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Information provided by:

Unité francophone d'Eurydice
Ministère de la Communauté française
Direction des Relations internationales
Bureau 6A/002
Boulevard Léopold II, 44
B - 1080 Brussels

Member of the CEDEFOP Documentary Network:
Avenue d'Auderghem, 20
B - 1040 Brussels

If you wish to have more detailed information on education systems in Europe, please consult the EURYBASE database (<http://www.eurydice.org>) and the CEDEFOP monographs (<http://www.cedefop.eu.int>)

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INTRODUCTION

Europe is characterised by a very wide variety of education and training systems. In order that this diversity should be fully appreciated, EURYDICE, the information network on education in Europe, the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP) and the European Training Foundation (ETF) regularly update a set of national monographs entitled *Structures of Education, Vocational Training and Adult Education Systems in Europe*.

Descriptions relating to individual countries in turn include basic information on the administration and structure of their systems of education and initial vocational training at all levels (from pre-primary to tertiary). Also included are descriptions of initial vocational education and training in alternance and adult education and training within provision for lifelong learning. The initial and in-service training of teachers and their status are also considered.

The information is set out in accordance with a common structure to facilitate inter-country comparisons while ensuring that special features peculiar to each system are duly emphasised.

The description for each country is preceded by a diagram of its education system. Here again, the way the diagrams are presented has, as far as possible, been standardised so that common – and differing – features of the various systems can be more easily identified and compared.

The first chapter within each country section is devoted to a short presentation of the country concerned, together with the basic principles governing its education and training, the division of responsibilities and then more specific information (relating to administration, inspection, financing, private schooling and advisory bodies). The major reforms of education systems are also considered.

The other chapters deal in turn with pre-primary education, compulsory and post-compulsory education (general, technical and vocational provision entirely within schools). The way these chapters are structured depends on each national context. Where pre-primary education is not in reality separate from primary education, or where compulsory education spans different levels, no artificial division has been created. In the case of all countries, a brief description of the aims and structure of the level of education concerned is followed by further headings devoted to the curriculum, assessment, teachers and statistics.

Initial vocational education and training in alternance is the subject of a chapter in its own right. It includes all education and training for young people that is not essentially school-based, and thus covers for example apprenticeships based on the 'dual system' pattern, sandwich course training and any other initiatives and experiments with major elements of 'on-the-job' experience.

This is followed by a chapter on tertiary education, in which a summary description is supplemented by sections on admission, tuition fees, the academic year, courses, qualifications and assessment. The chapter includes any initiatives implemented as part of the Bologna process.

The last chapter deals with continuing education and training for adults (whether in or outside the labour market, employed or unemployed). It provides information on the political, legislative and financial framework of this kind of education, on the authorities concerned and their responsibilities, as well as on the general organisation of training for adults (types of institution, access requirements, programme objectives, the curriculum and quality assurance). There is also a brief description of guidance/counselling services, as well as of questions relating to assessment and accreditation including the recognition of non-formal kinds of learning.

The situation regarding teachers is dealt with in a specific section for each level of education discussed. Also provided are national statistics on the number of pupils, students, teachers and educational institutions and, where figures are available, on pupil or student/teacher ratios, attendance and attainment rates or, yet again, on the choice of branches of study or areas of specialisation.

The National Units in the EURYDICE Network have drafted the descriptions for their countries, each using the same proposed outline of content as a common framework. The information on initial vocational education and training in alternance, and on adult education has been prepared in close collaboration with members of the CEDEFOP REFER Network (in the case of the European Union and EFTA/EEA countries) and the National Observatories of the European Training Foundation (ETF) in the case of the 12 candidate countries. We are extremely grateful to them and to all those who were involved in this project in the EURYDICE European Unit in Brussels, CEDEFOP in Thessaloniki, and the ETF in Turin for their invaluable contribution to this fundamental source of information which is vital to a better understanding of education and training systems in Europe.

Given the number of countries now covered ⁽¹⁾ and the amount of data available, the description of each system of education and training may be consulted solely electronically on the website of the EURYDICE Network (<http://www.eurydice.org>), which brings it to the attention of the largest possible number of people and enables it to be updated on a more regular basis.

Patricia Wastiau-Schlüter
Head of the EURYDICE
European Unit

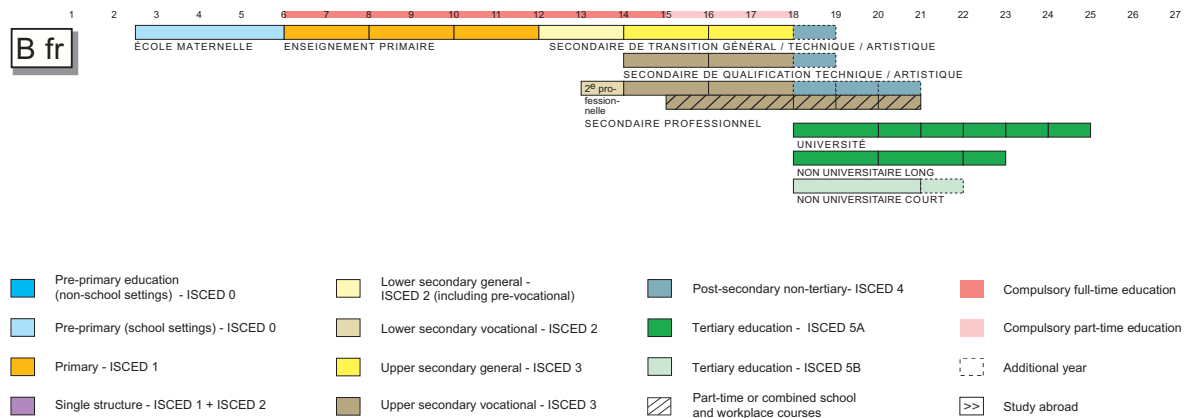
Johan van Rens
Director of CEDEFOP

Peter de Roij
Director of the ETF

June 2003

⁽¹⁾ The 30 European countries taking part in the EU Education Programme, Socrates.

Organisation of the education system in the French Community of Belgium, 2003/04



Source: Eurydice.

1. RESPONSIBILITIES AND ADMINISTRATION

1.1 Distribution of responsibilities for the organisation and administration of the education and training system

Following recent State reforms, education and higher education policy now comes under the remit of the Parliament of the French Community and its Government within which three ministers hold responsibility in the following key areas: basic education (pre-primary and primary); secondary education and special education; higher education; social advancement courses; and scientific research.

In the French Community, with the exception of private schools, the education system comprises three major categories of education institution:

- (official) public education institutions organised, managed and wholly financed by the French Community;
- (official) public education institutions subsidised by the French Community but managed by the provincial or municipal authorities;
- “free” denominational or non-denominational education institutions subsidised by the French Community.

Each category forms an “educational network” comprising one or more “organising bodies”, each managing one or more schools.

The organising body for institutions operated by the French Community is the Government of the French Community. It ensures the management and administration of institutions (at all levels) and the careers of the staff within its educational network. The organising bodies for subsidised official education are the provinces or municipalities, and those responsible for “free” subsidised education are the natural persons or legal entities concerned.

The network of subsidised public education institutions has developed two coordination structures for its schools: the *Conseil de l'enseignement des communes et des provinces* (CECP) and the *Conseil des pouvoirs organisateurs de l'enseignement officiel neutre subventionné* (CPEONS). “Free” education institutions are grouped together under the *Secrétariat général de l'enseignement catholique*

(SEGEC) and the *Fédération des écoles libres subventionnées indépendantes* (FELSI).

