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Vocational Guidance Education in Full-Time Compulsory Education in Europe

European Commission

VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE EDUCATION IN FULL-TIME COMPULSORY EDUCATION

BELGIUM (FLEMISH COMMUNITY)

School year 2007/08

Full-time education is compulsory for pupils between the ages of 6 and 15-16. It covers primary education lasting six years *(lager onderwijs)* as well as the first three years of secondary education *(secundair onderwijs).* Secondary education is divided into three two-grade stages. The first stage is general (with a differentiating first stage A and first stage B). The following two stages represent general, technical, vocational or artistic education according to the pupil's choice. Guidance regarding the different pathways is provided in particular at the moment of transition to secondary education, at the moment of transition to the second stage of secondary education (pupils aged 14) and at the end of the third stage of secondary education.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND NATIONAL OBJECTIVES

Educational and vocational guidance is integrated and defined in the legislation of the Flemish Community in a very general manner. It is included in policies in the area of education, training and employment, and is the object of different measures according to the target public.

The Flemish Government, social partners and Education are joining forces for a holistic approach to talent development in Flanders. Bringing theory and practice closer together is a definite policy priority, and is included in the '**Competence Agenda 2010'**, an initiative launched by the Flemish Minister of Work, Education and Training. This Competence Agenda consists of 10 priorities which have to explore, develop, recognise and put into action the capacities of students as well as employees and the unemployed, and this beyond the boundaries of education, employers and employees organisations.

Pupils' choice of study very much determines their professional choice and as a result also their chances on the labour market. Therefore several lines of action were elaborated supporting pupils and their parents to make a motivated study and professional choice. What is new and reinforcing is the fact that these actions are taken in collaboration with the professional world.

Some actions involving a closer link between education and the labour market are:

- the rethinking of part-time education to establish a full-time activity for all pupils;
- the creation of more opportunities for work experience in the private, public and non-profit sectors by means of agreements with certain professional sectors;
- the publication of a guide entitled 'Qualitative Learning in the Workplace' (2008), which contains practical tips on a general level, applicable to all forms of learning for all possible subjects in all sectors.

The decree on equal access to education (*Gelijke OnderwijsKansen* – GOK) of 20 June 2002 (published in the Belgian Official Gazette 14 September 2002) with several modifications by the decrees of 14 February 2003, 30 April 2004, 7 May 2004 and 15 July 2005 guarantees additional resources for the provision of guidance to specific target groups (such as pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds, those whose mother tongue is not Flemish) during the school years.

The decree governing the functioning of pupil guidance centres (CLB) of 1 December 1998 (published in the Belgian Official Gazette of 10 April 1999) requires these centres to adhere to a quality policy regarding the efficiency of services and the respect for others (protection of privacy, access to information, etc.) as well as rapid intervention and cooperation between the different stakeholders involved.

The policies also attribute a high level of importance to the relationship between education and the labour market. In 2006, the Ministries of Education and Economic Affairs launched an 'Entrepreneurial Education' plan of action whose objective is to give children a business sense and to get them interested in undertaking their own professional activity.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The responsibility for the establishment of initiatives in the area of vocational guidance is shared between different ministries, in particular the Ministries of Education and Training, Work and Economic Affairs (guidance to entrepreneurship). This responsibility also concerns different administrative levels and different partners.

The pupil guidance centres (CLB) constitute the main bodies responsible for guidance provided to pupils in compulsory education. In cooperation with schools, they conclude agreements consisting in the establishment of services and other measures related to educational and vocational guidance for pupils.

The services under the Ministry of Labour are not aimed at young people in compulsory education.

VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE EDUCATION IN THE CURRICULUM

A cross-curricular theme entitled 'learning to learn' is part of the compulsory education curriculum.

In primary education, true guidance education does not exist, and therefore the objectives for 'learning to learn' are limited to different approaches to studying and searching for information. In secondary education, a section with objectives concerning study choices and vocational guidance is included in 'learning to learn'. These objectives have been established within the gradually expanding structure of secondary education in three two-grade stages. The first two-grade stage has a common curriculum, and the next two-grade stage involves a choice between general or vocational education. The last stage comprises two specialised grades.

For each stage, one of the four objectives from the section 'learning to choose' is as follows:

- First stage (4 objectives): pupils can assess their interests and possibilities in order to make a choice of study in the second stage (www.ond.vlaanderen.be/dvo/english/corecurriculum/secondary/1grade/astream/learning.htm)
- Second stage (4 objectives): pupils acquire an overview of study and vocational options (www.ond.vlaanderen.be/dvo/english/corecurriculum/secondary/2grade/cross/learn.htm)
- Third stage (4 objectives): pupils take their interests and possibilities into account when making a study or vocational choice (www.ond.vlaanderen.be/dvo/english/corecurriculum/secondary/3grade/cross/learn.htm).

