



Structures of Education and Training Systems in Europe

Belgium (French Community)

2009/10 Edition

European Commission



STRUCTURES OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEMS IN EUROPE

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INTRODUCTION: GENERAL POLICY CONTEXT

Belgium is a parliamentary constitutional monarchy which in recent decades has implemented a major process of federalisation. Following successive amendments to the Constitution that have gradually altered Belgium's structures, the country has become a fully-fledged federal State (Art. 1 of the Constitution). It comprises three Communities: the French Community, the Flemish Community and the German-speaking Community (Art. 2 of the Constitution). Culture and language are the decisive constituent elements of these Communities. In parallel, Belgium has set up three Regions: the Flemish Region (northern part of the country), the Walloon Region (southern part of the country) and the Brussels-Capital Region (central part of the country) (Art. 3 of the Constitution). Territory represents the decisive constituent element of the Regions. The Brussels-Capital Region, although geographically situated in the Flemish part of the country, has a very large majority of French speakers. The small German-speaking Community (around 74 000 inhabitants in the eastern part of the country) forms part of the territory of the Walloon Region.

This political evolution has been implemented through the transfer of certain national competences to sub-national entities. The Regions are responsible for economic policies, external trade, public works and transport, environment, energy, scientific policy, health, housing, social action, training, employment and spatial planning. The Communities are responsible for cultural matters and the use of languages as well as education and training, childhood and youth policies, and research. In the German-speaking Community however, the use of languages remains a national competence with the exception of educational matters.

At national level, legislative power is exercised by the King and the federal Parliament made up of a Chamber of Representatives and a Senate. The King has no political responsibility. His acts are only valid if counter-signed by a minister who assumes responsibility for them. The Communities and Regions have legislative power exercised by an assembly of elected officials, the Council, and executive power exercised by a government. Legislative acts adopted at Community and Regional level take the form of decrees which have force of law. They are consequently equivalent to national laws. A Court of Arbitration organises the prevention and settlement of conflicts between the laws and decrees adopted by the different assemblies. It gives its decisions by way of judgments on such conflicts of competence and on any infringement of articles of the Constitution by a law or decree. Matters may be referred to it by any authority designated by law, by any court, or for a preliminary ruling, by any citizen. The State is also divided into 10 provinces, each of which includes a number of municipalities (589 in all). Every province is headed by a governor. Legislative power in the provinces is exercised by the Provincial Council, whose members are elected for a period of six years. The legislative assembly in the municipalities is the Municipal Council, whose members are elected for a six-year term of office.

With more than 10 million inhabitants in a territory of 30 528 km² (32 545 km² if the North Sea is included), Belgium's average population density was 349 inhabitants per km² on 1 January 2008: 205 inhabitants per km² in the Walloon Region, 456 inhabitants per km² in the Flemish Region and 6 493 inhabitants per km² in the Brussels-Capital Region⁽¹⁾. An ageing population is a distinctive feature of Belgian demographics. Ninety-five per cent of the population lives in urban areas, of which Brussels is the leading agglomeration (more than one million inhabitants for all the Brussels municipalities taken as a whole). The most densely populated municipalities are Antwerp (452 071 inhabitants), Ghent (237 250 inhabitants), Charleroi (201 593 inhabitants), Liege (190 102 inhabitants) and Brussels (148 873 inhabitants) respectively on 1 January 2008. The balance of migration is positive but has little influence on the current evolution of the population. Foreigners with the largest presence are French, Dutch and Moroccan nationals although there are differences

⁽¹⁾ Source: FPS Economy. Directorate-General Statistics and Economic Information, Demographics Service.

depending on the Region. On 1 January 2008, there were 971 448 foreigners residing in Belgium, which represents 9.1 % of the total population.

The official languages in Belgium are Dutch, French and German. The country's language laws are founded on the existence of four language regions (Art. 4 of the Constitution): the French language region, the Dutch language region, the German language region and the bilingual Brussels-Capital Region. Each municipality belongs to a language region. This linguistic division creates the framework for the scope of legislation on the use of languages and for the scope of decrees adopted by the Communities.

The concept of minority language has no validity in Belgium. Certain segments of the population nevertheless speak regional languages (Walloon, Gaumish, Picardese, etc.) or languages of immigration (Italian, Arabic, Spanish, Turkish and Portuguese in particular). Belgium signed the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities on 31 July 2001. In September 2002, following this ratification, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe stated in Resolution 1301 (2002) that the following groups could be considered national minorities in Belgium: at State level, the German-speaking Community as a whole; at regional level, the French speakers living in the Dutch-speaking region and in the German-speaking region, as well as the Flemish and German speakers living in the French-speaking region. This convention is not yet recognised by the Flemish Region.

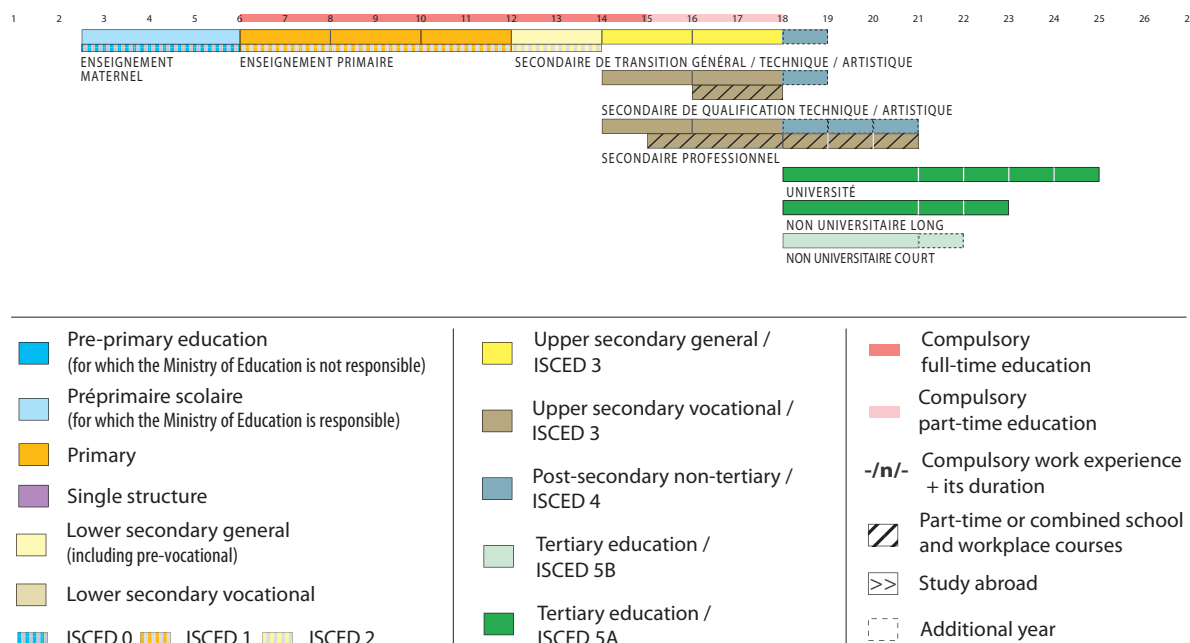
The language of education is that of the language regions and, depending on the parents' choice, French or Dutch in the bilingual Brussels-Capital Region. In basic and secondary education, certain schools are authorised to offer some of their courses and educational activities in sign language or in a modern language other than French (immersion). In higher education, some courses may be taught in a language other than French.

The fundamental principles governing education are written into the Constitution (Art. 24):

1. *"Education is free; any preventive measure is prohibited; the punishment of offences is governed exclusively by law or decree. The Community offers freedom of choice to parents. The Community and the competent authorities for state schools, as well as those for non-denominational private schools, organise neutral education. Neutrality implies respect for the philosophical, ideological or religious beliefs of parents and pupils. Schools run by the public authorities offer, for the entire period of compulsory school attendance, the choice between the teaching of one of the recognised religions and that of non-denominational ethics.*
2. *If a Community, in its capacity as the organising authority, wishes to delegate powers to one or more autonomous bodies, it may only do so by decree adopted by a two thirds majority.*
3. *Everyone has the right to education in keeping with fundamental rights and freedoms. Access to education is free throughout the period of compulsory school attendance. The Community is obliged to provide free religious or ethics training for all pupils of school age.*
4. *All pupils or students, parents, teaching staff and educational establishments are equal before the law or decrees. The law and decrees take objective differences into account, in particular the characteristics of each organising authority that warrant appropriate treatment.*
5. *The organisation, recognition and subsidisation of education by the Community are regulated by law or decree."*

1. INITIAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING: ORGANISATION, FUNDING AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

1.1 Organisation of the initial education and training system



Education is organised into different levels that correspond to age groups:

- Basic education which comprises pre-primary education (usually called nursery school or preschool) for children aged two-and-a-half to six years (see section 2) and primary education for children aged six to twelve (see section 3).
- Secondary education for young people between the ages of 12 and 18 and over (see sections 4 and 5).
- Tertiary education, the length of which varies depending on the programme of studies, for young people aged 18 to 25 and over (see section 6).

Tertiary education is divided into university and non-university education. Non-university education is provided by colleges of higher education (*Hautes Ecoles*) and art colleges and may be either 'short-type' or 'long-type'. Long-type higher education is university level. Preparations are under way to transfer the higher institutes for architecture to universities; this change will take effect at the start of the 2010-2011 academic year.

In addition to full-time ordinary education, the French Community organises dual vocational education and training, special education for pupils with specific needs aged three to 21 or older (pre-primary, primary and secondary, full-time or in alternance), part-time artistic education (secondary and tertiary short-type), social advancement education for young people and adults who have left the school system (secondary and tertiary) and distance education.

1.2 Distribution of responsibilities

A. The division of responsibilities for the organisation and administration of initial education and training systems

a) The central authorities

With respect to education, only three prerogatives set out in the Constitution remain the competence of the *federal authorities*:

- establishing the duration of compulsory education,
- setting the minimum conditions for earning diplomas,
- the pension scheme.

The *Regions'* only competences with respect to the education system are related to school transport and vocational training; the regional administration also participates in the management of school buildings together with the French Community. In the framework of their vocational training policy, the Regions are developing increasingly frequent contacts with secondary vocational and technical education institutions and they subsidise various joint enterprise/university actions, for example in the sector of new technologies.

It is the *Communities* that exercise the main competences in the sphere of education: education and higher education policy is the responsibility of the Parliament and government of the French Community. In 2009-2010, three government ministries are primarily responsible for education matters: compulsory education (primary and secondary, ordinary and special) and social advancement education; tertiary education (university and non-university); scientific research and the civil service.

The government of the French Community has dual competence:

- it is the organising authority for education in the French Community and in this capacity it determines its structures, programmes and methods; it manages schools and takes all measures that may improve their functioning;
- it applies regulations to grant-aided schools, both private and public, in accordance with the constitution and legal provisions.

Each minister is assisted by a cabinet made up of a number of persons who help the minister carry out the tasks assigned to him (drafting of legal texts to implement the decisions adopted by the Council and government of the Community, preparation of the decisions of the minister and Council).

The *Ministry of the French Community* primarily plays a role of executing ministerial decisions. However, it is sometimes involved in the technical preparation of new regulations (laws, decrees, etc.). Implementation of regulations by the administration necessarily entails a monitoring function, as well as an aspect of service to school heads and the organising authorities. This involves making available at the earliest opportunity all information and appropriate tools to enable them to organise their schools with equanimity and with all legal guarantees for pupils and staff members alike.

b) The education networks

In the French Community, the education system is structured into three categories or networks (*réseaux d'enseignement*) of schools (in addition to which are a few private schools):

- public schools organised and managed by the government of the French Community and financed entirely out of its budget;
- public schools grant-aided by the French Community and managed by the provincial or municipal authorities;
- private grant-aided schools, denominational or non-denominational, financed by the French Community and administered by a natural or legal person.

Each network is composed of one or more organising authorities, each heading one or more schools.

The network of public grant-aided schools has developed two coordination structures for its schools: the Municipal and Provincial Education Council (CECP) and the Council of Organising Authorities for Public Grant-aided Neutral Schools (CPEONS). Private grant-aided schools are federated under the General Secretariat of Catholic Education (SEGEC) and the Federation of Private Grant-aided Independent Schools (FELSI).

c) Schools

A Core Consultation Committee (CoCoBa) is set up in each school organised by the French Community. It is made up of members of the school's administrative staff and trade union representatives. Its principal task is to engage in consultation on staff working conditions. It ensures that the school's work plan conforms to the organising authority's educational programme. Local Joint Committees (CoPaLoc) for public grant-aided schools have been put in place in basic and secondary schools and tertiary establishments. The representatives of the organising authorities and trade union organisations who sit in these committees determine staff working conditions and intervene in cases of temporary appointment or transfers and reassignments of teachers, and when a school is placed under another organising authority; to administer the use of period-allocations (*in basic education, the number of teachers assigned on the basis of the number of pupils enrolled*) and the NTPP (*in secondary education, the total number of teacher-periods allocated on the basis of the number of regular pupils*) and to establish the opening and closing hours of schools. The Local Joint Committees review the conformity of the school's work plan with the educational programme of the organising authority. They are also consulted on other matters. In private grant-aided schools, the works council, a local consultation body or the trade union delegation plays a similar role.

Further to the Decree outlining the missions of schools (*Décret-missions*⁽²⁾), participation councils were set up in every school in all the different networks of basic and secondary education. The participation council must include the school head and representatives of the organising authority, representatives of school staff, parents, the social, cultural and economic community, as well as representatives of pupils (except in basic education).

These participation councils debate, amend and complete the school's work plan, submit it to the minister or organising authority for approval, periodically assess its implementation, propose adaptations and issue an opinion on the activity report. The participation council is also consulted for opinion on affirmative discrimination projects (see section 1.3).

⁽²⁾ The Decree establishing the priority tasks of basic and secondary education and organising the structures designed to perform them, known as the '*Décret-missions*', adopted on 24 July 1997, is a fundamental text that initiated major changes in basic and secondary education (ordinary and special) (see section 3 A).

Councils also exercise various responsibilities in higher educational establishments (see section 1.4 A).

Geographical areas have been defined for each school level as a means of ensuring better consultation between schools. Each has two councils, one for non-denominational education and the other for denominational education. These bodies oversee the use of the teacher-periods allocated to schools in the area and ensure the harmonisation of curricula available in secondary education. The proposals are transmitted to a consultation committee responsible for approving and thereby finalising them. These consultation committees and the area councils are made up of representatives of the organising authorities, including the minister in his/her capacity as the organising authority for education in the Community.

B. Trends of centralisation, concentration or regulation of the education and training system

A dual trend has occurred in the wake of the transfer of responsibility for education to the Communities. On the one hand, schools enjoy an increasing degree of management autonomy. This autonomy supplements the high degree of freedom schools have traditionally enjoyed in terms of teaching methods. On the other, this increasing autonomy has been matched with the introduction of new regulatory mechanisms with a view to developing fair and excellent schools.

In 1985, schools organised by the French Community became services under separate management, in anticipation of a deconcentration of the network of the French Community.

Deregulation has been introduced for certain matters. It can be described as the simplification, reduction or elimination of rules enacted by the central authority. One example is the abolition of standards for maintaining and splitting classes in secondary education. As a result of the elimination of such rules, authority for determining when to split cases or maintain options with few pupils enrolled has been transferred to the local school administration. Deregulation can therefore increase the autonomy of school heads, although this is not systematically the case.

Programming is related to the creation of schools and the organisation of new levels, new options and new sections. Although programming is governed by strict rules, schools have real leeway. Programming enables all schools to consider the possibility of supplementing, improving or changing its offering in terms of the needs of its public or the evolution of the employment market.

The Decree on the missions of schools gives each primary and secondary education institution the possibility to adapt its teaching and to change the organisation of courses: changes to the timetable, possibility of organising part of training leading to qualifications in companies, and the like. All ordinary and special schools in the primary and secondary system organised or subsidised by the French Community must have a school work plan. This plan defines the range of educational choices and specific concrete actions that the school's teaching team intends to implement – in collaboration with all players and partners – to achieve the educational aims set by the organising authority. The school work plan is a tool used to attain the general and specific objectives of the Decree and the required level of competencies and knowledge. Development of the school work plan is based on proposals submitted by representatives of the organising authority to the participation council (see above).

Alongside these measures that tend to increase the autonomy of schools and/or the organising authorities, in recent years there has been a tendency to develop greater coherence in the education system and to make it fairer by adding steering mechanisms and establishing new rules (in collaboration with the different organising authorities):

- In 1997, the Decree on the missions of schools defined the general objectives to be attained at the different levels of the education system and provided for the definition of competence echelons and final competencies that would serve as a reference for reviewing curricula, both in education organised by the French Community and in grant-aided education.

