

# BELGIUM

**Source:** Structures of the Education and Initial Training Systems in the European Union, EURYDICE/CEDEFOP, 1995.

## FRENCH COMMUNITY

### 1. Responsibilities and administration

- 1.1 Administration
- 1.2 Financing
- 1.3 Inspection
- 1.4 Consultative bodies
- 1.5 Guidance

### 2. Pre-school education (*Education préscolaire*)

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## **FLEMISH COMMUNITY**

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- 3.1 Primary education (*Lager onderwijs*)
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### **4. Initial vocational education and training**

- 4.1 Part-time compulsory schooling
- 4.2 Employment-training agreement

### **5. Higher education**

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1. Compulsory education covers twelve years, from 6 to 18 years of age. It is full-time up to 15 years of age; those who have completed at least the first two years of secondary education and do not wish to continue full-time until 18 may then follow part-time compulsory education. Pupils who have not completed 3 years of secondary education must attend full-time compulsory education until 16 years of age.
2. TYPE I or 'renovated' education comprises secondary education at lower and upper secondary levels, organised in four forms – general, technical, vocational and artistic education – and two main streams, one leading primarily to higher education, the other primarily to employment. TYPE II or 'traditional' education comprises secondary education at lower and upper levels comprising general, technical or vocational sections.  
TYPE I education is being extended to nearly all schools in the French and German-speaking Communities.  
TYPE I and II are being replaced by a unified structure in the Flemish Community.
3. A preparatory year for higher education or a year of specialisation or further education for employment after 6 years of secondary education.
4. Part-time education is available to 15- or 16-year-olds, and covers the last years of compulsory schooling. It lasts 360 hours in the first year (for 15/16-year-olds) and 240 hours in the following years.
5. The theoretical training of apprenticeship lasts the same time (360 hours in the 1<sup>st</sup> year and 240 hours in the following two years) as part-time education.
6. The Employment-Training Agreement is available to 18- and 25-year-olds, and lasts 256 hours when provided by an employer and 500 hours when followed in a training establishment.

# BELGIUM

## 1.1 Background

The State of Belgium was founded in 1830. The Constitution provided the structures of a unitary centralized State, with a constitutional monarch at its head.

Since 1970, after four consecutive phases of reform of the Constitution, Belgium has evolved to a federal State, composed of three Communities (Flemish, French and German-speaking) and three Regions (Flemish, Walloon and Brussels). There are four linguistic areas: Dutch-language, French-language, bi-lingual (Brussels) and German-language. Each of the Communities and regions has legislative and executive autonomy with respect to its own attributions. The Councils of the Communities and regions, as legislative authorities, pass regulations in the form of "decrees", which have force of law within their territory.

The Communities are responsible for cultural matters, education, person-related matters (welfare, health care) and language. The regions are responsible for economy, energy, public works and transport, town and country planning and the environment. The federal State retains the main responsibility for foreign affairs, defence, justice, finance and social legislation.

Below the regions there are 10 provinces and 589 communes responsible for provincial and local matters.

Belgium has a population of around 10 million in an area of just over 30,000 square kilometres.

The main areas of employment are industry (27.5%) and the services (7%), with only 2.5% now employed in agriculture. There is a 13.5% unemployment rate.

The Belgian Constitution guarantees the separation of Church and State. There is therefore no official religion. The Catholic Church is the most widespread.

## 1.2 Basic principles: education

Article 17 of the Belgian Constitution, established in 1831, guarantees **freedom** of education. This principle was meant to eliminate any monopoly on education. It also implies **freedom of choice** for parents, who may enrol their children in any school which subscribes to their philosophical or religious convictions. Only education administered by the Communities is neutral, respecting all philosophical and religious beliefs. All schools organized by public authorities must offer a choice between instruction in a recognized religion or secular moral instruction.

The Constitution also establishes the **right** to education. The corollary of this principle is that access to education is **free of charge** throughout the period of compulsory education.

## 1.3 Distribution of responsibilities

The constitutional reforms of 1980 and 1989 transferred responsibility for education from the State to the Communities.

Since 1 January 1989, and as stipulated in Article 59bis of the Constitution, only three very specific areas have remained under the control of the federal State:

- fixing the start and finish of compulsory schooling;
- minimum conditions for the award of diplomas;

- the pensions scheme for teachers.

All other educational matters have been transferred to the three Communities. They are responsible for education within their linguistic area and, as concerns the French and Flemish Communities, with regard to French or Dutch-speaking establishments in bilingual areas (Brussels). The educational responsibilities of each Community are vested in the Community Council (legislative power) and the Community Government and Education Minister (executive power).

The federal State continues to administer the tax system for the whole of Belgium and allocates funds to the Communities in accordance with detailed criteria set out in an Act of 16 January 1989. In education, the annual amount is calculated on the basis of the reference year 1987 and adjusted partially each year in relation to population trends. In 1989, the Flemish Community received 56.2% of the funds, the French and German-speaking Communities 43.8%. A special Act sets the amount of funding the German-speaking Community receives.

The Communities are also responsible for apprenticeships and initial training for the independent professions and for the managers of SMEs, through specialized bodies.

## **1.4 Compulsory education**

According to the Act of 29 June 1983, compulsory education lasts for 12 years, from 6 to 18 years of age.

Children are required to attend school full-time up to the age of 15, completing primary education and at least the first two years of secondary education. Pupils who have not completed the first two years of secondary education are required to attend full-time education until the age of 16. Those who do not wish to continue full-time until 18 may then follow compulsory part-time education up to the age of 18.

Part-time compulsory education is defined as studies in a recognized establishment, in the form of either part-time study or a recognized training course.

# FRENCH COMMUNITY

**Source:** Structures of the Education and Initial Training Systems in the European Union, EURYDICE/CEDEFOP, 1995.

## 1. RESPONSIBILITIES AND ADMINISTRATION

### 1.1 Administration

As a consequence of the recent reforms of the State, policy for education and higher education is the responsibility of the Council of the French Community and its Government, in which there is one Minister in charge of higher education and academic research, and another for education (pre-school, primary, secondary and special education).

In the French Community, except for private schools, there are three main types of education institutions:

- public education institutions organized and managed by the French Community and financed in total from its budget;
- public education institutions subsidized by the French Community, but managed by provincial or communal authorities;
- "free" education institutions, denominational or non-denominational, subsidized by the French Community.

Each category comprises an "educational network" composed of one or more "organizing bodies", each directing one or more schools.

The organizing body of Community education is the Government of the French Community. It administers and manages establishments (at all levels) and the careers of administrators of its own educational network. The organizing bodies of subsidized public education, however, are the provinces or communes, and of "free" subsidized education, the natural or legal persons responsible.

The network of subsidized public education establishments has developed two structures for coordinating education: the *Conseil de l'enseignement des communes et les provinces (CECP)* and the *Conseil des pouvoirs organisateurs de l'enseignement officiel neutre subventionné (CPEONS)*. The establishments of "free" education are grouped under the *Secrétariat national de l'Enseignement catholique (SNEC)* and the *Fédération des écoles libres subventionnées indépendantes (FELSI)*.

The Minister grants subsidies to educational establishments under certain conditions.

Establishments must:

- comply with legislation on language;
- adopt a structure approved by the Minister;
- follow a curriculum which meets legal requirements;
- submit to supervision and inspection as organized by the Government of the Community, which is responsible for determining that the level of instruction is satisfactory;
- have a minimum number of pupils per class, section or level;
- be composed of educational facilities which are located in the same complex of buildings and form a whole, and which meet standards for hygiene and cleanliness;

- follow the general scheme for leave and holidays;
- employ staff who are not likely to endanger pupils' health;
- possess the teaching materials and school facilities required to meet educational needs.

If the establishment meets these conditions, the organizing body is free to choose staff, as long as they also meet certain standards. It is also free to choose teaching methods and define the content of curricula, on the prior approval of the Minister.

Assessment is another area where the academic freedom of each organizing body is guaranteed. Within the limits of laws and decrees, each organizing body may define the type of assessment it wishes to use and the means of monitoring and communicating the results of the assessment.

In order to improve cooperation between full-time secondary education establishments, ten geographical zones have been established, each with two Councils, one for non-denominational education and the other for denominational education. The Councils ensure that common teacher periods (*périodes - professeurs*) are used in establishments in the same zone and that the provision of education is harmonized. Their proposals are sent to a cooperation committee (*Comité de concertation*) to be approved and made final. Educational options which have not been approved by the committee cannot be offered.

The cooperation committees and the zonal Councils comprise representatives of the organizing bodies concerned, including the Minister as the organizing body of Community education.

At the level of the school itself, the organizing body is free to choose the organization of cooperation. As regards Community education, since 1990 Participation Councils (*Conseils de participation*) have been set up to make proposals and give opinions on matters such as the pedagogical (e.g. implementation of the school education plan), the material and the administrative organization of the establishment. This Council comprises, *inter alia*, the head teacher, representatives of teaching and administrative staff, parents, unions, pupils and local policy makers.

## 1.2 Financing

The French Community covers all the costs of Community education and subsidizes public and "free" education as far as permitted by laws and decrees, according to the level of education, number of pupils, etc. Subsidies cover, for the whole school system including short higher education courses, completely or partially:

- staff remuneration, under the same conditions (qualifications and duties) as those granted to Community education staff;
- operating expenses, on a lump-sum basis, according to regulatory criteria;
- expenses related to construction and development, within the limits of credits provided for in the budgetary decree.

However, certain expenses, such as the purchase of material (school textbooks, exercise books, etc.) and participation in extra-curricular activities, may be covered by parents, associations, etc.

As regards university education, an operating grant is allocated to each institution in accordance with the number of students. This covers the purchase of material, salaries of teaching and administrative staff, etc.

## 1.3 Inspection

There is a triple system of inspection, consisting of:

- A monitoring service, which ensures that Community subsidies are being used correctly and inspects accounting procedures.
- A dual inspection service:  
The service of the French Community, which verifies the level of instruction in Community education establishments and gives its opinion on the qualifications of staff. This service also provides educational support by advising teachers, and contributes to the preparation of curricula and the development of teaching methods. In addition, it verifies the level of instruction in education subsidized by the Community.  
The service of subsidized pre-school and primary education, which has a supervisory function (with regard to the fulfilment of compulsory school obligations, material organization, etc.) and an educational one with regard to the value of education provided. Organizing bodies may also have educational advisers for their network.
- A "homologation committee" (*Commission d'homologation*), whose task is to verify whether secondary-level studies have been completed in keeping with the provisions of legislation and regulations. The committee is also responsible for approving upper secondary school certificates (*certificats d'enseignement secondaire supérieur - CESS*).

The education authorities enforce procedures for the award of other qualifications, such as certificates of vocational qualification, and also validate diplomas awarded in higher education. At university level, there is a ratification committee (*Commission d'entérinement*).

## 1.4 Consultative bodies

Community Ministers receive the opinions of a large number of councils and committees, of which the most significant have been established by the provisions of laws, decrees or regulations. These include, for example, the Education and Training Council, which has the task, *inter alia*, of determining the basic direction of education and training in the next ten years, and the French Community Parents' Council. In addition, each level of education has bodies for consultation and cooperation (e.g. Commission for cooperation and improvement in secondary education, Council for technical and vocational education, French Community Inter-University Council, Commission for the modernization of pre-school and primary education).

## 1.5 Guidance

The tasks of guidance and orientation of pupils in pre-school, primary, secondary and special education are the responsibility of the psycho-medico-social centres (*Centres Psycho-Médico-Sociaux - PMS*). These centres are also responsible for school medical inspections. The centres are independent of the schools, but work closely with them and with families. Each centre is composed of an interdisciplinary team made up of educational psychologists/counsellors, social workers, nurses and independent doctors.

