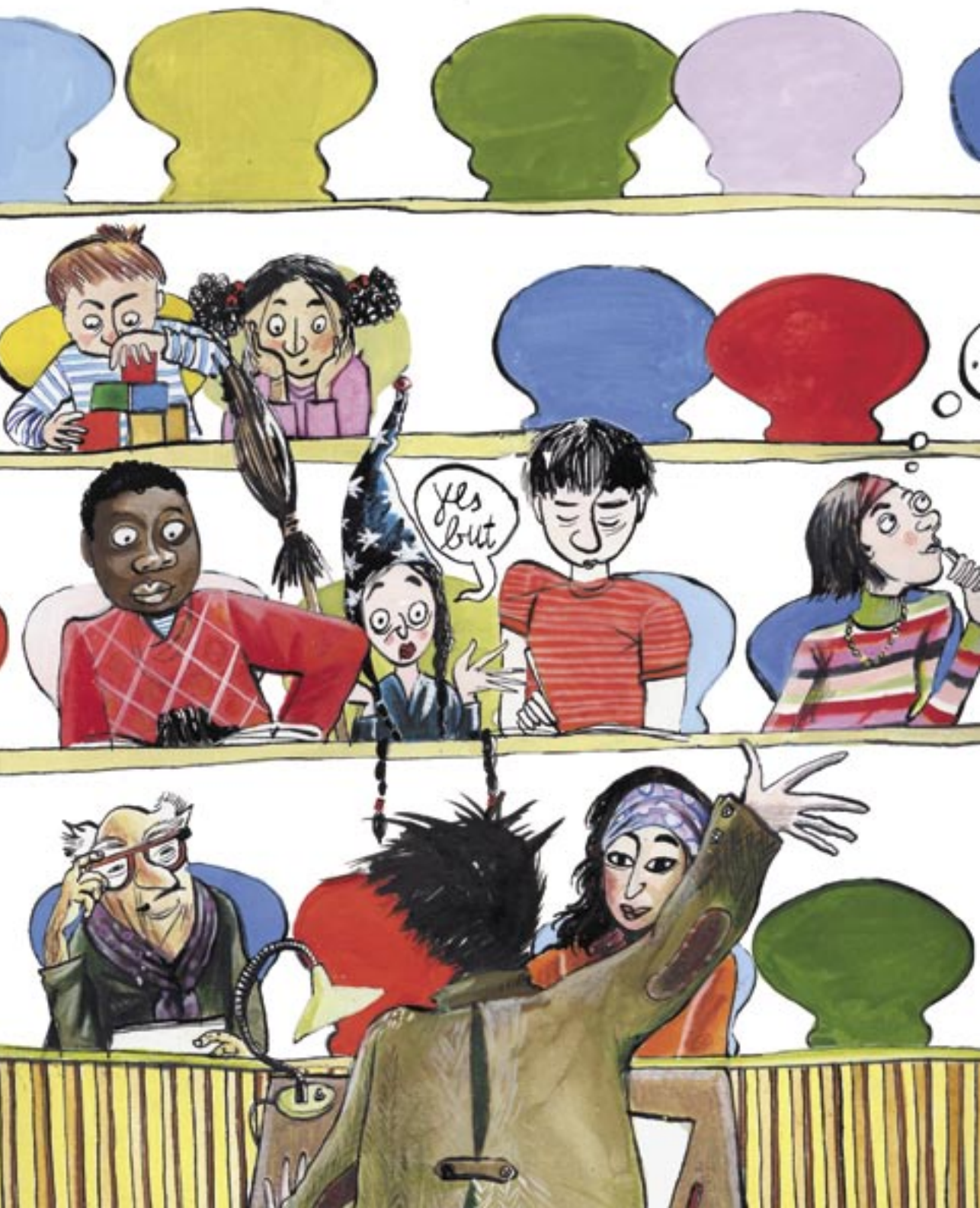


EDUCATION IN FLANDERS

The Flemish educational landscape in a nutshell / 2005



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1. THE POSITION OF FLANDERS



1.1 Flanders in Belgium and Europe

Flanders lies in the northern part of Belgium. It has a central position in the middle of the most important West European industrial regions. Flanders has almost six million inhabitants. Their official language is Dutch. Brussels is the capital of Flanders, but also of Belgium and of Europe.

1.2 Flanders as a federated state

The name 'Flanders' actually covers two meanings. Flanders encompasses the Flemish Community as well as the Flemish Region.

- The **Flemish Region** covers the Dutch language area with the provinces of West and East Flanders, Antwerp, Limburg and Flemish-Brabant.

The Flemish Region is competent with regard to the so-called territorial issues. These are policy areas such as the economy, infrastructure, agriculture, the environment and employment

- The **Flemish Community** includes the inhabitants of the Dutch-language area and the Dutch speakers in Brussels.

The Flemish Community is competent for the so-called person-related issues. These are policy areas in which the provision of services to the people is closely related

to the language in which they have to be carried out. Specifically they include education, welfare, public health and culture.

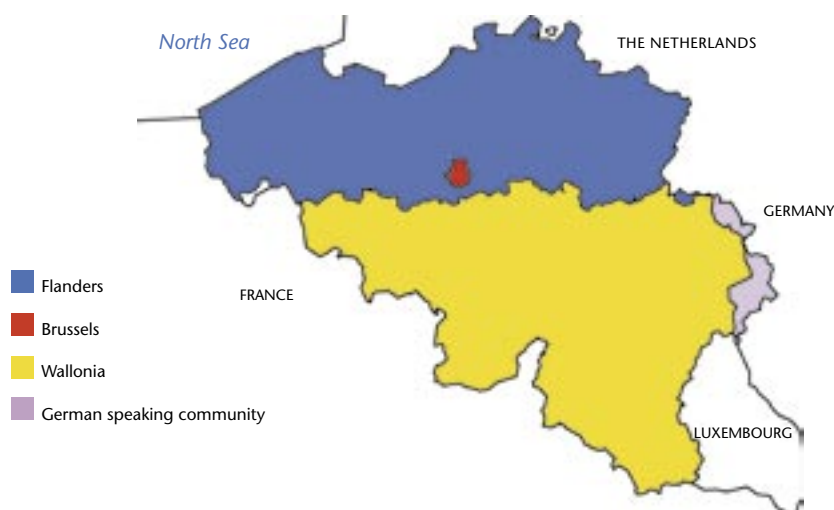
Flanders has opted for combining the parliament and government of both the Flemish Region and the Flemish Community in a single Flemish Parliament and a single Flemish Government.

1.3 Maximum scope, including the scope for educational issues

The process of federalisation was a slow process of political debate, which took almost a quarter of a century. Between 1970 and 1993, the federal parliament approved four state reforms. During this period, the federated states were granted, step by step, their own government, their own parliament and their own administration. The powers of the federated states were systematically enhanced.

The competence for education lies with the communities. That is why the Flemish, French as well as the German-speaking community have their own educational system.

Within the Flemish Government, the Flemish Minister of Education and Training is responsible for almost every aspect of education policy, from nursery to university education.



The minister heads the Education Department of the Ministry of the Flemish Community¹. Although education is a federated matter, the federal authorities still have some competencies. Indeed, this authority decides on the start and the end of compulsory education, the minimum conditions for obtaining a diploma and the education staff pensions.

1.4 Flemish education at regional, continental and world level

Flanders attaches great importance to participating in international programmes. We distinguish two categories:

- bilateral or multilateral collaboration with other countries. For example, Flanders co-operates with the Netherlands via the GENT agreements and the Cross-border Educational Co-operation project (GROS). Flanders also concluded some forty cultural agreements and co-operation agree-

ments with countries such as Russia, Morocco and South-Africa. In Belgium, the three communities exchange pupils via the special programme called 'Klavertje Drieprogramma'

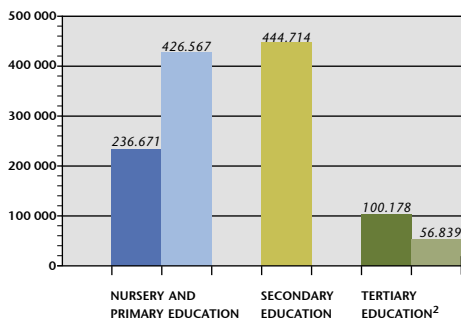
- Flanders encourages participation in two specific education and training programmes set up by the European Union: the Socrates programme and the Leonardo da Vinci programme.

The Education Department also participates in the activities of the Council of Europe, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and UNESCO.