Assessment is one of several areas in which the pedagogical freedom of each organising body is guaranteed. Within the framework of the relevant statutory and regulatory provisions, each organising body is free to decide the type of assessment it wishes to implement and the assessment tools and methods of communicating results it wishes to use.

To ensure better dialogue between full-time secondary education institutions, ten geographical zones have been defined, each comprising two councils, one dealing with non-denominational and the other with denominational education. These councils ensure the use of common “teacher-periods” (*périodes-professeurs*) in institutions in the same zone and the standardisation of the education provision. Proposals are submitted to a consultation committee (*comité de concertation*) for approval and final ratification. Thus, educational options which have not been approved by the consultation committee cannot be implemented.

These consultation committees and the zone councils are made up of representatives of the relevant organising bodies, including the Minister as the organising body for Community education.

At the level of the school itself, the organisation of consultation is left to the discretion of the organising body.

1.2 Inspection/supervision/guidance

The supervision system involves various aspects:

- a piloting commission set up to guarantee the quality and equivalency of compulsory education. If the commission has any reason to believe that an institution is not following its recommendations or is manifestly lax in following them, it sends a report to the Government, which will then implement the necessary measures or penalties;
- a two-fold inspection service:

- The French Community inspection service which verifies the level of instruction in Community education institutions and advises on staff qualifications. It provides pedagogical support by advising teachers and contributes to the preparation of curricula and the development of teaching methods. It is also responsible for inspecting the level of secondary education within the subsidised sector, including supervising the implementation of curricula and the level of instruction and examining subsidy applications from schools and new sections.
- The inspection service for subsidised basic (pre-primary and primary) education which, in addition to a supervisory role (supervising compulsory school attendance, material organisation, etc.), also has a pedagogical responsibility in terms of supervising the quality of education provided;

The organising bodies may employ teaching advisers for their own networks.

- a "homologation commission" (*commission d'homologation*) whose task is to verify whether secondary level studies are completed in accordance with the provisions laid down in the relevant legislative and regulatory provisions. The committee is also responsible for supervising the standards of upper secondary school certificates (*certificats d'enseignement secondaire supérieur* – CESS);
- a monitoring service which ensures that Community subsidies are properly used and accounts properly kept.

The administrative authorities are responsible for supervising the award of other certificates, including vocational qualification certificates, and by the same token validate diplomas awarded in higher education. At university level, supervision is carried out by a ratification committee (*commission d'entérinement*).

Guidance for pupils is the responsibility of:

- the class council, as regards pupil guidance in secondary education. The role of the council is to carry out a regular assessment of each pupil's intellectual, social and behavioural development, to draw the appropriate pedagogical conclusions, to propose any necessary guidance or remedial work, to suggest possible changes in course options and, at the end of the year, to take the necessary decisions with

regard to promotion. The role of the class council is particularly important at the end of the eight first years of compulsory education. At this level, its role is to help pupils plan their individual lives and careers.

In addition, during the first two years of secondary education (1st level), a guidance council made up of the members of the class council concerned and at least one representative from each of the other 1st level class councils (the competent CPMS can in any case take part) meets at least three times in the school year to draw up a report on each pupil giving details concerning his mastery of the core skills, diagnosing his specific difficulties and, where appropriate, suggesting suitable remedial work. The council also regularly informs the pupil and his parents of its recommendations.

Finally, each institution can devote the equivalent of two weeks spread over the two final years of secondary education to activities geared towards helping pupils make mature choices concerning their future profession and therefore concerning their academic path.

- "Psycho-medico-social centres" (*Centres psycho-médico-sociaux* – CPMS) for pre-primary, primary and secondary education, in both mainstream and special education. They operate independently of the schools themselves, but work very closely both with them and with pupils' families. Each centre is staffed by an inter-disciplinary team made up of educational psychologists, social workers, nurses and independent doctors. Centres within the French Community network are also responsible for school medical inspections.

Guidance is provided through a series of educational initiatives designed to help young people plan their lives and careers. The various methods used combine both group activities and individual analyses.

1.3 Financing

The French Community covers the entire cost of the operation of its education institutions and subsidises both official and "free" education within the framework laid down in the relevant legislative and regulatory provisions according to education level, pupil numbers, etc. Throughout the school system, including short higher education courses, these subsidies cover

all or part of:

- staff remuneration, under the same terms and conditions granted to Community teaching staff;
- operating expenses allocated on a lump-sum basis, according to regulatory criteria;
- construction and conversion costs based on the spending limits set out in the budgetary decree.

However, the cost of extra-curricular activities may be covered by parents, associations, etc.

The Minister responsible awards subsidies to education institutions on the basis of their compliance with certain conditions.

Institutions must:

- comply with the relevant legislative and regulatory provisions on the organisation of education studies and the application of linguistic laws;
- adopt a structure approved by the Minister;
- follow a curriculum which complies with the relevant legislative provisions approved by the Minister;
- comply with the provisions of the Decree of 24 July 1997 defining the aims and objectives of basic and secondary education and setting out the structures required to achieve them;
- accept the supervision procedures and inspections organised by the Government of the Community. Such inspections relate in particular to subjects taught, the level of instruction and the application of linguistic laws but not teaching methods;
- be organised by an individual or legal body which assumes complete responsibility for them;
- admit in each class, section, cycle or other sub-division a minimum number of pupils set by order of the Government of the French Community, except where a special dispensation is granted by the Minister on the basis of particular and exceptional circumstances;
- form one teaching unit located in the same complex of buildings which meets certain health and safety standards;
- adopt the general timetable of holidays;
- employ staff who will not jeopardise the safety of their pupils;
- use teaching materials and equipment which meet the necessary teaching standards.

As long as these conditions are met, the organising body is free to recruit staff on condition that they again meet certain criteria. It is also free to select the teaching methods of its choice and to determine the content of its curricular programmes subject to prior ministerial approval.

Funds have also been released in two specific areas: on the one hand, under the terms of positive discrimination legislation which provides, in particular, for the provision of human and financial resources to institutions meeting certain socio-economic criteria and, on the other hand, within the framework of a huge "computers for schools" project for the basic, secondary and social advancement educational systems.

At university level, each institution is awarded an operating allowance based on the number of students. This covers the purchase of equipment and the salaries of teaching staff, administrative personnel, etc.

1.4 Advisory and consultative bodies

Community Ministers hear the views of a large number of councils and committees, of which the most significant have been set up under the terms of various statutory and regulatory provisions. These include the *Conseil de l'éducation et de la formation* (Education and Training Council), which is responsible, among other things, for framing proposals and issuing recommendations in the fields of education and training, and the supervision commission, which is responsible for reporting to the Government and the Parliament of the French Community, upon request or at its own initiative, on its education system, the problems it is facing or is likely to face and any deviations from plans and forecasts. There is also a *Conseil des parents de la Communauté française* (French Community Parents' Council). In addition, each level of education has its own bodies for consultation and cooperation: e.g. the *Conseil général de l'enseignement fondamental*, the *Conseil général de concertation pour l'enseignement secondaire*, the *Conseil interuniversitaire de la Communauté française*, the *Conseil général des Hautes Écoles*, the *Conseil pédagogique de l'enseignement de la Communauté française*, the *Conseil supérieur de l'enseignement de promotion sociale*, the *Conseil supérieur de l'enseignement supérieur artistique*, the *Conseil de perfectionnement de l'enseignement secondaire artistique à horaire réduit* and the *Conseil supérieur de l'enseignement spécial*.