Schools are free to decide on how this theme will be integrated in the curriculum. In practice, the school advisory service provides support to schools for its cross-curricular integration into their curricula. The pupil guidance centre (CLB) may also provide support to schools. This cross-curricular approach to guidance is brought about and controlled in various ways: the obligation for schools to ensure the coordination between the programmes they offer and guidance is not only included in the legislation pertaining to education, but, furthermore, this coordination is one of the quality criteria taken into account by the school inspectorate in the evaluation of schools. This approach now takes on such importance in the definition of guidance that schools see to its adoption and it is sometimes the object of development projects and research on school curricula (test beds, *proeftuinen* – www.ond.vlaanderen.be/proeftuinen).

Traineeships within the framework of the curriculum

As regards traineeships in compulsory education in Flanders, much information is available as part of an OECD exercise designed to examine vocational education and training (VET) policy. (For further information, see OECD, 2007, 'Vocational education and training – policy and innovation: proposal for work', EDU/EDPC/CERI (2007))

When defining a VET programme, the vocational and technical content must represent at least 25 %. There are as many as 8 different programmes which meet this requirement.

1. Regular secondary education – 2nd stage and 1st and 2nd grade of the 3rd stage of BSO (vocational secondary education)

Pupils may begin this full-time programme when they are 14-15 years old for a theoretical duration of four years. The successful completion of the programme leads to a certificate *(studiegetuigschrift)*. The Flemish government does not determine the proportion of practical training versus general academic VET. The government sets developmental and final objectives to be reached by the students. Apart from practical training in schools, traineeships and other forms of practical training are included in most of the curricula. Depending on the curriculum, it is organised on a block release or alternating basis.

2. Experimental vocationally-oriented secondary education for the 2nd and 3rd stage of BSO in a modular system

Pupils may begin this full-time programme when they are 14-15 years old. A modular system divides the programme into learning modules/units, each associated with a certain amount of

learning, leading to a qualification (credits, part of a qualification). Modular courses allow people to choose between different course options, and can provide some freedom in the sequencing and speed at which the modules required for a qualification can be completed. Within the framework defined for each qualification, pupils can compose their own profiles rather than complete a fully prescribed set of courses according to a prescribed schedule (OECD, 2000). The Flemish government does not determine the proportion of practical training versus general academic VET. The government sets final objectives for the general theoretical part, to be reached by the students. Apart from practical training in schools, traineeships and other forms of practical training are included in most of the curricula. Depending on the curriculum, it is organised on a block release or alternating basis.

3. Part-time vocational secondary education (DBSO) for 15 to 18 year-olds

Part-time secondary education is provided during 40 weeks a year and comprises 15 weekly teaching periods of 50 minutes each. (In practice, often 1 day of 7 teaching periods is dedicated to general education and 1 day of 8 teaching periods to vocational training.)

It comprises a number of sections (such as ‘construction’, ‘caring’, ‘clothing and ‘ready-to-wear’) which have further been subdivided into courses of study.

The centres set their own training programmes (no curricula). Training consists of general education, social and personal development, which are intrinsically linked to the youngster's social and professional context + vocationally-oriented training + (in principle) employment.

The ‘on-the-job-learning’ component can be met in various ways:

- **employment** within a company;
- a **bridging project** (which was introduced in 1990 for young people who have not yet attained the required level of labour maturity; it gives them the opportunity to gain experience within a local administration or non-profit organisation for a period of 40 weeks and they receive a minimum monthly apprenticeship allowance of 230 euro);
- a **preparatory pathway** (established in 1997) which puts the emphasis on intake, diagnosis and orientation. To that effect centres may establish a **reception group** for young people who do not yet have any clear career perspectives and who can still opt for another training programme, or for young people who do not have the required level of work attitudes and skills or who are not yet motivated;
- a **personal-development pathway** (as from 2007/08) for youngsters who came to the attention of the social services already and have had a turbulent school career.