1.5 A small region with a large school population

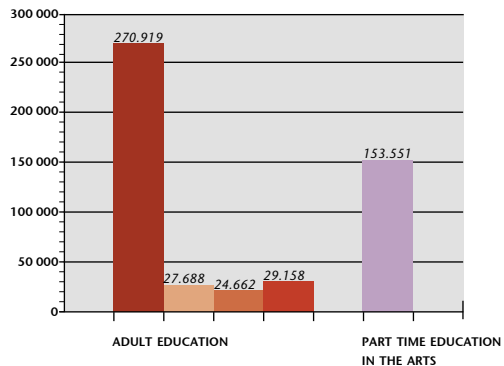
The graphs shown below provide information about the school population in every level of education of full-time education as well as in continuing education.

GRAPH 1:
School population in full-time education per level of education (2003 - 2004 school year)



- nursery education
- primary education
- secondary education
- education in colleges of higher education³
- university education

GRAPH 2:
School population in continuing education (2003 - 2004 school year)



- continuing education (secondary)⁴
- continuing education (higher)⁵
- adult basic education⁶
- BIS (Supervised individual studying)⁷
- part time education in the arts

¹ Through Better Administrative Policy (BBB), the innovative project of the Flemish administration, the Education Department will be given a new name 'Flemish Ministry of Education and Training'.

² Only initial courses.

³ From the 1999 - 2000 academic year, only principal enrolments are counted at colleges of higher education.

⁴ The number of course participants in the 1/02/2003 - 31/01/2004 period.

⁵ The number of course participants in the 1/02/2003 - 31/01/2004 period.

⁶ The data on basic education refer to the 2002 - 2003 year of operation.

⁷ The data on BIS refer to the 2003 calendar year.

2. EDUCATION IN FLANDERS

2.1 General principles

2.1.1 Compulsory education for all children from six to eighteen

The Belgian Constitution provides that everyone has a right to education, thus respecting the fundamental rights and freedoms. In order to guarantee this right for all children, there is **compulsory education**.

Compulsory education starts on 1 September of the year in which a child reaches the age of 6, and lasts 12 full school years. A pupil has to comply with compulsory education until the age of fifteen or sixteen. Afterwards only part-time compulsory education is applicable (= a combination of part-time learning and working). However, most young people continue to attend full-time secondary education.

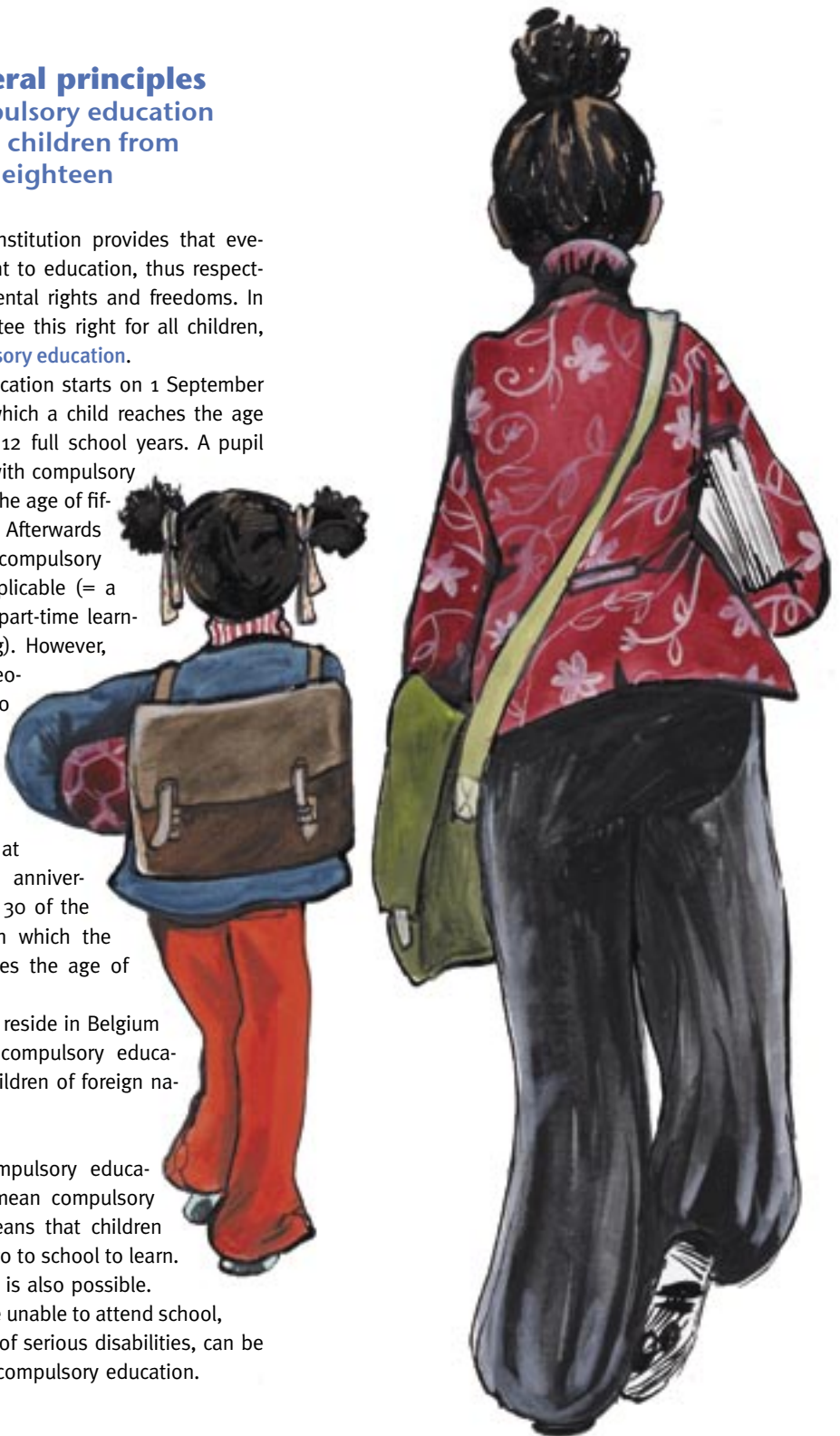
Compulsory education ends at the eighteenth anniversary or on June 30 of the calendar year in which the youngster reaches the age of 18.

All children who reside in Belgium are subject to compulsory education, i.e. also children of foreign nationality.

In Belgium, compulsory education does not mean compulsory schooling. It means that children do not have to go to school to learn.

Home education is also possible.

Children who are unable to attend school, mainly because of serious disabilities, can be exempted from compulsory education.





The Belgian Constitution also provides that access to education is **free of charge** up to the end of compulsory education. Primary and secondary schools that are funded or subsidised by the government may therefore not demand any fees. Access to Flemish nursery education is also free of charge, although it is not covered by compulsory education.

2.1.2 Freedom of education

Freedom of education is a constitutional right in Belgium. In other words, every natural person or legal person has the right to organise education and establish institutions for this purpose.

The concept of the **governing body** (or school board) is a key concept in the organisation of education in Flanders. The governing body is responsible for one or more schools. The governing body can take the shape of an authority, a natural person or a moral person/moral persons.

The governing bodies have a wide-ranging autonomy. However, schools that want government recognition or financial support from the government must meet the attainment targets, be adequately equipped and have sufficient teaching materials. They must be established in buildings, which are habitable, safe and sufficiently tidy, etc.

The constitution also guarantees the parents' freedom of choice. Parents and children must have access to a school of their choice within a reasonable distance from their home. Recent legislation makes this freedom of choice explicit and protects it (see point 2.4.2).

2.1.3 Educational networks

In many cases the educational networks, as the representative association of governing bodies, take over some of the responsibilities of the governing bodies. They draw up

their own curriculum and timetables. This means that the governing bodies concerned surrender some of their autonomy to the networks.

Traditionally, a distinction is made between three educational networks:

- **community education** is education organised by a public body called 'Flemish Community Education' acting under the authority of the Flemish Community. The constitution provides that community education must be neutral. This means that the religious, philosophical or ideological convictions of parents and pupils must be respected
- **subsidised publicly run schools** are municipal education institutions organised by the municipalities as well as provincial education institutions organised by the provincial administrations. The governing bodies of this education network are united in two umbrella organisations, the Educational Secretariat of the Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities (OVSG), and the Flemish Provincial Education (POV)
- **subsidised privately run schools** deliver education organised by a private person or private organisation. The governing body is often a non-profit-making organisation (VZW). Privately run education mainly consists of catholic schools. They are associated in the umbrella body called Flemish Secretariat for Catholic Education (VSKO). Furthermore, protestant, Jewish, orthodox, Islamic, etc. schools also exist. In addition to these denominational schools, there are also schools, which are not affiliated to a particular religion. Examples of these are the Freinet schools, Montessori schools or Steiner schools, which adopt particular educational methods and are also known as 'method schools'.