Several types of educational activities help young people plan their lives and careers. The methods used combine group activities and individual analyses. In the French Community, the Community and "free" education networks use computer software to help pupils choose studies and occupations (e.g. *CHOIX*). A software on options in higher education has also been developed (*SOCRATE*).

## 2. PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION (*Education préscolaire*)

Pre-school education is an integral part of the education system. Pre-school education is optional, free and coeducational, and is provided for children aged from two-and-a-half to six years, and up to seven years in exceptional cases. The pre-school education attendance rate is 95% among three-year-olds, 97% among four-year-olds and 100% among five-year-olds (and above).

Pre-school education has a social function and is a preparation for primary education. The general aim of pre-school education is to develop the child's:

- mental, physical and psychomotor balance;
- intellectual skills;
- capacity for expression and communication;
- independence;
- creativity.

Pre-school education is provided in nursery schools (*écoles maternelles*) which are attached to primary schools. There are nursery schools in the three educational networks. In most cases, depending on their size, nursery schools are organized in groups or "classes" according to age, but in some rural areas where small schools do not have enough children to set up three age groups, the "family model", bringing together children of different ages in one class, is often used.

The children are supervised mainly by nursery teachers. Since 1989, each pre-school teacher is responsible for one class, but specific provisions, as well as the internal rules of each establishment, encourage collaboration between teachers.

The organization of classes is very flexible, in order to adapt teaching to children's needs. There are various activities to encourage the child's development - psychomotor, artistic, linguistic, logical and social - but no lessons as such.

There is no formal assessment at this level and pupils automatically progress to the next class.

The school week is structured around five mornings and four afternoons; Wednesday afternoon is free. The school year is from 1 September to 30 June. In addition to traditional public holidays, there is one week's holiday in February (*Carnaval*) and November (*Toussaint*) and two weeks' at Christmas and at Easter.

There are special nursery schools for mentally or physically handicapped children.

## Teachers

Nursery teachers have followed three-year concurrent courses (of academic and theoretical and practical teacher training) at a teacher training institution (*Institut d'Enseignement Supérieur Pédagogique*) leading to a teaching diploma (*Instituteur/trice préscolaire*).

Teachers are employed by the organizing body. They may work part-time or full-time.

Participation in in-service training is voluntary and arranged under the responsibility of the different organizing bodies.

## Statistics 1991/92

	Pupils	Teachers*	Schools
Community Schools	14,576	894	194
Provincial Schools	314	18	3
Communal Schools	81,301	5,327	1,001
"Free" Schools	65,629	4,038	719

\* Number of full-time and part-time teachers.

### 3. Compulsory education

According to the Act of 29 June 1983, compulsory education lasts for 12 years, from 6 to 18 years of age.

Children are required to attend school full-time up to the age of 15, completing primary education and at least the first two years of secondary education. Pupils who have not completed the first two years of secondary education are required to attend full-time education until the age of 16. Those who do not wish to continue full-time until 18 may then follow compulsory part-time education up to the age of 18.

Part-time compulsory education is defined as studies in a recognized establishment, in the form of either part-time study or a recognized training course.

#### 3.1 Primary education (*Enseignement primaire*)

Primary education caters for children aged six to 12. It lasts six years and is divided into three cycles of two years each.

Primary education is provided in primary schools. In organizational terms, these may be:

- independent primary schools;
- primary schools attached to a secondary establishment;
- primary schools attached to a teacher training institution.

In accordance with official measures to promote equal opportunities for boys and girls, primary schools are now usually coeducational. However, there are still a few single-sex schools, mostly in the subsidized "free" denominational sector. Classes are usually organized by age.

Instruction is provided five days per week, morning and afternoon, with the exception of Wednesday afternoon, for a total of 182 days per year. There are 28 weekly lessons of 50 minutes each. The school year, as at pre-school level, starts on 1 September and ends on 30 June. Holidays are identical to those at pre-school level.

The general aims of primary education may be summarized as follows:

- to encourage the personal development of each child whilst respecting its identity;
- to encourage the child's initiation into society;
- to help the child acquire basic knowledge and skills;
- to overcome the child's inequalities with regard to the school and education.

In 1993, these general aims were made more precise in an action plan intended to promote school success, which, at the initiative of the Minister of Education, brings together all organizations representing organizing bodies.

This action plan provides, *inter alia*, that by the year 2005 all schools of basic education (nursery and primary schools) should be organized in cycles which allow each child:

- to progress in school in a continuous manner at his/her own rhythm from nursery school entry to the end of the sixth year of primary;
- to complete certain essential courses with reference to standards of knowledge and the level of studies.

To this end, all organizing bodies will implement strategies to:

- harmonize the transition from nursery to primary school;
- give meaning to learning;
- assure continuity;
- take individual rhythms into account through differentiated learning;
- avoid making pupils repeat, through the use of formative assessment within the same cycle and summative assessment at its end;
- support schools and teachers in their efforts to succeed;
- associate parents of all backgrounds with school life and ensure real collaboration with them;
- encourage the school to be open to its environment.

Since September 1984, standards for the staff-pupil ratio in primary schools have, as in nursery schools, been based on the system of *capital-périodes*. This fixes a certain number of periods at the disposal of the school in accordance with its total number of pupils. Each unit of 24 periods entitles the school to a full-time teacher. The system enables the school to adapt its structure partially to its pupils' needs.

## **Curriculum**

Since 1971, primary schools have been going through a process of fundamental reform in terms of both educational objectives and methods and teaching content. However, this reform has not extended to all primary schools, a large proportion of which continue to use traditional methods.

As a general rule, the reforms aimed to introduce a greater degree of flexibility into education, to take into consideration the particular ways of learning of young children, to adapt education to the changing needs of the surrounding world and to respect the learning speed and rhythm of the individual child as far as possible.

Curricula are designed to promote the acquisition of "instrumental knowledge" (such as the general mastery of language and mathematics) rather than "factual knowledge".

The timetable includes: French, writing (cycle I), mathematics, history, geography, natural sciences, religion or ethics, physical education, musical education, manual education, civics and road safety.

In some towns and communes (the Brussels region and some localities designated by law), the study of Dutch is compulsory from cycle II. In the rest of the French Community, a second national language (Dutch or German) or English may be taught in cycle III.

## **Assessment and qualifications**

As mentioned above, assessment is an area in which the principle of freedom is guaranteed.

Throughout the year, teachers use a continuous formative assessment to monitor the progress of their pupils. At the end of the school year, the teacher makes a summative assessment, and can use tests to assess pupils. The teacher or team of teachers/Class Council assesses the year's work and the results of the tests (if any) at the end of the year to decide whether or not to allow a pupil to move on to the next class. In this, the pupil's analytical skills, ability to think independently, cooperative spirit and taste for work and for working well must all be taken into account. Report cards regularly keep the child and his or her parents informed of test results, academic progress, behaviour in class and personal development.

It is possible for a child to repeat classes each year and within a cycle but it is rare to repeat more than one year at primary level. Pupils who experience learning difficulties can receive special and individualized assistance from a remedial teacher.

However, the progressive implementation of the action plan will generalize the use of formative assessment, with summative assessment only at the end of a two-year cycle.

When they have successfully completed six years of primary education, pupils receive a certificate of primary education (*certificat d'études de base - CEB*) in accordance with the Law of 29 June 1983. Pupils may also obtain this certificate by passing the cantonal examination.

For pupils having difficulties, the period of compulsory schooling may include seven years of primary education, or even eight in exceptional cases.

## Teachers

In most cases, primary school teachers (*instituteurs/trices primaires*) are allocated by class and provide all instruction, but, especially in cycle III, instruction may be broken down by subject area. Some courses may be given by specialized teachers (language, physical education or artistic or manual activities), who are employed on the basis of their teaching qualification.

Teachers have received three years of initial training at a teacher training institution (*Institut d'Enseignement Supérieur Pédagogique*).

Each year the ideal number of days of in-service training is fixed in regulations. The implementation of the action plan has led to an increase in in-service training activities which have also been allocated a specific budget.

## Statistics 1991/92

	Pupils	Teachers*	Schools
Community Schools	34,190	2,585	207
Provincial Schools	921	73	3
Communal Schools	130,757	10,327	1,004
"Free" Schools	135,929	9,437	706

\* Number of full-time and part-time teachers.

## 3.2 SECONDARY EDUCATION (*Enseignement secondaire*)

Secondary education, like primary education, is included in the period of compulsory schooling. Full-time schooling may last until age 18, or up to the age of 15 or 16, when part-time schooling may be followed up to age 18.

There are two procedures for entering secondary education:

- the first (which applies to 82% of pupils) allows pupils with a certificate of primary education (*CEB*) to be admitted automatically into secondary education. Pupils who have completed the sixth year of primary education but have not obtained the certificate may also be admitted under certain conditions;
- the second (applying to 18% of pupils) provides for admission for 12-year-olds who do not have the certificate.

The *CEB* may also be awarded to pupils who did not complete primary education successfully, but have successfully completed the first year of secondary education or the second year of vocational education.

In the French Community, secondary education is divided into two main categories:

Type I: three cycles of two years (known as "reformed" (*renové*) education);

Type II: two cycles of three years (known as "traditional" education); this system now exists in only a few subsidized public establishments.

The introduction of Type I secondary education began in 1969 in the public sector, and has now been extended to all schools organized by the French Community and to nearly all subsidized denominational and non-denominational establishments, and to provincial and communal schools.

The French Community provides secondary education in three types of establishments:

- the Royal *Atheneum* (*Athénée Royal*), organizing the three cycles, or the second and third cycles;
- the Community *Lyceum* (*Lycée de la Communauté Française*), organizing the first cycle, or the first and second cycle;
- the Community Technical Institute (*Institut technique de la Communauté Française*), organizing the three cycles or the second and third cycles.

Schools are usually coeducational. Secondary schools do not charge fees. They may be attached to primary schools. Classes are generally organized by age and sometimes by subject. In some schools, classes can be organized by level of ability. However, because of repeating, classes sometimes include pupils of various age-groups.

Secondary schools provide 32 lessons of 50 minutes each per week. In sections including practical classes as part of vocational education there may be 34 or even 36 lessons. The school year is organized as at primary level.

## **Curriculum**

### **TYPE I**

Type I secondary education, under the Law of 19 July 1971, is organized in the following four forms:

- general education;
- technical education;
- vocational education;
- artistic education;

and in two main streams:

- the transition stream (general, technical and artistic education), the objective of which is to prepare pupils for higher education while leaving them the option of entering employment;
- the qualification stream (technical, vocational and artistic education), the objective of which is to prepare pupils for employment, while allowing them the option of entering higher education.

As mentioned above, Type I secondary education comprises three cycles of two years:

- 1st cycle - an observation cycle (usually for pupils aged 12 to 14);
- 2nd cycle - an orientation cycle (usually for pupils aged 14 to 16);
- 3rd cycle - a determination cycle (usually for pupils aged 16 to 18).

In the first year of the **observation cycle**, nearly all pupils follow a common curriculum - religion or ethics, French, a second language, mathematics, history, geography, sciences, physical education and artistic education. In the common second year, the common curriculum is the same, with various basic options: Latin, economics and scientific, artistic or technical education. In the vocational second year, common courses do not include a second language or artistic education. Each grouped option of 12 weekly lessons covers at least two areas of technical activity.

From the beginning of the **orientation cycle**, the four forms of education are distinct, although within each form of education, in addition to the various options, there is a common core which is reduced in volume during the **determination cycle**.

**In the second cycle of the transition stream**, in addition to common instruction, it is compulsory to choose from among the following options: a second modern language, mathematics and sciences (biology, chemistry and physics), Latin, Greek, economics, social sciences, technical and technological education, and physical or artistic education.

**In the third cycle of the transition stream**, a training system incorporating integrated themes (scientific, classical, economic, social science and artistic), or training which combines options, has been introduced from the 1993/94 school year.