Since the passing of the “Missions Decree”, each institution has its own consultative council (*Conseil de participation*) which is responsible for:

- debating the institution plan on the basis of proposals submitted by the delegates of the organising body;
- amending and finalising this institution plan;
- submitting the plan for the approval of the relevant minister or organising body depending on the educational network;
- periodically assessing its implementation;
- proposing modifications;
- submitting a view on the activities report drawn up annually for each institution by the organising body.

The consultative council includes members of the management team, a representative of the workers and administration staff, parents, trade unions, pupils and the organising body.

2. PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION

In the French Community, pre-primary education is an integral part of the basic education continuum. This continuum, encompassing pre-primary education and the first eight years of compulsory education, is designed to equip all pupils with the basic skills needed for social inclusion and academic success.

In addition to preparing pupils for primary school, the specific objectives of pre-primary education are to:

- develop the child's awareness of its own potential and promote self-expression through creative activity;
- develop social skills;
- develop cognitive, social, emotional and psychomotor learning;
- identify any difficulties or disabilities which children may have and provide the necessary remedial measures.

Optional, free and co-educational, pre-primary education is aimed at children aged between two and a half and six or, exceptionally, seven years of age. Attendance rates in 2001/02 were 98% for three-year-olds, 100% for four-year-olds and 98% for children of five and over.

In most cases, pre-primary schools are attached to a primary school. All three educational networks have pre-primary schools.

There are special education pre-primary schools for children with mental and/or physical disabilities.

2.1 Organisation

In most cases, depending on the size of the school, pre-primary education is organised in age-based groups or "classes". However, in certain rural regions where small schools do not have enough children on their rolls to form three groups, there is a trend towards the application of the "family model" which involves grouping children of different ages in one "class".

For the most part, children are taught by pre-primary school teachers.

Teaching is provided five days a week both mornings and afternoons with the exception of Wednesday afternoon. The school year starts on 1 September and finishes on 30 June. In addition to certain traditional public holidays, the school year also includes a week's holiday at All Saints' (November) and at Carnival (February) as well as two weeks' holiday at Christmas and Easter.

2.2 Curriculum/Assessment

At this level of education, classes are organised in a very flexible manner to accommodate the needs of children. There are no "lessons" *per se*, but rather a range of organised activities all intended to ensure the balanced development of the children's psychomotor, linguistic, artistic, logical and social skills.

A wide range of measures relating to school organisation (modification of the teaching calendar, calculation of staffing levels and allocations, teacher and pupil timetables) and to language learning by immersion, in particular, was enshrined in the Decree on Basic Education passed in July 1998.

Each organising body is free to use the teaching methods of its choice whilst at the same time respecting the basic skills.

In order to be admitted to primary education, children must have reached the age of six during the civil year in which they are to start compulsory education, except where special exemption is given (under certain circumstances a child may be permitted to start school at the age of five).

2.3 Teachers

Since 1989, all pre-primary teachers have their own class, but specific provisions and the internal rules of organisation of each institution

are designed to promote teamwork among teachers.

Pre-primary teachers qualify by completing a three-year course of study (theoretical and practical training) in a teaching section of an *haute école* leading to the acquisition of a pre-primary teaching certificate.

Pre-primary teachers are employed by the organising body of their institution. They may work on a full- or part-time basis.

Since 2002 in-service training has been compulsory for teachers (initially six half-days a year).

Voluntary continuing training is not limited to a certain number of half-days, provided it takes place outside teaching time. Otherwise, and if an exemption is not granted, it is limited in basic education to ten half-days.

2.4 Statistics

2001/02	Pupils*	Teachers**	Schools*
Community schools	12,591	3,321	190
Provincial schools	432	77	10
Municipal schools	85,284	17,034	931
"Free" schools	60,389	13,221	721

* Including special education.

** Figures are for pre-primary and primary teachers working full-time in mainstream education for the 2001/02 school year. The figures also include full-time equivalents, i.e. all teachers working full-time plus those working part-time, but expressed in terms of full-time posts.

3. COMPULSORY EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Under the Law of 29 June 1983, compulsory education extends from the age of 6 to 18. Covering primary and secondary education, it is full-time until the age of 15/16 and in principle includes six years of primary schooling. Where a young person has not attended the first two years of secondary schooling by the age of 15, he or she must remain in full-time education until the age of 16. If they have completed (although not necessarily successfully) their second year of full-time secondary schooling, 15-year old pupils are no longer obliged to attend school on a full-time basis. The obligation to attend school on a part-time basis is satisfied if the adolescent continues full-time secondary schooling or if he or she follows a part-time vocational secondary course or a course which is recognised as meeting the requirements of compulsory schooling.

Part-time compulsory education is provided by accredited institutions in the form of either part-time courses or accredited training provision.

Access to compulsory education is free and certain school supplies must be provided by the organising bodies. There are nevertheless costs that must be borne by the parents, such as swimming pool entry charges, the price of the school newspaper, trips, etc. In secondary education, grants can be awarded to low-income families.

Just as at pre-primary level, there are primary and secondary schools catering to the special needs of pupils with mental and/or motor disabilities.

Both the basic and secondary education systems strive to meet the following general aims and objectives simultaneously and without priority (Decree on the Missions of Education of July 1997):

- to promote the self-confidence and personal development of each child;
- to ensure that all pupils acquire the knowledge and skills they need to continue lifelong learning and to play an active role in economic, social and cultural life;
- to prepare all pupils to be responsible citizens capable of contributing to the development of a democratic, supportive and pluralist society which is open to other cultures;

- to ensure all pupils equal opportunities of social freedom.

In order to achieve these general objectives, the knowledge and expertise required – whether developed by the pupils themselves or instilled by their teachers – are viewed within a context of skills acquisition. A document entitled “*Socles de compétences*” (Key stages or core skills) defines the basic skills which must be acquired in each network, school or class. These skills may be acquired during lessons or in the course of other educational activities and, more generally, in the organisation of daily school life.

Each organising body defines its curriculum and devises its teaching plan in accordance with the key stages and final skills adopted by the Parliament of the French Community.

In practice, and in order to ensure that all these new guidelines are successfully integrated into daily school life, a series of educational action plans ⁽²⁾ have been drawn up. They are used as the basis for teaching plans ⁽³⁾ that are in turn developed into concrete action plans at school level ⁽⁴⁾.

⁽²⁾ The **educational plan** defines all the values, societal choices and principles on the basis of which organising bodies or agencies set up to represent or coordinate organising bodies adopt their educational aims.

⁽³⁾ The **pedagogical aim** defines the teaching objectives and methodological choices enabling the organising bodies or agencies set up to represent or coordinate organising bodies to implement their projects. These projects allow each organising body to express and exercise its freedom of education.

⁽⁴⁾ The **school plan** is an internal school policy that defines all the pedagogical choices and practical actions that will be implemented to achieve the educational and pedagogical objectives, taking into account the pupils who attend the school and its environment. The school can, for example, define its organisational arrangements to enable pupils to complete a cycle of two or three years, organise the time devoted to pupil guidance, organise work-based training courses, distribute over time the number of hours to be devoted to each subject and determine how the subjects should be grouped together for interdisciplinary activities.

3A Primary education

Primary schooling is designed for children aged from 6 to 12 years.

Parents are free to select the institution of their choice for both primary and secondary schooling.