- The 1997 Decree established the Steering Committees which, several years later (2002), were addressed in a specific decree that details and strengthens the role of the single committee that replaced them.
- As from the 2008-2009 academic year, all pupils who complete primary education must sit a common examination in order to earn the certificate of primary education (*Certificat d'études de base* or CEB). Each school appoints a board of examiners which automatically awards the CEB to the pupils who have passed the common examination, but may also decide to award it to pupils who have not sat the exam or not passed it, based on an individual review.
- After various attempts that were often perceived negatively by the public opinion, the government of the French Community adopted in early 2010 a decree that governs registration in the first year of secondary school with a view to enhancing social diversity in secondary schools (the parents' choice is taken into consideration but in cases where the number of applications is greater than the number of places available, rules of priority are applied).
- In 2009, the government established maximum averages for the number of pupils per class for secondary schools, in terms of the level of studies and the course type (see section 4.2).

1.3 Financing

The French Community finances all costs inherent to the functioning of its schools and provides grants for public and private education in keeping with the conditions set by laws and decrees in terms of the level of education, the number of pupils and so on.

The minister concerned grants subsidies to schools provided certain conditions are met.

The schools must:

- comply with laws and regulatory provisions concerning the organisation of education and the application of language laws;
- adopt a structure approved by the minister;
- respect a curriculum that conforms to requirements set by decree and that is approved by the minister;
- respect the provisions laid down in the decree of 24 July 1997 establishing the priority tasks of basic and secondary education and organising the structures designed to perform them;
- submit to monitoring and inspection organised by the government of the French Community. This inspection particularly concerns the subject matters taught, the level of studies and compliance with language laws, but excludes teaching methods;
- be organised by a natural or legal person who assumes full responsibility for them;
- have a minimum number of pupils – per class, section, level or other subdivision – set by a decree issued by the government of the French Community, except where a waiver is granted due to special and exceptional circumstances;
- form a teaching entity established in the same complex of buildings that meet certain hygiene and health standards;
- abide by the general rules on holidays;
- have a staff that does not represent a danger to pupil's health;
- have teaching material and equipment that meets teaching requirements.

When these conditions are complied with, the organising authority has free choice in recruiting staff provided they satisfy certain criteria. It also has free choice of teaching methods and may itself determine the content of its curricula subject to prior ministerial approval.

The grants allocated by the French Community when the conditions set by laws and decrees have been met are threefold:

- salary grants for staff, equal to the remuneration paid to teaching staff of the French Community for the same qualifications and duties;

- operating and equipment grants consisting of a flat rate, which vary according to level, form and type of education;
- grants for building and equipping premises, allocated in the amounts set by law and according to the different schemes for public and private education.

Every school must respect a chart of accounts and justify yearly the use of its funds.

For staff, similar systems are implemented in basic education and secondary education. In basic education, the periods-allocation gives the educational community the opportunity to adapt the school's teaching structure in terms of pupils' specific needs (opening of an adaptation class, organisation of physical education classes, etc.). Management of the periods-allocation is discussed in the local joint committees and entity consultation bodies. Every secondary school has a total number of teacher-periods (NTPP) that can be divided by level, year or group of years based on the number of regular pupils enrolled on the last day of classes of the first quarter of the previous academic year. The teacher-periods calculated on that basis can be assigned on the basis of pupils' teaching needs, in consultation with the teaching team, without prejudice to the programming rules that set the conditions for the opening of new options and sections.

The allocation of operating grants to grant-aided schools is subject to supervision of use of the funds. A decree lays down the requirement of applying a chart of accounts, whereby a grant-aided school must keep certain types of documentation such as a 'special' ledger, a cash ledger, a bank and/or postal account cheques ledger, annual accounts and an inventory of purchases. Inspection of these documents is carried out by the Audit Department of the Ministry of the French Community. This department is also responsible for supervising proper use of the salary grants in keeping with regulations on required qualifications and school population rules.

The costs of participation in extracurricular activities can be covered by parents or associations, etc. provided rules on the free provision of education are respected (see sections 3 E and 4 D).

Resources have also been released, on the one hand, in the framework of the decree on positive discrimination, whereby additional human and financial means are granted to schools that meet certain socio-economic criteria, and on the other, in the framework of a major project for providing computers for schools in basic, secondary and social advancement education.

For university education, an operating allocation is granted to each institution based on the number of students. This allocation covers the purchase of material, the salaries of teaching staff, administrative staff, etc.

1.4 Quality assurance

There is no systematic assessment of educational institutions in the French Community of Belgium. However, there is a multiple oversight system made up of different bodies.

A. Assessment bodies and procedures

For compulsory education (basic and secondary), an Education Steering Committee (*Commission de pilotage du système éducatif*) chaired by the General Administrator for Education and Scientific Research has been put in place. It is made up of the general education inspectors, education experts, the representative of the French Community education system, and representatives of the organising authorities, trade union organisations and parent associations. The Steering Committee's many tasks include "*providing information, on its own initiative or on request, to the government and Parliament of the French Community, particularly about the state and evolution of the education system, present or foreseeable problems and shortcomings with respect to plans and projections. If the committee has information suggesting that an institution is not implementing or is applying in an obviously unsatisfactory way its recommendations intended to guarantee the quality and equivalence of the*

education provided in the system's schools, it sends a report to the government, which must take the necessary measures or sanctions."

For tertiary education, an Agency for Assessment of the Quality of Tertiary Education organised or grant-aided by the French Community (*Agence pour l'évaluation de la qualité de l'enseignement supérieur organisé ou subventionné par la Communauté française*) has the task of ensuring the implementation of the assessment procedures required by law, taking various measures to improve the quality of tertiary education and informing the government, actors and beneficiaries of tertiary education about its quality. The assessment concerns the quality of teaching in the different first- and second-cycle curricula organised by institutions. The curricula to be evaluated and the institutions concerned are determined by the agency based on a 10-year plan, established in such a way that each curriculum is evaluated at least every 10 years. The first 10-year plan covers the period 2008-2018. The assessment is based on a set of indicators that cover all the training and organisation processes to be taken into consideration. It focuses on determining the training objectives sought by the different curricula and the suitability of the means implemented to achieve them. The assessment of the quality of a curriculum in an institution includes the drafting of an internal assessment report, an external assessment carried out by a committee of experts, publication of the results of the assessment (or the refusal to publish) on the agency's site, definition by the academic authorities of a calendar and follow-up plan for the recommendations contained in the final report and their transmission to the agency. The agency then carries out a transversal analysis of the quality of the curriculum in the French Community. In addition, a Higher Education Observatory (*Observatoire de l'enseignement supérieur*) is responsible for steering tertiary education and developing analysis instruments, scientific reports on the evolution of the student population and indicators on success rates and other aspects.

A General Inspectorate (*Service général de l'inspection*) made up of specific departments at the different levels and categories of education (ordinary basic, special, social advancement, etc.) is charged with a variety of assessment tasks, including monitoring the level of studies, conformity with the requirements of different decrees, detection of possible segregation measures, and so on. Furthermore, the inspectorate assesses, at the request of the head of the establishment in education organised by the French Community and by the organising authority for grant-aided education, the teaching aptitudes of members of its teaching staff. The members of the General Inspectorate base their assessment and monitoring on facts established through attendance at classes and activities, a review of pupils' work and documents, the results obtained in external assessments that do not lead to qualifications, interviews with pupils, analysis of qualitative data related to failure rates, repeat years or reorientation to other schools and a review of preparations. When the government has decided to carry out an inquiry in one or more schools, the coordinating Inspector General may send one or more staff members of the General Inspectorate to the establishments. Detailed reports are drawn up on the inspections, which may concern a class or one or more schools in whole or in part, and are transmitted to the competent authorities. They may also be detailed in a briefing note transmitted to the relevant service in charge of advising and teaching support. When an organising authority does not take follow-up action on an unfavourable report drawn up by the General Inspectorate, it is obliged to state the reasons for its decision within one month following receipt of the report.

Government commissioners (*Commissaires du gouvernement*) ensure that decisions taken in higher education institutions are in conformity to legislation.

In compulsory education (*l'enseignement obligatoire*) each school must have a school work plan that determines all teaching choices and specific actions that the school's teaching staff intends to implement in collaboration with all actors and partners to achieve the organising authority's educational aims. The participation council set up in each school (see section 1.2) is in charge of periodically evaluating implementation of the school's plan, proposing adjustments and submitting an opinion on the school's activity report. For each of the schools it organises, the organising authority must transmit to the Steering Committee by 31 December an annual activity report for the previous

school year. The annual activity report includes the assessment of measures taken to achieve the general objectives in the framework of the organising authority's programme, information on success and failure rates, information on appeals against the decisions of class councils and the results of this procedure, and information on the number and reasons for refusals to enrol pupils.

Tertiary education establishments are also obliged to draw up and submit an annual report. In colleges of higher education (*hautes écoles*), the authorities transmit to the Community Education Commission a complete annual report and undergo a quality control inspection every three years on the teaching activities they organise and their other tasks. The curriculum assessment procedure includes two essential phases: an internal self-assessment and an external assessment by a committee of independent experts. Each college of higher education has an education council which can send a reasoned request to the executive board when the majority of its members representing either staff or students consider that the authorities of the college of higher education have failed to implement one or more means foreseen by the plan. A specific procedure is then followed, which in the case of failure may culminate in a reduction of allocations granted to the college of higher education. Each university is also obliged to draw up an annual report containing a description of measures taken for the benefit of students and various statistical data, which is transmitted to the competent minister. In each art college, a staff member is responsible for coordinating quality assessment.

B. The private education sector

Private education is virtually non-existent in the French Community. Denominational grant-aided schools are subject to inspections similar to those applying to other educational institutions.

C. The main procedures for assessment of the education system

In the French Community, a public enterprise for the new information and communication technologies (*Entreprise publique des Technologies nouvelles de l'Information et de la Communication*, ETNIC) has been assigned a range of tasks, among which the creation and updating of a statistical database and annual drafting of a set of statistical yearbooks. To obtain all the information necessary for steering the educational system consistently and effectively, the French Community has put in place a coherent system of education indicators that presents objective data on the education system in terms of pupils, staff and the education environment (see <http://www.enseignement.be/prof/dossiers/indicateurs/>).

Every year, all pupils in the second and fifth years of primary education, and the second and fourth years of secondary education participate in an external assessment that does not lead to qualifications. It covers reading/writing, mathematics and sciences/discovery. In 2009-2010, second and fifth year primary pupils and second and fourth year secondary pupils were tested in sciences. The tests are meant to provide information for teaching teams and education system officials on pupils' progress: they measure pupils' level at the start of the year with a view to the competencies expected to be developed by the end of the cycle.

The French Community also participates in *international assessments* of pupils' achievements such as PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment – 15-year-old pupils), PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study – fifth year primary) and ESLC (European Survey on Language Competences – fourth year secondary pupils).

2. PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION

The *first day-care institutions for groups of children* were founded at the beginning of the 19th century with the development of industrialisation. During the 20th century, the orientation of pre-primary institutions (commonly called 'nursery schools') experienced a major evolution: originally offering simple day-care, nursery schools evolved into places of socialisation, intellectual development and personal development. The influence of M. Montessori and especially O. Decroly can be observed in the curricula of the 1950s. Attendance at pre-primary school (often called 'pre-school education') was gradually extended to children from all social categories. From 1950, almost all children aged three to six attended nursery school.

In 2007-2008, 44.9 % of two-year-olds attended school; for children aged three, four and five, the figures were respectively 98.6 %, 99.0 % and 99.4 %. Among five-year-olds attending school, 1.7 % are in primary education (Source: 2009 indicators). Among six-year-olds, 99.6 % of whom attend school, 5.6 % are enrolled in pre-primary education (commonly referred to as 'nursery' or 'pre-school').

The system also includes *childcare facilities for children under three years of age*: mainly day nurseries, the services of registered childminders (formerly known as supervised child minders) and municipal childcare centres. The previous dichotomy between education and care to make up for the mother's absence is gradually fading into a single objective of the young child's development and socialisation, but section two describes only pre-primary education that forms part of the education system.

Pre-primary education constitutes a level that forms part of the *education continuum*. This continuum, based on pre-school education and the first eight years of compulsory education, aims to give all pupils the fundamental skills necessary for social integration and for continuing their education. Although nursery school remains a separate level of education, it is grouped with the three cycles of primary education commonly known as basic education.

In addition to a role of preparation for primary education, pre-primary education aims to achieve all the *general objectives* set in the 1997 Decree on the missions of school (*Décret-missions*), in particular the following:

- to develop the child's awareness of his or her own potential and to encourage self-expression through creative activities;
- to develop socialisation;
- to develop cognitive, social, emotional and psychomotor learning;
- to detect children's difficulties and disabilities and provide the necessary remediation.

Nursery school forms an integral part of the education system. The majority of *laws and regulations* concerning pre-primary education are the same as those in force for the primary level.

The three education networks (network of the French Community, public grant-aided schools and private grant-aided schools) organise pre-primary education. The schools that receive grants must comply with legal provisions. Consequently, the vast majority of nursery schools are subject to the same rules in terms of equipment and health standards, teachers' salaries and level of training, supervision, school calendar and the like.

There are several types of pre-primary establishments:

- independent nursery schools with their own sites and administration;
- nursery and primary sections that may together constitute an independent entity (known as a basic school) or may be attached to a secondary school;
- schools attached to a childcare centre organised or recognised by the Birth and Childhood Office;

- schools attached to boarding schools for children of parents with no fixed abode;
- schools belonging to a home for children placed under court authority.

In most cases, nursery schools are attached to a primary school (basic school).

There are specialised pre-primary schools for children who, based on a multidisciplinary exam, must receive adapted education due to their special needs and learning possibilities ('children with special needs'). Recently, provisions were enacted to facilitate the mainstreaming of these children into ordinary pre-primary education.

Pre-primary education is optional and co-educational and designed for children aged two and a half to six years, or in exceptional cases seven years. In certain cases, where a child is authorised to attend pre-primary education during the first year of compulsory schooling, the child is obliged to attend on a regular basis.

Access to basic education is free for all pupils, irrespective of their origin; no school fees may be charged. Parents may nevertheless be asked to make a financial contribution to cover the cost of meals, transport or extra-curricular activities and childminding. Financial aid such as student grants does not exist for pupils in basic education.

2.1 Admission

Pre-primary education is for children aged two-and-a-half (on 30 September of the school year in progress) to five or even six, in exceptional cases. Registration is open year-long.

Parents have free choice as to which school their child will attend.

2.2 Organisation of time, groups and venue

A. The school year

A school year consists of 181 to 183 days of classes covering a period of 37 weeks. The school year generally begins on 1 September and ends on 30 June the following year. In addition to the two-month summer holidays, pupils have one week of autumn holidays (in early November), two weeks of winter holidays (Christmas), one week of Carnival holidays (February) and two weeks of spring holidays (Easter). Regardless of the date of Easter, the spring holidays (often called 'Easter holidays') are the first two full weeks of April, unless otherwise specified for the year in progress. All schools are also closed on Ascension Thursday, Whit Monday, 27 September (French Community Day), 11 November and 1 May. Classes are also suspended during six half-days at most to allow teachers to obtain continuing training.

In practice, 28 weekly class periods (50 minutes each) are scheduled over nine half-days from Monday morning to Friday afternoon, excluding Wednesday afternoon. The time when the school day begins and ends is determined by the competent authority. Generally, the school day is from 9.00 to 12.00 and from 13.30 to 15.30, with 8.30 and 16.00 representing the earliest starting and latest ending times. Every full day includes a 15-minute playtime in the morning and a break of at least one hour between morning and afternoon classes. Playtime is not one of the 28 periods referred to above. The schedule must be continuous.

Any organising authority may nevertheless authorise basic or secondary schools, in the framework of their work plan, to organise the weekly schedule in such a way as to implement activities aimed at meeting the general objectives.

Pupils spend an average of five hours per day in learning activities but some are present for close to nine hours. In many schools, childminding is provided from 7.00 until classes start and from the end of classes until 18.00. In cities, most pupils remain at school during the lunch break.

B. Grouping of pupils

In most cases, pre-primary education is organised in two or three *groups or 'classes'* in terms of age (horizontal distribution). The limits for different age groups vary according to the size of the school. Half the pre-primary sections include only one or two classes. In rural areas, where small schools do not have high enough enrolment to make up three groups, and increasingly in other schools, children of different ages are grouped into a single, more 'family-type' class referred to as a 'composite class' (vertical distribution). Rather than implementing a rigid group structure, some schools choose to organise classes vertically at certain times, i.e. with children of different ages, and horizontally at others.

C. The number of children per class

A given number of periods calculated on the basis of the number of pupils enrolled on 15 January preceding the start of the school year (the periods-allocation) are allocated to the school. The competent authority may divide up this periods-allocation without having to observe standards on the minimum and/or maximum number of children per group.

D. Classrooms

The use of classrooms depends on how the pupils have been grouped. In most cases, each group uses the same classroom on a permanent basis. When groups are more flexible, some or even all children change classrooms for certain activities.

2.3 Curriculum

A. Establishing the curriculum

Competence levels (*socles de compétences*) to be achieved at the end of the 5-8 cycle are defined by inspectors and teachers from all the networks. They concern all schools organised or grant-aided by the French Community and present in a structured way the proficiency levels to be achieved by the end of the first eight years of compulsory education and those to be mastered by the end of each phase within it.