**In the second and third cycles of the qualification stream**, in addition to general education, grouped options representing an average of 21 weekly lessons are organized. These cover the following nine areas: agronomy, industry, construction, hotel work, clothing, arts, economics, social service, and sciences.

**In vocational education**, options are also grouped into nine areas. One grouped option represents 25 weekly lessons. At the end of the second cycle of vocational education there may be a year of further education or specialization.

At the end of the 3rd cycle, the following may be organized:

- a preparatory year for higher education (university);
- a year of further education, or specialization in a qualification stream leading to a qualification certificate;
- a seventh year of vocational education leading to an upper secondary school certificate.

## **TYPE II**

Type II secondary education is organized according to the basic laws on general and technical secondary education of April and July 1957. It comprises two cycles of three years each.

General Type II secondary education is composed of the following sections: Latin-Greek, Latin-mathematics, Latin-sciences, modern humanities (scientific, economic and human science options).

Two-thirds of technical education courses are theoretical; in vocational education, two-thirds are practical. However, since there are few remaining technical and vocational sections, there are no longer separate schools of technical Type II education.

## **Assessment and qualifications**

Teachers use formative assessment methods on a regular basis. The results of this continuous (periodical) assessment, together with the results of the one or two examination sessions which may be organized, are all taken into account in the decision of the Class Council (Type I) or the teaching staff (Type II), at the end of each school year, as to whether or not a pupil will move up to the next year, with or without restriction or repeat the current year. When they are organized, the examinations are written, oral or practical, depending on the subject.

In both Type I and Type II education, certificates are awarded by the schools concerned. The upper secondary education certificate (*certificat d'enseignement secondaire supérieur - CESS*) is ratified by the "homologation committee", which ensures that the schools comply with regulations on the organization of studies.

At the end of the third year of general or technical studies, or of the fourth year of vocational education, the pupil receives a lower secondary education certificate (*certificat d'enseignement secondaire inférieur - CESI*).

In Type I education, in the technical or vocational forms, a qualification certificate (*certificat de qualification - CQ*) is awarded at the end of the 4th year, and a pupil may obtain a lower secondary education certificate at the end of the first cycle of Type II secondary technical education.

An upper secondary education certificate is awarded to each pupil who has successfully completed the sixth year of Type I or Type II education in the general or technical sections.

In the vocational sections, a study certificate (*certificat d'études*) and a qualification certificate are awarded at the end of the sixth year of studies. Pupils who go on to a seventh year of vocational studies may obtain an upper secondary education certificate if they already have a lower secondary education certificate, which in vocational education may be obtained at the end of the fourth year.

These certificates are not obtained on the basis of examinations separate from the overall assessment procedures described above and defined by the school itself. They are awarded to pupils who have regularly followed and successfully completed the course concerned.

## Teachers

Teachers are subject specialists and are appointed to teach these subjects.

To be appointed to a permanent position in secondary education, a candidate must have one of the following:

- The qualification for lower secondary school teachers (*diplôme d'agrégé de l'enseignement secondaire inférieur - AESI*). This diploma is awarded to students who have successfully completed the three-year teacher training course at teacher training institution and qualifies the holder to teach in the lower cycle (the first three years). The course comprises general and pedagogical training, including the study of one or two specific subjects. In the third year, about 50% of the time is spent on teaching practice.
- The qualification for upper secondary school teachers (*diplôme d'agrégé de l'enseignement secondaire supérieur - AESS*). This diploma is awarded after at least four years of study (at *candidature* and *licence* levels) at a university and qualifies the holder to teach in the upper three years of secondary education and in short higher education.

The four or five years of academic training is completed by pedagogical training and teaching practice. Pedagogical training is not full-time and may be carried out either in parallel to the degree course from the third year or after its completion as a two-year part-time course.

To be appointed to a permanent position, teachers of technical and practical vocational education must have a qualification for lower secondary technical education (*diplôme d'agrégé(e) de l'enseignement technique moyen inférieur* or *regent(e) technique*) obtained on completion of three years of study at a technical teacher training college. There are also technical teacher training courses offered by social advancement education which lead to a teaching qualification; these last one, two or three years depending on what level of education the entrant already has.

In-service teacher training is organized by each education network within the legal framework regarding the aims, methods and administration of such training. Participation by teachers is voluntary.

## Statistics 1991/92

	Pupils	Teachers*	Schools
Community Schools	89,773	13,643	204
Provincial Schools	29,887	5,079	62
Communal Schools	32,479	4,722	64
"Free" Schools	183,039	24,695	409

\* Number of full-time and part-time teachers.

## 4. INITIAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

### 4.1 Part-time compulsory schooling

Beyond full-time compulsory schooling, the training of young people below 18 years of age comes under three types of measures conforming to requirements for part-time compulsory schooling up to age 18:

- part-time education;
- apprenticeship (including industrial apprenticeship);
- recognized training courses.

#### Part-time education

Under the Law of 29 June 1983 on compulsory education, part-time compulsory education was introduced in 1984 for young people who have either reached the age of 15 and have already had two years of secondary education or who have already reached the age of 16. Pupils who no longer wish to follow full-time education can study on a part-time basis in a centre for part-time education (*Centre d'éducation et de formation en alternance - CEFA*) or in a recognized training centre, such as a centre for training in independent professions (*Centre de formation des classes moyennes*).

The centres for part-time education provide courses combining general education (including social and personal training) with preparation for an occupation. The content of courses is limited, and designed to be a continuation of the full-time education system. The centres are linked to a school providing full-time technical and/or secondary vocational education.

Training lasts for 600 periods of 50 minutes per year, spread over at least 20 weeks. The number of periods devoted to general training in proportion to the number of periods spent on vocational training is partly left to the discretion of the management of the centre, which takes into account the characteristics of the group of pupils concerned. Part-time secondary education may be provided outside the opening hours of full-time education establishments. Evening or weekend courses are allowed. This type of education may also be organized in modules to be determined by the Executive of the French Community.

Part-time education leads to an annual certificate indicating the skills acquired by the pupil, and may also lead to a qualification certificate (*certificat de qualification*), equivalent to the certificate awarded for full-time study.

## **Apprenticeship**

Apprenticeship is a recognized form of part-time compulsory schooling. It is available to 15-year-olds who have successfully completed two years of general secondary education or vocational secondary education, or have passed an entrance examination, or to 16-year-olds.

Apprenticeship lasts for one to three years. Theoretical vocational/technical training lasts for 360 hours during the first year and 240 hours during the following two years. It is provided in a *Centre de formation des classes moyennes* for one to one-and-a-half days per week. Practical training is provided by a craftsman; the apprentice spends three-and-a-half to four days a week in a firm with which he/she has an apprenticeship contract.

Apprenticeship contracts may be concluded for all groups recognized by the *Conseil supérieur des classes moyennes*, that is, commerce, trade, smaller industries and occupations in the services sector. According to the apprenticeship contract, a monthly minimum salary is paid to the apprentice by the head of the firm on a progressive basis. The training period is subject to continuous assessment and ends in an examination.

The *Institut de Formation Permanente Pour les Classes Moyennes et les Petites et Moyennes Entreprises* (Institute of Continuing Training for Independent Professions and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises) at present provides training to 8,000 apprentices in the French Community.

In 1983, apprenticeships in occupations exercised by salaried workers were recognized under the name "industrial apprenticeship". This type of apprenticeship is intended for young people, aged between 16 and 21, with a poor school record, who have lost interest in attending school. It lasts for six months to two years and may take place in several firms successively.

Training in a firm lasts an average of 21 hours per week. The content is established by the representative committee of the sector concerned. Theoretical training is provided in school for 15 hours over two days per week. The apprentice receives an allowance, a percentage of the minimum wage in the chosen sector, from the head of the firm.

The apprenticeship leads to a vocational aptitude certificate (*brevet d'aptitude professionnelle*) and a certificate of apprenticeship (*attestation d'apprentissage*).

## **Recognized training courses**

These courses are given by bodies, usually non-profit-making associations, which are recognized and subsidized by the authorities of the Community.

After the age of 18, the vocational training of young people may be covered either by continuing training intended for adults, or by provisions specifically aimed at 18- to 25-year-olds, that is, the industrial apprenticeship described above and the employment-training agreement described below.

## **4.2 Employment-training agreement**

Set up in 1986, this type of training is available to all young people between the ages of 18 and 25 who are seeking employment, and do not already possess a diploma of long or short higher education or university education, or of technical upper secondary education.

The employment-training agreement involves industrial and commercial firms, non-profit-making associations and the liberal professions. The agreement is signed by the young person and the employer and lasts for a minimum of one year or a maximum of three years. It has two parts: a contract for part-time work of indeterminate duration (at least half-time) and training.

Theoretical training lasts for 256 hours per year when it is provided by an employer in the context of training for independent professions (*classes moyennes*) and 500 hours when it takes place in an education establishment or training centre, in particular in a centre organized by a Community/regional training office such as *FOREM* (Community and regional office of vocational training and employment).

Since 1987, nearly 600 young people have taken part in employment-training agreements in Wallonia and the Brussels region.

\* \* \*

In the French Community, three other forms of training are specifically aimed at young people over 18 who are from disadvantaged backgrounds and are considered to be at risk:

- apprenticeship training enterprises (*Entreprises d'apprentissage professionnel - EAP*), which offer 18 months of training and professional activity in an enterprise created for this purpose;
- centres for employment promotion (*Centres de promotion de l'emploi - CPE*) offering sandwich courses combining work and training;
- integrated development actions (*Actions intégrées de développement - AID*) based on partnerships between different associations, employers, unions and public services with the aim of reintegrating young people between 18 and 25 years old who are not entitled to unemployment benefit.

## 5. HIGHER EDUCATION

There are three types of higher education: short higher education, long higher education and university education.

### Admission

All those who hold an upper secondary education certificate (*Certificat d'enseignement secondaire supérieur - CESS*) have access to all three types of higher education. For some courses (for example, in the engineering sections) an entrance examination is organized.

### Fees/Student finance

Registration fees (*minerval*) are paid in all types of higher education. The minimum amount in short and long higher education is fixed by regulations. Universities fix the amount themselves.

### Academic year

The academic year comprises 30 weeks of classes and begins between 15 September and the first Monday of October.

### Courses/Qualifications

#### Short and long higher education

Short and long higher education covers an extremely wide range of courses. It prepares students for a variety of activities, providing access to occupations mainly in the following sections : industry,

trade, transport, agriculture, paramedical and social, education, translation and interpretation, applied arts and distributive arts.

Courses are given in institutions, bearing a variety of names depending on the specializations taught (e.g. *Institut d'enseignement supérieur pédagogique* - IESP, or higher teacher training institution).

Education comprises two forms:

- short higher education, which is organized in a single cycle of study lasting 3 or 4 years and leads to the diplomas of *gradué* (in various disciplines), nurse, social worker or auxiliary, librarian-documentalist, pre-school teacher, primary teacher, educator, lower secondary teacher (*agrégé*);
- long higher education, which is of the same nature and level as university education. It is organized in two cycles of study, lasts at least 4 years and leads to the following diplomas and degrees: industrial engineer, commercial engineer, upper secondary teacher (*agrégé*), architect, *licencié* in commercial, administrative or consular sciences, *licencié* in translation, *licencié* in applied communications.

## University education

University education is organized in institutions with university or equivalent status. Three universities in the French Community consist of the five traditional faculties (philosophy and arts, law, sciences, medicine, applied sciences) and a variable number of departments, schools and institutes which organize courses in other disciplines (agricultural sciences, oriental studies, business and economics, education, science, etc.).

The aim of university education is to provide theoretical training for managerial staff responsible for research, conception and application of knowledge.