A small number of schools in Flanders are not recognised by the government. These are the so-called **private schools**, which are not financed or subsidised by the government.

Education that is organised for and by the government (community education and municipal and provincial education) is known as

publicly run education. Recognised education organised on private initiative is called **privately run education**.

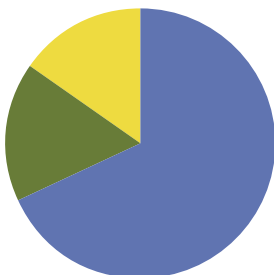
The table below shows the distribution of pupils across the different educational networks. It reveals that the great majority of Flemish pupils attend subsidised (privately run) education.



DIAGRAM 1:

Distribution of pupils across the networks in primary and secondary education (2003 - 2004 school year)

- subsidised privately run education: 68.30 %
- subsidised publicly run education: 16.52 %
- community education : 15.18 %



2.1.4 Funding education

Strictly speaking, the Flemish education budget expressed in available policy credits amounted to 7,86 billion EUR in 2004. This accounts for 42.64 % of the total Flemish budget and represents an average nominal increase of 4 % per year since 1989. The 2004 budget increased by 3.6 % compared to 2003.

DIAGRAM 2:

The education budgets per level of education (2004)

- nursery and primary education: 32.38 %
- secondary education: 41.04 %
- education provided by colleges of higher education: 7.81 %
- university education: 9.56 %
- continuing education: 4.78 %
- regardless of levels of education: 4.44 %

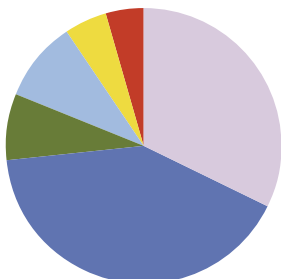
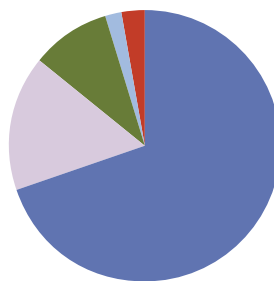


DIAGRAM 3:

The education budgets for every category of expenditure (2004)

- salaries: 69.99 %
- operation: 15.95 %
- tertiary education: 9.47 %
- investments: 2.04 %
- others 2.55 %



2.1.5 Autonomy

Flemish policy makers have tried to give a new impetus to education by placing greater responsibility on education providers and by making pupils, students and parents accountable as well, as far as possible. This process of local accountability has been introduced at every level of education. Colleges of higher education and universities are further along the way than primary and secondary schools are.

As a consequence of the same trend, the organisation of community education was removed from the direct authority of government in 1989. This remit was placed on autonomous administrative bodies. In 1998 the authorities continued to proceed along the same track by giving broader responsibilities to schools and schools groups.

2.1.6 The legal position of staff

The legal position of staff guarantees their legal security and provides a certain degree of job security. It contains the basic rules related to recruitment, appointment, selection, promotion and discipline. This means that careers of staff in primary, secondary and special education, part-time art education, continuing education, CLBs and boarding schools are developed within the limits imposed by the acts on legal position of 27 March 1991 for subsidised education and community education. For staff at colleges of higher education and universities a separate legal position was approved.

Once a member of staff is appointed, this appointment can be turned into a permanent appointment under certain conditions. A **permanent appointment** guarantees job and salary security. It also gives the member of staff the right to a whole series of systems of leave, sick leave, and a state pension.

Flemish schools have become increasingly autonomous in implementing their own personnel policy. They are encouraged to implement an HRM policy based on supervision, encouragement and monitoring.



2.1.7 Organisation of the school and academic year

For nursery, primary and secondary education, the **school year** starts on 1 September and ends on 31 August in theory. However, because of the summer holidays (1 July up to and including 31 August), the school year ends on 30 June in practice.

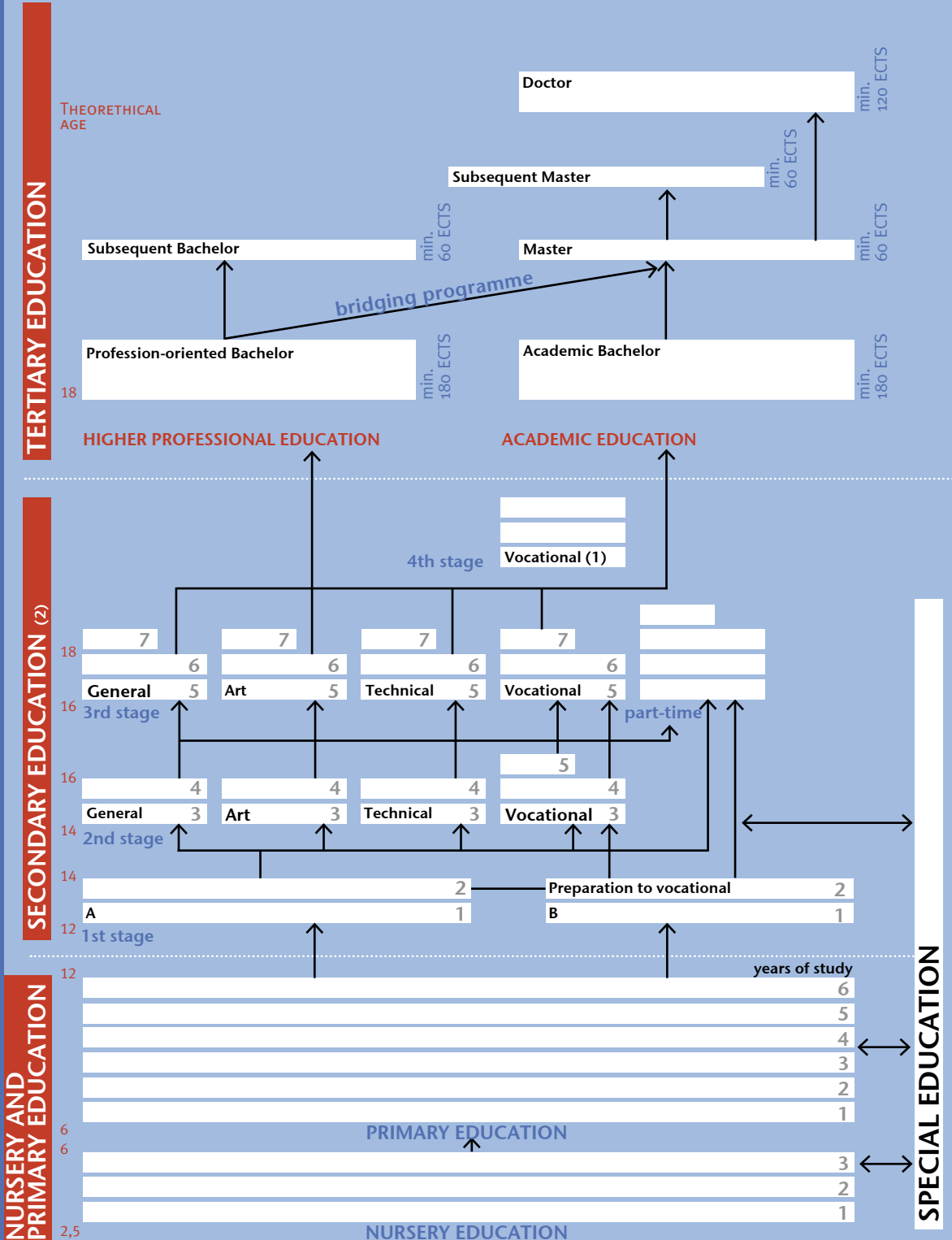
In tertiary education, the **academic year** starts between 1 September and 1 October. The academic year ends on the day before the start of the next academic year.

Up to the 2004 - 2005 academic year, a system of study years is applied, one academic year coinciding with one year of study. From the 2005 - 2006 academic year onwards, the student enrolls in one or more autonomous course components.⁸ He/she chooses for the already existing educational programme of 60 credits per academic year or for a flexible combination of course components (= less than 60 credits per academic year).

⁸ Each course component comprises minimum 3 credits. One credit corresponds with 25 to 30 hours of education and other study activities.