The competence levels concern the different subjects: French, mathematics, discovery of the world (*'éveil'*) – introduction to science, modern languages, physical education, education through technology and artistic education – and history and geography, including social and economic studies. An outcome is established for each of these areas of learning and each stage: the aim is to create awareness of exercise of the competence or to certify or maintain it.

Curricula are the responsibility of the organising authorities, who may delegate it to a representation and coordination body. A Curriculum Committee ascertains whether the curricula are suited to achievement of the competence levels. It issues an opinion on the curricula which are then submitted to the government for approval, and on the government-established curricula for the education system of the French Community.

B. Important elements of the curriculum

An organisation of education in cycles and stages is gradually being introduced in all compulsory education. The first stage concerns children aged two-and-a-half to eight. It is organised in two cycles: from entry into nursery school to age five and from age five to the end of the second year of primary school. This second cycle of the first stage, which covers both pre-primary and early primary education, allows for harmonisation of the transition between the two.

Each school must allow all pupils to progress at their own rate by practicing differentiated teaching. All children must fully experience the different stages of maturity at their own pace, and gradually acquire

and reinforce the attitudes and knowledge required for harmonious development. The official texts stress orientation, detailed observation and listening to the child with a view to providing teaching support for his or her development. They also mention respect for each child's individual learning pace and the need to place activities in a functional context.

C. Teaching methods

Each organising authority is entitled, in keeping with the competence levels, to define the teaching methods it will implement in accordance with its own teaching options.

In most schools, the organisation of classes in pre-school education remains very flexible to allow for the adaptations considered necessary in terms of the children's needs. There are no 'lessons' proper, but various activities are organised. All aim to promote the balanced development of the child's psychomotor, language, artistic, logical and social faculties.

Children are accommodated in specially equipped premises. The most common teaching aids are tabletop games, toys, books, painting materials and psychomotility equipment. An outdoor play area is also available. The majority of schools also have video equipment and recorders. More than half of nursery schools are equipped with computers. The increasingly general use of psychomotility activities goes hand in hand with the allocation of grants for the purchase of psychomotility equipment to schools that request funding for this purpose, within the limits of budgetary resources. Specific areas are generally defined for certain activities.

2.4 Assessment

A. Internal assessment

Assessment is one of the aspects for which each network's freedom is guaranteed. Each organising authority may consequently, in compliance with relevant laws, decrees and orders, determine the type of assessment it wishes to use and the manner in which results will be notified.

Assessment, which is primarily based on observing the child's approach to carrying out activities, is conceived of as an integral part of education and learning. Education in self-assessment must be provided starting in the youngest age section.

Assessment by the teacher is based essentially on observing the child's behaviour. This is usually how the teacher becomes aware of any difficulties the child may experience in day-to-day activities. The teacher may then suggest remedial activities or support.

Some classes have class councils: the teacher and the children discuss the activities carried out during the day or half-day (this is less frequent in the first year of nursery school). Reference is often made to drawings or symbols that the children understand. In this way they can grasp the significance of assessment (positive or negative comments) and their personal development.

By monitoring individual progress and using assessments commonly carried out two or three times a year, the teaching staff can give parents an assessment of their child's behaviour and development.

B. External assessment by the Centre for Psychological, Medical and Social Services

Children in the third year of pre-primary education are regularly observed by agents of the Centre for Psychological, Medical and Social Services (unless parents explicitly express their disapproval). These agents administer maturity tests to pupils in the third year of pre-primary school.

After consulting the CPMS and the school head, parents may decide either to extend their child's pre-school attendance or, on the contrary, to have the child begin primary education at the age of five.

2.5 Teachers

A. Initial training

Initial training for teacher employed in basic education (pre-school and primary teachers) is provided in the colleges of higher education and consists of three years of study. It is open to students holding a certificate of upper secondary education (CESS). Administratively speaking, the education departments of colleges of higher education form part of full-time short-type tertiary education.

Various aspects of organisation, content and teaching activities are instrumental in enabling students not only to acquire the reflexes of teaching professionals, but also to become theoreticians of this teaching practice. The training model implemented is a *simultaneous model*. *Teaching internships* are organised during each of the three years of study. In the first year, this consists of participative observation in the presence of an internship advisor; in the second and third years, the student takes charge of a class. *Vocational training workshops* offer students a range of activities designed to develop professional competence and reflexive know-how. Students experience, observe and analyse the different aspects of the profession. In addition, professional identity-building interdisciplinary activities are organised in the form of seminars and supervised by professors from the college of higher education or by outside experts (two per academic year).

Assessment may be performed by the establishments (internal assessment) or by a board of examiners appointed by the minister (external assessment). Internal assessment is one of the areas for which each network's freedom is guaranteed. In accordance with laws and decrees, each organising authority may therefore determine the type of assessment it prefers, the means of assessment and how it will communicate results. The assessment is based on end-of-year exams and a final project. A file containing various examples of the student's work is also examined, with special attention on practical training and internships.

Upon completion of their studies, graduates must take a public oath, vowing to commit all their energy and competence to the education of all the pupils entrusted to them.

B. Continuing training

Continuing training is organised at three levels:

1. Macro level (inter-network, for all establishments);
2. Meso level (by network or by organising authority if the latter is not a member of a representation and coordination body);
3. Micro level (by establishment for the French Community system and by organising authority for the grant-aided system).

Continuing training is *mandatory* for teachers in the amount of six half-days per year at macro level. Voluntary continuing training is not limited in terms of half-days provided it takes place outside of the teacher's service hours. In the opposite case and in the absence of a derogation, it is limited to ten half-days in basic education.

Continuing training at macro level is organised by the in-service training institute. This institute does not directly train teachers but makes use of training operators (inspection, colleges of higher education, universities, teachers' associations, continuing education bodies, etc.). Training at meso level is organised by the network (or the organising authority if the latter is not a member of a representation body) and micro training is organised by the school. 'Guild' (*compagnonnage*) activities (which allow teachers from different schools or different locations to meet and share their teaching experiences) are likened to micro level training.

C. The appointment of teachers

Pre-primary teachers are responsible for a class and therefore take charge of all teaching, with the exception of two 50-minute periods per class, which must be taught by a special psychomotility teacher. Additionally, under certain conditions, pre-primary schools have the assistance of a child-minder.

2.6 Statistics

Statistics on ordinary pre-primary education (2008-2009)

| School year 2008-2009 | Pupils ⁽³⁾ | Teachers ⁽⁴⁾ | Schools |
|---|------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------|
| French Community education | 12 744 | 671 | 154 |
| Public grant-aided education (provinces) | 281 | 13 | 2 |
| Public grant-aided education (municipalities) | 94 324 | 5 125 | 892 |
| Private grant-aided education | 67 873 | 3 486 | 664 |

Source: General Administration for Education and Scientific Research, Directorate General for Compulsory Education.

⁽³⁾ Pupils enrolled on 15 January 2009.

⁽⁴⁾ Teaching staff and administrative and supervisory staff on 1 October 2008, in full-time equivalents (excluding contractual agents and agents employed under employment promotion assistance and vocational transition programmes).

3. PRIMARY EDUCATION

In 1914, a law introduced compulsory education for all children aged six to 14, but the First World War delayed its implementation by several years. In 1955, the Collard Act imposed the creation of a public childminding school and a primary school in every municipality, regulated grants and entitled parents to choose between a religion course and an ethics course in public schools. In 1959, a basic law known as the School Pact (*Pacte scolaire*) organised and standardised relations between networks and guaranteed the real exercise of freedom of choice by families.

A. Legislation

Several recent decrees have been instrumental in determining the principal characteristics of basic education. The decree on the promotion of success at school, adopted in March 1995, presents a concrete action plan for all players in basic education, designed to bring about a significant and lasting reduction in the number of failures. It defines a cycle as a "set of school years within which the pupil pursues his education on a continuous basis, at his own pace and without repeating any years" (Art. 1) and allocates important means to developing consultation and "guild" relations (see section 2.5).

The Decree on the missions of school, adopted in July 1997, defines the objectives of compulsory education. It specifies the framework within which teaching activities take place and establishes the length of cycles and stages, organises the setting of competence levels, the preparation of teaching tools and assessment instruments, and the monitoring of curricula. It imposes the implementation of formative assessment and of differentiated teaching. It further clarifies the concept of free education, imposes the drafting by the organising authorities or individual schools of texts specifying the options offered to pupils and their parents, and the establishment of participation councils in each school.

In 1998, a framework decree redefined the resources to be allocated to ordinary and special pre-primary and primary education, as well as timetables. It also imposed the organisation of language classes in all primary schools. Another decree adopted in 1998 coordinated and expanded various positive discrimination initiatives. A decree dated 2 June 2006 significantly modified the assessment system in the French Community of Belgium by setting up a common external examination for pupils completing primary education.

B. General aims and objectives

Compulsory education pursues simultaneously all of the following general objectives (Decree on the missions of schools) without establishing priorities among them:

- to promote self-confidence and the personal development of all pupils;
- to enable all pupils to acquire learning and develop skills that will make them capable of learning throughout their lives and playing an active role in economic, social and cultural life;
- to prepare all pupils to become responsible citizens capable of contributing to the development of a democratic society based on solidarity, pluralism and openness to other cultures;
- to give all pupils equal opportunities for social emancipation.

In accordance with the Decree on the missions of schools, primary education seeks to achieve the following objectives:

- to give priority to reading, with emphasis on understanding meaning, written work and communication;
- to gain mastery of basic mathematical problem-solving skills;
- to enable children to attain the general objectives of compulsory education through a range of educational activities.

To achieve these general objectives, all knowledge and know-how, whether developed by the pupils themselves or transmitted to them, is approached from the angle of the acquisition of competencies. A document entitled 'Competence Levels' (*Socles de compétences*) defines, for all networks, all schools

and all classes, the basic skills to be mastered. The structure of the competence levels itself stresses the need for consistency in the education system, in particular continuity in learning between basic education and the first level of secondary education.

An educational plan identifies all the values, societal choices and references upon which an organising authority or a representation and coordination body appointed by the organising authorities may determine its objectives, in keeping with the general objectives of compulsory education.

C. Length, stages and age groups

Primary education lasts six years (pupils aged six to 12). An organisation based on cycles and stages is gradually being introduced throughout compulsory education.

Pre-primary education and the first eight years of compulsory schooling are considered a single education continuum structured into three stages and aimed at ensuring that all pupils achieve the defined competence levels. These stages are as follows:

1. from the start of pre-primary education to the end of the second year of primary education;
2. from the third to the sixth year of primary education;
3. the first two years of secondary education.

The first stage is organised into two cycles:

1. from the start of pre-primary school to age five;
2. from age five until the end of the second year of primary education.

The second stage is organised into two cycles:

1. the third and fourth years of primary education;
2. the fifth and sixth years of primary education.

For certain pupils, it may take longer than the normal period of six years to achieve the competence levels set for each of the first two stages. To take account of individual learning paces, schools have the possibility to allow students to spend an extra year at most in each stage. For pupils experiencing difficulty, compulsory primary schooling may therefore include seven years of primary education, or even up to eight or nine years if a derogation is granted.

D. Types of schools

Each of the three networks mentioned in the School Pact (French Community network, public grant-aided network and private grant-aided network) organises primary education.

Most primary schools are grouped with pre-primary schools, constituting basic education institutions. In the French Community network, certain primary or fundamental schools are attached to a secondary school.

In accordance with official provisions on equal opportunities for boys and girls, most primary schools are now co-educational. In practice, there are still a few schools that are not co-educational in denominational grant-aided education.

As is the case in the primary level, there are also special education primary schools for pupils with 'special needs'. Provisions were adopted recently to encourage better schooling for children with special needs and in particular their mainstreaming into ordinary education.

E. Free education

Access to education is free throughout the period of compulsory education. No school fees may be charged. The Communities bear part of the cost of traditional school supplies.

In basic education, parents may be asked to reimburse certain expenses at real cost:

- the costs of certain services or supplies related to the work plan, provided they are optional (for instance, subscription to a review related to the organising authority's programme);
- entrance fees to swimming pools and cultural and sports activities that are part of the organising authority's programme or the school work plan (see section 1.2), as well as related transport costs.

The non-payment of such costs may in no case constitute a reason for refusing to enrol a child or for expelling a pupil.

3.1 Admission

The child is admitted to primary education after the summer holidays of the calendar year in which he or she reaches age six; this date marks the beginning of compulsory education. However, if the child's parents or guardians have a certificate issued by the school head and its Centre for Psychological, Medical and Social Services, they may request admission to the first year of primary education once the child has reached age five or may postpone entry to primary school by one year while keeping the child in pre-primary education.

Parents may enrol their child in the school of their choice.

3.2 Organisation of time, groups and venue

A. School time

School time is the same as in pre-primary education (see section 2.2 A).

B. Organisation of grouping of pupils

In most cases, primary education is organised into six *groups or 'classes'* in terms of pupils' age (horizontal distribution). In rural areas, where small schools do not have sufficient enrolment to make up six groups, and increasingly often in other establishments, children from the different years of primary education are grouped into a single so-called 'vertical' class on a permanent basis or, more frequently, for certain activities.

Some schools organise a shared teaching system where two teachers divide up the subject matters to be taught in two classes (generally fifth and sixth year primary) in terms of their competencies and preferences.

C. The number of pupils per class

A certain number of periods calculated on the number of pupils enrolled in the school on 15 January preceding the start of the school year (the 'periods-allocation') are allocated to the school. The competent authority may allocate the periods freely, without having to observe rules on the minimum and/or maximum number of children per group. This system allows the school to adapt its structure to some extent to the specific needs of its pupils.

A supplement of six, nine or 12 periods is allocated to every school that has first and/or second year primary pupils, provided the school has at least 50 pupils. This supplement, which is added to the periods-allocation generated by the pupils of the first and second years of primary, is meant to enable each catchment area to hire teaching staff so as to reduce the size of groups/classes permanently or temporarily or to hire remediation teachers (*teachers providing remedial activities for pupils in difficulty either outside of or during regular classroom time*).

D. Classrooms

The use of classrooms is the same as in pre-primary education (see section 2.2).

3.3 Curriculum

A. Establishment of the curriculum

For details on the competence levels and curriculum, see section 2.3.

B. Important elements of the curriculum

Compulsory subjects in primary education are as follows: physical education (two periods), ethics or religion class (two periods), and a foreign language (none, two, three or five periods, depending on the case). The rest of the curriculum is set by a decree which states that the competence levels must give priority to reading and mastery of basic mathematical problem-solving skills. Other educational activities aimed at achieving the general objectives set for this level of education form part of the common compulsory training: temporal and spatial structuring, psychomotility and corporal education, discovery of the world and introduction to history and geography, artistic education, education through technology, introduction to science, discovery of the environment, media education, and social behaviours and citizenship.

C. Teaching methods

The networks are free to choose their own teaching methods. An education programme sets out the teaching aims and methodological choices that enable an organising authority, or a body that represents or coordinates organising authorities, to implement its specific education programme and each school must adopt its own work plan (see section 1.2).

The Decree on the missions of schools nevertheless lays down a general implementing framework in the different networks. The organising authorities must ensure that each establishment:

1. places pupils in situations that encourage them to make use simultaneously of transversal and disciplinary skills, including related knowledge and know-how;
2. gives precedence to activities that promote discovery, production and creation;
3. combines theory and practice to allow for the development of concepts from practice;
4. strikes a balance between individual and group work, develops the pupils' capacity to make an effort with a view to achieving a goal;
5. ensures that pupils respect the obligation to participate in all the activities related to the certification provided by the establishment and to accomplish the resulting tasks;
6. includes orientation as part of the education process, particularly by encouraging the discovery of different occupations and informing pupils about training streams;
7. makes use of information and communication technologies to the extent that these serve as tools for development, access to autonomy and individualisation of learning pathways;
8. develops a taste for culture and creativity and encourages participation in cultural and sports activities through collaboration with the players concerned;
9. trains pupils to respect the personality and convictions of others and the duty of banning both mental and physical violence, and teaches democratic practices of responsible citizenship in the school;
10. participates in the activities of the neighbourhood or village and municipality, and becomes harmoniously integrated therein, particularly by opening its doors to democratic debate.

The competencies described in the competence levels reference system and translated into action in the curricula are acquired both in classwork and in other educational activities and in general in the organisation of daily life at school.

Under certain conditions, immersion in a modern language or sign language is authorised.

In basic education, pupils with learning difficulties may be given specific and individualised support by an adaptation teacher and classes for adaptation to the language in which teaching is provided are organised for stateless, foreign or adopted pupils.

3.4 Assessment, progression and certification

Assessment is one of the areas for which the teaching freedom of each organising authority is guaranteed. Each may therefore, in accordance with laws, decrees and orders, determine the methods and frequency of assessments, the marking system, etc.