University education is subdivided into distinct levels of study. Each period or cycle of study leads to the award of a degree which is required to be admitted to the next study cycle. As a general rule, the first university degree is the *candidat* obtained after two or sometimes three years of study. It indicates that the student has completed the basic training essential to commence the second cycle. The second cycle leads to a second degree, the *licence*, obtained after two or three years of study. It includes specialized education and the presentation of a thesis. In some disciplines, the second cycle leads directly to the qualifications of doctor, pharmacist, engineer or teacher (*maître*) and thus lasts longer. Some *licences* may be supplemented by the diploma of *agrégé de l'enseignement supérieur* (AESS), a diploma in upper secondary education, necessary to become a teacher at this level.

University education may also include a third cycle in some specializations. This leads to the award of the title of doctor to students who have successfully defended a thesis at least one or two years after completing the second cycle.

## Assessment

Each year of study leads to examinations which determine whether a student may continue to the next year. Examinations are carried out in line with a number of administrative and organizational arrangements. Two examination sessions are held each academic year (the first between 15 June and 15 July, the second after 15 August of the current academic year). Students are prohibited from sitting the same examination more than four times in two academic years and must sit examinations during the first session. Students are, at the end of the academic year, either:

- admitted to the next year of study if they have obtained a score of at least 50% in each test and 60% of the points awarded for the entire examination;

- deferred and required to resit, at the second session, the examinations in which they did not meet the examining board's standards;
- rejected, and must repeat the year.

# GERMAN-SPEAKING COMMUNITY

**Source: Structures of the Education and Initial Training Systems in the European Union, EURYDICE/CEDEFOP, 1995.**

## 1. RESPONSIBILITIES AND ADMINISTRATION

### 1.1 Administration

As a consequence of the recent reforms of the State, education policy is the responsibility of the Council of the German-Speaking Community and its Government and Minister of Education.

In the German-speaking Community, except for private schools, there are three main types of education institutions:

- public education institutions organized and managed by the German-speaking Community and financed in total from its budget;
- public education institutions subsidized by the German-speaking Community but managed by communal authorities;
- "free" education institutions, denominational or non-denominational, subsidized by the German-speaking Community.

Each category comprises an "educational network" composed of one or more "organizing bodies", each directing one or more schools.

The organizing body of Community education is the Minister of Education. The Minister directly administers and manages establishments at all levels, and the careers of administrators of the Minister's own educational network. The organizing bodies of subsidized public education however, are the communes, and of "free" subsidized education, the natural or legal persons responsible.

The Minister grants subsidies to educational establishments under certain conditions.

Establishments must:

- comply with legislation on language;
- adopt a structure approved by the Minister;
- follow a curriculum which meets legal requirements;
- submit to supervision and inspection as organized by the Government of the Community, which is responsible for determining that the level of instruction is satisfactory;
- have a minimum number of pupils per class, section or level;
- be composed of educational facilities which are located in the same complex of buildings and form a whole, and which meet standards for hygiene and cleanliness;
- follow the general scheme for leave and holidays;
- employ staff who are not likely to endanger pupils' health;
- possess the teaching materials and school facilities required to meet educational needs.

If the establishment meets these conditions, the organizing body is free to choose staff, as long as they also meet certain standards, and to choose teaching methods.

With respect to the freedom of subsidized education, the Minister decides on the rational organization of school transport and on the organization of centralized and decentralized in-service training activities.

At the level of each educational establishment, daily management is generally the responsibility of the organizing body or of the head teacher to whom it delegates its responsibilities.

Each educational establishment has total responsibility for the assessment of its pupils. Within the limits of laws and decrees, each organizing body may define the type of assessment it wishes to use and the means of monitoring and communicating the results of the assessment.

## **1.2 Financing**

The Community covers all the costs of Community education and subsidizes public and "free" education as far as permitted by laws and decrees.

These subsidies cover, completely or partially:

- staff remuneration, under the same conditions (qualifications and duties) as those granted to Community education staff;
- operating expenses according to regulatory criteria;
- expenses related to facilities, construction and development, within the limits of credits provided for in the budgetary decree.

Financing is partially based on a pupil/teacher ratio. Since September 1984, the rules which govern the pupil/teacher ratio have been based on a subsidizable set of units known as the system of "capital periods". This places a certain number of periods at the disposal of the school in accordance with its total number of pupils. Each unit of 20 (secondary) or 28 (primary) periods entitles the school to a full-time teacher. The system enables the school to adapt its structure partially to its pupils' needs.

## **1.3 Inspection**

There is a triple system of inspection, consisting of:

- A monitoring service which ensures that Community subsidies are being used correctly. This service mainly controls the number of regular pupils and students.
- An inspection service which verifies the level of instruction in Community educational establishments and gives its opinion on the qualifications of staff. This service also provides educational support by advising teachers, and contributes to the preparation of curricula and the development of teaching methods. In addition, it verifies the level of instruction in education subsidized by the Community. Organizing bodies also have a teaching inspection service for their network. Every six months inspectors establish a plan for in-service teacher training activities.
- This inspection service is still provided by the French Community, but in the near future, the Minister of the German-speaking Community will have his own inspection service that will cooperate with the inspection services of the two other communities and of the neighbouring countries.
- A "homologation committee" whose task is to verify whether secondary-level studies have been completed in keeping with the provisions of legislation and regulations. The committee is also responsible for approving lower secondary school certificates and upper secondary school

certificates (*Abschlußzeugnis der Unterstufe des Sekundarunterrichts, Abschlußzeugnis der Oberstufe des Sekundarunterrichts*).

This "homologation committee" is an inspection service of the French Community, but the German-speaking Community is represented in every section.

## 1.4 Advisory bodies

The Minister's advisory body is the *Pädagogische Kommission*. This comprises representatives of the different organizing bodies, the *Pädagogische Arbeitsgruppe* (service of the Department of Education responsible for the in-service training organized by the Ministry), the inspection service, the administration, the institutions of higher education and the unions. It advises the Minister mainly on matters of in-service training and educational projects.

## 1.5 Guidance

The tasks of guidance and orientation of pupils in pre-school, primary, secondary and special education are the responsibility of the psycho-medico-social centres (*Psycho-Medico-Sozial-Zentren - PMS*). These centres are also responsible for school medical inspections. The centres are independent of the schools, but work closely with them and with families. Each centre is composed of an interdisciplinary team made up of educational psychologists/counsellors, social workers, nurses and independent doctors.

The teams deal with assistance and advice to pupils, parents and schools. The main task of these centres consists in helping schools to offer their pupils the best possible chance of developing a balanced personality. That is why *PMS* counselling is of a multi-disciplinary nature. In order to fulfil their task properly the centres follow pupils from nursery school up to the end of their secondary education.

Several types of educational activities help young people plan their lives and careers. The methods used combine group activities and individual analyses. The *PMS* centres use computer software (e.g. *CHOIX*) and other interesting means (e.g. *BIZ-Mobil*, a kind of mobile exhibition of information on occupations mainly in Germany and Belgium) to help students choose their studies and occupations.

## 2. PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION (*Kindergarten*)

Pre-school education is an integral part of the education system. Pre-school education is optional, free and coeducational, and is provided for children aged from two-and-a-half to six years, and up to seven years in exceptional cases. For children aged three and above the attendance rate is higher than 95%.

Pre-school education has a social function and is a preparation for primary education. The general aim of pre-school education is to develop the child's:

- mental, physical and psychomotor balance;
- intellectual skills;
- capacity for expression and communication;
- independence;
- creativity.

Pre-school education is provided in nursery schools (*Kindergarten*) which are usually attached to primary schools. There are nursery schools in the three educational networks.

In most cases, depending on their size, nursery schools are organized in groups or classes based on age, but in some rural areas where small schools do not have enough children to set up three age groups, the "family model", bringing together children of different ages into one class, is often used. There are 20 pupils per class.

The children are supervised mainly by nursery teachers. Each pre-school teacher is responsible for one class, but specific provisions, as well as the internal rules of each establishment, encourage cooperation between teachers.

The timetable is flexible as there is no academic teaching. There are various activities to encourage the child's development - psychomotor, artistic, linguistic, mathematical, musical, scientific - but no lessons as such. There is no formal assessment and no written reports at this level.

Assessment is mainly based on the teacher's observation of pupils' attitudes and behaviour. Pupils automatically progress to the next class. The *PMS* centres, together with the educational team, measure the degree of maturity and development reached by the child.

The school week consists of four-and-a-half days; Wednesday afternoon is free. In the first year, pupils may attend only in the mornings if their parents choose. The length of the school year is the same as in compulsory education, with two months' holiday in the summer, and two weeks' at Christmas and at Easter.

## Teachers

Pre-school teachers have followed three-year concurrent courses of theoretical and practical teacher training at an institution of higher education (*Pädagogische Hochschule*) leading to a teaching diploma [*Vorschullehrer(in)*, *Kindergärtner(in)*]. Teachers are employed by the organizing body. They may work part-time or full-time. In-service training is not compulsory, but there are normally three in-service days (*Konferenztage*) per year.

## Statistics 1991/92

	Pupils	Teachers*	Schools
Community schools	696	42	10
Provincial schools	-	-	-
Communal schools	2,011	149	51
"Free" schools	217	19	4

\* Number of full-time and part-time teachers.

## 3. Compulsory education

According to the Act of 29 June 1983, compulsory education lasts for 12 years, from 6 to 18 years of age.

Children are required to attend school full-time up to the age of 15, completing primary education and at least the first two years of secondary education. Pupils who have not completed the first two years of secondary education are required to attend full-time education until the age of 16. Those who do not wish to continue full-time until 18 may then follow compulsory part-time education up to the age of 18.

Part-time compulsory education is defined as studies in a recognized establishment, in the form of either part-time study or a recognized training course.

### **3.1 PRIMARY EDUCATION** (*Primarschulwesen*)

Primary education caters for children aged six to 12. It lasts six years and is divided into three cycles of two years each.

The general aims of primary education may be summarized as follows:

- to encourage the personal development of each child whilst respecting its identity, to stimulate its initiation into society and to participate actively in its education;
- to help the child acquire basic knowledge and skills;
- to overcome the child's inequalities with regard to the school and education.

In the German-speaking Community, there is a special solution for the French-speaking minority according to the Laws on languages (1963): there are French primary schools where the language of instruction is French and the second language is German.

Primary education is provided in primary schools. In organizational terms, these may be:

- independent primary schools;
- primary schools attached to a secondary establishment;
- primary schools attached to a teacher training institution.

There are primary schools in every educational network.

Each school is placed under the responsibility of the organizing body (Community, free bodies and institutions, or other public institutions) on which it depends. There are no entrance requirements. Education is free of charge.

In accordance with official measures to promote equal opportunities for boys and girls, primary schools are now usually coeducational.

Classes are usually organized by age. In low population areas classes may cover two years (one cycle) or more.

Instruction is provided five days per week, morning and afternoon, with the exception of Wednesday afternoon, for a total of 182 days per year. There are 28 weekly lessons of 50 minutes each. The school year starts on 1 September and ends on 30 June. There are three main holidays: two weeks at Christmas, two weeks at Easter and eight weeks in the summer, and one shorter mid-term holiday each term.

#### **Curriculum**

Since 1971, primary schools have been going through a process of fundamental reform in terms of both educational objectives and methods and teaching content. However, this reform has not extended to all primary schools, a large proportion of which continue to use traditional methods.

As a general rule, the reforms aimed to introduce a greater degree of flexibility into education, to take into consideration the particular ways of learning of young children, to adapt education to the changing needs of the surrounding world and to respect the learning speed and rhythm of the individual child as far as possible.

Curricula are designed to promote the acquisition of instrumental skills (such as the general mastery of language and mathematics) rather than factual knowledge.

The timetable includes: German, French, observation of the environment (history, geography and science education), mathematics, religion or ethics, physical education, musical education, manual and artistic education, road safety and health education.