2.2 Levels of education

2.2.1 Structure of education⁹



(1) All students who have successfully passed the 3rd stage or passed an entry test, have access to the 4th stage of vocational education.

(2) Modular education is not divided in stages and years of study and thus is not represented in the diagram.

⁹ In addition to the levels of education included in the diagram, there are also types of education related to lifelong learning (part-time education in the arts and adult education, continuing education, supervised individual study (BIS), and adult basic education).

2.2.2 Nursery and primary education

2.2.2.1 Structure and organisation

‘Basisonderwijs’ comprises both nursery and primary education.

Nursery and primary schools provide nursery as well as primary education, an autonomous nursery school only provides nursery education, and an autonomous primary school only provides primary education.

Since 1 September 2003 a new structure, a school cluster, has been operational in nursery and primary education. This partnership between several schools adds to a more effective management of means and extends the scope of the separate schools.

There is mainstream and special nursery and primary education.

Nursery education is available for children from 2.5 to 6 years.

Between the ages of 2.5 and 3 years, children can start **mainstream nursery education** at only 6 times in the school year: at the first school day after each holiday period and the first school day in February.

Once the young child has reached the age of 3, he/she can start school at any time in the school year.

The school entry dates don't apply to special nursery education.

Mainstream primary education is aimed at children from 6 to 12 and comprises 6 consecutive years of study.

The start of primary education normally coincides with the start of compulsory education (= the age of 6). This is also the age at which the few children who do not have received nursery education, (normally) start primary school.

Special nursery and primary education is aimed at children who need special help, temporarily or permanently. This can be because





these children are suffering from a physical or mental disability, have serious behavioural or emotional problems, or serious learning difficulties. Special nursery and special primary education consist of 8 types, adapted to the educational and developmental needs of a particular group of pupils.

In principle, special primary education lasts seven years.

Integrated nursery and primary education is the result of co-operation initiatives between mainstream nursery and primary education and special education. This education is aimed at making disabled children or children with learning or educational difficulties attend classes or activities in a school for mainstream education, with assistance from special education. This may be temporary or permanent and may concern some of the lessons or all of the lessons.

The number of teachers in nursery and primary education depends on the total number of **teaching periods allocated for funding purposes**. This means the total number of teaching periods organised in a school that is funded or subsidised by the government.

These teaching periods are calculated on the basis of the numbers of pupils on a particular count date and the supplementary teaching periods.

Apart from the number of teaching periods, schools in mainstream nursery education receive a **number of periods** to call in child carers. They support nursery teachers and optimise the way in which the young child is taken care of.

Finally, the government allocates to each school a **funding envelope** for management and support staff. These funding envelopes are meant for special needs (only in mainstream nursery and primary education), the co-ordination of ICT policy and the development of administrative support.

The government does not impose any minimum or maximum numbers with regard to the number of pupils per class. The schools decide for themselves how they divide the pupils into groups. Although there are other possible ways of organising, most nursery and primary schools choose a year group system. In most cases, every class has its own (nursery) teacher.



2.2.2.2 Contents

Although **nursery education** is not compulsory, almost all children receive nursery education in Flanders. The fact that children can go to school at a very early age as compared to other countries, is a special stimulus to children from deprived backgrounds.

Nursery education tackles every aspect of the multifaceted education of children and encourages spontaneous growth into maturity so that pupils are ready to move up to primary school. The child is taught skills (such as language acquisition, motor development, social skills, ...) and an initial way of exploring the world. Primary education continues to build on this process.

Since 1 September 1998, the developmental objectives have been applied in mainstream nursery education.

In mainstream **primary education**, the educational provision covers the same areas as mainstream nursery education, and wherever possible, also in an interrelated way. However, mathematical introduction is replaced by a real mathematics curriculum content. Moreover, attention is also paid to cross-curricular themes such as 'learning to learn' and 'social skills'.

Since 1 September 1998, attainment targets have been applied in mainstream primary education.

To special nursery and primary education developmental objectives apply. Currently, developmental objectives have already been drawn up for types 1, 2, 7 and 8.

At the end of primary education, pupils who have achieved the curriculum targets receive a certificate of primary education. Also in special primary education children can obtain, in certain cases, a certificate that is equivalent to the certificate gained in mainstream primary education.





2.2.3 Secondary education

Secondary education is aimed at young people aged 12 to 18. In principle, all schools in secondary education are open to boys and girls. Indeed, a school is not allowed to refuse children on account of their gender.

Since 1989, **full-time secondary education** has been organised in a **uniform system**.

This uniform structure comprises stages, types of education and study disciplines. The definitive choice of subjects is postponed until the second stage so that pupils are first introduced to as many subjects as possible.

The majority of teaching periods in the **first stage** is devoted to the core curriculum.

From the **second stage**, we distinguish four different education forms. Within one of these education forms, the pupil opts for a particular course of study. Below we try to shed a light on the four education types:

- **general secondary education** (ASO), places an emphasis on broad general education, which provides a very firm foundation for passing on to tertiary education
- **technical secondary education** (TSO), places a special emphasis on general and technical/theoretical subjects. After TSO, young people can exercise a profession or pass on to tertiary education
- **secondary education in the arts** (KSO), combines a broad general education with active art education. After KSO, young people can exercise a profession or go on to tertiary education
- **vocational secondary education** (BSO) provides practice-oriented education in which young people learn a specific occupation in addition to receiving general education.

In the second and **third stage** there is a common and an optional part. In the optional part, the core curriculum is supplemented with a broad range of possible subjects. In the third

stage, the specific education can be further narrowed down with a view to the ultimate choice of profession or possible educational pathways in tertiary education.

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

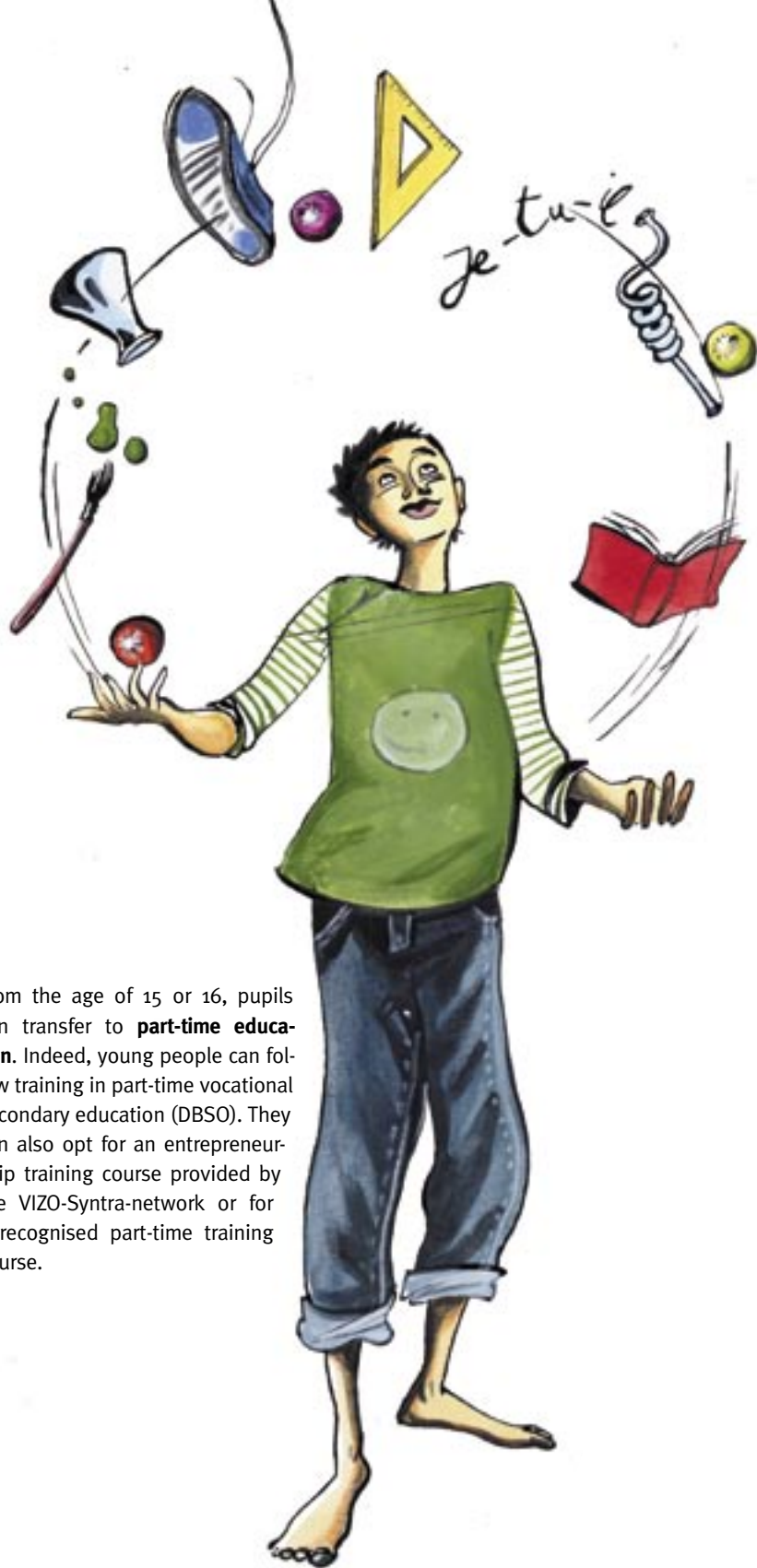
A pupil gains the certificate of secondary education after successfully completing six years of ASO, TSO, or KSO or seven years of BSO¹⁰. With a certificate of secondary education from any school, type of education or course of study, a young person has unrestricted access to tertiary education.