A. The division of responsibilities

Every teacher evaluates his or her own pupils in terms of his/her objectives and teaching. This is generally done after one or more learning sequences. The successful completion of a school year is decided by the class teacher, often after consultation of the school head and possibly other members of the school's teaching staff who assess the year's work (observations and marking based on a formative assessment) and the results of end-of-year tests (where these are organised). The pupil's capacities of analysis and synthesis, capacity to think for him/herself, spirit of cooperation and appreciation of effort and well done work must be taken into consideration.

The arrangements for award of the certificate of primary education (CEB) are described below in point D.

An Administrative Steering Unit organises external assessments of pupils' achievements at the beginning of third and fifth years of primary school. These assessments enable teachers to measure more accurately the level attained by their pupils and to adapt their teaching accordingly. The unit conducts an analysis of the results and develops teaching methods. The inspectorate provides educational monitoring.

The Decree on the missions of schools created an Assessment Tools Committee in connection with the competence levels. This committee is responsible for preparing batteries of standardised tests corresponding to the competence levels. The government distributes these batteries of tests as a guideline to all schools organised or grant-aided by the French Community. These batteries of tests are also forwarded to the institutions responsible for initial or continuing teacher training.

B. The use of assessment results

The competence levels give tangible form to the concept of level of studies and are meant to help teaching teams in charge of the pupils in a given cycle to put into practice ongoing formative assessment, summative assessments and assessment leading to certification (at age 12).

Pursuant to the Decree on the missions of schools, every school must allow every pupil to proceed at his or her own pace by practicing formative assessment and differentiated teaching. Formative assessment is defined as an assessment carried out in the course of activities aimed at assessing the pupil's progress and understanding the nature of any learning difficulties; its aim is to improve, correct or readjust the pupil's advancement. Formative assessment is based in part on self-assessment.

The majority of primary schools organise exams every year, but others do so only at the end of a cycle. Examination arrangements vary. The exam is generally drawn up by the class teacher alone, although consultation with teachers from other schools or those teaching other years is more frequent for exams given at the end of a cycle.

An initial summative assessment may take place at the end of the second year of primary. Classes may be suspended in order to organise exams over 10 days at most in the course of the year in the fifth and sixth years of primary, and over five days at most during the year in the second and fourth years of primary. During these exam days, pupils are obliged to attend school.

Certain pupils whose learning pace does not enable them to achieve the objectives set for each stage may be given an extra year per stage. This measure should not be confused with repeating a year and must entail the preparation of a file for each child concerned. The teaching team, in agreement with the parents, chooses the most suitable time for making use of this possibility in terms of the pupil's specific situation (not necessarily at the end of the stage).

C. Communication of results to families

A school report card transmitted to the parents informs them of the results achieved, the child's educational progress, learning behaviours and personal development.

The communication to the parents of a decision not to issue the certificate of primary education (CEB) must be accompanied by the following information:

- the reasons for the decision,
- information on arrangements for a meeting to be organised by the school to explain the reasons for the decision and inform them about the continuation of their child's education, and
- information on the procedure for appealing the decision.

D. A certificate of completion of studies

All pupils enrolled in sixth year primary of ordinary education must take a common external test leading to the certificate of primary education (CEB). The test is devised by a working group headed by the Inspector General for Basic Education, which also determines the criteria for administering and marking the test and the passing score: the conditions under which the test is taken must be identical in all places where the test is administered (the arrangements may nevertheless be adapted to special situations of pupils suffering from sensory and/or motor disabilities).

The common external test relates to mastery of the competencies expected upon completion of the second stage of compulsory education (competence levels) and must include questions on French, mathematics, introduction to science and introduction to history and geography, including social and economic studies.

A board of examiners is set up in each school in the ordinary education system. This board must issue the certificate of primary education to any pupil enrolled in sixth year primary who has passed the common external test. The panel may decide to grant the certificate of primary education to a sixth-year pupil who failed to reach the passing mark or was unable to participate in all or part of the common external test: in this case, it must base its decision on a file containing copies of the pupil's school report cards for the previous two years, a detailed report by the pupil's teacher including his or her recommendation on whether the certificate should be awarded, and on any other consideration that the panel considers relevant.

Admission to secondary school is not conditional upon having earned the certificate of primary education (the secondary system may even issue this certificate).

3.5 Guidance and counselling

The Centres for Psychological, Medical and Social Services (CPMS) are information and assistance centres where multidisciplinary teams (educational psychologists and auxiliaries, social auxiliaries, paramedical auxiliaries and doctors) provide free services. Every school has a CPMS.

The CPMS centres are assigned three key tasks:

1. To promote the psychological, educational, medical and social conditions that give pupils the best chances of developing their personalities harmoniously and of preparing to take on their role of autonomous and responsible citizens playing an active role in social, cultural and economic life.
2. To contribute to the educational process throughout pupils' school career by encouraging the implementation of means enabling them to make constant progress, with the aim of ensuring equal access for all pupils to social, civic and personal emancipation. To this end, the centres mobilise, among others, the resources available in the pupil's family, social and school environment.
3. With a view to providing orientation for their lifelong development, to support pupils in the positive construction of their personal, educational and professional plans and their integration in social and professional life.

Each centre's activities must necessarily be in keeping with the framework of a programme common to all the CPMS centres, the specific programme established by the organising authority (in terms of its priorities and values) and its own work programme (drawn up by all personnel and based on the centre's specific situation).

3.6 Teachers

A. Initial training

See section 2.5 A.

B. Continuing training

See section 2.5 B.

C. Assignments

In most cases, primary school teachers take charge of a single class and consequently teach all subjects (general teachers), although in some cases the organisation of teaching may be based on subject matter (shared teaching). In addition, some subjects must be taught by specially qualified teachers: modern languages, physical education and ethics classes are taught by teachers recruited on the basis of an education degree, while religion classes are taught by a minister of one of the recognised religions or a minister's delegate, who is given responsibility solely for classes in the corresponding religion.

3.7 Statistics

Statistics on ordinary primary education (2008-2009)

| School year 2008-2009 | Pupils ⁽⁵⁾ | Teachers ⁽⁶⁾ | Schools |
|---|-----------------------|-------------------------|---------|
| French Community education | 26 619 | 1 957 | 159 |
| Public grant-aided education (provinces) | 617 | 40 | 2 |
| Public grant-aided education (municipalities) | 148 402 | 11 013 | 903 |
| Private grant-aided education | 129 265 | 21 643 | 672 |

Source: General Administration for Education and Scientific Research, Directorate General for Compulsory Education.

⁽⁵⁾ Pupils enrolled on 15 January 2009.

⁽⁶⁾ Teaching staff and administrative and supervision staff on 1 October 2008, in full-time equivalents (excluding contractual agents and agents employed under employment promotion assistance and vocational transition programmes).

4. SECONDARY EDUCATION

Secondary education, like primary education (see first paragraph of section 3), is now included in the period of compulsory education. Compulsory school attendance can be full-time until age 18 or can combine full-time teaching until age 15 or 16 with part-time from 15 or 16 until age 18.

A. Legislation

A major revamping of secondary education was adopted on 19 July 1971. A single secondary education structure, known as 'reformed' or 'type I' education, was established. Today, it has been almost completely replaced by traditional education ⁽⁷⁾. The reform aimed in particular to postpone the choice of orientation until the age of 15 or 16.

The decree of 29 July 1992, supplemented and amended on numerous occasions, organises ordinary full-time secondary education. It addresses questions related to the creation and maintenance of schools, the calculation and use of the number of teacher-periods, 'promotion' jobs in educational institutions, the counting of pupils and inter-institutional consultation bodies.

The Decree on the missions of schools (see section 3, Legislation, paragraph two) applies to all compulsory education.

In 2001, a decree reorganised alternance secondary education (combining education and work experience) and expanded the offering of training opportunities. A 2006 decree further clarified the educational organisation of the first level of secondary education. It describes the functioning of the common first level and organises the possibility of a differentiated first level. Another decree adopted in 2007 regulates the possibility of offering language immersion teaching in secondary schools organised or grant-aided by the French Community. Since that year, successive decrees have laid down further rules on the enrolment of pupils in the first level of secondary education.

B. The levels of secondary education and the types of curricula

Secondary education is subdivided into three levels lasting two years each (three years maximum for the first level):

- first level – referred to as the observation level (as a general rule for pupils aged 12 to 14 – maximum age 16);
- second level – orientation level (as a general rule for pupils aged 14 to 16);
- third level – determination level (generally for pupils aged 16 to 18).

The first two years make up the first level and correspond to ISCED 2. The common first level is organised for pupils holding the certificate of primary education (CEB). A differentiated first level is designed for pupils who do not have the CEB and who do not satisfy the abovementioned conditions for enrolment in the common first year. Once the CEB has been earned, the pupil can be oriented towards either the common first level or towards an additional year.

For pupils who have attended the first level for three years but have failed to achieve the required competencies, a specific year of differentiation and orientation may be organised in the second level. This year is meant to help the pupils acquire the competencies defined for the third stage of the educational continuum and to develop, in collaboration with the Centre for Psychological, Medical and Social Services, a personal plan for the continuation of their education.

From the third year (second and third levels – ISCED 3), secondary education comprises four types (general, technical, artistic and vocational) and two streams (transition and qualification).

⁽⁷⁾ This chapter only concerns Type I education given the extremely low number of pupils enrolled in Type II.

The transition streams prepare pupils for higher education while offering possibilities to enter the labour market, whereas the qualification streams prepare pupils for entering the labour market while giving the possibility to continue their studies up to the level of tertiary education.

General education is organised as a transition stream while vocational education is a qualification stream. Technical education and artistic education may be organised as transition or qualification streams.

Alternance secondary education also exists for young people from age 15 or 16. It combines general training with work experience. Alternance education is organised as a qualification stream.

C. Types of schools

Each of the three networks mentioned in the School Pact (French Community network, public grant-aided network and private grant-aided network) organises secondary education. In accordance with official provisions on equal opportunities for boys and girls, most secondary schools are now co-educational. There are nevertheless still a very small number of schools in denominational grant-aided education that are not co-educational.

The 500 or so schools offering ordinary full-time secondary education may be distinguished by the type of education they offer: for example, certain schools only offer transition streams while others offer qualification streams; within a single type of education, different options may be offered; some schools only offer the first level. *Athénées* offer the second and third levels or all three levels, *lycées* offer the first level or the first and second levels, and technical institutes offer the second and third levels or all three levels of technical and occupational education. Academies offer artistic education.

Alternance education is provided in dual vocational education and training centres: CEFA, Centre d'Enseignement et de formation en Alternance), IFAPME (Institut wallon de formation en alternance et des indépendants et petites et moyennes entreprises) and EFPME (Espace Formation PME). A CEFA is a structure shared by one or more ordinary full-time secondary schools that offer the second and third levels, qualification technical education or vocational education. For information on the IFAPME and the EFPME, which are financed by the Regions and not by the French Community, see section 7.

As is the case in the pre-primary and primary levels, there are special secondary education institutions for pupils with 'special needs'. Very recently, provisions were enacted to encourage better schooling for children and adolescents with special needs, and in particular their mainstreaming into ordinary education.

D. Free education

Throughout the period of compulsory schooling, access to education is free. No school fees may be charged. The French Community bears part of the cost of traditional school supplies. Only certain pupils over age 18 who are not nationals of the European Union must pay a specific enrolment fee.

In secondary education, parents may be asked to reimburse certain expenses at real cost:

- the costs of certain services or supplies related to the work plan, provided they are optional (for instance, subscription to a review related to the organising authority's programme);
- entrance fees to swimming pools and cultural and sports activities that are part of the organising authority's programme or the school work plan as well as related transport costs.
- photocopies distributed to pupils (a maximum annual amount is set by the government);
- the loan of textbooks, individual equipment and tools.

The non-payment of such costs may in no case constitute a reason for refusing to enrol or for expelling a pupil.

Subject to satisfying certain educational and financial conditions, secondary school pupils may benefit from student grants or loans awarded by the Ministry of the French Community.

4.1 Admission

The common first level is organised for pupils who hold the certificate of primary education (CEB). Pupils who have not obtained the CEB may either enrol in the common first year if they satisfy four conditions (be at least age 12, have completed the sixth year of primary education, have the agreement of the parents and of the admission council), or enrol in a differentiated first level, the main objective of which is to enable pupils who have not earned the CEB to acquire it. Once the CEB has been earned, the pupil may be oriented towards the common first level or towards an additional year.

Since 2007, various decrees have been enacted with a view to regulating enrolment in the first year of secondary education so as to encourage social diversity. The rules implemented for the start of the 2009-2010 school year established a two-phase enrolment procedure, the first phase of which concerned so-called 'priority' pupils (on the basis, for example, of the presence of a brother or sister in the school). If the number of applications at the end of the second phase exceeded the school's capacity, lots were drawn among the second phase applicants. These rules have since been repealed and a new decree applies for the 2010-2011 school year.

In alternance education, enrolment is open year-long. Pupils subject to the part-time compulsory schooling requirement may attend a dual education and training centre (CEFA) or IFAPME or EFPME (see section 7) from age 15 provided they have completed two years of secondary education. Exceptions to this rule are allowed for the CEFAs and for the IFAPME or EFPME.

4.2 Organisation of time, groups and venue

A. School time in full-time education

The school calendar is the same as for basic education (see section 2.2, first paragraph). Secondary establishments provide from 28 to 32/34 class periods of 50 minutes each per week, or even up to 37 periods depending on the courses taken.

Any organising authority may authorise basic or secondary schools, within the framework of their work plan, to arrange the weekly schedule so as to implement activities that help them attain the general objectives.

B. School time in alternance education

In a CEFA, the training year may be organised in accordance with the school calendar or be organised on other bases (including outside of the normal school hours and days of full-time educational institutions). The training may be organised in modules.

Training is provided in the amount of at least 600 periods of 50 minutes per year, over a period of at least 20 weeks, and must also include at least 600 hours per year of work experience training, over a period of at least 20 weeks. When it proves impossible for any reason whatsoever to obtain 600 hours of work experience in the course of a year's training, additional vocational training periods are organised in the pupil's school.

C. The organisation of groupings of pupils

Classes are theoretically organised by age groups and by subject matter. However, because certain pupils sometimes have to repeat years, classes often include pupils of different ages.

Different teachers teach different subject matters, so pupils can have a different teacher every 50 minutes. Each pupil can form part of different groups depending on the type of education and the options selected. In most schools, pupils change classrooms several times each day.

In the first level, the maximum number of pupils per class is 24, but this maximum is 15 and 18 respectively in the case of the first and second years of the differentiated first level. In general education, the average maximum number of pupils per class is 27 (second level) or 30 (third level), but 16 for laboratory classes. In qualification education, the average maximum number of pupils per class is 27 (in vocational education, 20 in second level and 24 in third level), but 16 for laboratory classes, 12 for certain practical vocational classes and 10 when required for security reasons.

4.3 Curriculum

A. Development of curriculum

For the competence levels (which cover the first two years of secondary education) and curricula, see section 2.3.

In addition to the competence levels, similar reference systems exist exclusively for secondary education: final achievement levels (given levels of competencies to be achieved upon completion of secondary education) and training profiles (competencies to be achieved with a view to obtaining a qualification certificate).

B. Important elements of the curriculum

The *common first year and the common second year* consist of a core curriculum (28 periods) and complementary activities (4 periods). The core curriculum covers the following subjects (the number of weekly periods is shown in brackets for first and second year respectively): religion or ethics (2-2); French (6-5); mathematics (4-5); history and geography (4-4); modern language I (4-4); introduction to science (3-3); physical education (3-3); technology education (1-1); artistic education (1-1). The complementary activities include one of the following four subject matters: French, selected modern language, sciences, mathematics, social and economic studies and technological education; or sports or artistic activities. They can be replaced in whole or in part by periods of musical education, sports training or a specific programme designed to bring pupils up to the competence levels for age 14. In addition to ethics or religion, the curriculum in the *differentiated first and second years* covers French and history and geography including social and economic studies; mathematics and introduction to science; a modern language; physical education; artistic education; and technology education.

The curriculum for the *third year of differentiation and orientation* covers religion/ethics, French (including history and geography), mathematics (including introduction to science), modern language I, physical education, artistic education and an integrated training module, for a total of 34 weekly periods (depending on the classes, the distribution of these periods is either totally specified or leaves an element of choice).

The *second level of the transition stream* must include a core curriculum (religion/ethics, French, history and geography, mathematics, sciences, modern language I, physical education), with numbers of periods that may vary in some cases depending on the type and network. In addition to this core curriculum are options (groups of options in technical and artistic qualification education) and a choice of activities.

In the *third level of the transition stream*, the curriculum must include religion/ethics, French, history and geography, mathematics, sciences, modern language I and physical education, either as a core or as compulsory options, with a variable number of periods. In addition to this core are different optional classes and activities depending on the pupil's orientation (sciences, classics, modern languages,

economics, social studies, arts or physical education). In certain conditions, schools can combine elements of different orientations ('combined option training').