In accordance with the "Missions Decree", the specific aims and objectives of primary schooling are to:

- prioritise the teaching of reading through concentration on the understanding of meaning, the production of written work and communication;
- ensure mastery of the basic tools of mathematics for use in problem-solving exercises;
- ensure the child achieves the general aims and objectives of compulsory education through a range of educational activities.

In terms of organisation, primary schooling may be provided in:

- "free" primary schools;
- primary schools attached to secondary schools.

In accordance with the official provisions designed to ensure equality of opportunity between boys and girls, the majority of primary schools are now co-educational. There are, however, still a few single-sex schools within the subsidised denominational sector.

3A.1 Organisation

Primary schooling is structured in three cycles each covering two years. As a general rule, each year forms one class.

Teaching is provided five days a week both mornings and afternoons, with the exception of Wednesday afternoons, 182 days a year and breaks down into 28 to 31 50-minute periods per week. As in pre-primary schooling, the school year starts on 1 September and finishes on 30 June with the same holiday timetable.

Since September 1984, the rules governing staffing levels in primary schools and pre-primary schools depend on what is known as the *capital périodes* (credit periods) system. This system establishes the number of periods

available to each school based on the number of pupils it serves. Each block of 24 periods constitutes one full-time primary teacher's post. This system allows schools to go some way towards adapting its structures to the particular needs of its pupils.

3A.2 Curriculum

For some time, primary education has been undergoing a process of fundamental reform of both its aims and objectives and its teaching methods and curricular content.

In general terms, the reform meets the need to introduce greater flexibility into education, to take into account the particular ways of learning of young children, to adapt education to the new needs of the surrounding world and to respect the individual learning speed and rhythm of the individual child as far as possible.

A whole series of measures relating to school organisation (modification of the teaching calendar, calculation of staffing levels and allocations, teacher and pupil timetables) and to language learning by immersion, in particular, was enshrined in the Decree on Basic Education passed in July 1998. Specific measures have also been implemented:

- generalise the teaching of a modern language in addition to French;
- enable schools to organise certain classes and pedagogical activities in the timetable in sign language;
- support access classes in the language of teaching three times a week for refugee, foreign and adopted children.

Thanks to the freedom of choice of teaching methods, each organising body can submit its own primary school curriculum for the approval of the minister responsible. These curricula must be drawn up in line with the skills bases (the skills which must be acquired by the end of the first cycle of secondary education) which apply to all the networks and which define the necessary assessment standards. The curriculum is submitted to a curriculum commission for approval and then approved by the Government.

In primary education, the compulsory subjects are: physical education (two periods), philosophical courses (two periods) and a foreign language (two or five periods according to the case). The rest of the timetable is set by a decree that specifies that the core skills give priority to the teaching of reading and the

mastery of basic mathematical tools for problem-solving. Other education activities also geared towards the general objectives for this level of education form part of the core curriculum: the structuring of time and space, psychomotor and physical education, introduction to history and geography, artistic education, technological education, basic science, the discovery of the environment, media education, social behaviour and citizenship.

The pupils' weekly timetable must be submitted to the government.

3A.3 Assessment/certification/guidance

In primary education, assessment is one of several areas in which the pedagogical freedom of each organising body is guaranteed. Within the framework of the relevant statutory and regulatory provisions, each organising body is free to decide the type of assessment it wishes to implement and the assessment tools and methods of communicating results it wishes to use. Teachers assess their own pupils on the basis of their aims and objectives and their teaching. A school report sent to parents informs them of the results achieved by their child, the progress they are making at school, their learning behaviour and their personal development. Whether or not a child "passes" a school year is decided by their class teacher, often in consultation with the headmaster or headmistress and possibly other members of the teaching team who are in a position to assess the work produced over the year (observations and marks based on formative assessments) and the results of end-of-year tests (where they exist). Children's powers of analysis and synthesis, their ability for personal thought, their spirit of cooperation, their taste for effort and work well done must also be taken into consideration.

Except for the first two years of primary education (since September 2000), pupils may be required to repeat any year, even within a cycle, but it is rare for pupils to repeat more than one year at primary level. From 2005, the system of repeating will be abandoned between years 3 and 6. In addition, pupils who experience learning difficulties can be offered special, one-to-one support from a special support teacher.

For pupils with difficulties, compulsory primary schooling may cover seven or even eight years of primary schooling in exceptional cases.

Under the terms of the Law of 29 June 1983, a certificate of basic studies (*certificat d'études de*

base – CEB) is awarded to pupils who have successfully completed six years of primary education in an education institution or who have passed the cantonal examination.

In 1995, a decree designed to promote successful schools was adopted. It stipulates, in particular, that between now and the year 2005 all basic (pre-primary and primary) schools must organise themselves in cycles allowing children:

- to attend school continuously and at their own pace from the start of pre-primary school to the end of the sixth year of primary education;
- to acquire during this period all the necessary skills based on key stages and core skills, incorporating the notion of "levels of instruction".

The progressive implementation of the "successful schools" decree will introduce the general practice of formative assessment, leaving summary assessment until the end of each two-year cycle.

3A.4 Teachers

Primary teachers receive three years of initial training in the teacher training department of an institute of higher education (*haute école*).

In most cases, primary school teachers are responsible for their own class in which they carry out all the teaching (general teachers) but teaching may be organised on a subject by subject basis. Certain lessons (languages, physical education, art and craft) must then be taught by subject teachers recruited on the basis of teaching qualifications.

In-service training is organised along similar lines to training for pre-primary education. The implementation of the "successful schools" decree has increased the number of training initiatives that receive specific funding.

3A.5 Statistics

2001/02	Pupils *	Teachers **	Schools *
Community schools	33,744	3,321	207
Provincial schools	1,749	77	13
Municipal schools	152,282	17,034	966
"Free" schools	139,386	13,221	740

* Including special education.

** Figures are for pre-primary and primary teachers working full-time in mainstream education for the 2001/02 school year. The figures also include full-time equivalents, i.e. all teachers working full-time plus those working part-time, but expressed in terms of full-time posts.

3B Secondary education

Secondary education, like primary education forms part of compulsory education. Full-time education may last until the age of 18 or combine full-time education until 15/16 with part-time education from 15/16 to the age of 18.

There are two routes leading to secondary education:

- The first route, taken by around 90% of pupils in 2001/02, allows those who have achieved the basic school certificate (*certificat d'études de base* – CEB) to be admitted automatically to secondary education. Pupils who have completed their sixth year of primary school without obtaining the basic school certificate may also be admitted subject to certain conditions;
- The second route, used by around 10% of pupils in 2001/02, is reserved for those who, having reached the age of 12, do not hold the basic school certificate. They are admitted into the first year reception class of a secondary school (Class B).

The basic school certificate can also be awarded to pupils who, although they have not "passed" primary school, have however successfully completed the first year B reception class of a secondary school. Moreover, a certificate equivalent to the basic school certificate is awarded to pupils who successfully

complete the second year of secondary education and who do not have the basic school certificate.

In the French Community, secondary education is divided into three two-year cycles:

- Cycle 1 – known as the observation cycle (generally for pupils aged 12 to 14);
- Cycle 2 – known as the orientation cycle (generally for pupils aged 14 to 16);
- Cycle 3 – known as the determination cycle (generally for pupils aged 16 to 18).

The introduction of type I⁽⁵⁾ secondary education started in 1969 in public schools, subsequently spreading to all institutions organised by the French Community, to almost all subsidised denominational and non-denominational institutions and to provincial and municipal institutions.

Schools are usually co-educational. Secondary schools do not charge fees.