Young people whose physical, psychological, social or intellectual development is hampered by a disability, or learning or behavioural difficulties, can receive **special education**. These young people temporarily or permanently need special assistance and education adapted to their needs.

The aim is to integrate the pupil as far as possible in the educational environment and in society, by means of an individual educational and teaching provision. The years in special secondary education (BuSO), rarely coincide with the school years in mainstream secondary education. Indeed, a pupil only passes on to the next 'learning stage' when he/she is ready for this. The types of education that exist in special primary education (see 2.2.2.1) are the same as those in secondary education. The exception is type 8, which is not organised at the level of secondary education. In special secondary education, types of education are organised in accordance with the type of disability and the possibilities of the pupil.

Young people with a disability can also be admitted to a school for mainstream secondary education through the system of **integrated education (GON)**. They are helped by experts from special education.

¹⁰ For further details: see the diagram of the educational structure (p. 13).



From the age of 15 or 16, pupils can transfer to **part-time education**. Indeed, young people can follow training in part-time vocational secondary education (DBSO). They can also opt for an entrepreneurship training course provided by the VIZO-Syntra-network or for a recognised part-time training course.



2.2.4 Tertiary education

The higher education reform Act of 4 April 2003 thoroughly changed tertiary education in Flanders. The Act contains three major lines of action: the introduction of the bachelor-master structure, interinstitutional co-operation between a university and one or more colleges of higher education and the accreditation of training programmes. Below we will explain the first two lines of action. The accreditation of training programmes is discussed in point 2.3.4.2 (quality control and promotion).

2.2.4.1 Associations

An association is inter-institutional co-operation between one university and one or more colleges of higher education. Associations facilitate improved interaction between education and research in the academic bachelor courses and the master courses provided at colleges of higher education.

There are five associations in Flanders:

- the K.U. Leuven Association
- the Ghent University Association
- the Antwerp University Association
- Brussels university association
- the universiteit - hogescholen Limburg association.

2.2.4.2 The introduction of the bachelor-master structure

The colleges of higher education and universities are gradually introducing the bachelor-master structure from the 2004 - 2005 academic year onwards.

Higher professional education only offers bachelor courses and is only provided at colleges of higher education.

Academic education consists of bachelor courses and master courses. Academic education is provided at universities and at colleges of higher education operating within the framework of an association.

The educational provision in tertiary education is laid down in the Higher education register. This register is annually updated.

From the 2004 - 2005 academic year onwards, higher education provides five possible programmes of study. These courses are set out below.

There are two kinds of **bachelor courses**: the professional and the academic bachelor course.

Only colleges of higher education offer **professional bachelor courses**. These courses are mainly geared towards professional practice. Their aim is to teach students general and specific knowledge and competencies that are necessary for an autonomous exercise of one specific profession or a group of professions.

Students who have completed a professional bachelor course, can take a **subsequent bachelor course**. This further training programme aims at developing an in-depth understanding or specialisation in the field of the competencies acquired during the bachelor course. Both colleges of higher education (within the framework of an association) and universities offer **academic bachelor courses**. These courses are intended to make students pass on to the master course.

The study volume of a bachelor course is at

least 180 ECTS credits. This corresponds with three years of full-time studying. The study volume of a subsequent bachelor course is at least 60 ECTS credits. This takes one year of full-time study.

Students who want to start a bachelor course or a subsequent bachelor course, have to satisfy specific entry requirements.

Apart from the general and specific entry requirements, an admission test designed to gauge the students' artistic talents is mandatory for the following disciplines: visual and audio-visual arts, music and performing arts. Students proposing to enter medicine or dentistry have to sit an entrance examination.

Students successfully completing a bachelor course and a bachelor after bachelor course earn a diploma.

The **master courses** are offered by universities and colleges of higher education within the framework of an association. They are academic although some master courses may be professionally-oriented.

Master courses are intended to bring students to an advanced level of knowledge and competencies that are typical of scientific or artistic functioning in general and of a specific domain of sciences or arts in particular. This knowledge and these competencies are necessary for autonomously exercising a profession or group of professions.

A master course can be followed by a further training programme called a **subsequent master course**. This training programme aims at developing an in-depth understanding or specialisation in the field of the competencies acquired during the master course.

The study volume of a master course is at least 60 ECTS credits. This takes one year of full-time study. This also applies to a subsequent master course.

A diploma of an academic bachelor course is a general prerequisite for entry to a master course.

A professionally-oriented bachelor can take a





master course after completion of a **bridging programme**.

At least a master diploma is required for entering a subsequent master course.

Students having completed a master course and a subsequent master course earn a diploma.

A **doctoral programme** is focused on the preparation of a doctoral thesis. This doctoral course is concluded with a certificate. A doctorate based on a thesis concludes with the academic degree of 'doctor' (after a public defence of the thesis). Only universities are allowed to deliver this doctorate degree.

The **postgraduate courses** are designed for students who want to strengthen their competencies or attain specialised expertise in the competencies acquired in the bachelor or master programme. Both colleges of higher education and universities can organise these courses.

A postgraduate course is concluded with a certificate.

Continuing education comprises a wide range of in-service and further training programmes within the context of lifelong learning. Continuing education leads to a certificate.

At present a new act on **teacher training** is being prepared. Until it is passed, the situation is as follows.

The former three year teacher training courses of one cycle that qualified nursery teachers, primary teachers and lower secondary school teachers at colleges of higher education are transformed into professionally-oriented bachelor courses.

Some advanced teacher training courses that have a study volume of at least 60 credits are transformed into a subsequent bachelor course.

Colleges of higher education organising academic bachelor and master courses in com-

mercial sciences and business studies, visual and audio-visual arts, music and performing arts can complete these courses with a teacher training course. They can be organised simultaneously or after the master course. This teacher training course leads to the diploma of qualified upper secondary school teacher. It is a teaching qualification for the second, third and fourth stages of secondary education.

Universities also provide teacher training programmes based on the same concept. These programmes can be organised following on all courses of all disciplines.

2.2.5 Continuing education

2.2.5.1 Part-time education in the arts (DKO)

Part-time education in the arts is aimed at the artistic education of children and adults and, in doing so, at providing a contribution to their personal development.

DKO is a supplementary form of education aimed at children, young people and adults. Participants enrol voluntarily and pay an enrolment fee.

In part-time education in the arts there are four different disciplines: visual arts, music, wordcraft and dance.





Every discipline has its own structure, with levels and options that are laid down by law. Children can start dance and visual arts education from the age of 6. For the disciplines of music and wordcraft the starting age is 8. Upon successfully completing every level, a certificate indicating the level achieved is awarded.

2.2.5.2 Adult education

In Flanders there are several publicly funded education, training and developmental provision schemes for adults.

Within part-time adult education, 3 different actors can be distinguished: continuing education (OSP), supervised individual study (BIS) and adult basic education.

With more than 250,000 course participants, **continuing education** is the most important pillar in adult education.

OSP is education that supplements or is separate from the initial educational career of course participants and aims to impart knowledge, improve skills and attitudes. This can be useful to function in society, participate in further education, practice a profession or master a language. By attending continuing education, course participants may obtain a recognised diploma, certificate or qualification.

OSP participants must have finished full-time compulsory education. For some training programmes, specific entry requirements apply. The course participant pays an enrolment fee.

Continuing education is provided in **centres for adult education** which are recognised and funded by the authorities.