In contrast with the common first level and the transition stream, the *qualification stream* is organised on the basis of timetables that differ not only depending on the type chosen, but also depending on the networks. The different timetables in the qualification stream must include 16 (technical or artistic qualification stream) or 18 weekly periods of grouped options. Classes cover on the whole the same subjects as in the transition stream, but are taught according to orientations and with numbers of hours that are sometimes very different. A modern language is not compulsory in vocational education. The grouped options organised in the framework of transition stream technical education, qualification stream technical or vocational education fall into one of the following ten sectors: agronomy, industry, construction, hotel industry, clothing, applied arts, fine arts, economics, personal services and applied science.

Alternance secondary education covers both general training, including social and personal, and preparation for an occupation, through alternating work and studies, through the practice of an occupation or a socioprofessional integration agreement.

C. Teaching methods

For general information on teaching methods, see the corresponding point in section 3.3.

The reform of the first cycle recommends differentiated teaching that in principle enables all pupils to achieve their maximum by setting targets within their capabilities, learning at their own pace and according to specific terms. Pupils who experience difficulty achieving the competence levels can be obliged to take part in specific individualised remedial and/or teaching support activities, catch-up work, restructuring of acquired knowledge through complementary activities or two weekly remedial periods. Individualised remedial and/or reorientation activities can also be organised in the second and third levels.

The use of textbooks is not very widespread, particularly in science and mathematics. The decision of whether or not to use a textbook, as well as the choice of textbook itself, is left up to the teachers.

Two educational information servers have been set up, one shared by the different networks (<http://www.enseignement.be>) and the other specifically for education organised by the French Community (<http://www.restode.cfwb.be>). An online educational resource bank is available to teachers on the common server, which includes teaching tools that enable pupils to achieve the competence levels and the final achievement levels.

Various initiatives are aimed at developing responsible citizenship and educating pupils in development ('Democracy or Barbarism' inter-network coordination unit, working and reflection group on development education in schools, document entitled 'Being and Becoming a Citizen' for pupils in the fifth and sixth years of secondary education, the obligation to organise interdisciplinary activities for responsible and active citizenship at least once during each cycle or level, etc.). Cybermedia centres also exist in schools along with activities focused on education in the media.

With respect specifically to vocational education, a reform introduced different teaching means and methods (interdisciplinary approach; small teaching teams; project-based teaching and workshop teaching; adjustment of time management to pupils' learning paces and ways of learning; development of the relationship between school and working life; coordination and educational support; remedial work).

Secondary schools are gradually developing activities in cooperation with companies in their region, for example, when schools do not have appropriate equipment at their disposal.

Different initiatives conducted in collaboration with the French Community, the Walloon Region and the French Community Commission (CoCof) in the Brussels-Capital Region are helping to improve the

quality of qualification-oriented sections of technical and vocational education: investments in teaching equipment, the creation of new infrastructures in the French Community, 'Advanced Technology Centres' (CTA), and the allocation of subsidies to a not-for-profit association whose aim is to canvass companies that may be in a position to donate material so schools, to inform companies of schools' needs for material and to distribute equitably the materials obtained among schools in the different networks.

4.4 Assessment, progression and certification

Assessment is one of the aspects for which the freedom of each network is guaranteed. Each organising authority may consequently, in compliance with relevant laws, decrees and orders, determine the methods and frequency of assessments, the marking system and so on.

A. The division of responsibilities

The authorities and official bodies of the French Community, in particular schools, the services of the Ministry of the French Community and the General Inspectorate, verify for their respective areas of competence that pupils' studies are completed in accordance with the legal requirements in force in the French Community.

The issuing of certificates (apart from the CEB) is not the outcome of the organisation of a test that is separate from all the assessment procedures as defined in the school itself. They are awarded to pupils who regularly attended classes and successfully completed their chosen curriculum under the responsibility of the schools concerned.

Every secondary school has the same number of class councils as groups of pupils. The class council, chaired by the school head, is made up of all members of the administration and teaching staff in charge of a given group of pupils. The class council must conduct at regular intervals an intellectual, social and behavioural assessment of each pupil, draw the appropriate educational conclusions, propose any necessary guidance or recommendations, and if need be orientation or reorientation, define a common approach towards each pupil and at the end of the year take decisions concerning promotion to the next class, with or without restrictions, deferral (with the obligation to re-sit examinations in September), denial of promotion and certification. It bases its opinions and decisions on various elements, including the previous school record of each pupil, the intermediate results of each term, reports and examinations, information collected by the Centre for Psychological, Medical and Social Services and possibly meetings with the pupil and his or her parents.

The qualification certificate (CQ) is awarded to pupils who have attended classes and successfully completed the qualification test before a board made up of the school head, teachers of the last two years and external consultants selected on the basis of their competencies in the area of the qualification to be awarded.

An administrative steering unit organises external assessments (that do not lead to certification) of pupils' achievements upon entering the second and fourth or fifth years of secondary education, covering reading/writing, mathematics and sciences. These assessments enable teachers to better measure the level attained by their pupils and to adapt their teaching accordingly. The unit conducts an analysis of the results and develops teaching suggestions. The inspectorate provides educational monitoring.

The Decree on the missions of schools set up a committee on assessment tools for general and technological secondary education and another for vocational and technical secondary education. These committees are responsible for developing batteries of standardised tests corresponding to the competence reference systems. The government distributes these batteries of tests for information purposes to all schools organised or grant-aided by the French Community. These batteries of tests are also forwarded to the institutions in charge of initial or continuing teacher training.

B. The use of assessment results

Pursuant to the Decree on the missions of schools, each school must permit each pupil to progress at his or her own pace by practicing formative assessment and differentiated teaching. Formative assessment is defined as an assessment carried out in the course of an activity and aimed at assessing progress achieved by the pupil and giving insight into the nature of any learning difficulties; it is meant to improve, correct or readjust the pupil's advancement and is based in part on self-assessment.

Teachers use formative assessment on a regular basis. The results of such ongoing (periodical) assessment, possibly matched with two examination sessions, are taken into account by the class council when it takes decisions at the end of the school year concerning the pupil's future schooling. When examination sessions are organised, they include written, oral or practical tests, depending on the nature of the subject matter being monitored.

One or two exam sessions are organised every year. The June exams have the essential objective of checking whether pupils have acquired the minimum competencies authorising them to continue their schooling. A pupil deferred in June must re-sit exams in September. At the end of the first level and for subsequent years of study, pupils receive a certificate of orientation.

During the first level of secondary education, an individual learning plan (PIA) must be drawn up by the guidance council made up of members of the class council concerned and at least one representative of each of the other first-level class councils (the relevant CPMS is entitled to participate). It must meet at least three times per school year to draw up a report for each pupil that assesses achievement of the competence levels, diagnoses specific difficulties and proposes appropriate remediation as necessary. This plan must be drawn up for pupils attending the additional years of the first level or the first or second common year, or for those experiencing considerable learning difficulties and for whom orientation towards an additional year is being considered.

C. Communication of results to families

A school report card transmitted to the parents informs them of the results achieved, the child's educational progress, learning behaviours and personal development.

The Decree on the missions of schools establishes procedures for appealing the decisions of the class council in ordinary full-time secondary education. Parents (or pupils of age) may request additional information on the precise reason for a failure or restricted passing decision. Upon completion of an internal procedure, an appeal may be lodged with the chair of a board of appeal.

D. Certificates

All pupils enrolled in differentiated first or second year are put through a common external assessment for award of the primary education certificate (CEB – see section 3.4).

Pupils who have successfully completed the first and second levels (orientation level) are awarded a second-level certificate of secondary education (CES2D).

A certificate of upper secondary education (CESS) is awarded to regular pupils who have successfully completed the last two years of study in general, technical or artistic full-time secondary education in the same type, stream and orientation of studies. The qualification certificate (CQ) is obtained upon completion of the sixth and seventh years (CQ6 or CQ 7) of the qualification stream of secondary education.

A certificate of intermediate competencies is awarded to all pupils who have successfully completed at least a fourth year of study in vocational or technical education upon leaving school. The certificate details each pupil's acquired competencies.

Upon completion of certain years of vocational education, a complementary certificate of management skills (CCCG) is awarded to pupils who have completed a special curriculum focused on vocational activities in small and medium-sized commercial companies or the artisan sector. This certificate gives them access to regulated occupations.

4.5 Guidance and counselling

A. Existing services

Orientation involves teaching teams, the Centres for Psychological, Medical and Social Services (CPMS – see section 3.5.), parents and pupils. It is one of the essential tasks of the class council.

In ordinary secondary education, the class council includes all members of the teaching staff responsible for a given group of pupils and is chaired by the school head. The class council takes decisions such as promotion to the next year, educational and professional orientation, and certification.

B. Orientation in the curriculum

Throughout the pupil's secondary school career, the role of the CPMS is to provide orientation and reorientation. In the event a pupil experiences specific difficulties, an analysis and treatment plan is drawn up in agreement with the school and the parents.

Upon completion of the first eight years of compulsory schooling, pupils are oriented towards the type of education best suited to their aspirations and capacities. The class council is responsible for orientation. It involves the CPMS and parents in this process. The class council guides each pupil in developing his or her own plan for education and professional life. Information, visits and traineeships contribute to a positive orientation of pupils.

Various initiatives are aimed at improving the information and orientation provided to pupils during their final years of secondary education, in particular through closer collaboration between secondary education and tertiary education. The government makes information on educational possibilities available to secondary schools. Since 2006, an information brochure entitled '*L'enseignement supérieur. Mode d'emploi*' ('Higher Education: A user's guide') has been sent to every pupil in the final year of secondary education. It presents the higher education system and provides information on admission conditions, financial aspects, grants and the types of education available. Support is provided to numerous existing initiatives concerning student orientation, in particular the activities of the study and career information service (SIEP).

At the request of a pupil enrolled in the last year of secondary education, the CPMS together with the school helps the pupil to discover his or her motivations and capacity to complete successfully his or her future educational plans. As part of its work plan, every school can allocate the equivalent of two weeks divided up over the entire third level (determination level) to activities designed to help pupils choose an occupation and the corresponding studies.

4.6 Teachers and trainers

Teachers are specialised by subject and are intended to teach only those subjects.

A. Initial teacher training

To be appointed on a permanent basis in *lower secondary education* (first three years), a teacher must hold a lower secondary education teaching qualification (*agrégé de l'enseignement secondaire inférieur*, AESI), awarded to students who have successfully completed three years of study in an education curriculum at a college of higher education. The initial training for the AESI qualification is organised along the same lines as training for primary school teachers (see section 2.5).

To be appointed on a permanent basis in *upper secondary education* (last three years), a teacher must hold an upper secondary education teaching qualification (*agrégé de l'enseignement secondaire supérieur*, AESS) awarded after at least four or five years of higher education (first and second cycle, or bachelor's and master's). The four or five years of education in the field of specialisation are completed with training in the teaching profession and practice teaching.

To be appointed on a permanent basis as a *teacher of technical and practical vocational classes* in secondary education, the teacher must hold a teaching qualification for technical education (*agrégé(e) de l'enseignement technique moyen inférieur* or *régent(e) technique*) obtained after three years of study in an education curriculum at a college of higher education, or hold a technical diploma of upper secondary level, short-type, long-type or university higher education diploma, and have obtained the certificate of teaching accreditation (*certificat d'aptitude pédagogique*, CAP), which is the required qualification attesting to teaching training.

B. Continuing training for secondary teachers

The status of continuing training in secondary education is similar to that of continuing training in basic education (see section 2.5), apart from the reference period for compulsory training (three years in secondary education) and the number of voluntary continuing training days during the teacher's service hours, limited in secondary to six half-days per year.

C. The appointment of teachers

Secondary school teachers are appointed to teach courses that correspond to their qualifications in terms of cycle and subject matter. Certain rules nevertheless allow the appointment of teachers who do not have the required qualifications in the event of a shortage of qualified candidates.

4.7 Statistics

Statistics on ordinary secondary education (2008-2009)

| 2008-2009 | Full-time education | | Alternance education | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------|---------|----------------------|---------|
| | Pupils | Schools | Pupils | Schools |
| French Community | 79 628 | 129 | 1 892 | 10 |
| Public grant-aided (provinces) | 28 595 | 45 | 1 495 | 9 |
| Public grant-aided (municipalities) | 22 376 | 39 | 1 085 | 4 |
| Private grant-aided | 199 196 | 296 | 4 122 | 20 |
| Total | 329 795 | 509 | 8 594 | 43 |

Source: General Administration for Education and Scientific Research, Directorate General for Compulsory Education.

5. POST-SECONDARY NON-TERTIARY EDUCATION

In addition to the six years of secondary education, secondary schools may organise complementary years of study:

1. After the third level of the transition stream, a seventh year of preparation for tertiary education.
2. After the third level of the qualification stream, a seventh year of qualification or a complementary seventh year.
3. A complementary fourth level in the framework of vocational secondary education for nursing studies.

In addition, within the framework of the Marshall Plan, the Walloon government allows the possibility for young people in the qualification stream to attend an advanced seventh year in Flanders.

The case of these complementary years is treated in the same legal texts and the same circulars as the rest of secondary education.

5.1 Admission

Pupils holding the certificate of upper secondary education (CESS) may be admitted as regular pupils to the seventh year of preparation for tertiary education (special year in mathematics, science, modern languages or performing arts and communication techniques).

A seventh year of specialisation and/or proficiency is available to pupils who have successfully completed the sixth year of technical or artistic studies in the qualification stream.

Vocational stream pupils who have completed the sixth year also have the possibility to attend a complementary seventh year of proficiency or specialisation in the same or a corresponding orientation of studies and a seventh year after which they may obtain the certificate of upper secondary education (CESS).

For the complementary year of preparation for tertiary education, pupils are charged an enrolment fee of € 124 (reduced to € 62 for grant recipients).

5.2 Organisation of time, groups and venue

See section 4.2.

5.3 Curriculum

For general information on the secondary education curriculum, see section 4.3.

The curriculum of the complementary year of preparation for tertiary education includes a large number of hours of classes preparing pupils for their chosen orientation, as well as a few free options.

For the seventh vocational year aimed solely at obtaining the CESS (type C), 55 % of the weekly number of periods must concern general, social and personal education (when the qualification certificate or a certificate of competencies complementary to a CQ is also sought (type B), this figure is brought down to 40).

The curriculum of the seventh year in technical education, qualification stream, and the seventh complementary year in type B vocational education focuses a large number of periods (at least 20 and 18 periods respectively) on a grouped basis option. These complementary years of study may be organised on a full-time or alternance basis.

A fourth level is organised in full-time complementary vocational education in a few establishments for certain fields of study such as hospital nursing with an orientation in mental health and psychoanalysis. It includes three years of study, sometimes preceded by a preparatory year.

5.4 Assessment, progression and certification

Upon successful completion of the seventh year of preparation for tertiary education, the pupil receives a certificate of achievement. A certificate of seventh-year proficiency and/or specialisation in technical, artistic or vocational education is awarded to secondary pupils having successfully completed the corresponding year.

A CESS is awarded to regular pupils who have successfully completed a seventh year of vocational education after having successfully completed a sixth year of vocational secondary education in orientations B or C. This CESS only gives access to short-type tertiary education. Those pupils who, upon completion of a seventh year of vocational courses, have obtained the CESS and wish to gain access to university education may obtain the diploma of aptitude for tertiary education (*diplôme d'aptitude à accéder à l'enseignement supérieur*, DAES) by sitting for an exam administered by a board of examiners of the French Community

Upon completion of the fourth level, vocational education certificates for the complementary secondary cycle (BEPSC nursing) are awarded. Certificates of achievement are awarded each year.

5.5 Guidance and counselling

See section 4.5.

5.6 Teachers and trainers

See section 4.6.

5.7 Statistics

Statistics on post-secondary non-tertiary education (2008-2009)

| 2008-2009 | 7 th year of level 3 | | | | Level 4, including 7 th year of level 4 | | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------|------------|---------|--|---------|------------|---------|
| | Full-time | | Alternance | | Full-time | | Alternance | |
| | Pupils | Schools | Pupils | Schools | Pupils | Schools | Pupils | Schools |
| French Community | 990 | 55 | 58 | 8 | 276 | 2 | | |
| Public grant-aided (provinces) | 940 | 37 | 104 | 6 | 1.447 | 6 | | |
| Public grant-aided (municipalities) | 649 | 25 | 46 | 2 | 0 | 0 | | |
| Private grant-aided | 3 322 | 134 | 186 | 17 | 3 085 | 7 | | |
| Total | 5 901 | 251 | 394 | 33 | 4 808 | 15 | | |

Source: General Administration for Education and Scientific Research, Directorate General for Compulsory Education.

6. TERTIARY EDUCATION

A. Types of institutions

Tertiary education includes university education, non-university higher education organised in colleges of higher education, artistic higher education (art colleges) and higher institutes of architecture. Tertiary education may be of the short type (three or four years) or long type (four or five years). Both types are found in the colleges of higher education and in art colleges, whereas universities and higher institutes of architecture offer only long-type studies. Long-type higher education is of the university type and level.

Two or more universities may join forces to form an 'academy'. An academy may establish partnerships with other higher education institutions.