3B.1 Organisation

Secondary education institutions offer 28 to 32/34 lesson periods, each lasting 50 minutes, per week and in some cases up to 36 periods where practical worked linked to vocational training is involved. The school calendar is the same as in basic education.

Classes are theoretically organised by age group and subject. However, due to pupils repeating a failed year, classes often include pupils of different ages.

Each organising body is free to select the teaching methods of its choice within the limits of the key stages and core skills to be achieved by the end of cycle 1 of secondary education and the final skills required at the end of secondary education.

3B.2 Curriculum

The law of 19 July 1971 divided secondary education into the following four types: general,

⁽⁵⁾ Type I or *renové* education includes lower and upper secondary education, which is subdivided into four forms (general, technical, vocational and artistic) and two main branches, one leading essentially to higher education and one to working life.

technical, vocational and artistic education, and into two main streams:

- the transitional stream (general, technical and artistic education), which aims to prepare pupils for higher education whilst leaving them the option of entering employment;
- the qualification stream (technical, vocational and artistic education), which aims to prepare pupils to enter employment whilst allowing them the option of continuing their studies in higher education.

At the observation cycle, there is a common core for the first two years. This common core, intended in particular to ensure a broad base of training giving pupils the opportunity to acquire all the skills they require at their own rhythm, is organised in the same manner in all institutions in the French Community. This compulsory common curriculum includes the following subjects:

- Common subjects: religion or ethics, French, mathematics, history and geography, a foreign language, science and physical education;
- Compulsory options: technology and art;
- Options: mathematics and other subjects.

In cycle 1 an additional year is organised for pupils who are seriously lagging behind. This takes into account the specific needs of the pupil, in particular his personal learning speed. The additional year cannot under any circumstances be regarded as the equivalent of repeating the previous year.

For pupils who have experienced difficulties in primary school (e.g. having to repeat years, illness, exceptional circumstances), a first B year with a specially adapted curriculum is organised. This special year concerns around 7.5% of pupils in the first year of secondary education. The objective is to restore pupils' self-confidence and, if necessary, to enable them to come to terms with school and to consolidate their basic knowledge. After this first B year, pupils can either enter first A or second year of vocational education, which gives young people basic training in at least two trades.

At the end of this first cycle, the pupil will choose a general, technical, artistic or vocational course.

In cycle 2 of the transitional stream (general education), in addition to the core education, a certain number of compulsory options may be selected from the following: a second modern language, Latin, Greek, economics, social science, technical and technological education, physical education or art.

In cycle 3 of the transitional stream (general education), an education system incorporating integrated themes (sciences, modern languages, physical education, classics, economics, human sciences, art) or combining options was introduced at the start of the 1993/1994 school year.

In cycles 2 and 3 of the qualification stream (technical or vocational education), in addition to general education, groups of options representing 17 to 25 periods a week in cycle 2 and 23 to 25 periods a week in cycle 3 are organised.

The group options organised within the framework of *technique de transition* courses, *technique de qualification* courses and vocational courses cover the following ten areas: agronomy, industry, construction, hotel and catering, clothing, applied arts, fine arts, economics, social services and applied sciences.

3B.3 Assessment/certification/guidance

Teachers generally use formative assessment methods. The results of this continuous (periodic) assessment, in certain cases combined with two sets of exams, are taken into account at the end of the school year by the class council (*conseil de classe*) to decide whether pupils can be admitted to the next class, with or without reservations, or whether they must repeat the year. Where exams are organised, they comprise written, oral or practical tests depending on the subject under examination.

There is no repeating during the first two years, except in exceptional circumstances.

The certificates are awarded by the individual schools.

Since the start of the 1997/1998 school year, a certificate of secondary education – cycle 2 (*certificat d'enseignement secondaire du deuxième degré*) is awarded to pupils who have successfully completed cycles 1 and 2.

In the technical and vocational categories of type I education, a certificate of qualification (*certificat de qualification* – CQ) is awarded at the end of the sixth and seventh years (CQ6 or CQ 7).

A certificate of upper secondary education (*certificat de l'enseignement secondaire supérieur* – CESS) is awarded to all pupils who successfully complete the sixth year of secondary

education in the general and technical categories.

In the vocational category, pupils who opt for a seventh year (type B or C) may apply for a certificate of secondary education.

The certificate of secondary education is ratified by the Homologation Committee (*Commission d'homologation*) which ensures that schools respect the regulations on the organisation of education.

These certificates are not obtained on the basis of examinations separate from the overall assessment procedures as defined within the education institution. They are awarded to pupils who have regularly attended and successfully completed the course they chose to follow.

3B.4 Teachers

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

To be appointed to a permanent post in the secondary education system, candidates must hold one of the following:

- The qualification for lower secondary school teachers (*diplôme d'agrégé de l'enseignement secondaire inférieur – AESI*) which is granted to students having successfully completed the third year of study in a teaching department of a higher education institute (*Haute École*). This qualification enables the teacher to teach in the lower cycle (first three years). The course includes teaching and subject training.
- The qualification for upper secondary school teachers (*diplôme d'agrégé de l'enseignement secondaire supérieur – AEES*) which is awarded after at least four-five years' study (candidature and licence). This qualification entitles the teacher to teach in the last three years of secondary education and in short courses of higher education. The four or five years of scientific training are completed by teacher training and teaching practice.

To be appointed to a permanent post, teachers of technical and practical vocational education in secondary education must possess the qualification for lower technical secondary education (*agrégé de l'enseignement technique moyen inférieur or régent(e) technique*) which is obtained after three years of study in a teaching section of an *haute école* or have a technical diploma (upper secondary, short-type or long-type upper secondary or university-level) and have been awarded the certificate of pedagogical aptitude (*certificat d'aptitude pédagogique – CAP*) which attests that the holder to the requisite teacher training.

In-service training is organised along similar lines to training for pre-primary and primary teachers.

3B.5 Statistics

2001/02	Pupils *	Teachers**	Schools *
Community schools	89,194	10,088	149
Provincial schools	30,738	3,915	54
Municipal schools	26,598	3,242	52
"Free" schools	207,793	21,226	347

* Including special education and block release courses (CEFA).

** Figures are for secondary level teachers working full-time in mainstream education for the 2001/02 school year. The figures also include full-time equivalents, i.e. all teachers working full-time plus those working part-time, but expressed in terms of full-time posts.

4. POST-COMPULSORY SECONDARY EDUCATION

Education is compulsory, at least part-time, up to the age of 18 years. Secondary education is divided into three levels each lasting two years and an additional 4th level lasting two or three years and organised specifically within the framework of the vocational branch of secondary education for studies in the decorative arts or nursing sections.

5. INITIAL VOCATIONAL TRAINING

5A Training in schools

5A.1 Organisation of initial/vocational training institutions

On completion of full-time education (at either 15 or 16), pupils can choose to follow a block release course at secondary level (lower vocational and/or higher vocational and technical) and can enrol in a CEFA (*Centre d'Éducation et de Formation en Alternance* – centre for education and block release training).

The following young people can currently enrol as regular pupils at a CEFA:

- young people of compulsory school age who have not reached 18 years of age as of 31 December of the current school year. They remain regular pupils if they engage in block release training activities within undertakings proposed by the block release education and training centre;
- young people between 18 and 25 years of age provided they have concluded:
 - either an apprenticeship contract for trades exercised by salaried workers;
 - or an employment-training agreement;
 - or any other form of contract or agreement recognised by labour legislation and within the framework of block release training that has been approved by the Government of the French Community.