The teaching of French is possible from the first year on and compulsory from the third year on. (The Minister has made a lot of efforts to improve the teaching of French and the in-service-training of primary teachers, especially in French.)

The same subjects are taught to all pupils, and there is little differentiation.

### **Assessment and qualifications**

Each teacher and school have complete responsibility for the process of pupil assessment. As assessment is an area in which the pedagogical freedom of each network is guaranteed, each organizing body can define the type and method of assessment it wishes to use as well as the way it communicates the results, insofar as the relevant laws and regulations are respected.

Throughout the year, teachers use a continuous formative assessment to monitor the progress of their pupils on the basis of all written and oral work and homework. At the end of the school year, the teacher makes a summative assessment, and can use tests to assess pupils. The teacher or team of teachers/Class Council assesses the year's work and the results of the tests (if any) at the end of the year to decide whether or not to allow a pupil to move on to the next class. In this, the pupil's analytical skills, ability to think independently, cooperative spirit and taste for work and for working well must all be taken into account. Report cards regularly keep the child and his or her parents informed of test results, academic progress, behaviour in class and personal development.

It is possible for a child to repeat classes each year but it is rare to repeat more than one year at primary level. Pupils who experience learning difficulties can receive special and individualized assistance from a remedial teacher.

When they have successfully completed their primary education, pupils receive a certificate of primary education (*Abschlußzeugnis der Grundschule*). Schools may award the certificate themselves as long as they respect the terms of the law, or they may register pupils for a cantonal examination (minimum age: 11 years by 31 December of that year). This certificate can also be awarded to anyone who successfully completes either the first year of secondary school (class B) or a second year of vocational education, even though he or she did not obtain it in primary school.

For pupils having difficulties, the period of compulsory schooling may include seven years of primary education, or even eight in exceptional cases.

### **Teachers**

In most cases, primary school teachers are allocated by class and provide all instruction, but, especially in cycle III, instruction may be broken down by subject area. Some courses may be given by specialized teachers (language, physical education or artistic or manual activities) or remedial teachers.

Teachers have received three years of initial training at a teacher training institution. The course comprises academic and theoretical and practical teacher training and leads to diploma for primary school teachers [*Primarschullehrer(in)*].

In-service training is not compulsory, but there are normally three in-service days (*Konferenztage*) per year, and 10 days of training per year are available in special centres. Teachers may work full-time or part-time and are appointed by the organizing body of the school.

### Statistics 1991/92

	Pupils	Teachers*	Schools
Community schools	1,300	101	10
Provincial schools	-	-	-
Communal schools	2,990	294	51
"Free" schools	661	64	5

\* Number of full-time and part-time teachers.

## 3.2 SECONDARY EDUCATION (*Sekundarschulwesen*)

Secondary education, like primary education, is included in the period of compulsory schooling. Full-time schooling may last until age 18, or up to the age of 15 or 16, when part-time schooling may be followed up to age 18, combined with vocational training.

There are two procedures for entering secondary education:

- the first allows pupils with a certificate of primary education (*Abschlußzeugnis der Grundschule*) to be admitted automatically into the first year A (general education) of secondary education. Pupils who have completed the sixth year of primary education but have not obtained the certificate may also be admitted under certain conditions (on the agreement of parents, the recommendation of the *PMS* centre and the first year A admission council);
- the second provides for admission for 12-year-olds who do not have the certificate to the first year B (reception or transition class).

Transfer from the first year B to the first year A is possible up to 15 November and from first year A to first year B up to 15 January if the pupil's parents agree and the Class Council so advises.

Schools are usually coeducational. Secondary schools do not charge fees. Schools have an average of 200 - 400 pupils. They may be attached to primary schools. Classes are generally organized by age and sometimes by subject. However, because of repeating, classes sometimes include pupils of various age-groups.

Secondary schools provide 32 lessons of 50 minutes each per week. In sections including practical classes as part of vocational education there may be 34 or even 36 lessons. There are 182 school days per year and there are three main holidays: eight weeks in the summer, two weeks at Christmas and at Easter, and three shorter mid-term breaks each term.

In the German-speaking Community, secondary education now comprises Type I education only, which is divided into three cycles of two years and is known as reformed education.

Type I secondary education, under the Law of 19 July 1971, is organized in the following four forms:

- general education;
- technical education;
- vocational education;
- artistic education;

and in two main streams:

- the transition stream (general, technical and artistic education), the objective of which is to prepare pupils for higher education while leaving them the option of entering employment;
- the qualification stream (technical, vocational and artistic education), the objective of which is to prepare pupils for employment, while allowing them the option of entering higher education.

As mentioned above, Type I secondary education comprises three cycles of two years:

- 1st cycle - an observation cycle (usually for pupils aged 12 to 14);
- 2nd cycle - an orientation cycle (usually for pupils aged 14 to 16);
- 3rd cycle - a determination cycle (usually for pupils aged 16 to 18).

Throughout the first two cycles and to a lesser extent in the third cycle, there is the possibility of transferring from one form of education to another, as well as bridges from vocational education to other types of education.

## Curriculum

In the first year of the **observation cycle**, nearly all pupils follow a common curriculum - German, French, religion or ethics, mathematics, history, geography, sciences, physical education and artistic education. In addition, five periods a week are left available to each school to allocate as they wish within a defined and legally fixed framework.

In the common second year, the common curriculum is the same, with various basic options: Latin, economics and scientific, artistic or technical education. Each option of 12 weekly lessons covers at least two areas of technical activity.

Special arrangements exist for pupils who follow vocational education from the second year. They study the same subjects provided in the basic course, but 8 to 10 lessons are available for each school to develop individually as regards for example the tradition of the school or the socio-economic environment in which it is situated. In the second year of vocational education the basic course is limited to 16 lessons. Two groups of subjects, a total of 16 lessons, are added to this package. Each of these groups provides an introduction to the theory and practice of the main vocational sectors.

From the beginning of the **orientation cycle**, the four forms of education are organized separately, although within each form of education, in addition to the various options, there is a common core which is reduced in volume during the **determination cycle**.

The common part consists of the basic course.

Basic education from the third to the sixth year consists of the following subjects: religion or non-denominational ethics, French, German, mathematics, history, geography, science and physical education in the transition stream. General academic education also includes a third modern language. In some schools, different subjects are gradually taught in the second language, French.

In addition to the common part, it is compulsory to choose from among the following options:

- in the transition stream: Latin, modern languages, mathematics, sciences, economics, social sciences, technological education, physical education;
- in the qualification stream: agronomy, industry, construction, hotel work, clothing, arts, economics, social services, sciences.

The educational networks enjoy total freedom as regards **teaching methods**. Curricula can contain a list of recommended textbooks, but there is no obligation whatsoever to use a textbook from these lists. The same applies to **teaching materials**.

### **Assessment and qualifications**

The essential instrument in assessment is the Class Council (*Klassenrat*), which is the committee consisting of the entire teaching staff responsible for the education of a specific group of pupils. It assesses their school progress and makes the decision regarding each pupils' promotion to a higher class. It issues certificates as appropriate. The Class Council bases its decisions on various factors, such as:

- the past school career of each pupil;
- the intermediate results from class work, assessments and oral and/or written examinations;
- information from the psycho-medico-social centre (*PMS*);
- interviews with the pupil and parents, as necessary.

Each Class Council has to establish, at regular intervals, an intellectual, social and moral assessment of each pupil. The results of assessments carried out during the year are taken into account in the end-of-year assessments. Tests are compulsory for all pupils.

At the end of the year, the Class Council decides, for each pupil, whether they should be promoted to a higher class - with or without restriction - or whether the promotion should be delayed or refused. Unsuccessful pupils repeat a year, but pupils with learning difficulties may obtain help from remedial teachers.

Certificates are awarded by the schools concerned, and then ratified by the "homologation committee", which ensures that the schools comply with regulations on the organization of studies.

At the end of the third year of general or technical studies, or of the fourth year of vocational education, successful pupils receive a lower secondary school certificate (*Abschlußzeugnis der Unterstufe des Sekundarunterrichts*).

In the technical section, a qualification certificate (*Befähigungsnachweis*) is awarded at the end of the 6th year.

An upper secondary school certificate (*Abschlußzeugnis der Oberstufe des Sekundarunterrichts*) is awarded to each pupil who has successfully completed the sixth year in the general or technical sections.

In the vocational section, a study certificate (*Studienzeugnis*) and a qualification certificate (*Befähigungsnachweis*) are awarded at the end of the sixth year of studies. Pupils who go on to a seventh year of vocational studies may obtain an upper secondary certificate.

### **Teachers**

Teachers in secondary schools in the German-speaking Community are trained in the French Community as there is neither a teacher training institution for that level nor a university in the German-speaking Community itself.

Teachers are subject specialists and are appointed to teach these subjects.

To be appointed to a permanent position in secondary education, a candidate must have one of the following:

- The qualification for lower secondary school teachers (*diplôme d'agrégé de l'enseignement secondaire inférieur - AESI*). This diploma is awarded to students who have successfully completed the three-year teacher training course at a teacher training institution and qualifies the holder to teach in the lower cycle (the first three years). The course comprises general and pedagogical training, including the study of one or two specific subjects. In the third year, about 50% of the time is spent on teaching practice.
- Or the qualification for upper secondary school teachers (*diplôme d'agrégé de l'enseignement secondaire supérieur - AESS*). This diploma is awarded after at least four years of study (at *candidature* and *licence* levels) at a university and qualifies the holder to teach in the upper three years of secondary education.

The four or five years of academic training is completed by pedagogical training and teaching practice. Pedagogical training is not full-time and may either be carried out in parallel to the degree course from the third year or after its completion as a two-year part-time course.

Teachers of vocational education courses and certain technical courses at secondary level, for which no full-time training is available, may follow part-time teacher training through social advancement courses. Courses include theoretical and practical teacher training and teaching practice and lead to the certificate of pedagogical aptitude (*Fachkundelehrer(in) und Pädagogischer Befähigungsnachweis*).

Teachers may work full-time or part-time. They are appointed by the organizing body. In-service training is organized by the organizing body or the centralized structure and is available for all teachers.

## Statistics 1991/92

	Pupils	Teachers*	Schools
Community schools	1,507	306	5
Provincial schools	-	-	-
Communal schools	227	50	1
"Free" schools	2,007	329	8

\* Number of full-time and part-time teachers.

## 4. INITIAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

### 4.1 Part-time compulsory schooling

In the framework of compulsory schooling, the training of young people under 18 years of age comes under two types of measures conforming to requirements for part-time compulsory schooling up to age 18:

- part-time education;
- apprenticeship (apprenticeship in the SME sector and industrial apprenticeship).

#### Part-time education

Under the Law of 29 June 1983 on compulsory education, part-time compulsory education was introduced in 1984 for young people who have either reached the age of 15 and have already had two years of secondary education or who have already reached the age of 16. Pupils who no longer wish to follow full-time education can study on a part-time basis in one of the two centres for part-time education.

The centres for part-time education provide courses combining general education (including social and personal training) with preparation for an occupation. The content of courses is limited, and designed to be a continuation of the full-time education system. The centres are linked to a school providing full-time technical and/or secondary vocational education.

Training lasts for 600 periods of 50 minutes per year, spread over at least 20 weeks. (Part-time education lasts 360 hours in the first year - 15- to 16-year-olds, and 240 hours in the following two years.) Part-time education is provided for 40 weeks a year with an average of 15 hours per week covering, according to need, 8 hours of general (French/Dutch, mathematics), personal and social training and 7 hours of vocational training (technology). The remaining time may be spent on a training placement in a firm. The number of periods devoted to general training in proportion to the number of periods spent on vocational training is partly left to the discretion of the management of the centre, which takes into account the characteristics of the group of pupils concerned. Part-time secondary education may be provided outside the opening hours of full-time educational establishments. Evening or weekend courses are allowed. This type of education may also be organized in modules to be determined by the Government.