B. The legal framework

The law on the financing and supervision of university institutions was adopted on 27 July 1971. It has been amended on several occasions. In particular, a 1994 decree modified the granting of university degrees by doing away with the distinction between scientific and legal degrees. The 'Bologna Decree' established provisions on the refinancing of universities.

A decree adopted on 5 August 1995 launched a comprehensive reform of higher education institutions that resulted in the creation of colleges of higher education. A decree dated 21 February 2003 laid down the degrees awarded by colleges of higher education. It was replaced by another decree on 2 June 2006, which was further updated in 2007 and 2008.

The decree of 17 May 1999 established a framework for artistic higher education by establishing its objectives, defining its fields and levels, and setting out the main organisational aspects, including access to studies and their approval. On 20 December 2001, a second fundamental decree completed the framework, making artistic higher education provided in art colleges a third pillar of tertiary education. This decree guarantees the existence of 17 art colleges, establishes a new financing system that contributes to the stability of institutions, provides them with a more participatory type of organisation, gives professors a status adapted to their situation as artists and gives new prestige to the diplomas awarded.

Architecture education is governed primarily by a law adopted on 18 February 1977 and the measures approved to implement this law. A 'Bologna Decree' specific to architecture was adopted on 31 March 2004 and a decree approved by the French Community on 14 April 2004 established the minimum number of hours of courses. The integration of architecture institutes into universities is being prepared.

C. The Bologna process

In March 2004, a landmark decree known as the 'Bologna Decree' reorganised all tertiary education in the French Community, contributing to its integration in the European area. This decree entered into force in September 2004. It was completed by other decrees specific to a given type of higher education. Consequently, the same system now applies to all higher education. Certain technical terms were redefined or simplified (degrees, for instance) and education was organised into three cycles, which qualify students for the bachelor's, master's or doctoral degree (only universities organise the third or doctoral cycle). Arrangements for partnerships between universities and other institutions are regulated. The use of the European credit transfer system (ECTS) was confirmed, with a year's study representing 60 credits. The first cycle includes 180 credits which may be earned in three years of study. It leads to the bachelor's degree. The second cycle includes 60 or 120 credits

which may be earned in at least one or two years of studies respectively and qualify successful students for the master's degree.

D. Objectives and fields covered

The decree of 31 March 2004, known as the 'Bologna Decree', states that higher education organised or grant-aided by the French Community aims to achieve the following objectives, simultaneously and without any one taking precedence over another:

- to provide support for students in their role as responsible citizens capable of contributing to the development of a democratic society based on pluralism and solidarity;
- to promote students' autonomy and self-fulfilment, in particular by developing their intellectual and artistic curiosity, their critical thinking and awareness of individual and collective responsibilities and duties;
- to transmit, through the content of teaching and through other activities organised by the institution, the values of humanism, creative and innovative traditions, as well as the artistic, scientific, philosophical and political cultural heritage, which represent the historical foundations of this type of education, whilst respecting the specific identity of each;
- to guarantee education of the highest level, both general and specialised, fundamental/conceptual as well as practical, with a view to enabling students to play an active role in professional, social, economic and cultural life, and to offer them equal opportunities for social emancipation;
- to develop specialised competencies designed to last, by imparting to students the aptitudes to maintain their relevance, either autonomously or in the context of continuing or lifelong learning;
- to bring a perspective of intellectual, artistic, professional and cultural openness to this initial and complementary education, giving professors, students and graduates incentives for inter-community and international mobility and cooperation.

The key mission of *university education* is to maintain, disseminate and advance science. Teaching and research are closely tied in this process. The university is also vested with a cultural and critical function and increasingly aims to promote the practical aspect through ties between fundamental and applied research, relations with companies, etc. University studies are organised in the following sectors: human and social sciences (religions, philosophy, history, languages and literature, arts and archaeology, law, criminology, psychology, education, economics, political science, social sciences), science (sciences, applied sciences, agronomy and biological engineering) and health sciences (medicine, dentistry, veterinary sciences, public health, pharmaceutical sciences, physical education and physiotherapy).

In the *colleges of higher education*, *short-type higher education* comprises a curriculum designed to provide technical training with a view to acquiring professional skills in a given area. *Long-type (university level) higher education* strives to attain abstraction through the concrete aspect of things and provides scientific and technological training geared more directly to practical applications. It trains highly technical management staff for transposition and implementation tasks and short-term applied research. Both short-type and long-type higher education studies may be organised in the following categories: agronomy, applied arts, economics, paramedical studies, education, technical studies, and translation and interpreting.

Artistic higher education is defined as a multidisciplinary setting for research and creation, in which the plastic, visual and spatial arts and their teaching are inseparable. The purpose of *short-type* education is the practice of an artistic profession. Through artistic instruction and knowledge of cultural research, it is designed to train professionals, autonomous specialists capable of taking charge of their future, in particular through research based on the professional objective. *Long-type* artistic education provides in-depth and versatile training in a large number of options nurtured by interdisciplinary experimentation and research. Education provided by the art colleges is subdivided into four areas:

plastic, visual and spatial arts; music; theatre and vocal arts; and performing arts and communication and broadcasting techniques.

The *higher institutes of architecture* organise education that leads to the bachelor's and master's degree in architecture.

6.1 Admission

A. The competent authorities

A legal framework regulates the conditions for admission to higher education (see below). However, each higher education institution is free to impose additional admission conditions. Such conditions may regulate access to certain studies (for example, a medical examination and physical test for access to physiotherapy studies).

B. Admission procedures and conditions

The first year of higher education is open to students who hold a certificate of upper secondary education (CESS). Those who earned the CESS after a seventh year in vocational secondary education must also earn the diploma of aptitude for tertiary education (DAES) by sitting for an exam before the board of examiners of the French Community, to be admitted to a university. In addition, no one may be admitted to exams for a first-cycle year of study without demonstrating sufficient command of the French language. The French Community does not apply a restricted admissions system.

Access to first-cycle studies in applied sciences is also subject to passing an entrance exam. Admission to artistic higher education is subject to different conditions: applicants must satisfy the general conditions for access to higher education or hold a certificate attesting to having earned a passing mark on an entrance exam organised by the art colleges, the programmes for which are adopted by the government, in the chosen field of studies; they must also pass an entrance exam ascertaining their aptitude for artistic education in the chosen area.

There are also possibilities for individualised admission to studies. Boards of examiners, applying the general conditions laid down by the academic authorities, assign a value to the credits earned by students who have already successfully completed certain higher education courses (gateways). Students who hold such credits are dispensed from the corresponding courses in the curriculum. The boards of examiners may also assign a value in this context to the knowledge and competencies acquired by students through personal or work experience.

Students have free choice in terms of the higher education institution in which they wish to enrol. There are defined circumstances in which a university, college of higher education or art college may refuse enrolment and an appeal procedure exists.

With its decree of 16 June 2006, the government imposed on the authorities of universities and colleges of higher education the requirement to limit the number of non-resident students (within the meaning of the decree) enrolling for the first time in certain curricula at a college of higher education or a university in the French Community. This measure concerns, for instance, curricula leading to the bachelor's degree in veterinary medicine.

C. Equivalence

Holders of a higher education certificate or diploma also have access to tertiary education in the French Community provided they have obtained recognition of the equivalence of their qualification.

An Equivalence Service is responsible for conducting a single, comprehensive review, in both administrative and educational terms, of applications from pupils from foreign countries (the opinion of the General Inspectorate may also be sought). Applications for equivalence concerning certificates issued upon completion of the fourth level of complementary vocational secondary education, nursing section, must undergo an additional review and are subject to the opinion of the Directorate General for the Ministry of Health of the French Community.

For higher education, the legal and regulatory framework allows for recognition of practically all diplomas earned in another country, regardless of level, discipline or the country where they were conferred. Total or partial equivalence may be granted for periods of study, exams or diplomas and other certificates obtained in an educational establishment in a foreign system. The gateways scheme (see above) is applicable both to students who have completed their studies in the French Community and to those who attended school entirely or partially abroad and have obtained total or partial equivalence from the French Community.

6.2 Students' contributions and financial support

A. Enrolment fees

Enrolment in higher education requires payment of an enrolment fee (*minerval*) determined by regulations in terms of the type of studies (a specific enrolment fee is set for foreign students from a country outside the European Union).

In 2009-2010, the enrolment fee was set at 175.22 euros for short-type higher education (227.50 euros for the last year), 350.44 euros for long-type higher education (455.00 euros for the last year of the first and second cycles and 70.65 euros for certification for teaching at the upper secondary level and for the CAPAES). For students receiving grants, the amounts are 35.33 and 52.28 euros respectively depending on whether they are enrolled in short-type or long-type education. Additional fees may be charged, but not to students receiving grants, and in the other cases a maximum level is set (from 159.39 to 417.42 euros depending on the student's situation and the type of studies). Save in the case of a few sections with specific needs (imaging techniques, for example), the total amount charged to the student (including the enrolment fee, additional fees and the costs of goods and services provided to the student) may not exceed a ceiling that depends on the student's situation (from 113.04 to 837.94 euros).

B. Financial support for students

The families of all students who are pursuing their studies successfully are entitled to material and financial support from the authorities if the parents cannot ensure that their child will be able to stay in school due to insufficient income.

Subject to certain educational and financial conditions, higher education students may receive *student grants* from the Ministry of the French Community. Those eligible for such grants are: Belgian students and nationals of the European Union, students who are political refugees who have resided in Belgium for at least one year, and students from Turkey and developing countries who, on 1 October, have resided for at least five years in Belgium and completed at least five years of schooling in the country. In 2007-2008, according to ETNIC, 38 830 applications for student grants for higher education were submitted, among which 30 151 were accepted. The average grant is 910.14 euros.

Student loans are financial aid granted under certain conditions (educational and financial, but also age, family composition and nationality) to pupils and students from families with at least three dependent children. The loan is always paid back with interest. The amount of the loan varies in terms of the level of studies, the needs of the borrowers and their repayment capacities, on the basis of ten

six-monthly payments of the capital and interest. In 2007-2008, according to ETNIC, 64 higher education loan applications were submitted, of which 56 were accepted, for a total amount of 68 910 euros.

This aid is supplemented with *other advantages* such as low-priced meals, aid for students in financial difficulty from the social services attached to higher education institutions, cut-rate subscriptions to public transport services and the like.

C. Aid for parents

Advantages are granted to families by the federal authorities. They receive free healthcare insurance and family allowances for every child – up to age 25 – still in education. The parents also receive a tax reduction for every dependent child still in education, with no age limit.

6.3 Organisation of the academic year

The academic year comprises at least 30 weeks of courses. It begins on 15 September and ends on 14 September the following year. Students are given three holiday periods: two weeks in winter (Christmas), two weeks in spring and at least one month in summer (from 1 July, 5 July or the end of the period of classes determined by the authorities, until the start of the following academic year), on top of which come public holidays. Educational activities and assessment, with the exception of employment integration activities, are not organised on Sundays, public holidays or 27 September. The higher education academic authorities or organising authorities may decide to suspend classes on other days for activities specific to their institution.

Each institution organises its own schedule. Apart from preparation of a doctoral thesis, a year of study corresponds to 60 credits (a credit corresponds to 24 hours of educational activities) which may be earned in one academic year. For purposes of organising curricula, the academic year is divided into three four-month terms. The academic authorities determine the beginning and ending dates of each term on an annual basis.

Educational activities for courses leading to a first or second cycle academic degree are organised during the first two terms of the academic year, with the exception of certain exams or employment integration activities. The first two terms comprise at least 12 weeks of activities and may not exceed four months. An assessment period is organised at the end of each of these terms. The third term comprises assessment periods as well as employment integration activities or individual work. The academic authorities may, for duly justified reasons of force majeure, prolong a student's assessment period to the following term or even beyond the end of the academic year, but no later than the following 14 November. Educational activities that are part of third cycle studies and other programmes may be organised over the three terms of an academic year.

6.4 Assessment, progression and certification

A. Student assessment

Assessment of coursework may consist in an oral or written examination or any other work carried out by the student for this purpose. Oral exams are public (with the exception of exams requiring the presence of patients). The public may not interact with the professor or examinee in any way during the exam, or disturb the proper conduct of the exam. Corrected tests and written work may be consulted by the student within 60 days of publication of the results. In colleges of higher education, the marks assigned during the year are taken into consideration in the final marks. During a single academic year, a student may sit twice for exams or assessments for the same course (or even more in certain exceptional cases).

For first-year students, assessments at the end of the first term lead to exemptions: they may count towards all or part of the exam but do not count in case of failure.

The doctoral degree is awarded after the student defends a thesis demonstrating his or her creativity and ability to carry out scientific research and disseminate its results. The doctoral assessment consists in: 1) the writing of an original thesis in the discipline either as a personal thesis or as an essay by the candidate showing the usefulness of a coherent set of publications and achievements of which the candidate is author or co-author; 2) the public presentation of this work to highlight its qualities, originality and the candidate's capacity to make the scientific content accessible to the layman.

B. Prior and experiential learning

The paragraph on admission procedures and conditions (see section 6.1) describes the terms whereby a student's prior experience is taken into account. This experience plays an important role in the case of an application for enrolment in an art college.

C. Progression from one year to the next

Every year of studies ends with exams (see section 6.4 A) which must be passed before progressing to the next year.

At the end of the academic year, the student may be:

- admitted to the following year;
- deferred and required to sit for a second exam for the courses in which he or she failed to meet the required level;
- failed and obliged to repeat the year.

D. Earning the final qualification

The last year's exams include the preparation and presentation of a final project.

6.5 Guidance and counselling

A. Before entering higher education

Among the many services offered by the Centres for Psychological, Medical and Social Services (CPMS) to pupils in basic and secondary education is that of providing information on education, training and career possibilities, in addition to guidance in planning their educational or occupational future.

Some higher education institutions organise 'open days' that allow future students to learn about the different curricula. During certain holidays in secondary education, classes continue in universities and interested pupils are invited to attend them as a way of becoming more familiar with university education.

Higher education institutions usually provide orientation and information for students on everything related to a choice of studies, pre-requisites, reorientation, gateways, curricula and course descriptions, employment possibilities, additional and third cycle training, etc.

B. During higher education

In universities and colleges of higher education, various measures must be implemented to ensure as a matter of priority the success of so-called 'first-generation' students: availability of self-assessment tools; mandatory organisation before 1 December of each academic year of small group sessions to monitor the student's progress and orientation; assignment of staff to provide information, orientation

and support for students with a view to enabling them to complete their education successfully (success support service). Specific financing must be earmarked for these measures.

The yearly activity report must detail the implementation of these measures for first-generation students, as well as the initiatives taken to encourage the success of other students, in particular 'measures in the area of counselling, information, assessment, orientation, remediation and re-orientation'.

Higher education students therefore benefit from specific initiatives in terms of counselling and guidance provided by the institution they attend. Information and orientation services that are independent from the higher education institutions, which obtain official support, also have the objective of helping students to choose a profession or field of training, to reorient their choice of studies, to cope with certain psychological or relational difficulties that disrupt the educational process or to develop a better educational strategy adapted to their personal objectives and personality (for example, the SIEP – Service for Information on Education and Professions).

6.6 Academic staff

In *non-university higher education*, teaching staff represents the leading category of personnel (78 % of full-time equivalents), followed by administrative staff (11 %), supervisory personnel, trades and service staff (6 %), auxiliary educational staff (3 %) and executive staff (2 %) (Source: Board of Chief Education Officers of French-speaking Universities of Belgium, Year 2009-2010).

In *universities*, there is a distinction between statutory staff (i.e. paid out of the operating allocation, the social budget or the non-allocated endowment) and non-statutory staff (personnel paid under research contracts and recipients of major research grants). The latter represent nearly one fifth of the total. Statutory staff includes teaching staff (25 % full-time equivalents), research staff (26 %) and administrative, technical and management staff (49 %). Each of these categories is made up of several sub-categories (teaching staff includes professors, ordinary professors, extraordinary professors, visiting professors, full-time lecturers, etc.).

Higher education teaching staff are trained to a large extent at the university (second cycle diploma).

Teaching staff at *colleges of higher education* must earn the certificate of teaching aptitude for higher education (*certificat d'aptitude pédagogique approprié à l'enseignement supérieur*, CAPAES): this requires sitting for an exam administered by a committee appointed by the minister with responsibility for tertiary education and submitting a professional and educational file based on the specific competencies that must be acquired by teaching staff in higher education and taught by universities and social advancement educational institutes. Teaching staff in colleges of higher education must earn the CAPAES during the early years of their career to satisfy the conditions of hiring or formal appointment as an associate instructor of practical training (*maître de formation pratique*), associate instructor (*maître assistant*) or lecturer (*chargé de cours*).

Qualifications for teaching in *artistic higher education* differ for general courses (university qualification or university level of equivalent), artistic courses (diploma conferred by an art college or equivalent) or technical courses (higher education qualification or equivalent). In addition, on the basis of the opinion issued by a committee, the government may accept professional, scientific or artistic achievement related to the position and the courses to be taught as being equivalent to the required qualification.