The provision of continuing education is very varied and broad. It is organised at the level of secondary education (33 areas of study) and at the level of one-cycle higher education (8 categories). There are **linear courses** (years of study) and **modular courses** (modules).

Supervised individual study (BIS) makes individual study possible. BIS bridges distances, can be spread over time, and above all, is very flexible. The course participant can decide individually on his/her own pace of study.

BIS education is in fact correspondence education and uses printed courses supplemented with the necessary educational materials. Since October 2003, BIS has also been on offer via internet.

A BIS course consists of a number of learning packages and homework tasks. A mentor, who will provide also extra explanation where it is needed, sees to the correction of homework tasks. The time needed to complete a BIS course depends on a number of factors: the number of learning packages per course, the volume of the learning package, the level of difficulty of the subject matter, the time available to the participant to study, etc. However, the maximum time within which a BIS course must be completed is three years. Access to this type of education is completely free. No special conditions are imposed in terms of age or certificates acquired. Only a modest enrolment fee has to be paid. At present BIS covers 7 disciplines: foreign languages, Dutch, computer studies, economics, law, human sciences and technology.

A number of people in Flanders tend to have reading, writing and numeracy problems. Or they may lack other basic skills that are necessary to cope in our demanding society. **Basic education** focuses on all adults who need a basic training in order to fully participate in society or follow further training. Due to a lack of schooling or to limited schooling, these people do not have enough basic knowledge, skills, and attitudes. In this way the government wishes to contribute to combating the divisions in society.

In recent years, Flanders has set up a sound basic education network. The 29 **centres for basic adult education** try to provide a broad and varied range of basic education pro-

grammes: languages, mathematics, social orientation, ICT, introduction in French and English and stimulation and student counselling activities.

In contrast with continuing education and BIS, courses in basic education are free of charge.

Since September 2004, there are 8 **Dutch Language Houses** in Flanders. There is a Dutch Language House in each Flemish province and in the towns of Antwerp, Brussels and Ghent.

Dutch Language Houses themselves do not organise any 'Dutch language as a second language' courses (NT2), but are partnerships between the NT2 education providers, the

Flemish Employment Agency (VDAB), the welcome offices and local authorities.

Non-native Dutch speaking adults can turn to the Dutch Language Houses for information on the NT2 course provision. Dutch Language Houses also co-ordinate the intake, testing and choice of provision that is best suited to meet the needs of the course participant.

Recently Dutch Language Houses got a specific remit in the framework of the Flemish civic integration policy. Together with the welcome offices and VDAB, Dutch Language Houses ensure effective services to non-native Dutch speaking newcomers.





2.3 Support and quality control

2.3.1 Pupil Guidance Centres (CLBs)

The Pupil guidance centre or CLB is a service funded by the government, which pupils, parents, teachers and school management teams can consult for information, help or guidance. The CLB monitors the welfare of pupils. It also plays an important role in the contacts between pupils, parents, the school and welfare and health institutions.

CLB guidance is free of charge and is based on four important pillars:

- learning and studying
- the school career
- preventive health care
- social and emotional development.

In this supervision the pupil takes a central place. The guidance happens in an atmosphere of trust and dialogue. In principle, the initiative always comes from the applicant. Therefore the supervision only starts when a pupil or parent has taken an initiative in this respect. If a school asks the CLB to supervise a pupil, the centre will always first expressly ask for the parents' consent (for a pupil under the age of 14), or the consent of the pupil him/herself (from the age of 14).

The supervision provided by the CLB has a multi-disciplinary character and focuses particularly on pupils with learning difficulties due to their social background and situation. The CLB guarantees confidentiality with regard to information obtained and works independently.

Supervision by a CLB is only compulsory in the case of truancy and some medical examinations. In addition to the medical examination, the CLB is responsible for preventive health care for young people. This is aimed at monitoring, maintaining or promoting the health of pupils.

2.3.2 Information and communication technologies (ICT)

Society gradually evolves towards a knowledge society in which knowledge acquisition, management and processing initiatives take a predominant place. This requires new skills from children and adults and influences learning and teaching methods.

The Flemish Government has implemented a policy of promoting ICT in education (since 1996). This means that the government aims to encourage schools to integrate ICT in their class practice by means of information and awareness-raising campaigns, in-service training, infrastructure and project funding. In this respect, the emphasis is on the educational use of the new media.

The major actions and initiatives of ICT policy are:

- developing ICT skills for primary education in support of the educational field. The emphasis is on working together, exploring, dealing with information, communicating
- giving means to schools for ICT co-ordination. The ICT co-ordinator is responsible for technical and educational ICT support at school level
- training teachers in the educational use of ICT via REN¹¹ Vlaanderen. The key task of this regional expertise network is to provide both supply- and demand- driven in-service training
- taking actions to provide schools with adequate and high quality programming and educational software. Examples are the programme matrix, general agreements with a number of software companies, the freeware project and a number of recent initiatives to introduce free software (open source software) in education
- promoting examples of good practice in the framework of the European Network

¹¹ REN = Regional Expertise Network see: www.renvlaanderen.be

of Innovative Schools (ENIS)

- supporting Klascement¹², the educational portal site, which develops by order of the Education Department, specific ICT files and makes the results of government projects available to a broader educational public.

2.3.3 Communication

High quality education requires strong commitment of all stakeholders, i.e. teachers, school management teams, parents and pupils. The Education Department takes a wide range of initiatives to inform the different target groups. This communication is increasingly operated via electronic means. We give some examples.

- The onderwijs.vlaanderen.be website is a portal to all on-line information and services of the Education Department. This site clearly responds to information needs: in 2004 an average of 10.000 visitors were counted daily.
- The department issues a lot of **publications**. These publications are not only edited on paper, but also exist electronically.

Brochures and leaflets can be ordered electronically via an on-line catalogue.

- **Klasse** is multifaceted. Indeed, Klasse comprises four magazines that are monthly published by the Education Department and are distributed free of charge among teachers, parents and pupils. In addition, there are related websites that form an inextricable part of the project as well as e-letters, a teacher card and student card, ...

Electronic communication has many trumps as it makes information available in real time and 24 hours a day. Updating of contents is relatively easy and target groups such as the visually impaired can be reached more directly.

It is obvious that direct contact with the education sector and the broad public remains important. That is why the Department continues holding **information events** to take up contact with the target groups and engage in direct interaction.

Examples of these initiatives are the Student information days for pupils in the final year of secondary education and the Tours of Flanders for school management teams and school secretarial staff.



¹² www.klascement.net



2.3.4 Quality control and quality promotion

2.3.4.1 Quality control in nursery, primary and secondary education, part-time education in the arts, adult education and CLBs

MBy means of the **attainment targets**, the Flemish Community clearly indicates its minimum expectations with regard to nursery, primary and secondary education. They are a tool to ensure high quality education to Flemish citizens.

Attainment targets are minimum goals that schools should foster and achieve for most pupils of a particular educational level and a particular course of study.

In concrete terms, this concerns qualities with regard to knowledge, insight, attitudes and skills. There are both subject-related attainment targets and cross-curricular attainment targets.

In nursery education, special education and the first year B (secondary education), we do not use attainment targets, but developmen-

tal objectives. These are skills that a school must aim to achieve, but which it does not necessarily achieve.

Every governing body or school board must include the attainment targets or **developmental objectives** in the curriculum.

The **Inspectorate** of the Flemish Community consists of five inspection teams:

- the inspection team for nursery and primary education
- the inspection team for secondary education
- the inspection team for part-time education in the arts
- the inspection team for adult education and basic education
- the inspection team for pupil guidance centres.

In addition, there is also an inspection team that inspects religious and/or philosophical education subjects.

Key tasks of the inspectorate are the control of the quality of education and the recognition of educational institutions and CLBs.

In order to accomplish these key tasks, it examines whether the attainment targets or

developmental objectives are being achieved, and whether the other legislative obligations are being properly observed (e.g., applying a timetable based on the core curriculum). To this end, the inspectorate conducts **school audits** or **centre audits** (for CLBs and adult education).

Every education network has its own **educational advisors**. Schools can appeal to them for educational and methodological advisory services (innovation projects, self-evaluation projects, support initiatives).

2.3.4.2 Quality control in tertiary education

There is one single system of **internal and external quality control** for the whole of tertiary education.

Colleges of higher education and universities carry out their own internal quality control through a self-evaluation.