Employment opportunities

Youngsters can start work:

- under a **part-time employment contract** which entitles them to a minimum income;
- with an **industrial apprenticeship contract** under which the employer undertakes to train young people on the shop floor. It is organised by the joint apprenticeship committees who draw up apprenticeship rules, propose a sample apprenticeship

contract and organise the final examinations for these young people. The company's training manager draws up an apprenticeship programme. The young is entitled to an apprenticeship allowance;

- under a **starting-job agreement** (if they start work before 1 January of the year in which they turn 19 years of age);
- as a **family-business assistant** (where they must be related to the manager);
- under a training contract with VDAB for **individual vocational training** (i*ndividuele beroepsopleiding* – **IBO**) in which VDAB contracts its training assignment out to a company where the job-seeker will be taught his chosen vocation on the shop floor;
- under a **temping contract** with a temping agency;
- under a **vocational-immersion agreement** (*beroepsinlevingsovereenkomst* – **BIO**) with Flemish, provincial and local authorities.

In the 2003/04 school year, 5 693 pupils (aged 15-18) were enrolled in DBSO. DBSO was attended by 649 pupils aged 18-25. Six pupils are enrolled in part-time fishery education.

4. Apprenticeship training courses organised by Syntra Flanders (Flemish Agency for Entrepreneurial Training)

Over 200 vocations can be learned through apprenticeship contracts. The pupil follows practical training in a company during four days a week and supplementary courses the other day of the week.

These 'apprenticeships' are open to young people from the age of 15 who attended the first two grades of secondary education or from the age of 16. When they turn 18 they can enter into an apprenticeship agreement. Essentially, apprenticeship training takes 3 years. Depending on age and prior education a shorter training period may be possible.

The programme leads to a certificate *(getuigschrift leertijd)*.

5. Regular Secondary Education – 2nd stage and the 1st and 2nd grade of the 3rd stage of TSO (technical secondary education)

Pupils may begin this full-time programme when they are 13-14 years old for a theoretical duration of four years. The successful completion of the programme leads to a qualification *(diploma van het secundair onderwijs)*. The Flemish government does not determine the proportion of practical training versus general academic VET. The government sets goals (qualifications) to be reached by the students. Apart from practical training in schools, traineeships and other forms of practical training are included in most of the curricula. Depending on the curriculum, it is organised on a block release or alternating basis.

6. Regular secondary education – 3rd grade of the 3rd stage of KSO (artistic secondary education) and BSO

Pupils may begin this full-time programme when they are 17-18 years old for a theoretical duration of one year. The successful completion of the programme leads to a qualification *(studiegetuigschrift van het 3de leerjaar van de derde graad)*. The Flemish government does

not determine the proportion of practical training versus general academic VET. The government sets goals (qualifications) to be reached by the students. Apart from practical training in schools, traineeships and other forms of practical training are included in most of the curricula. Depending on the curriculum, it is organised on a block release or alternating basis.

7. Modular secondary education – 4th stage of BSO

Pupils may begin this full-time programme when they are 17-18 years old. A modular programme is separated into learning modules/units, each associated with a certain amount of learning, leading to a qualification (credits, part of a qualification). Modular courses allow people to choose between different course options, and can provide some freedom in the sequencing and speed at which the modules required for a qualification can be completed. Within the framework defined for each qualification, pupils can compose their own profiles rather than complete a fully prescribed set of courses according to a prescribed schedule (OECD, 2000). The Flemish government does not determine the proportion of practical training versus general academic VET. The government sets goals (qualifications) to be reached by the students. Apart from practical training in schools, traineeships and other forms of practical training are included in most of the curricula. Depending on the curriculum, it is organised on a block release or alternating basis.

8. Regular secondary education – 3rd grade of the 3rd stage of BSO

Pupils may begin this full-time programme when they are 17-18 years old for a theoretical duration of one year. The successful completion of the programme leads to a qualification *(diploma secundair onderwijs)*. For the third stage the Flemish government does determine the proportion of practical training (14 hours) versus general theoretical VET (12 hours). The government sets final objectives for the general theoretical part, to be reached by the students. Apart from practical training in schools, traineeships and other forms of practical training are included in most of the curricula. Depending on the curriculum, it is organised on a block release or alternating basis.

Apart from vocational training in compulsory education, there is a growing number of projects concerning the organisation of training in the working environment. This may involve ‘explorative traineeships’ and ‘pioneer companies’, or cooperation between schools and companies when writing a report or a thesis. However, these activities are not a compulsory part of the curriculum.