In *universities*, the positions of professor and lecturer are reserved to holders of doctoral degrees; positions of head of practical education or associate instructor are reserved to holders of master's or bachelor's degrees, but also to doctors of medicine or veterinary medicine, pharmacists, engineers, architects, etc.; the position of associate instructor of practical training is reserved to persons with at least two years of relevant experience and who hold a first-cycle tertiary education qualification

(various higher vocational diplomas, certain qualifications for teachers of lower secondary classes, etc.). An equivalent foreign qualification or professional or scientific achievement related to the position may replace one of the required qualifications. In addition, in case of a confirmed shortage of candidates with the required credentials, an individual derogation may be granted by the government.

6.7 Statistics

Statistics on tertiary education (2008-2009)

| 2008-2009 | Full-time education | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------|--------------|
| | Students | Institutions |
| Colleges of higher education | 74 684 | 25 |
| Art colleges | 7 273 | 17 |
| Higher institutes of architecture | 2 932 | 4 |
| Universities | 73 249 | 9 |
| Total | 158 138 | 55 |

Sources: Enterprise for New Information and Communication Technologies (ETNIC) – Statistics Service – French Community of Belgium and Board of Chief Education Officers of French-speaking Universities of Belgium

7. CONTINUING EDUCATION AND TRAINING ⁸

Continuing training and education initiatives for young school leavers and adults come within the competence of different authorities:

- distance education, social advancement education, part-time artistic education and continuing education are the remit of the French Community;
- continuing training for self-employed activity and vocational training for employees and job-seekers (pre-qualification, qualification, skills improvement and occupational reorientation) are the competence of the regions ⁽⁹⁾.

The focus of the policy of French-speaking Belgium on lifelong learning is presented in the declarations made by the different governments concerned at the time they take up their duties. The declarations of July 2009 prolong and expand upon the previous declarations and strengthen synergy between levels of competence. Accordingly, the governments of the Walloon Region and the French Community adopted in December 2009 a 'green' Marshall Plan 2 (*Plan Marshall 2.vert*) that emphasizes the enhancement of human capital through the mobilisation of training, education and employment actors and launches 'employment-environment alliances' which include the upgrading of training in 'green occupations'.

Among the focuses of this strategy are its emphasis on young people and workers recently made redundant ('acting quickly'); the development of training opportunities in consultation with local actors ('training clusters'), in particular alternance training; prolongation of the drive to improve foreign language skills; improvement of orientation; and further development of systems allowing the recognition of competencies.

7.1 Policy and legislative framework

A. Legislation

At *federal level*, the recovery law of 22 January 1985 put in place the paid education leave scheme. The aim of this mechanism is the social advancement of full-time private-sector workers. It enables them to be absent from work to secure training while continuing to receive their normal pay. The vocational training courses taken must be related to the worker's occupational activity or career prospects. A limited number of hours of leave is authorised. The royal decree of 20 July 1998 lays down the special rules and implementing terms for paid education leave for employees of small and medium-sized enterprises or SMEs (namely, enterprises whose staff does not exceed an annual average of 50 persons). The employee receives an allowance, paid by the employer, for training completed with the employer's agreement and outside of normal working hours, for a maximum of 100 hours of training.

A federal government measure gives unemployed persons who do not hold a certificate of upper secondary education the possibility to resume full-time education that will prepare them for an occupation in which there is a shortage of qualified applicants, while continuing to receive unemployment benefit and being dispensed from registration as a jobseeker.

Among the recent measures to stimulate the economy in the wake of the financial and economic crisis, the federal government decided to provide financial support for traineeships by reducing social security contributions for workers who serve as tutors and provide coaching for trainees in initial or

⁽⁸⁾ Section 7 was drawn up in collaboration with Christine Mainguet, scientific officer at the Walloon Institute for Assessment, Forward Studies and Statistics (IWEPS).

⁽⁹⁾ On the territory of the French-language region only. The German-speaking Community has responsibility for these matters in the German-speaking municipalities.

continuing training, and by increasing the financial bonuses paid to young people and employers. A refocusing of efforts on high-risk groups was also financed.

Other schemes are the responsibility of the *Walloon Region* or the *Brussels-Capital Region*.

In each region, a specific body is in charge of implementing training policies: the Walloon Office for Vocational Training and Employment (*Office wallon de la formation professionnelle et de l'emploi*, known as FOREM), and in particular its FOREM *Formation* (Forem Training) branch, created by a decree approved by the Walloon Regional Council on 16 December 1988, and the Brussels Institute for Vocational Training (*Institut bruxellois francophone pour la formation professionnelle*, IBFFP), more commonly referred to as *Bruxelles-Formation*, set up by the decree of the French Community Commission on 17 March 1994. On 1 April 2004, a Walloon decree laid down a legal framework for the 'integration pathway' (decree on the integrated scheme for socio-professional integration or DIISP). The integration pathway organises among different operators actions in the area of pre-qualification, qualification and integration, which are integrated, coordinated and focused on beneficiaries to help those furthest from employment gain access to quality, permanent employment. The decree modified the terms for approval and subsidisation of all associative structures involved in socio-professional integration and aims in particular to strengthen gateways between operators. The development of gateways is also one of the challenges of the policies applied by Brussels.

In Walloon, another decree adopted in April 2004 laid down the terms of intervention by the public authorities to fund financial incentives for training that targets companies (training cheques and adaptation allocations).

The Institute for Continuing Training for self-employed persons and small and medium-sized enterprises (*Institut francophone de formation permanente pour les classes moyennes et les petites et moyennes entreprises*, IFPME), a not-for-profit association, previously provided training for adults and adolescents who wished to learn or advance in an occupation that they wished to practice as self-employed persons or as qualified employees in a small or medium-sized enterprise (SME). In 2003, the IFPME was split into two separate entities, one on the territory of the Brussels-Capital Region (the SFPME – *Service formation PME de la Commission communautaire française* – SME Training Service of the French Community Commission, whose name was later changed to EFPME – *Espace Formation PME* – SME Training Area), and the other on the territory of the Walloon Region (the IFAPME – *Institut wallon de formation en alternance et des indépendants et petites et moyennes entreprises* – Walloon Institute for Alternance Training and training of self-employed persons and small and medium-sized enterprises).

The *French Community* has competence for several other categories of training.

Social advancement education is for adults and forms part of a process of lifelong learning. Article 7 of the French Community's decree of 16 April 1991 organising social advancement education sets out the main purposes of this type of education. A decree dated 14 November 2008 details the integration of social advancement education in the European area and another dated 30 April 2009 is meant to increase the offering of training in literacy by social advancement institutions for the under-educated public.

Distance learning is organised by the decree of 18 December 1984 and part-time artistic secondary education (ESAHR) by the decree of 2 June 1998.

The decree on support for action by associations in the framework of continuing education (17 July 2003) lays down the conditions for recognition and subsidisation of organisations active in continuing education for adults.

B. The rights and responsibilities of adults

The integrated scheme for socio-professional integration (see above) aims to ensure access to quality permanent employment within two years at most (including a maximum of six months of support in employment). On the basis of a personal and occupational assessment and an evaluation of the individual's needs, the FOREM's advisers identify with the individual the stages of the process of securing employment and draw up individual training or employment proposals. The voluntary signature of a credit-integration contract admits the applicant to the scheme.

The Activation Plan (*Plan d'accompagnement, PAC*), a system of monitoring and coaching for the jobless, is aimed at providing support and activating the search for a job more quickly after registering as a jobseeker. Under this scheme, job-seekers are convened systematically by both the monitoring services (ONEM) and the coaching services (FOREM or ACTIRIS) and sign personalised integration contracts that can include training periods. The payment of unemployment benefit can be interrupted or even discontinued if the jobseeker fails to appear for an appointment with a potential employer or the regional employment or vocational training service.

In part-time artistic education, if a pupil's unjustified absence rate after 31 January is greater than 20 %, he or she is not admitted to end-of-year assessments (exams, board of examiners, etc.).

Negotiations are currently under way to define a single statute for alternance trainees.

C. Validation of prior and experiential learning

Since 2003, the Walloon Region, the Brussels-Capital Region and the French Community have worked together to develop opportunities for the validation of prior and experiential learning. A consortium made up of representatives of *FOREM Formation, Bruxelles-Formation*, the IFAPME, the EFPME and social advancement education is responsible for conferring qualifications. The two sides of industry (management and labour) participate in the development and implementation of the scheme. The objective is to enable those over age 18 to gain recognition for the competencies acquired through work experience, vocational training and life experience. In 2009, validation was available in 42 different occupations and in a large number of validation centres.

7.2 Distribution of responsibilities

The political authorities aim to promote greater synergy, better public regulation of the sector and the development of steering structures.

A. The competent authorities

The *federal state* is the initiator of various measures taken to improve the quality of the workforce, some of which facilitate access to training. These include in particular paid educational leave. The federal state is also competent for matters related to labour law and social security: for example, one scheme entitles employers to pay lower social security contributions if they hire young job-seekers who combine work and vocational training.

Distance education, social advancement education and part-time artistic education are the remit of the *French Community*. The government of the French Community is responsible for the general policy of *continuing education* for adults: under certain conditions, it grants allocations to continuing education bodies and subsidies for permanent staff positions. The French Community also has competence to *legislate* in the following areas: conditions for access to learning, conditions for organisation of courses, ongoing assessment and exams, the minimum requirements for learning programmes, the issuing and approval of achievement certificates. Certification that results in legal implications (relating to access to a regulated occupation or a subsidised job, authorisation of an equivalence with other diplomas, as a factor of consideration for the setting of a public sector salary scale or receipt of an

interim allowance or unemployment benefit) is restricted to those bodies that respect the accreditation procedures stipulated by the Ministry.

Competence in the area of training is in the hands of the *Regions*: the development of vocational training must enable every learner, in particular the least favoured, to secure access to employment and enable workers to adapt or improve their vocational qualifications. Accordingly, the regions implement *training support* measures (for example, the training-cheques system introduced in 1998 by the Walloon Region) and they contribute to *alternance training* and to different training/integration initiatives for the *poorly qualified*. The Walloon Region also has competence for vocational training for *agricultural workers*. Various initiatives aim to facilitate access to *information and communication technologies* (for example, the Walloon Region's Mobilisation Plan for Information and Communication Technologies) or *languages* (for example, the cheques granted in Brussels for language or ICT training when an employee is hired).

In the Brussels-Capital Region, the administration of the French Community Commission is responsible for approving and financing socio-professional integration operators and local missions, the partners to *Bruxelles Formation* in the socio-professional integration scheme.

Vocational training for adults in the Walloon Region is provided by FOREM Formation in partnership with private operators. The FOREM Management Committee and the Walloon government sign a contract that lays down priorities and guidelines. This contract covers a four-year period and allows the negotiation of very concrete objectives. The IFAPME is also financed by the Walloon Region. Vocational training for (French-speaking) adults is the responsibility in Brussels of the French Community Commission (CoCof).

B. Transversal policies

Working groups and joint meetings of the governments of the French Community, Brussels-Capital Region and CoCof are organised in the areas of employment, training and education. Structures are gradually being put in place to deliver this synergy. The competencies centres (see section 7.3) and the future CTAs (see section 4.3) are accessible both to pupils in education leading to qualifications and to adults in training.

The Community Professions and Qualifications Commission (*Commission communautaire des professions et des qualifications*, CCPQ) is made up of actors in education leading to qualifications, social advancement education and vocational training. It aims to strengthen ties between the business world and training and education structures. The socio-economic actors are represented in the structure to report on developments and expectations in matters of competencies and qualifications. The CCPQ establishes occupational reference systems that are then translated into education or training curricula.

A cooperation agreement between the Walloon Region, the CoCof and the French Community created a permanent steering structure for adult literacy, whose main task is to investigate possibilities for ensuring better coordination in the sector.

In the French Community of Belgium, the Agency for Lifelong Learning (*Agence francophone pour l'éducation et la formation tout au long de la vie*, AEF-Europe) was set up by a decree adopted by the Government of the French Community on 19 July 2007 via a process of cooperation involving the French Community, the Walloon Region and the Brussels-Capital Region. This agency is charged with promoting, implementing and managing the different programmes in keeping with European objectives. It is home to the Europass Centre for French-speaking Belgium.

C. The social partners

Within the framework of the multi-industry agreements negotiated at federal level, the social partners agreed to earmark 1.9 % of the total wage and salary bill to training and to ensure that, between 2003 and 2010, 50 % of workers have access to continuing training. A monitoring and penalty system has been put in place.

The FOREM and *Bruxelles-Formation* are managed jointly by representatives of workers and employers. In addition, the FOREM works in close cooperation with the 11 sub-regional employment and training committees which are also constituted jointly and deal with initiatives, ambitions and local specific characteristics tied to development of the employment market. In each sub-region, this committee is charged with issuing opinions, recommendations or proposals on all matters related to employment and training, particularly regarding support for and assessment of the integrated scheme for socio-professional integration. Employment-education-training advisory committees analyse training needs, draw up a directory of the education and training opportunities on offer and serve as employment observatories. The Economic and Social Council of the Walloon Region (CESRW) regularly issues opinions to the government, on its own initiative or on request, particularly on training policies.

In Brussels, the Advisory Commission on Training, Employment and Education plays a similar role.

The social partners are also involved in the management of sectoral training funds.

7.3 Financing

Enterprises contribute to the financing of training through a mandatory contribution calculated in per cent of the wage and salary bill and paid to a sectoral fund.

The main sources of financing for the actions and services offered by the FOREM are subsidies included in the budget of the Walloon Region, European Social Fund (ESF) interventions, various revenues (particularly the sale of goods or services resulting from the FOREM's activity), the share of promoters in the framework of the Unemployment Reduction Programme, interventions from the Federal Public Service for Employment, Labour and Social Dialogue in the framework of cooperation agreements or conventions (the Activation Plan, National Employment Fund, etc.) and revenues related to international relations (particularly in the framework of different European programmes).

The Walloon Government also finances operators involved in socio-professional integration that provide pre-qualification training (90 OISP and 70 EFT – see section 7.4). Additional financing for training actions as part of implementation of the priority actions for the future of Walloon (2006-2009) (Marshall Plan) basically financed the training schemes of the competitiveness clusters, training to prepare for occupations for which there is a shortage of candidates, the Language Plan, access for pupils and teachers to the competencies centres, alternance training provided by the IFAPME and the creation of advanced technology centres. Apart from revenues from the federal state in the framework of cooperation agreements and the ESF, *Bruxelles Formation* receives subsidies within the limits of the allocations earmarked for this purpose in the budget of the French Community Commission and can receive bequests and donations and any other income. *Bruxelles Formation* grants an additional subsidy to bodies that have concluded partnership agreements with it. Trainees who have signed a training contract with the FOREM or *Bruxelles Formation* receive a training allowance and their transport costs are covered. Forty-one socio-professional integration operators and nine local missions are currently approved and financed by the French Community Commission. These bodies also receive support from ACTIRIS (Brussels regional employment office) for the guidance and job-search aspects, and co-financing from the ESF.

The IFAPME is subsidised by the Walloon Region. At European level, it receives subsidies mainly from the ESF and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). These cover the institute's operating costs, training activities and the centres' building costs.

The Ministry of the French Community supports continuing training for adults through the structural subsidisation of not-for-profit associations (ASBL) or de facto associations, as well as centres for expression and creativity. Distance education is financed by the French Community. The order of the Executive of the French Community of 28 September 1992 established the payment of a single enrolment fee of 37.50 euros. Certain persons – particularly the jobless and prisoners – may be exempted from payment of this fee. The French Community has financed social advancement education since 1989. Operating costs are covered by subsidies and allocations out of the French Community's budget and by limited enrolment fees charged to pupils (although certain categories can be dispensed, particularly the unemployed and prisoners).

For the 2007-2013 programming period, ESF interventions support training actions and the development of information, orientation and competence validation systems that meet specific criteria.

7.4 Programmes and providers

A. Public bodies charged with vocational training for job-seekers and workers

The public service responsible for training is FOREM Formation (one of the components of the FOREM) in the French-speaking Walloon Region and *Bruxelles Formation* in the Brussels-Capital Region (for French speakers).

a) FOREM Formation

The FOREM comprises three directorates, including FOREM Formation, which provides training for individuals that leads to qualifications. It provides such training related to all sectors of industry and services and at all levels of qualification. The training basically targets job-seekers. The FOREM also intervenes in hundreds of enterprises, offering training adapted to their needs (individual on-the-job training). The training programmes are designed in the form of flexible modules that enable participants to put together their own training itinerary. The training is based on practice, taught by experienced instructors, reflects the situation of the job market, and is personalised. The priority aim of FOREM training is to make the individual more employable.

There are no strict conditions regarding diploma requirements for admission to a training programme. Persons with professional experience or sufficient knowledge – determined by selection assessments – may also be admitted.

Once the vocational training has been completed, the FOREM awards certificates to trainees specifying the training or module(s) completed. This certificate is not recognised in the educational system, nor does it give access to a given programme of studies or social advancement education. However, it is sought after by companies that hire new staff based on this qualification.