In addition, visitations of their courses are conducted on a regular basis by a committee of external experts who draw up a public report. The visitation gauges both the quality of education and of research activities. It concerns one course or a cluster of related courses. Related courses in colleges of higher education and universities can be reviewed together. The Flemish Interuniversity Council (VLIR) and the Flemish Council for Non-University Higher Education (VLHORA) play an important role in the co-ordination of these visitation committees.

The higher education reform act (04/04/2003) adds another dimension to quality control, i.e. the **accreditation**. This is a formal recognition that a course attains the international minimum quality standards. This accreditation is a condition for carrying the higher education label and for granting the bachelor and master degrees.

In Flanders it is the Nederlands-Vlaams Ac-

creditiatieorgaan (NVAO Dutch-Flemish accreditation agency) which delivers accreditations. This independent body of experts grants accreditations on the basis of visitation reports of the courses.

The accreditation can possibly also be granted by an accreditation body recognised by the NVAO.

From the 2004 - 2005 academic year, quality control in colleges of higher education and universities is carried out in three steps:

- internal quality control which results in self-evaluation
- external visitation which results in a public report
- accreditation which results in the recognition that a course meets the international minimum quality standards and is allowed to carry the bachelor or master label.

The higher education reform act gives the transformed courses (see point 2.2.4.) a temporary 'transition' accreditation which ceases ultimately at the end of the 2012 - 2013 academic year. This means that all courses must have successfully gone through the three step process described above. For universities and colleges of higher education, respectively VLIR and VLHORA drew up a time line for visitation. They also developed a joint protocol as a guideline for the visitation of all higher education courses.



2.4 Current issues

2.4.1 Study grants and study financing

Each year, the Flemish Community gives financial support to pupils and students who come from financially deprived families. The study grants (for secondary education) and study financing (for higher education) are intended to promote the democratisation of education.

Depending on the family income and the number of persons in the family who live on the income, financial support in secondary education varies from 93 euro to 618 euro (in the fourth stage of secondary education the maximum allocation amounts to 1,403 euro). In higher education, study financing amounts to minimum 201.68 euro. The maximum study financing amount is 3,121.17 euro for students living in digs and 1,873.31 euro for students living at home.

Regulations on study grants (secondary) or study financing (higher education) differ. Recently, regulations in higher education were changed thoroughly by the higher education reform act. Nevertheless, there are three pillars in both legislative systems: the condition of nationality, the educational conditions and the financial conditions.

2.4.2 More opportunities for everyone

In the nineties of the past century, the Flemish government already encouraged **primary and secondary schools** to have an eye for equal opportunities in education for all children. Schools were granted extra means, supervision and support.

Since 1 September 2002, all these temporary projects have been replaced by an integrated support provision, paying special attention to children from deprived backgrounds. This new provision provides full opportunities to all children to learn and develop themselves and counter exclusion, social separation and discrimination.

The **Act on equal opportunities in education** sets out three major lines of action:

- each pupil has in principle the right to enrol in the school of his/her (parents') choice. Only in a strictly limited number of cases, a school can refuse an enrolment or refer a newly enrolled pupil to another school
- the establishment of local consultation platforms with a threefold task: the local consultation platforms ensure the right of enrolment, act as an intermediary in case of conflicts and co-operate in implementing a local policy on equal opportunities in education
- additional support that must enable schools to develop an extended needs provision geared toward deprived children.



The remit of the centres for the study of Dutch as a second language and for Intercultural Education as well as of the centre of expertise for Experience-based Education is linked as regards content with the policy on equal opportunities in education. These centres conduct research, develop courses and course materials by order of the education authorities. But schools are not the only beneficiaries of these centres of expertise (their services are free of charge in most cases).

In **higher education**, a number of measures are also taken to promote equal opportunities among students. Colleges of higher education and universities have extensive possibilities to recognise foreign diplomas and competencies acquired elsewhere through derogatory entry conditions and reduction of course duration. Colleges of higher education and universities also have the responsibility to provide both the material and immaterial means to facilitate the admission of students from certain backgrounds, of whom participation in higher education is significantly lower than of those pupils that stem from other backgrounds.

In Flemish education, there is a system of **reception classes for minor non-native Dutch speakers**.

Within a reception period of one school year, these pupils receive specific education to help them master the Dutch language and foster their knowledge of our education system. Afterwards, these pupils are integrated in normal classes. Schools that organise reception classes, are given additional teaching periods and operating resources.

Adult non-native speakers can enrol in adult education (see 2.2.5.2).

2.4.3 Priority policy in Brussels

The Brussels priority project (VBB) is also linked with regard to content to the policy principles of equal opportunities in education, but it is geared towards the specific educational situation in Brussels. Through an intensive guidance, this project intends to teach teachers and schools how to cope in a professional way with pupils having learning and developmental disadvantages. In addition, priority policy in Brussels wants to optimise the co-operation and co-ordination with the various education actors and to improve the co-ordinating capacity of schools.



2.4.4 Participation

The **Flemish Education Council** (VLOR) has been operating at the central level since 1991. The Flemish Education Council can carry out studies, discuss and advise on educational matters, on its own initiative, at the request of the Minister of Education or of the Government of Flanders. The VLOR advises on all draft acts and policy texts relating to education.

In the act on participation at school and the Flemish Education Council of 2 April 2004, the VLOR is transformed into a strategic advice council for the Education and Training policy domain. That is why the composition of VLOR will be altered. Apart from the existing sections, also directly elected school management staff and co-opted teachers will have a seat. These regulations apply at a date to be determined by the government.

The **Flemish Interuniversity Council** (VLIR) advises and presents proposals to the minister with regard to university education. The VLIR carries out research itself or contracts out research.

The **Flemish Council for Non-University Higher Education** (VLHORA) has a task analogous to that of the VLIR, but it was created for the colleges of higher education.

Strong **local structures** are necessary to support the large degree of autonomy and responsibility of educational establishments.

In **nursery, primary, secondary education**, participation of all education actors is organised by the **school council**. This school council has a general right to information and a well-defined scope of competence regarding advice and consultation.

Since the act on participation of 2 April 2004, a single set of rules is applicable to all primary and secondary schools as regards educational councils, parent councils and pupil councils, and this regardless of the education network.

Staff members in nursery, primary or secondary schools, pupils in nursery and primary schools or parents of children in nursery, primary and secondary schools can respectively ask for an **educational council**, a **pupil council** and a **parent council** in the school.

These three councils have large advisory powers and are composed via elections.

The different parties involved in the school also often organise separate informal committees.

In most nursery, primary and secondary schools, parents set up a **parents' association** which organises school-related activities on a voluntary basis, usually aimed at fund raising.

In order to strengthen the participation of parents in school policy, the government subsidises a number of umbrella parents' associations.

In **higher education**, the local participation structures are as follows.

Members of staff and students are represented in all administrative bodies and co-management bodies of Flemish colleges of higher education and universities.

In addition, there are specific participation bodies at colleges of higher education and universities, such as the **student council**, the college negotiation committee, ...

Government commissioners in colleges of higher education and universities assess student participation every five years on the grounds of the findings of the umbrella student association(s). The assessment report is presented to the Flemish Government.



2.4.5 Development of talents

The motivation to learn is closely linked to the degree in which pupils find it meaningful and interesting to learn. From primary school onwards, efforts are made to enhance the involvement of children in learning by making an appeal to their talents and giving them more success experiences.

In secondary education, the elimination of barriers between the ASO, TSO, BSO and KSO forms of education enables pupils to find a learning pathway that is best suited to their talents. However, this is not a simple remit. Waterfall thinking, which means that ASO is better than TSO and TSO better than BSO, is deeply rooted in Flemish educational structures, the organisation of society and the minds of many parents and teachers.

In the 2003 - 2007 period, education providers want to set up experimental projects under the denominator 'Focus on Talent'.

2.4.6 Modularisation

The modularisation experiment gives pupils attending vocationally-oriented training courses (BSO, DBSO, BuSO OV3) the opportunity to complete a learning pathway in well-defined units or modules.

Modular education is organised in secondary education for individual study areas, separately from stages or years. Within an area of study, the pupil chooses from the different learning pathways defined by the government. That course of training consists of one or more modules. For each module that the pupil completes, he/she receives a modular certificate recognised by the government. Once the learner has successfully completed the training, he/she will be issued with a certificate.

A modular structure makes it possible for the interim successes of learners to be expressed in (modular) certificates, thus enhancing their chances of entering the labour market. It is an attempt to reduce the numbers of unqualified school-leavers, and stimulate at the same time experiences of success in learners.