These centres are attached to an institution providing full-time secondary technical and vocational education. Trainees receive two types of training: practical training within an undertaking and theoretical vocational and general education in the centre (CEFA).

The French Community subsidises the costs of the courses.

The education is provided free of charge, and parents have a free choice of institution for their child.

5A.2 Curriculum

A decree adopted in 2002 draws a distinction between two forms of block release training: training leading to the same certificates and qualifications as full-time qualification education (qualification certificate, upper secondary education certificate, etc.) and training leading to qualifications at a lower level through specific courses. There are mechanisms enabling students to switch from one form to another. Transparency of qualifications (even specific qualifications) is guaranteed by the fact that they are in line with the lists of skills (training profiles) drawn up by the *Commission communautaire des professions et des qualifications* (Community Commission for Professions and Qualifications – CCPQ).

Preparation for exercising an occupation is offered in the following sectors: agronomy, industry, construction, hotel business, food trade, clothing, applied arts, economics, social services and applied sciences.

5A.3 Assessment/certification/guidance

Pupils who have regularly attended and successfully completed their courses in a CEFA (form 1) obtain the same vocational skills certificates and other certificate as those awarded in full-time education, except where these state that they were awarded within secondary education block release courses. An intermediate skills certificate at lower secondary level (block release) is issued to pupils who have regularly attended lower secondary vocational block release courses in the same field of study for at least two academic years. Class councils award these certificates.

5A.4 Trainers/teachers

The administrative and salary status of block release staff in secondary education organised

in centres for block release education and training is governed in accordance with the regulations in force for staff working in full-time secondary education or on social advancement courses, according to the case.

5A.5 Statistics

In 2001/02, 5,969 trainees were enrolled in CEFA's.

5B Alternative or complementary measures

Successive governments have launched many measures to help low-skilled young people and the long-term unemployed. Many of these initiatives involve a training element.

Block release training and self-employed operators and small and medium-sized enterprises (IFAPME)

The IFAPME (*Institut wallon de formation en alternance et des indépendants et petites et moyennes entreprises* – Walloon Institute for block release training and self-employed operators and small and medium-sized enterprises) was set up by the decree of the Walloon Government of 17 July 2003.

The training courses organised by the IFAPME provide for the acquisition of the general and vocational knowledge required to practise a self-employed occupation (i.e. small and medium-sized business or craft enterprises and certain non-manual occupations). The Institute has 11 regional services divided into 3 regional sections. Also, the IFAPME organises and coordinates the activities of the network of the 9 training centres in 16 locations dotted around Wallonia.

Since the Royal Decree of 1984, apprenticeships have been recognised as meeting the needs of compulsory part-time education up to the age of 18, as specified in the Law of 29 June 1983 on compulsory education. They involve block release courses for young people from 15 years upwards and for adults.

Following this basic training, apprentices can enrol in a course of training to become a business manager, which can be a two- or three-year course or even a one-year course.

The Institute organises and promotes continuing training for self-employed operators and for small and medium-sized enterprises with the help of the training centres and in close cooperation with the professional associations. It also organises advanced pedagogical training aimed at improving the value of the pedagogical input of employers who employ apprentices or trainees.

The first-job agreement (CPE)

This new measure took effect on 1 April 2000.

The objective of this measure is to offer young people, at the earliest possible stage, a job and vocational training in conformity with European employment guidelines designed to prevent them from sinking into unemployment and to round off their educational training with vocational skills essential for their lasting integration in the labour market.

Characteristics: The employers targeted are public-sector employers (obliged to employ young people to comprise at least 1.5% of their workforce) and private-sector employers (obliged to employ enough young people to make up 3% of their workforce, in the case of businesses with at least 50 employees). The target groups are: firstly, young people aged from 18 to under 25 who ceased attending courses or participating in employment integration measures within the preceding six-month period; secondly, job seekers aged under 25; thirdly, job seekers aged under 30.

The CPE offers young people:

- 1) an employment contract (at least half-time working) concluded between a young person and a public- or private-sector employer for the first 12 months from the day on which the young person begins performing the contract;
- 2) a part-time employment contract (at least half-time working) concluded between a young person and a public- or private-sector employer for a period of 12 to 24 months from the day on which the young person begins performing the contract provided that the young person also undergoes vocational training during this period;
- 3) a contract of apprenticeship in occupations practised by wage-earners, an apprenticeship contract approved by the IFAPME, an in-house training agreement organised and approved by the IFAPME, a vocational integration agreement, or any other form of apprenticeship or integration determined by the King, during a period of 12 to 24 months from the day on which the

young person begins performing the contract or agreement.

Pathways to integration

These pathways are part of a scheme fulfilling an ESF requirement aimed at a global concept of the processes of hosting, guidance, advice, monitoring, training, job-seeking and employment. The integration pathways are arranged in stages, which are not necessarily successive, since some training strategies combine several approaches. These pathways comprise different components in Wallonia and Brussels.

Characteristics: A number of actors are involved in creating and sustaining these pathways. The charter scheme for integration and employment establishes six levels of regulation, the aims of which are to: (1) report annually on the balance between supply and subregional labour market demands and public needs; (2) assure transparency of supply and disseminate information to local users and actors; (3) monitor individual progress; (4) coordinate actors at subregional level and build bridges; (5) assure external evaluation; and (6) gather feedback from users in a structured way.

The aim of this approach is to offer support to all young people aged under 25 within three months of their leaving school without upper secondary qualifications. They will also benefit from specific measures designed to improve their chances of labour market integration, particularly in the context of a first-job agreement. Specifically, young job seekers in the target group are invited to visit the relevant regional employment service before the end of

the third month of registration as a job seeker. An integration agreement is concluded with the young persons concerned, taking account of what they specifically need in order to obtain a first-job agreement.

Providers of education and training for people with a low-level of qualifications

A distinction must be made between actors in the field of socio-occupational integration in the Brussels Region and those in the Walloon region.

Actors providing education/training intended for poorly qualified people have multiplied in a difficult economic environment in which youth unemployment rates are particularly high. The various bodies have their own specific features. In recent years, increasing efforts have been made to coordinate the various initiatives.

In addition to and supplementing "traditional" institutional training providers, the association sector has developed a number of training centres primarily aiming at socio-occupational integration measures and providing training experience through work. These measures aim to give access to a vocational qualification and gainful employment, covered by social security.

Socio-occupational integration mechanisms are designed for all poorly qualified people (those not holding a *Certificat d'Enseignement Secondaire Supérieur* – CESS [certificate of upper secondary education]) who have no job, are available for work and are actively seeking employment.

6. HIGHER EDUCATION

A distinction is drawn between university and non-university higher education (short-type and long-type). There is no hierarchy among the different forms of education (university and short-type and long-type and non-university higher education). Each of these branches pursue specific aims, so much so that their structures and methods of teaching are different. However, there are mechanisms to switch between the different branches of education.

6A Non-university higher education

Most non-university higher education is provided by *hautes écoles*. These higher education courses can be short-type or long-type. Long-type higher education is university-level.

6A.1 Admission requirements

The first year of higher non-university education is accessible mainly to students who have an upper secondary school leavers' certificate (CESS). Those with a foreign diploma or certificate may also be eligible for this level of education, provided they have obtained equivalency.

6A.2 Fees/financial support for students

Students who enrol in higher non-university education must pay fees (the *minerval*). The minimum payment is set by regulations (there are special fees for certain foreign students).

Subject to certain pedagogical and financial conditions, students can be awarded study grants or loans. The forms of assistance offered also include other benefits, such as low-cost meals, assistance by the social services

connected with *hautes écoles*, season tickets for transport, etc.