Part-time education leads to an attendance certificate (*Bescheinigung über den regelmäßigen Schulbesuch*), and may also lead to a qualification certificate (*Bescheinigung über die erworbenen Kenntnisse*).

## **Apprenticeship in the SME sector**

Apprenticeship is a recognized form of part-time compulsory schooling. It is available to 15-year-olds who have successfully completed two years of general secondary education or vocational secondary education, or have passed an entrance examination, or to 16-year-olds. It aims to train young people to run a business.

Apprenticeship lasts three years. Theoretical vocational/technical training lasts for 360 hours during the first year and 240 hours during the following two years, and is provided in a SME training centre for one to one-and-a-half days per week. The apprentice then spends three-and-a-half to four days a week gaining practical experience in a firm with which he/she has an apprenticeship contract.

Apprenticeship contracts may be concluded for occupations related to commerce, trade, smaller industries, craftsmanship and non-manual occupations in the services sector.

The training period is subject to continuous assessment and ends in an examination.

The Community Minister responsible for the SME sector is required to determine the length of training for each occupation or group of occupations within a range of one to three years. They also use the preliminary training during the period of apprenticeship as a basis for deciding whether the duration should be extended or shortened. A monthly minimum allowance, adjusted each year to the consumer price index, is paid each school year to the apprentice by the head of the firm on a progressive basis.

## **5. HIGHER EDUCATION**

In the German-speaking Community there is only one type of higher education (short higher education; short non-university level).

For long higher education or university education, students have to study in the French Community, the Flemish Community or Germany. Most choose the French Community, and this is one of the reasons why French is taught from early on in the education system of the German-speaking Community.

### **Admission**

Students must have an upper secondary school certificate (*Abschlußzeugnis der Oberstufe des Sekundarbereichs = Abitur*).

### **Fees/Student finance**

Students pay tuition fees each year, but grants are available from the Community budget and may be awarded on the basis of a means test.

### **Academic year**

The academic year starts between 15 September and the first Monday of October, with a total of 30 weeks of classes.

### **Courses/Qualifications**

Short higher education is organized in a single cycle of studies lasting three or four years, leading to a final diploma and providing direct access to a profession in the German-speaking Community.

This type of education covers two types of studies: paramedical (medical auxiliary education) [*Graduierte(r) Krankenpfleger(in)*] and educational (pedagogical education). It leads to diplomas in various professions: nurse, nursery teacher [*Kindergärtner(in)*], primary teacher [*Primarschullehrer(in)*].

### **Assessment**

Each year of study is sanctioned by examinations which determine whether a student may continue to the next year. Examinations are regulated by a number of administrative and organizational rules. Two examination sessions are held each academic year. Students are prohibited from sitting the same examination more than four times in two academic years and must sit examinations during the first session. Students are, at the end of the academic year, either:

- admitted to the next year of study if they have obtained a score of at least 50% in each test and 60% of the points awarded for the entire examination;
- deferred and required to resit, at the second session, the examinations in which they did not meet the examining board's standards;
- rejected, and must repeat the year.

Assessment comprises the accumulation of results and the award of a certificate. It is based on end-of-year examinations and the submission of a final project or thesis. However, a dossier containing an evaluation of the performance of the students during the academic year, and in particular of their practical work and courses, is studied prior to assessment. Recently, initiatives have also been taken to introduce formative assessment aimed at providing teachers and students with more frequent assessment opportunities.

# FLEMISH COMMUNITY

**Source:** Structures of the Education and Initial Training Systems in the European Union, EURYDICE/CEDEFOP, 1995.

## 1. RESPONSIBILITIES AND ADMINISTRATION

### 1.1 Administration

As a consequence of the recent reforms of the State, education policy is the responsibility of the *Vlaamse Raad* (Flemish Council, legislative power by means of *decreet*) and the Flemish Government and the Flemish Minister of Education (executive power by means of *besluit*). The Minister heads the Education Department, which is part of the Ministry of the Flemish Community.

The concept of organizing body (*inrichtende macht*) is central to the organization of Flemish education. The organizing body is the natural or legal person taking the initiative to provide education and being responsible for it. It defines the "character" of the education provided (except for Community education), and develops the school educational plan.

According to the type of organizing body, there are three educational networks:

- Community education: education set up by the Autonomous Council for Community Education (*Autonome Raad van het Gemeenschapsonderwijs - ARGO*) on behalf of the Flemish Community. The Constitution stipulates that Community education must be neutral.
- Subsidized "public" education: provincial education, organized by the provincial authorities, and municipal education, set up by the municipal authorities. Schools in this network can be denominational or neutral.
- Subsidized "free" (private) education: education set up at private initiative by a private person or organization. It consists of denominational (mainly Catholic) and non-denominational private education.

Education organized by the first two networks (the authorities) is called public education. Education provided by the third network is called "free" education.

A school is subsidized by the Community when it complies with legislation and regulations concerning the organization of studies and with legislation on language.

The organizing body receives the financial resources required to provide education. It is responsible for the correct management of these resources. The organizing body owns or rents the school buildings. The organizing bodies of subsidized education can apply for building grants for school construction.

The organizing body is free to appoint school staff within the limits of the personnel statute and the regulations concerning financing and subsidy.

It is also free to determine its teaching methods, and draws up curricula on the basis of centrally defined minimum goals (*eindtermen*). The curricula are not developed centrally. The minimum goals are the final aims to be achieved at each level of education and are determined by the Flemish Government. They are prepared by the education development service (*Dienst voor Onderwijsontwikkeling - DVO*) and, upon the unanimous recommendation of the Flemish Education Council (*Vlaamse Onderwijsraad - VLOR*), the Flemish Council ratifies them.

The school is responsible for assessment and can award certificates and diplomas on condition that the minimum goals, as ascertained by the inspectorate, are achieved.

In **Community education** the Central Council (*Centrale Raad*) of the *ARGO* receives and manages the financial resources required to provide education. It determines the school educational plan and school curricula, and deals with the recruitment of school staff, the management of the school construction fund and overall educational planning. The local School Council (*lokale schoolraden*) can take decisions on all matters which can be settled at local level. This applies to the provision of materials and financial management, and to teaching and staff policy. It is composed of representatives of parents, local social, economic and cultural circles and teachers. This council ensures genuine co-management. There is also a pedagogical board (*pedagogisch college*), composed of members of the teaching staff of the school. In higher non-university education, the local school council is called *raad van bestuur* (administration council).

In **subsidized public education** each organizing body enjoys full autonomy in conducting its local policy for the school or schools that come within its responsibility. There are two bodies coordinating the different organizing bodies of this network: *Cel voor het Vlaams Provinciaal Onderwijs (CVPO)* for the provinces; *Onderwijssecretariaat van de Steden en Gemeenten van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap (OVSG)* for the municipalities.

In **subsidized free education** the autonomy of the organizing bodies is the same. There are also bodies uniting the organizing bodies. As regards Catholic education, there is the *Vlaams Secretariaat van het Katholiek Onderwijs (VSKO)* at Community level, the *Diocesane Planificatie- en Coördinatiecommissie (DPCC)* at diocesan level and the *Regionale Coördinatiecommissie (RCC)* at regional level.

In subsidized public and free education, there is a Participation Council (*participatieraad*), composed of representatives of the organizing body, parents, staff members and the local community. The Council has the right to information about all matters involving school life. It provides advice with regard to the general organization and operation of the school, planning at school level and general criteria for the counselling and assessment of pupils, and is consulted about the criteria for applying the capital-periods system (number of periods per teacher), the determination and modification of school rules, school transport, and the safety and health of pupils. In subsidized free education, in a limited number of matters, the organizing body cannot make decisions without the consent of the Participation Council.

## 1.2 Financing

As far as public spending is concerned, it should be repeated that education is a Community matter. In Flanders, the Community and the region coincide politically and therefore all Community and regional matters are financed in total by the Community and the region. In addition to Community spending, contributions are made by the provinces and the municipalities (in subsidized public education), and by private persons and organizations (in subsidized free education).

The basic principle is that the Community covers all the costs of Community schools, and awards the subsidized schools grants to cover the running, maintenance and replacement costs of equipment and buildings. The salaries of all school staff are paid directly by the Education Department.

Access to education is free of charge until the end of compulsory schooling. However, in practice many schools have to cater for additional expenses, to which parents do make some financial contribution.

## 1.3 Inspection

The inspectorate (*Inspectie*) supervises the quality of all levels of education up to short higher education. To that end, it has to examine whether the minimum goals are properly achieved and whether the other organizational obligations are correctly observed. The inspectorate is not subject-related or meant to check out individual teachers. It operates through team visits aimed at the examination of the whole school.

Quality control in long higher education and at universities is essentially based on self-evaluation and "visitation committees" (peer review).

The education development service (*Dienst voor Onderwijsontwikkeling - DVO*) can be considered as a scientific staff service belonging to the inspectorate. It defines the minimum goals, and develops the instruments required to measure the functioning of these.

## 1.4 Advisory/Consultative/Participatory bodies

The Flemish Education Council (*Vlaamse Onderwijsraad - VLOR*) is the advisory and consultative body for all educational matters. All draft decrees in the field of education must be submitted to the *VLOR*. Furthermore, the *VLOR* can give advice to the Flemish Government at its own initiative. The *VLOR* consists of a general council and separate councils for primary, secondary, higher and adult education. The general council is composed of representatives of the organizing bodies, school staff, parents and socio-economic organizations, university experts and Education Department representatives.

Within the *VLOR* there are two so-called "participation boards": one for subsidized public education and the other for subsidized free education. Their composition is analogous to that of participation councils in schools. The boards have a mediating role when conflicts arise and they have to establish violations of the participation rules.

The Flemish Socio-Economic Council (*Sociaal-Economische Raad van Vlaanderen - SERV*), composed of representatives of employers and employees, must give advice on all draft decrees, including those in the field of education.

The Flemish Interuniversity Council (*Vlaamse Interuniversitaire Raad - VLIR*) gives advice and makes proposals to the Minister of Education in the field of university education.

## 1.5 Guidance

Each educational network also has pedagogical counselling services (*pedagogische begeleidingsdiensten*) to assist teachers and schools in the general pedagogical and methodological fields.

Psycho-medico-social guidance centres (*Psycho-medisch-sociale centra - PMS*) deal with assistance and (non-binding) advice to pupils, parents and schools. The task of these centres consists in helping schools to offer their pupils the best possible chances of developing a balanced personality. *PMS* guidance is therefore multidisciplinary, with the team at a centre including doctors, paramedics, psychologists, educationalists and social workers. The centres follow pupils from nursery school up to the end of secondary education. *PMS* centres belong to one of the three educational networks.

## 2. PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION (*Kleuteronderwijs*)

Pre-school education is optional and is provided for children aged between two-and-a-half and six years, exceptionally seven years, in nursery schools free of charge. The attendance rate is 92% among three-year-olds, 97% among four-year-olds and 100% among five-year-olds (and above).

Pre-school education has a social function and is a preparation for primary education. The general aim of pre-school education is to develop the child's:

- mental and physical equilibrium;
- intellectual skills;
- expression and communication skills;
- creativity and independence.

There are special nursery schools for children with serious mental or physical handicaps

Nursery schools are coeducational and can be attached to a primary school. In most cases, classes are organized into three groups of children by age, according to the size of the school. Teachers are allocated to a different group of children each year.

The school year is organized as at primary level.

Assessment in nursery schools is mainly based on observation. Pupils progress automatically up to the next class. The guidance centres, together with an educational team, measure the degree of maturity and development reached by the child.

## Teachers

Intending pre-school teachers are trained in the same way as primary teachers (see 3) but are specialized in pre-school education. Successful students are awarded a teaching diploma (*kleuteronderwijzer*).