The Vocational Training Service (DBO) of the Education Department has the task to co-ordinate and support this experiment. The project ends in the 2006 - 2007 school year. By the end of 2005, a steering group will evaluate this experiment. On the basis of this evaluation and other studies, policy makers will then decide on the continuation of the modularisation process in secondary education.



2.4.7 Lifelong learning

Lifelong and life-wide learning is a continuous process in which the learners acquire the necessary knowledge and competencies to better cope with their professional, social and cultural tasks in a quickly changing society. Lifelong and life-wide learning is embedded in life itself and fits in with the experiences, requirements and educational needs of persons, organisations and companies.

On 31 March 2003, the **Training and Alignment Information Service** (DIVA) was launched. DIVA co-ordinates the educational provision for adults in Flanders. DIVA facilitates the cooperation between the policy fields Education and Training, Employment, Culture and Economy. DIVA's partners are the educational

networks, VDAB¹³, VIZO¹⁴ and Socius¹⁵. These partners represent respectively adult education (including further higher education, OSP, basic education, BIS and DKO), the training courses set up by VDAB, by Syntra and socio-cultural adult work.

Through an awareness-raising programme with the slogan 'Word wat je wil' (Become what you want to be), DIVA tries to create a positive learning environment and enhance the participation of the adult citizen in education and training. The Learning Shop project intends to guide the citizen through the educational provision and training pathways by means of an on-line database¹⁶. This website will also inform the citizen about work experience places through the work experience data base.



¹³ VDAB = Flemish Employment and Vocational Training Agency.

¹⁴ VIZO = Flemish Institute for the Self-Employed.

¹⁵ SoCiuS = Support Centre for Socio-cultural Work.

¹⁶ www.wordwatjewil.be

Higher education also is placing a more explicit emphasis on the lifelong learning perspective. In Flanders, flexibilisation has already been laid down by law (transition between courses through bridging or transfer programmes, recognition of competencies acquired elsewhere, distance learning, ICT integration, evening courses, mobility programmes, dual learning pathways,...). Educational institutions are gradually taking more initiatives to flexibilise education.

One of the main objectives of **open distance education** is making the educational provision accessible to as many adults as possible by taking their way of living and world of experience into account to the maximum extent.

Various combinations of learning and working, whether in part-time or in an alternating form, can also facilitate the transition from learning to working and vice-versa. Some Flemish educational institutions have made concrete efforts to introduce **dual learning pathways** in the education provision. This new learning trajectory consists of a broad specialist academic training linked to a considerable and relevant work experience.

Many valuable experiments have been developed in which part-time trajectories in combination with the recognition of qualifications and competencies acquired elsewhere lead to a full-fledged diploma in education, nursing or social work.

2.4.8 Recognition of acquired competencies and qualifications

Young people and adults can have learning experiences and develop skills outside the formal education systems, for example during work experience. In future, these skills can be recognised through a **Certificate of Professional Competence**. The Flemish developments within RAC fit in a European perspective.

Apart from the recognition, a **uniform qualification structure** is worked on in which training programmes provided by VDAB, VIZO, OSP and basic education and training programmes provided in compulsory education coincide. The qualifications awarded by the various education providers could become one coherent whole in this way.

The act on flexibilisation in higher education provides the possibility to design study paths tailored to each student and a legislative framework in which the institutions are to elaborate a procedure to validate **competencies acquired elsewhere** and **qualifications acquired elsewhere** in higher education. The recognition of competencies acquired elsewhere will become a right to all future students.

A number of courses in present higher continuing education (HOKTSP) are integrated in tertiary education in the framework of the bachelor-master reforms, which is to the benefit of these certificates. Through the integration, colleges of higher education will serve as learning centres for continuing learning at their level.

The act on flexibilisation ensures that HOSP courses which are not integrated, are eligible, via qualifications acquired elsewhere, for exemptions from training components of the higher education provision at colleges of higher education.



2.4.9 Professionalisation of education staff

Good teachers form the axis of education and guarantee high quality education. Indeed, Flemish education is renowned for its quality. In the first instance, this is the result of professional knowledge and involvement of teaching staff. Therefore, teachers must be able to exercise their job in good circumstances. They are professionals who have to be well trained. The teacher training reform which is scheduled will strengthen professionalism by giving candidate teachers and beginning teachers more practical experiences.

It is of importance that teachers can focus on teaching and on their pupils. An overload of paperwork and assignments that do not belong to their key tasks must be avoided.

An attractive career perspective and further professionalisation are equally important. The job contents of teachers should vary. These topics are central in the debate on teachers'

careers that the government will conduct with the social partners in 2005.

Education should also become more attractive to employees from other sectors. With a view to offering perspectives to these newly recruited teachers entering the profession, the administrative and financial position of teachers should be adapted.

2.5 Useful addresses

Ministry of the Flemish Community Education Department

website www.ond.vlaanderen.be

Nursery and Primary Education Administration

Koning Albert II-laan 15 - 1210 Brussels
tel +32 2 553 93 76 - fax +32 2 553 93 75
e-mail scholen.basisonderwijs@vlaanderen.be

Secondary Education Administration

Koning Albert II-laan 15 - 1210 Brussels
tel +32 2 553 89 01 - fax +32 2 553 89 05
e-mail scholen.secundaironderwijs@vlaanderen.be

Tertiary Education and Scientific Research Administration

Koning Albert II-laan 15 - 1210 Brussels
tel +32 2 553 98 32 - fax +32 2 553 98 05
e-mail hogescholen@vlaanderen.be
universiteiten@vlaanderen.be

Lifelong Learning Administration

Koning Albert II-laan 15 - 1210 Brussels
tel +32 2 553 98 61 - fax +32 2 553 98 65
e-mail deeltijdskunstonderwijs@vlaanderen.be
volwassenenonderwijs@vlaanderen.be

Budget and Data Management Division

Koning Albert II-laan 15 - 1210 Brussels
tel +32 2 553 95 46 - fax +32 2 553 95 45
e-mail begrotingengegevensbeheer@ond.vlaanderen.be

Policy co-ordination Division

Koning Albert II-laan 15 - 1210 Brussels
tel +32 2 553 95 64 - fax +32 2 553 95 65
e-mail beleid@ond.vlaanderen.be

CLB Unit

Koning Albert II-laan 15 - 1210 Brussels
tel +32 2 553 86 94 - fax +32 2 553 86 85
e-mail clb@vlaanderen.be

Educational Publications Unit

Koning Albert II-laan 15 - 1210 Brussels
tel +32 2 553 66 53 - fax +32 2 553 66 54
e-mail onderwijspublicaties@vlaanderen.be

Flemish Info line - Education

Koning Albert II-laan 15 - 1210 Brussels
tel 0800 30 201 or from abroad +32 2 553 50 70
fax +32 2 553 96 55
e-mail www.ond.vlaanderen.be/infolijn

Klasse

Koning Albert II-laan 15 - 1210 Brussels
tel +32 2 553 96 86 - fax +32 2 553 96 85
e-mail nieuwsredactie@klasse.be

Study Grants Division

Koning Albert II-laan 15 - 1210 Brussels
tel 0800 30 201 (for general information)
and 078 15 78 70 (for information on applications)
fax + 32 2 553 86 65
e-mail studietoelagen@vlaanderen.be

Vocational Training Service

Koning Albert II-laan 15 - 1210 Brussels
tel + 32 2 553 87 00 - fax + 32 2 553 88 45
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DIVA (Training and Alignment Information Service)

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Coordinating Inspector General

Koning Albert II-laan 15 - 1210 Brussels
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Nursery and Primary Education Inspection team

Koning Albert II-laan 15 - 1210 Brussels
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Secondary Education Inspection team

Koning Albert II-laan 15 - 1210 Brussels
tel +32 2 553 88 62 - fax +32 2 553 88 75
e-mail inspectie.secundaironderwijs@vlaanderen.be

Educational Development Service, Information Unit

Koning Albert II-laan 15 - 1210 Brussels
tel +32 2 553 88 29 - fax +32 2 553 88 35
e-mail eindtermen@vlaanderen.be

Flemish Employment and Vocational Training Agency (VDAB)

Keizerslaan 11 - 1000 Brussels
tel +32 2.506 15 11 - fax +32 2.506 15 90
e-mail vdab@vdab.be

Flemish Institute for the Self-Employed (VIZO)

Kanselarijstraat 19 - 1000 Brussels
tel +32 2.227 63 93 - fax +32 2.217 46 12
e-mail info@vizo.be

Support Centre for Socio-cultural Adult Work (Socius)

Gallaitstraat 86 bus 4 - 1030 Brussels
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e-mail info@socius.be