6A.3 Academic year

The academic year lasts at least 30 weeks. It starts on 15 September and ends on 14 September of the following year.

6A.4 Courses

Short-type and long-type higher education courses encompass an extremely wide spectrum of options. These courses prepare students for various activities that give access to professions in sectors such as industry, commerce, tourism, agriculture, the paramedical and social professions, teaching, translation and interpreting, applied arts and broadcasting.

This education is provided in the form of:

- short-type higher education courses, which include a three-year cycle (four years for graduate midwives), possibly followed by a year of specialisation;
- long-type higher education courses (university-level); these courses consist of two cycles and last minimum four years and maximum five years, possibly followed by one or two years of specialisation.

The education provided is divided into theoretical courses, practical courses and exercises, seminars and in-house training.

6A.5 Assessment/certification

At the end of each year there are examinations which students must pass to move on to the next year. An end-of-study dissertation must be presented in the final year. The conduct of examinations is governed by a series of

administrative and organisational measures. One of the principles underpinning these examinations is that the academic year must be divided into two sessions (the first ends before 15 July, while the second starts after 15 August of the current academic year).

At the end of the academic year, according to the case students may be:

- admitted, in general automatically, to the next year, provided they have obtained at least 60% of the marks for all the examinations and 50% for each examination (if these percentages are not attained, admission to the next year is at the discretion of the examining board);
- deferred and asked to retake, in a second session, the examinations where they failed to meet the requirements of the board of examiners;
- failed and obliged to repeat the year.

Short-type higher education leads to a variety of diplomas: *gradu * (various subjects), graduate nurse, social worker, librarian-researcher, pre-primary teacher, primary teacher, lower secondary school *agr g * (qualified teacher), etc.

Long-type higher education leads to the following qualifications: diplomas and degrees for industrial engineering, commercial engineering, upper secondary education (qualified teacher), degrees in business studies, translation, interpreting, applied communications, physiotherapy and landscape architecture.

6A.6 Teachers

Many non-university higher education teachers are trained at university or in *hautes  coles* (certificate of proficiency in teaching for higher education).

The workload and conditions of employment of teachers were redefined following the restructuring of non-university higher education in 1995. As a result, the benefits connected with the status of the members of staff of the different networks, which were voted in 1969, 1993 and 1994 and which applied only to staff in short-type higher education, were extended in 1996 and 1997 to all the staff of the *hautes  coles*.

6A.7 Statistics

2001/02	Students	Teachers	Institutions
Community schools	13,690	1,004	6
Provincial schools	16,632	1,166	8
Municipal schools	4,695	321	2
"Free" schools	33,556	2,115	14

6B Higher education in universities

University higher education is provided in institutions which have university status.

University courses are divided into the following sectors: human and social sciences (religion, philosophy, history, languages and letters, arts and archaeology, law, criminology, psychology, education science, economics, politics and social sciences), the science sector (science, applied science, agricultural science and biological engineering) and the health science sector (medicine, dentistry, veterinary medicine, public health, pharmaceutical science, physical education and physiotherapy).

University education aims not only to provide theoretical training in the field of research, design and the application of knowledge, but also increasingly to promote the practical aspects, particularly through links between fundamental and applied research, links with industry, etc.

6B.1 Admission requirements

First-cycle university courses are accessible mainly to students who have been awarded the secondary school leavers' certificate ^( ). Those who have been awarded a foreign diploma or

^( ) At the end of the seventh year of secondary vocational education, pupils who wish to apply for university-level higher education must take a test before the Examining Board of the French Community to obtain the certificate of aptitude for higher education (*dipl me d'aptitude   acc der   l'enseignement sup rieur* – DAES).

certificate may also be eligible for university education, provided they have obtained equivalency.

Those wishing to enter the first cycle of applied science must pass an entrance examination. Those wishing to enter the first cycle of veterinary science must also take an entrance examination for academic years 2003/04, 2004/05 and 2005/06.

The French Community does not apply a *numerus clausus*. However, a quota is applied for medical courses: students must take a selection examination at the end of the second cycle of study. Similar arrangements have been introduced for dentistry.

- The first cycle provides advanced or specialised education and lasts at least one year (but this level can last up to six years in the case of medicine) as well as courses leading to a doctorate or a higher education *agrégation*, which generally involve three to five years of research work.

It is also possible to take additional courses after the first or second cycle of university.

Teaching is provided in the form of theoretical classes, practical exercises, seminars (human sciences) or laboratory work (sciences) and, for medical sciences studies, in-house training periods. Students are not provided with free course materials.

6B.2 Fees/financial support for students

University enrolment fees were laid down in a clause in the Law of 27 July 1971 on the financing and supervision of university institutions.

Subject to fulfilment of certain educational and financial conditions, students can benefit from student grants or loans. This assistance is supplemented by other benefits such as low-price meals, assistance granted by welfare services linked to the universities, season tickets for transport, etc.

6B.3 Academic year

The academic year starts on 1 October and ends on 30 September of the following year.

6B.4 Courses

University studies are divided into three cycles:

- The first cycle lasts two or three years, depending on the subject area. The purpose of this cycle is to provide general training in the chosen subject.
- The second cycle lasts two or three years, again depending on the subject area (and even four years in medicine). This cycle provides more specialised training in the chosen subject.

6B.5 Assessment/certification

Each year of study ends with examinations, which must be passed successfully before moving on to the next year. The examination process is subject to a set of administrative and organisational measures, the main principles of which are the organisation of two examination sessions per academic year.

At the end of the academic year, students are, as applicable:

- admitted to the next year;
- deferred and asked to retake, in the second session, the examinations where they failed to meet the requirements of the board of examiners;
- failed and obliged to repeat the year.

University education leads to first-cycle qualifications of candidate and graduate in supplementary studies (*Diplômé d'études complémentaires*, D.E.C.1); second-cycle qualifications of graduate, doctor of medicine, doctor of veterinary medicine, pharmacist, engineer, master, graduate in supplementary studies (D.E.C.2) and qualified upper secondary teacher (*Agrégé de l'enseignement secondaire supérieur*, A.E.S.S.); third-cycle qualifications of doctor (with thesis), qualified teacher in higher education (*Agrégé de l'enseignement supérieur*, A.E.S.), graduate in in-depth studies (*Diplômé d'études approfondies*, D.E.A.) and graduate in specialised studies (*Diplômé d'études spécialisées*, D.E.S.).

6B.6 Teachers

Members of the academic corps, whose administrative status and income status are governed by a law of 28 April 1953, are appointed by the board of governors of the university. In order to be appointed junior lecturer or associate lecturer, an applicant must be a qualified doctor, pharmacist, engineer or teacher in higher education; applicants must have held one of these degrees for at least eight years in order to become an ordinary professor, extraordinary professor, professor or associate professor.

Assistants, first assistants, *chefs de travaux*, *répétiteurs*, *agrégés de faculté* and *lecteurs* (for foreign languages) are employed to assist lecturers with their courses and/or in the work of students. They are also appointed by the board of governors. Applicants must have a *diplôme de licencié* (assistants) or be a qualified doctor or teacher in higher education. The administrative status of these members of the academic corps is set by the Royal Decree of 31 December 1953. Their income status is governed by the Royal Decree of 21 April 1965.

6B.7 Statistics

2001/02	Students	Teachers*	Institutions
Community universities	16,093	1,194	3
"Free" universities	45,174	2,524	7

* or academic staff.