Teachers may work full-time or part-time. In-service training is not compulsory.

## Statistics 1991/92

	Pupils	Teachers*	Schools
Community schools	30,278	1,662	327
Provincial schools	300	15	4
Communal schools	41,417	2,200	405
"Free" schools	161,266	8,328	1,336

\* Number of full-time and part-time teachers.

There is no pupil/teacher ratio in the proper sense in pre-school education. Since September 1984, the rules which govern the pupil/teacher ratio have been based on a subsidizable set of units known as the system of *lestijden* (capital periods). It puts a certain number of periods at the disposal of the school in accordance with its total number of pupils. Each unit of 24 periods entitles the school to a full-time teacher. The system enables the school to adapt its structure partially to its pupils' needs.

## 3. Compulsory education

According to the Act of 29 June 1983, compulsory education lasts for 12 years, from 6 to 18 years of age.

Children are required to attend school full-time up to the age of 15, completing primary education and at least the first two years of secondary education. Pupils who have not completed the first two years of secondary education are required to attend full-time education until the age of 16. Those who do not wish to continue full-time until 18 may then follow compulsory part-time education up to the age of 18.

Part-time compulsory education is defined as studies in a recognized establishment, in the form of either part-time study or a recognized training course.

### **3.1 PRIMARY EDUCATION (*Lager onderwijs*)**

Primary education is for children aged six to 12 years and is divided into three stages of two years each. It is provided free of charge in primary schools. These are usually coeducational; however, a rather limited number of schools are still single-sex.

Classes are usually organized by age. As in nursery schools, there is no pupil/teacher ratio in the proper sense, since standards are based on the system of *lestijden* (capital periods).

Instruction is provided five days per week, morning and afternoon, with the exception of Wednesday afternoon, for a total of 182 days per year. There are 28 weekly lessons of 50 minutes each. The school year starts on 1 September and ends on 30 June. There are three main holidays (two weeks at Christmas, two weeks at Easter and two months in the summer) and one shorter mid-term holiday each term.

The general aims of primary education may be summarized as follows:

- to encourage the personal development of each child whilst respecting its identity, to stimulate its initiation into society and to participate actively in its education;
- to help the child acquire basic knowledge and skills;
- to overcome the child's inequalities with regard to the school and education.

#### **Curriculum**

The timetable applied in primary education comprises: religion or ethics, observation of the environment, Dutch, mathematics, drawing, manual activities, physical education, music and writing. In Brussels, the teaching of French is possible from the first year on and compulsory from the third year on. In all other Flemish schools, French may be taught in the third stage (5th and 6th years). In linguistic border municipalities, the teaching of French is compulsory in the second stage (3rd and 4th years). It is also possible to teach consumer education. The same subjects are taught to all pupils, with little differentiation.

#### **Assessment and qualifications**

As mentioned above, assessment is an area in which the pedagogical freedom of the organizing body is guaranteed; each organizing body can define the type and method of assessment it wishes to use and the way it communicates the results, as long as the relevant laws and regulations are respected.

Throughout the year, teachers use a continuous formative assessment to monitor the progress of their pupils on the basis of all written and oral work and homework. At the end of the school year, the teacher makes a summative assessment, and can use tests to assess pupils. The teacher or team of teachers assesses the year's work and the results of the tests at the end of the year to decide whether or not to allow a pupil to move on to the next class. In this, the pupil's analytical skills, ability to think

independently, cooperative spirit and taste for work and for working well must all be taken into account. Report cards regularly keep the child and his or her parents informed of test results, academic progress, behaviour in class and personal development.

It is possible for a child to repeat classes each year and thus within a stage. Pupils who experience learning difficulties can receive special and individualized assistance from a remedial teacher.

When they have successfully completed their primary education, pupils receive a certificate of primary education (*Getuigschrift van het Basisonderwijs*). Schools may award this certificate themselves as long as they respect the terms of the law, or they may register pupils for a cantonal examination. However, the latter possibility will disappear in the near future. This certificate (or an equivalent) may also be awarded to pupils who successfully complete either the first year of secondary education or a second year of vocational education, if they did not complete primary education successfully.

## Teachers

In most cases, primary teachers are not subject specialists and are allocated by class, but, especially in the third stage, instruction may be broken down by subject area. Some courses may be given by specialized teachers (language, physical education or artistic or manual activities) or remedial teachers.

The initial training of primary school teachers is organized in *Pedagogische Hogescholen*, higher teacher training institutions. It entails three years of study comprising academic and theoretical and practical teacher training. Successful students are awarded a diploma of qualified teacher for primary education (*Onderwijzer*). Teachers may work full-time or part-time. In-service training is not compulsory.

## Statistics 1991/92

	Pupils	Teachers*	Schools
Community schools	54,457	3,883	329
Provincial schools	702	55	3
Communal schools	88,178	5,825	508
"Free" schools	261,436	16,434	1,387

\* Number of full-time and part-time teachers.

## 3.2 SECONDARY EDUCATION (*Secundair onderwijs*)

Secondary education, like primary education, is included in the period of compulsory schooling. Full-time schooling may last until age 18, or up to the age of 15 or 16, when part-time schooling may be followed up to age 18.

Pupils must have reached the age of 12 before they are admitted to secondary education. They may enter the first year A on obtaining the certificate of primary education. After spending a year in the sixth year of primary education without obtaining the certificate, pupils may be admitted to the first year A with their parents' consent and on the advice of the *PMS* centre, on condition that the first year A admission Class Council (*Toelatingsraad*) gives a favourable opinion. Without the certificate of primary education, pupils may be admitted to the first year B from the age of 12. The same holds true - with parental consent and on the advice of the *PMS* centre - for pupils who do not seem to be suitable for the first year A, even though they have the certificate. Transfer from the first year B to the first year A is possible until 15 November and from the first year A to the first year B until 15 January, if the child's parents agree and the Class Council so advises.

As the coexistence of two different structures in secondary education caused quite a number of complicated organizational, budgetary and psychological problems, it was decided to replace the two types - Type I and Type II - with a new general structure for secondary education. As a result of this decision all Flemish secondary schools adopted the new organizational type - progressively from the first year of secondary education from 1 September 1989.

In accordance with the Act of 31 July 1990, the new structure is composed of three stages of two years, the second and third stage comprising four different forms:

- General secondary education (*Algemeen secundair onderwijs - ASO*), which emphasizes broad theoretical training and provides a strong basis for attending higher education.
- Technical secondary education (*Technisch secundair onderwijs - TSO*), which focuses mainly on general and technical-theoretical subjects, and leads to employment or higher education. Practical courses are also included.
- Artistic secondary education (*Kunstsecundair onderwijs - KSO*), which links general and broad development with active art practice, and leads to employment or higher education.
- Vocational secondary education (*Beroeps-secundair onderwijs - BSO*), which is practical education combining the acquisition of specific skills with general education. It may provide access to higher education.

Throughout the first two stages and to a lesser extent in the third stage, it is possible to transfer from one form of education to another, and there are "bridges" from vocational education to other types of education.

There are three types of secondary schools organized by the *ARGO*:

- Middle Schools (*Middenscholen*) which organize general secondary education in the 2nd and 3rd stages, or the three stages;
- Royal *Atheneum* (*Koninklijk Atheneum*) which organizes general secondary education in the 2nd and 3rd stages, or the three stages;
- Royal Technical *Atheneum* (*Koninklijk Technisch Atheneum*) which organizes technical and vocational secondary education in the three stages.

All Community schools are coeducational. The vast majority of subsidized schools are also coeducational, and it is expected that the remaining single-sex schools will become coeducational in the years to come. Secondary schools do not charge fees.

The smallest schools have some 200 pupils. They can be attached to primary schools or to teacher training institutions. Classes are generally organized by age and sometimes by subject. In some schools classes can be organized by level of ability.

The timetable in secondary schools may vary between 32 and 36 periods of 50 minutes. There is a short break of 10-15 minutes in the morning and in the afternoon. The break at noon must last at least an hour and a half. The school week consists of 5 days, except Wednesday afternoon. The school itself can determine the start and the end of the school day (usually from 8.30 a.m. to 12.00 noon and from 1.30 p.m. to 4.00 p.m.).

The school year is organized as at primary level.

## **Curriculum**

The purpose of the first stage is to provide a broad general basis. This stage should enable pupils to be oriented in the most suitable way towards the different courses available in the second stage.

In the first year, all pupils follow a common curriculum of at least 27 lessons per week consisting of the following subjects: Dutch, French, (English may also be included), mathematics, history, geography, art education, science, technical education, physical education and religion or ethics. In addition, five periods a week are left available to each school to allocate as they wish within a defined and legally fixed framework.

In the second year, almost all pupils follow a basic course of at least 24 lessons per week, consisting of the following subjects: religion or ethics, Dutch, French, English, mathematics, history, geography, art education, science, technological education and physical education. At least 14 of the 24 lessons are followed by all pupils.

Special arrangements exist for pupils who follow vocational education from the second year. They study the same subjects provided in the basic course, except for French and English. Apart from the basic course, 8 to 10 lessons are available for each school to develop its individual character. In the second year of vocational education, the basic course is limited to 16 lessons. Two groups of subjects (a total of 16 lessons) are added to this package. Each of these groups provides an introduction to the theory and practice of the main vocational sectors.

The remaining periods are free for optional courses (e.g. Latin, Greek, modern languages, additional mathematics, technology).

From the third year up to and including the sixth year, the four forms of education (listed at the beginning of this section) are organized separately, with a common and an optional package. The common part consists of the basic course. Optional subjects are either fundamental (depending on further choices) or complementary.

Basic education from the third to the sixth year consists of the following subjects: religion or non-denominational ethics, Dutch, a second modern language, mathematics, history, geography, science and physical education. General secondary education also includes a third modern language. In vocational education the basic training from the third up to and including the sixth year consists of the following subjects: religion or non-denominational ethics, Dutch, history and geography (the last two subjects may be replaced by an integrated social education course) and physical education.

A wide range of subjects are offered in the optional section to supplement the basic course.

Curricula can contain a list of recommended **textbooks**, but there is no obligation to use a textbook from these lists. The same applies to **teaching materials**.

### **Assessment and qualifications**

The essential instrument in assessment is the Class Council (*Klasseraad*), which is the committee consisting of the entire managerial and teaching staff responsible for the education of a specific group of pupils. It assesses pupils' school progress and makes the decision regarding their promotion to a higher class, and issues certificates where appropriate. The Class Council bases its decisions on various factors, such as:

- the past school career of each pupil;
- the intermediate results from lessons, assessments and oral and/or written examinations;
- information from the guidance centre;
- interviews with the pupil and parents, as necessary.

Each Class Council has to establish, at regular intervals, an intellectual, social and moral assessment of each pupil. The results of assessments carried out during the year are taken into account in the end-

of-year assessment. Tests are compulsory for all pupils.

At the end of the year, the Class Council decides whether pupils should be promoted to a higher class, with or without restriction, or whether promotion should be delayed or refused. Unsuccessful pupils repeat a year, but pupils with learning difficulties may get some help from remedial teachers.

At the end of the 6th year of secondary education or at the end of the 7th year of vocational education, pupils receive a secondary education certificate (*Diploma van secundair onderwijs*), which provides access to higher education.

## Teachers

Teachers are subject specialists and are allocated to teach one subject. They can be full-time, part-time, permanent or temporary. There is no obligation to follow in-service training.

There are different forms of teacher training.

### Teacher training in full-time higher teacher training institutions

This course lasts 3 years, and comprises concurrent general and pedagogical training, together with the study of one or two specific disciplines in the case of future lower secondary teachers. In the third year of studies, half the time is spent on teaching practice. Students completing the course are awarded a diploma qualifying them to teach in lower secondary education (*Diploma van geaggregeerde voor het lager secundair onderwijs*). They may teach in the 1st stage (1st and 2nd years) and in vocational secondary education.