OTHER TYPES OF ACTIVITY/GUIDANCE SERVICES

Contacts with the professional world

The ‘Entrepreneurial Education’ plan of action established in 2006 (by COMPETENTO, the knowledge centre of the Flemish Agency for Entrepreneurial Training, *Vlaams Agentschap Ondernemingsvorming* – SYNTRA Flanders) has the objective to give children (centred on primary and secondary level) a business sense and to get them interested in undertaking their own professional activity (business). For this purpose, different projects (such as the creation of joint ventures between schools and companies, the establishment of a special course on companies, and a sharing of experience between schools and companies) are

supported by the government or other bodies (such as, for example, the King Baudouin Foundation).

Guidance services at school

In order to provide guidance to pupils, each school concludes a contract with a pupil guidance centre (CLB – see below).

On request of a school, a CLB will provide a supervision service. This supervision service (i.e. a guidance service which is not offered at school, but is a cooperation between schools and CLBs) is only offered when a pupil or parent has taken an initiative in this respect. If a school asks the CLB to supervise a pupil, the centre will always ask explicitly for the parents' consent first (for a pupil under the age of 14), or the consent of the pupil him/herself (from the age of 14).

The supervision provided by the CLB has a multi-disciplinary character and focuses particularly on pupils with learning difficulties due to their social background and situation. This service could also be considered as a guidance service outside school.

Guidance services outside school

Each pupil guidance centre (CLB) provides information, guidance and counselling services to pupils, parents, teachers and school management teams. They can provide support to schools, for example in the cross-curricular integration of themes related to educational guidance in their curricula. They may provide guidance to pupils with learning difficulties or behavioural problems, in the choice of future studies, etc.

CLB guidance is based on four important pillars:

- learning and studying;
- the school career;
- preventive healthcare;
- social and emotional development.

Priority must be given, among others, to guidance provided to pupils during the key moments in their education (such as the transition between the first and second stages of secondary education), to special education (the development of operational plans, the reduction in the number of young people at risk, etc.) and to the appropriateness and quality of transfers of pupils between mainstream and special schooling.

Counsellors and other staff (social workers, psychologists, teachers, etc.) form specialised teams in the different multidisciplinary areas. They provide their services free of charge to pupils, parents and schools, and may also submit proposals to schools in the area of guidance.

QUALIFICATIONS OF GUIDANCE STAFF

Due to the fact that the CLBs have a multi-disciplinary character, every discipline has its point of view in the guidance of pupils. This means that not only psychological or social themes, but also medical aspects, can be part of guidance.

Recently, the CLBs in cooperation with VDAB, launched a project on vocational and educational guidance and the provision of more information about labour market professions, in order to improve their skills and experience in that area. They have made an inventory of materials, visions and concepts in the sector, in schools and the Flemish Employment Services and Vocational Training Agency (VDAB). They also spread good practices and are looking for partners in order to share their experience. They intend to develop guidelines for teachers on how to integrate educational/vocational choice activities in their lessons. They want to facilitate and reinforce the common responsibility between schools, CLBs and VDAB.

COOPERATION BETWEEN SCHOOLS, EMPLOYERS, PARENTS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

The Flemish minister for employment and education launched a decree regarding a new qualification structure in the Flemish Community. Recently (July 2008), this decree was approved by the Flemish government. It now links both training and professions with qualification levels. The aim is to have a common language which brings together all stakeholders regarding education and work, in order to facilitate cooperation between schools, employers, students, parents and other stakeholders.

A new decree concerning higher professional education has also been approved by the Flemish government (see http://www.vandenbroucke.com). In terms of educational policy in Flanders, it will be an important bridge between secondary and higher education. It focuses on students who want to acquire a professional qualification after secondary education. This short training includes existing training which is now clearly aimed at the labour market: higher education for social promotion (HOSP), the seventh grade of technical secondary education and the fourth grade of vocational secondary education (until now very unclear on the educational landscape). This new decree was necessary to enhance and facilitate better cooperation between all the concerned stakeholders of (initial and continuing) education.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION ON VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE

CLBs have the obligation to provide information related to educational and vocational guidance for pupils. Special rooms equipped with display shelves and pertinent information in printed and digital formats are available in these centres. The CLB website (www.ond.vlaanderen.be/clb) is also accessible to pupils and parents and provides the possibility to consult useful information.

A virtual centre on the knowledge of entrepreneurial skills was set up within the framework of the 'Entrepreneurial Education' plan of action (http://www.competento.be).

The VDAB website (www.vdab.be) provides complete information on careers and possible assistance in the search for employment, IQ tests, etc. It also provides links to other related sites (private bodies, projects, etc.). The same information is also available on CD-ROM.

Internet references

CLB: www.ond.vlaanderen.be/clb

Flemish Agency for Entrepreneurial Training: http://www.competento.be

VDAB website: www.vdab.be

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