FOREM Formation and *Bruxelles Formation* are also developing a distance-based, modular and free training scheme.

An integrated competencies management system has been developed from occupational-employment reference systems. This tool is used both for self-positioning and screening of the competencies of job-seekers before a contract is concluded, and in training reference systems.

Specific measures exist for workers who lose their jobs because of collective redundancies. Their needs are addressed by skills improvement units, which offer training and other measures.

b) Bruxelles Formation

In the Brussels-Capital Region, *Bruxelles Formation* organises nearly 200 types of training leading to qualification for French speakers in six areas of activity: technical and industrial occupations; office and services techniques; advanced computer studies and management; orientation and support; on-the-job training; self-training and distance training.

The target public is not limited to job-seekers, but also includes workers and enterprises. *Bruxelles Formation* is also charged with training disabled persons for the Brussels Region. The conditions for admission to training courses are variable. In some cases, previous knowledge is necessary. Tests are also given.

Some training schemes can be provided in cooperation with occupational sectors. *Bruxelles Formation* collaborates with social advancement education. It also works in partnership with other operators, particularly as regards implementation and educational follow-up of training courses organised in the framework of the regional socio-professional integration scheme (nine local missions and 34 partner associations).

Tailor-made manual, technical and industrial vocational training is offered on an inter- or intra-enterprise basis according to the company's needs. Trainees are included in existing training schemes at a *Bruxelles Formation* centre, or a trainer is assigned to the company, or specific training sections or modules may be put in place in the company or at a *Bruxelles Formation* centre.

The methods are basically practical, based on the realities of work in companies (workshops, simulation, case studies, etc.).

A certificate of successful completion of the training course is issued to the trainee after each is completed.

c) The training network for small and medium-sized enterprises

Two public operators offer training adapted to the specific needs of self-employed persons and small and medium-sized enterprises. In the Walloon Region, the training network of the IFAPME, in addition to its task of implementing initial alternance training (apprenticeship, training for company managers, etc. – see section 4 C), organises ongoing training for self-employed persons and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), with support from training centres.

Company management training primarily targets individuals with qualification in a craft, commercial or intellectual profession who wish to improve their competencies while learning to manage a small or medium-sized firm. The practice of the activity may be learned through an internship contract approved by the IFAPME. Upon successful completion of this training of two to three years, a certificate of management is issued along with a diploma in company management approved by the French Community, which satisfies, among other requirements, all those set by the law on access to the chosen profession.

Continuing training is intended for self-employed persons and company managers. Advanced seminars are organised regularly at training centres and allow regular updating of technical and management skills. Retraining courses help meet the needs resulting from the fast-changing technological, economic and management environment in which SMEs must operate. Many training modules are co-financed by the Walloon Region through training cheques.

The EFPME (*Espace Formation PME*) is the training centre for the self-employed and small and medium-sized enterprises in the Brussels Region. Its target public includes those interested in taking up self-employment, and companies of fewer than 250 employees as well as their employees. Like the IFAPME, the EFPME organises alternance training, training in company management and continuing

training which enables the self-employed, SME heads and their staff to acquire additional professional skills and to adapt to new technologies and economic, legal and social developments.

B. Private bodies financed by the regional public authorities

a) Socio-professional integration bodies

In the Walloon Region, socio-professional integration bodies can be approved and subsidised either as on-the-job training enterprises (*entreprise de formation par le travail*, EFT), or as socio-professional integration bodies (*organisme d'insertion socioprofessionnelle*, OISP). The EFTs and OISPs are training centres that have the status of not-for-profit associations or those that depend directly on public social assistance centres. In the EFTs, training is built around work experience and a production, either within the EFT or in a company. These operators are in charge of pre-qualification training.

In the Brussels-Capital Region, beneficiaries of the socio-professional integration scheme frequent on-the-job training workshops (*ateliers de formation par le travail*, AFT): these AFTs are approved bodies whose activities are subsidised for the implementation, within the framework of socio-professional integration actions, of vocational training operations leading to qualification, alternance work/training vocational training leading to qualification, pre-qualifying basic training, literacy or on-the-job training. The AFTs also have the aim of providing basic education and training in view of ongoing education. They target persons at least 18 years of age who do not hold certificates of upper secondary education and who have either been unemployed for a long period or are beneficiaries of the social/occupational integration minimum income. The AFTs issue participation certificates.

b) Competence centres

The competence centres are training, monitoring and awareness centres that cater to adult workers as well as young people in initial training and their teachers. These 25 operators are specialised in advanced training, particularly technological. They result from partnerships that involve the Walloon Region, the FOREM, the IFAPME, the social partners in the occupational sectors, research centres and universities. The centres receive support from the European Structural Funds and form part of the general framework of the process of the Walloon Region's successive skills improvement plans, particularly the development of competitiveness clusters.

In the Brussels Region, reference centres have been established based on equivalent principles. There are currently five such centres.

c) Local missions and neighbourhood development associations

The Walloon Region also finances neighbourhood development associations and local missions. The neighbourhood development associations are not-for-profit associations active in urban renewal neighbourhoods and/or those with subsidised housing. They aim to give fresh impetus to the neighbourhood (improvement of the living environment, activities, conviviality and exercise of citizenship) while providing support in the form of pre-training for the socio-professional integration of job-seekers or beneficiaries of social assistance. The local missions are developed in the framework of the DIISP. Their main task is to implement integration and support actions.

C. Schemes that contribute to public financing of training opportunities

The Adaptation Allocation scheme allows companies to be reimbursed for in-house training costs, particularly those related to worker adaptation or investments. The Training Cheques scheme targets SMEs. These cheques, bought by companies for half their face value, can be used to secure services from approved training operators. The language cheques and eco-climate cheques, financed by the Marshall Plan, form part of this scheme.

Public employment and training operators manage numerous calls for projects that finance training schemes. Formal agreements are concluded with a number of occupational sectors (construction, electricity, automotive centres, etc.). In Walloon, these projects are mainly managed by the FOREM.

Around 100 operators are recognised in Walloon as providers of training modules that form part of the Information and Communication Technologies Scheme (*Plan mobilisateur sur les technologies de l'information et de la communication, PMTIC*).

In the Walloon Region, the integration training plan enables enterprises to provide training to a jobseeker for a period of four to 26 weeks for tasks that require specific learning. This period is immediately followed by an employment contract for a term at least equivalent to the length of training. The trainee remains enrolled as a jobseeker throughout the performance of the training-integration contract and continues to receive any benefit to which he/she is entitled, such as unemployment benefit, bridging benefit or social integration income. The employer pays an encouragement allowance that is exempted from the payment of social security contributions.

A similar scheme, Individual On-the-job Vocational Training (*Formation professionnelle individuelle en entreprise, FPI*) exists for French-speaking job-seekers in the Brussels Region when no other candidates are available for the job offer submitted to ACTIRIS and when there is no training scheme available in an approved centre, or if the waiting time is excessively long.

D. Training under the responsibility of the French Community

a) Social advancement education

Social advancement education is provided mainly in the evening and on weekends, but also in late afternoon or even throughout the day. Generally taught in schools, under certain conditions this type of education can also be provided at workplaces or in another place where the learners can meet.

Social advancement education is organised at both secondary and tertiary (short-type or long-type) level. Along with qualifications specific to social advancement education, other qualifications are also conferred that correspond to those in full-time education, although they do not always have the same effects in law. The certificate of teaching accreditation (CAP) can be issued by social advancement tertiary education.

Social advancement education provides training that generally corresponds to occupational profiles. Every training course is made up of one or more units that are capitalised with a view to earning a qualification. A certificate of completion is awarded upon successful completion of the training units.

The target public includes:

- workers or job-seekers who already hold a vocational qualification but wish to improve their skills, specialise in a given area, refresh their skills or be trained in new skills;
- persons with or without vocational qualifications who wish to acquire knowledge and know-how for the purpose of personal fulfilment;
- persons wishing to acquire the pre-requisites for a given training course;
- unemployed persons who wish at least to maintain their vocational qualification and individual competencies.

In each establishment, an education board takes decisions on the admission of students, their educational follow-up and the qualifications awarded. It can take into consideration the capacities acquired in other education or in other means of training, including work experience.

b) Continuing education

The Ministry of the French Community supports continuing education for adults by granting structural subsidies to not-for-profit or de facto associations, along with centres for expression and creativity.

These associations are recognised pursuant to different systems. The decree of 17 July 2003 organised support for associations whose aim is to encourage and develop, primarily among adults, awareness and critical knowledge of the realities of society, skills in analysis, choice, action and evaluation, as well as attitudes of responsibility and active participation in social, economic, cultural and political life.

To earn recognition by the French Community, associations must register in at least one of the four areas laid down by the decree: citizenship participation, education and training; training of organisers, trainers and associative actors; production of services or analyses and studies; awareness-raising and information. In June 2010, some 300 associations were recognised by the French Community as continuing education associations. A wide range of themes are addressed: literacy (34 associations), gender equality (48), environment (42), cultural activities (73), town planning (17), etc. (see the following site: <http://www.educationpermanente.cfwb.be>). For example, the not-for-profit association based on the 'open university' concept, *Association Francophone des Universités Tous Âges de Belgique*, is a general continuing education organisation recognised by the Ministry of the French Community.

c) Distance education

Distance education (*enseignement à distance, EAD*) is adapted to the learner's level and prepares him or her for the exams of the French Community's boards of examiners for the award of a CES2D or CESS. The passing of these exams entitles the learner to resume oral education. The EAD also prepares learners for competitions and exams for the recruitment and promotion of staff of different levels in the civil service.

At present, EAD offers some 170 different courses to more than 10,000 new learners every year (including learners with Belgian nationality who live outside the territory of the French Community, prisoners and hospitalised persons, etc.).

The teaching is deferred but individualised: each lesson includes, in addition to numerous examples with solutions, a written exercise that must be sent in to the service, accompanied as need be with questions and requests for additional explanations. These are returned to the learner, with corrections and comments, along with a standard correct version.

d) Part-time artistic education

The three main objectives of part-time artistic education are to:

- Contribute to the learner's artistic fulfilment by promoting an artistic culture through the teaching of various artistic media and practices.
- Give learners the means and training enabling them to achieve artistic autonomy that allows expression of personal creative capacity.
- Offer education that prepares learners to satisfy the requirement for admission to artistic tertiary education.

Part-time artistic education is subdivided into four groups of disciplines related to the plastic arts, music and vocal arts, dance, broadcasting arts and techniques. The courses are provided in academies. For the teaching of music, vocal arts and dance, courses are taught at lower secondary and upper secondary levels. The teaching is subdivided into 'lower' and 'middle' levels for lower secondary and 'higher' and 'excellence' levels for upper secondary.

One of the characteristics of the education provided by academies is that it accepts pupils of all ages: children from age five, adolescents and adults. Its courses and workshops are consequently taught mainly outside of normal working hours in order to make them accessible to the largest number of pupils and students in full-time education and to adults who work.

E. Other types of training

Other types of training available to adults include training provided to the staff of ministries, teachers and persons employed by the local authorities, specific training for persons with disabilities, training provided in companies organised either out of own funds or under sectoral initiatives, and training offered by profit-making private sector operators that do not receive financial support from the public authorities. Among such operators, private employment agencies are increasingly engaging in training activities.

7.5 Quality assurance

For training under the responsibility of the French Community, a specific inspectorate is charged with different assessment tasks (see section 1.4). In addition, committees such as the Higher Council of the EAD are responsible for giving the government of the French Community, either on its own initiative or at the latter's request, advice on all matters related to the education for which they are responsible.

In social advancement education, the quality management guide (*Guide pour la gestion de la qualité*) drawn up by the Higher Council for social advancement education must encourage the inclusion of a quality component in all institutions. This guide is designed to serve as a support for initiating dialogue between the different stakeholders on assessment and ongoing improvement of the education and training actions provided by the institutions as well as their organisational aspects. It aims to develop a quality process that includes reflection on the institution's strengths, weaknesses, risks and opportunities, in coherence with the objectives of each. The assessment of continuing education associations is based, depending on their type of recognition, on a general report on the implementation of their programme-contract and which includes quantitative and qualitative criteria required by the government. It may also be based on an annual activity and accounting report.

Regulatory provisions establish quality checks at different levels of the bodies in charge of training. The FOREM's different tasks are exercised in accordance with a management contract, performance of which is subject to annual assessment reports drawn up by the management committee and by the government's superintendents. The FOREM can conclude partnership agreements under certain conditions, one of which is an assessment clause: "the agreement must provide that renewal shall only be possible upon an assessment of the actions carried out and the criteria on the basis of which the assessment shall be performed". Likewise, the advisory committee for the integration system is tasked with drawing up proposals for the organisation of coordination of the integration system, including the criteria for assessment of missions by category of operators.

The operators that form part of the Walloon system of training cheques are approved for a period of three years. The decree on incentives for training is assessed annually by the Economic and Social Council of the Walloon Region.

The increase in the rate of drop-outs is one of the factors of concern to training operators and the public authorities. In a difficult budgetary context, the quality dimension is also characterised by the introduction of new operating rules aimed at improving transparency, the development of cross-overs and partnerships between operators.

Operators are also obliged to improve equal treatment with respect to employment and vocational training. In the Brussels Region, emphasis is placed essentially on combating discrimination on the grounds of gender or ethnic origin.

Certain pilot experiences are aimed at objectivising the competencies acquired in training. Sectoral and vocational certifications can be acquired upon the completion of training leading to qualifications.

7.6 Guidance and counselling

Apart from private bodies financed by the public authorities, such as the service that provides information on education and professions (*Service d'information sur les études et les professions*, SIEP) and helps provide a personalised review, several other bodies provide support and coaching for the choice of training with a view to improving the individual's occupational situation.

In the Walloon Region, the employment-training hub known as the *Carrefour Emploi Formation* has the aim of helping all visitors obtain an appropriate response to their questions on orientation, training and employment or self-employment.

The Brussels-Capital Region implements mechanisms that are similar to those in the Walloon Region (*Bruxelles Formation Carrefour*, socio-professional integration) and also operates a specific database created by *Bruxelles Formation* that covers all training opportunities for adults in the Brussels Region (DORIFOR) and specific guidance operators that offer individualised coaching and support to job-seekers who are experiencing a particular problem (former inmates, for instance) by offering them follow-up on vocational training.

7.7 Teachers and trainers

The trainers employed by the FOREM and *Bruxelles Formation* are selected from among teachers and practitioners of the given occupation. The situation is similar in most of the many bodies (public social assistance centre, not-for-profit associations, etc.) that provide training.

Teachers who work with distance education (correctors or course developers) are responsible for writing lessons, supervising learners and correcting their work. They are teachers in the discipline that they teach. For the teaching of administrative matters, the teachers are top-level civil servants. They work under the responsibility of a team of specialised inspectors assisted by around 15 task officers.

In social advancement education, alongside teachers recruited on the basis of a teaching degree, certain courses are entrusted to experts from the private sector. This contribution allows learners to benefit from the teacher's mastery of a trade or profession and ensures a constant adaptation of social advancement education to evolving knowledge and techniques.

In part-time artistic education, functions are defined for every speciality in every field. For plastic, visual and spatial arts, for example, the function of 'fired-works teacher' is defined for five specialities (pottery, ceramics, sculptural ceramics, metalwork and glasswork). The required qualifications and those deemed to be sufficient can be diplomas, certificates or years of practical experience made up of time spent either in a public or private service or institution, or in a trade or occupation other than teaching.

7.8 Statistics

Statistics on training under the responsibility of the French Community (education)¹⁰

| 2008-2009 | Students | Institutions |
|--|----------|--------------|
| Social advancement education | 169 853 | 163 |
| Part-time artistic education (plastic arts) | 12 432 | 21 |
| Part-time artistic education (music) | 83 832 | 91 |
| Distance education, training potentially under way | 70 233 | - |

Source: Enterprise for New Information and Communication Technologies – Statistics Service – French Community of Belgium

Statistics on training under the responsibility of the Regions

| 2009– Walloon Region | Hours of training |
|--|----------------------|
| FOREM-formation (43,950 trainees) | 8 333 017 |
| OISP and EFT (integration) (2008) (16,346 beneficiaries) | 5 200 000 |
| Training cheques (8,367 user enterprises) | 626 697 cheques used |
| Adaptation allocations (296 user enterprises) | |
| 2008 – Brussels-Capital Region | Hours of training |
| <i>Bruxelles Formation</i> | 3 611 012 |
| Socio-professional integration | 1 474 482 |
| Language cheques | 18 098 |

Sources: FOREM Formation State of Play 2007-2009; EFT/OISP Sector; Presentation by the Forem at the CCFFEE/IWEPS seminar on 16 June 2010 for data on the system of financial incentives. Bruxelles Formation – Annual Report 2008.

¹⁰ The number of part-time artistic education institutions concerns the year 2006-2007 and the figures on distance education concern the number of "training courses potentially under way", since a single individual can be enrolled in more than one course while others have ceased their participation.

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