### Teacher training at universities

Students enrolled in university education in certain specialized subjects may obtain a supplementary certificate entitling them to teach. Training comprises an introduction to some of the theoretical aspects of pedagogy, and teaching practice. Students who successfully complete this course are awarded a diploma qualifying them to teach in upper secondary education (*Diploma van geaggregeerde voor het hoger secundair onderwijs*). This diploma also entitles them to teach in short higher education.

### Teacher training through social advancement courses (part-time education in the form of evening or weekend classes based on a credit system).

This type of teacher training is meant for teachers giving vocational training courses and certain technical courses, for which no full-time training is available. Courses focus on both the theory and practice of teaching, and students give lessons under the supervision of an instructor. Training leads to a certificate of pedagogical aptitude (*Getuigschrift Pedagogische Bekwaamheid*), which entitles the holder to teach technical subjects at lower or upper secondary level.

## 4.4 Statistics 1991/92

### Statistics 1991/92

	Pupils	Teachers*	Schools
Community schools	70,694	10,989	289
Provincial schools	13,969	1,971	33

Communal schools	22,775	3,553	80
"Free" schools	319,877	37,799	657

\* Number of full-time and part-time teachers.

## 4. INITIAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

### 4.1 Part-time compulsory schooling

In the framework of compulsory education, the training of young people under 18 years of age comes under three types of measures conforming to requirements for part-time compulsory schooling up to age 18:

- part-time education;
- apprenticeship in the *SME* sector;
- industrial apprenticeship.

#### Part-time education

Pupils who are no longer required to follow full-time education can study on a part-time basis in a centre for part-time education (*Centrum voor deeltijds onderwijs - CDO*) or in a recognized training centre.

The centres for part-time education provide courses combining general education (including social and personal training) with preparation for an occupation. The content of courses is limited and designed to be a continuation of the full-time education system. The centres are linked to a school providing full-time technical and/or vocational secondary education.

Part-time education lasts 360 hours in the first year (15 to 16-year-olds), and 240 hours in the following two years. Part-time education is provided for 40 weeks a year with an average of 15 weekly periods of 50 minutes (8 periods of vocational training and 7 periods of general education).

Part-time education leads to an attendance certificate (*Attest van regelmatige lesbijwoning*), and may also lead to a qualification certificate (*Kwalificatiegetuigschrift*) equivalent to the certificate awarded for full-time study.

#### Industrial apprenticeship

This concerns apprenticeships in occupations exercised by salaried workers. It was initially intended for young people aged between 15 and 18, with a poor school record, who had lost interest in attending school. Young people aged 16 who had already completed two years of general secondary education or vocational secondary education, or had passed an entrance examination were also eligible. Since 1987, young people between 18 and 21 have also been able to participate.

The length and content of the apprenticeship is established on the basis of a proposal put forward by the representative committee of the sector concerned. Successive apprenticeship contracts may be concluded with several different firms if required for training in a given occupation. Since 1992, firms with under 50 employees have been entitled to train young people by means of an industrial apprenticeship.

Pupils spend two days in a recognized part-time training centre where they acquire the necessary theoretical and general knowledge, and spend the other three days of the week working in a firm under the guidance of an experienced employee.

Training in a firm lasts an average of 21 hours per week. Training in a centre for part-time education lasts 15 hours per week: 7 hours of general, personal and social training and 8 hours of vocational training (theoretical knowledge, practical skills).

In the case of the unskilled occupations, training must last no less than six months and no more than two years. The representative committee has established a longer period of training for the skilled occupations. The trainee is deemed to be an employee and receives a percentage of the minimum wage in the business sector concerned.

When training has been completed, the employer provides the apprentice with a certificate indicating the period covered by the training and its content.

### **Apprenticeship in the SME sector**

Young people can conclude an apprenticeship contract with an employer-instructor from the age of 15 or 16. They then spend 4 days a week gaining practical experience in the firm with which they have the apprenticeship contract and one day in a training centre supervised by the Flemish Institute for Independent Entrepreneurship (*Vlaams Instituut voor het Zelfstandig Ondernemen - VIZO*). In the training centre, the apprentices follow a technical/vocational training course and a general social education course. These courses are strongly oriented towards practice.

Apprenticeship in the SME sector is thus a form of alternating training and practical training is an essential part. The head of the enterprise-instructor is responsible for ensuring that the apprentices get a general and technical basic training in the practice of the occupation concerned. The pupils are bound to take the additional courses in the training centre.

Apprentices have the status of pupils since they are still fulfilling their compulsory education obligations. However, apprentices are entitled to a fixed apprenticeship fee from their employer.

The number of occupations covered by apprenticeship is virtually unlimited and includes all occupations that can be practised as a self-employed person. The education service of *VIZO* and the *VIZO* centres continually adjust the apprenticeships available to take into account new developments in SMEs or in educational techniques.

The apprenticeship lasts three years (or less if apprentices have followed preliminary training). At the end, apprentices obtain an official certificate (*Getuigschrift van Leertijd*).

They can then opt to find a job as an employee or go on to entrepreneur training. A lot of young people who do not intend to become self-employed prefer to follow vocational training within the training programme for the self-employed.

There are 120 hours each of general social education and technical/vocational training in all three years. General social education comprises thematic project work and separate language and mathematics periods. It aims to develop the apprentice's personality. Technical/vocational training is aimed at the acquisition of the basic knowledge needed to practise an occupation. The course is supplementary to the practical training in the enterprise.

In accordance with the legislation regarding compulsory education, 15-year-olds must take an additional course in general social education of 120 hours in the first year. This means that they attend the training centre an extra half-day a week.

Apprentices are subject to continuous assessment throughout the course year. At the end of the first and second years, they have to take a transitional examination, which consists of A and B tests. This examination is intended to assess their progress and determine whether they can continue the apprenticeship.

At the end of the third year, there is a final examination, which consists of A,B and C tests. The A test concerns general social education (Dutch, mathematics, social legislation, civics, history, geography and hygiene), and the B test assesses theoretical technical/vocational knowledge of the occupation concerned. The C test is the practical part of the examination; the apprentices have to carry out a piece of work or an assignment. In both the transitional and final examinations apprentices must obtain 50% in each part of the examination in order to pass. They are informed of the results of the transitional examination by a certificate. At the end of the course, the apprentices who pass the final examination obtain an apprenticeship certificate, signed by the *VIZO*. This certificate provides access to the entrepreneur training and also complies with the legal requirements for most regulated occupations.

Each year, the *VIZO* provides education and training to more than 10,000 young people.

## **4.2 Employment-training agreement (+ 18 years)**

In addition to education and training organized as part of compulsory part-time education, there is also what is known as the employment-training agreement.

Set up in 1986, this type of training is available to all young people between the ages of 18 and 25 who are seeking employment, and do not already possess a certificate of long or short higher education or university education, or of technical upper secondary education.

This initiative is based on granting a temporary reduction in the employer's contribution to the State Social Security system when they hire young job-seekers involved in an employment-training scheme.

The employment-training agreement involves industrial and commercial firms, non-profit-making associations and the liberal professions. The agreement is signed by the young person and the employer and lasts for a minimum of one year or a maximum of three years. It has two parts: a contract for part-time work of indeterminate duration (at least half-time) and training. The training provided under the employment-training agreement must involve courses and establishments which are recognized or subsidized.

Training lasts for a total of 500 hours, except for management training in the context of training for independent professions, where the minimum period is 256 hours.

From 1987, the year in which the scheme was launched, up to 30 June 1990, 842 employment-training agreements were concluded in Flanders.

Legislation on the employment-training agreement falls within the competence of the Employment Minister.

## **5. HIGHER EDUCATION**

Higher education can be divided into 3 types:

- short higher education;
- long higher education;
- university education.

## **Admission**

All those who hold a certificate of secondary education are in principle entitled to follow any type of higher education. Access to university education in applied sciences (including architecture) is subject to an entrance examination organized by the universities concerned. Special or additional conditions may be specified to candidates by educational institutions.

## **Fees/Student finance**

Students pay tuition fees for each academic year, but grants are available from the Community budget and may be awarded on the basis of a means test.

## **Short and long higher education**

Higher education establishments providing short and long higher education courses have various designations: Higher Institute, School, Centre for Higher Education, Teacher Training College/Institute, Conservatory, Academy, etc.

Both short and long higher education cover eight main disciplines: technical, economic, agricultural, paramedical, social, artistic, pedagogical and maritime.

## **Academic year**

The academic year starts between 15 September and the first Monday of October and ends in June.

## **Courses/Qualifications**

**Short** higher education courses are organized in a single cycle of 3 to 4 years. Study focuses on practical aspects and provides direct access to employment. It is not university level. Courses lead to diplomas in various professions: nurse, social worker, librarian/documentalist, etc.

**Long** higher education courses are divided into 2 cycles: the first cycle takes 2 years, the second cycle takes 2 or 3 years. The first cycle of general theoretical and academic education is a preparation for a second specialized cycle. At the end of this, the student has to present and defend a thesis. Courses are university level, and diplomas are of equal value to those of universities and confer titles such as industrial engineer, licentiate, commercial engineer or architect. Long higher education trains highly technical staff for executive tasks and applied research.

## **Assessment**

Every academic year is completed by examinations. Students must pass these examinations to be admitted to the next year.

The examinations are regulated by a number of administrative and organizational rules. Two examination sessions are held each academic year (the first between 15 June and 15 July, the second after 15 August of the current academic year). Students are prohibited from sitting the same examination more than four times in two academic years and must sit examinations during the first session. Students are, at the end of the academic year, either:

- admitted to the next year of study if they have obtained a score of at least 50% in each test and 60% of the points awarded for the entire examination;

- deferred and required to resit, at the second session, the examinations in which they did not meet the examining board's standards;
- rejected, and must repeat the year.

Assessment comprises the accumulation of results and the award of a certificate. It is based on end-of-year examinations and the submission of a final project or thesis. In some sections, however, a dossier containing an evaluation of the performance of the students during the academic year, and in particular of their practical work and courses, is studied prior to assessment. Recently, initiatives have also been taken to introduce formative assessment aimed at providing teachers and students with more frequent assessment opportunities.

## University education

(academic education at universities)

### Academic year

The academic year runs from early October to the end of September. The courses begin in early October and end in May or June, depending on the university.

### Courses/Qualifications

University education provides theoretical training for managerial staff responsible for research, conception and application of knowledge. It is offered at different levels: basic academic courses; and advanced academic courses following the basic academic courses (e.g. teacher training, doctoral programmes and post-academic programmes). The basic academic courses are divided into two cycles: a first cycle of 2 or 3 years and a second cycle of 2, 3 or 4 years.

The first cycle of basic academic education leads to the intermediate academic degree of candidate (*kandidaat*).

The second cycle is concluded by the following academic degrees (equivalent to a Master's):

- licentiate (*licentiaat*);
- dentist;
- physician-medical practitioner;
- veterinary surgeon;
- pharmacist;
- civil engineer-architect;
- civil engineer with further qualification;
- bio-engineer with further qualification;
- commercial engineer.

University education is divided into study years of at least 1,500 and at most 1,800 hours of tuition or other study activities. The volume of study for each year is expressed in terms of study-points and corresponds to 60 study-points per year. One study-point corresponds to 25 to 30 hours of study.

Most courses are compulsory. There are few electives in the first cycle, but there are many in the study programmes of the second and third cycle.

### Assessment

Students are assessed in all of the courses of a specific year of study.

The examinations are subject to a number of administrative and organizational requirements, similar to those described under short and long higher education.

Students are awarded a maximum mark of 20 for each subject in which they take an examination. The pass mark for any subject is 10 out of 20. To complete a given study year, students must take all the examinations that are included as part of that particular year of study.