7. ADULT EDUCATION

7.1 Legislative framework

Federal level

The rectifying law of 22 January 1985 instituted the system of paid educational leave. It is aimed at social advancement for workers employed on a full-time basis in the private sector, and involves the right to time off work with retention of normal earnings. The vocational training courses that workers follow must be linked to their job or occupational prospects.

The Federal Public Service for Employment, Labour and Consultation takes responsibility for reimbursing wages paid and the associated social security contributions by means of a global subsidy.

The number of authorised hours of leave is restricted.

The system of paid educational leave is to be evaluated, particularly as regards its effects on individual skills levels, the system's mode of operation and the global concept of paid educational leave.

On 31 July 1998, the Belgian Official Gazette published the Royal Decree of 20 July 1998 laying down the special rules and modalities applying to paid educational leave for employees of SMEs (with an average annual workforce not exceeding 50 employees).

The wage-earner receives an allowance, payable by the employer, for training undertaken with the employer's approval and outside normal working hours, for a maximum of 100 hours of training.

Employers are able to obtain reimbursement from the Federal Public Service for Employment, Labour and Consultation of half the cost of the allowances and the associated social security contributions.

Community and regional level

1. The FOREM (Walloon vocational training and employment office) was created on 16 December 1988 by a decree of the Walloon Regional Council.

This agency has placement and training powers in the Walloon Region. In the

context of training, the FOREM's mission is to accept people (workers and job seekers) intending to engage in salaried employment.

The Walloon Government adopted a decree setting 1 April 2003 as the date of entry into force of the decree amending the decree of 6 May 1999 on the Walloon Vocational Training and Employment Office. The reorganisation of the FOREM is based on the following principles:

- • the management of general activities;
- • compliance with European law, and in particular the competition rules.

Since 1 January 2000, in the German-speaking Community it is the ADG (*Arbeitsamt der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft*) that is responsible for employment and vocational training.

2. Bruxelles-Formation (IBFFP – *Institut bruxellois francophone pour la formation professionnelle* [French vocational training institute of Brussels]) was created on 17 March 1994 by decree of the French Community Commission, and is a body responsible for organising and managing vocational training for French people in the Brussels Capital Region.
3. The IFPME was set up by a decree of the Walloon Government of 17 July 2003. This is a public-interest body which is responsible for organising block release training, in particular apprenticeships and the training of employers and continuing training for self-employed operators and small and medium-sized enterprises.
4. The French Community Decree of 8 April 1976 lays down the conditions for recognising and awarding subsidies to organisations providing ongoing education for adults. However, from 2004 the decree of 1976 will be superseded by a new decree provision issued in response to the changes in the structures of organisations over the last 25 years. From then on, a subsidy arrangement based on programme contracts will be applicable.
5. Distance learning is governed by the Decree of 18 December 1984.

6. Social advancement courses (*enseignement de promotion sociale*) are held on a part-time basis. They are the main channel for adult vocational training in the French Community.

French Community Decree I of 16 April 1991 governing social advancement courses describes their main functions in Article 7. These courses should aim to work towards individual development by promoting improved occupational, social, cultural and academic integration by meeting training needs and demands expressed by enterprises, public services, the education service and agencies in socio-economic and cultural fields in general.

Social advancement courses at higher education level come under the Law of July 1970 on higher education.

7. Article 5 of the French Community Commission Decree of 27 April 1995 relating to the approval of vocational integration agencies stipulates that socio-occupational integration bodies should be registered and their activities subsidised for implementation of one or more activities incorporated into measures to be promoted (vocational training activities leading to qualifications).

Finally, other training designed for adults includes training for ministry staff, training for the disabled, in-company training, sectoral initiatives, and training organised by the private sector and local authorities.

7.2 Administration

Federal level

With regard to training, the federal state is competent in areas associated with labour law or social security. One example is the law on block release training, which does not involve a new training system, but gives employers an entitlement to a reduction in social security contributions if they take on young job seekers who are combining work and vocational training.

Community and regional level

The Decree of 16 December 1988 created a Regional Employment Office. The FOREM is responsible for adult vocational training in the French Community.

The Decree founding the FOREM provides for the management committee and the

governments of the French Community and the German-speaking Community to sign a contract stipulating the priorities and the policies to adopt. This management contract covers a four-year period and allows for negotiation of very specific objectives, taking account of the political vision of the Walloon and German-speaking community governments and of the FOREM's experience on the ground.

The management committee of Bruxelles-Formation has equal numbers of representatives from trade union and employers' organisations.

The French Community Commission (*Commission communautaire française* – COCOF) in Brussels is responsible for the vocational training of (French) adults.

The *Institut wallon de formation en alternance et des indépendants et petites et moyennes entreprises* (IFAPME) falls within the scope of competence of the Walloon Region.

The Parliament of the French Community Council is competent in matters involving the general policy on ongoing education.

Responsibility for distance learning was transferred to the French Community in 1982.

Social advancement courses are organised by the French Community.

The role of the social partners

The social partners play an essential part in training. For example, the FOREM and Bruxelles-Formation are managed jointly by representatives of workers and employers. Moreover, the FOREM is helped in its task by some 20 subregional employment and training committees also comprising joint representation, which give expression to local initiatives, ambitions and specific features associated with the labour market trend. In Brussels, the *Commission Consultative en matière de formation, d'emploi et d'enseignement* (Consultative Commission on Training, Employment and Education) plays a similar role.

The social partners also play a role in the conclusion of inter-occupational training agreements. Since 1989, these agreements have provided for arrangements for enterprises to devote part of the wage bill to training for vulnerable groups. In the 1999/2000 agreement, 0.10% of the wage bill must be used in this way. However, the social partners have also made a commitment which could effect a perceptible change in the vocational training landscape. They have undertaken to make additional efforts to set Belgium on a path which will bring it up to the average level achieved by its three neighbours. The input of enterprises will be raised from 1.2% to 1.4%.

7.3 Financing

The main sources of funding for the measures and services offered by the FOREM are subsidies written into the budget of the Walloon region, subsidies written into the budget of the German-speaking Community, direct funding from the European Social Fund or funding for ESF projects, various receipts, in particular sales of goods or services resulting from the FOREM's activities and investment income, enterprise funding of training costs, developers' contribution in the context of the *Programme de Résorption du Chômage* [unemployment reduction programme], funding from the Federal Public Service for Employment, Labour and Consultation, in the context of cooperation agreements or conventions (*Plan d'Accompagnement des Chômeurs* (PAC – plan for support for the unemployed), *Fonds National de l'Emploi* [national employment fund], etc.) and income in the context of international relations, in particular under various European programmes (Leonardo Da Vinci, Adapt, Employment, etc.).

In addition to the revenue from the Federal State within the framework of cooperation agreements (for example the CAP) and the ESF, Bruxelles-Formation receives subsidies within the limits of funds written into the budget of the French Community Commission (COCOF). The Institute can accept legacies and donations and receive any other income.

Bruxelles-Formation grants a supplementary subsidy to entities that have concluded partnership agreements with it. Trainees who have concluded a training contract with the FOREM or Bruxelles-Formation receive a training indemnity, and their travelling costs are covered.

The IFAPME receives subsidies from the Walloon Region. At European level, it receives its main subsidies from the European Social Fund and the ERDF.

These subsidies cover the Institute's operating costs, the costs of training activities, and the property charges for the centres.

The Ministry of the French Community promotes ongoing adult education by providing structural subsidies to around 700 non-profit associations or *de facto* associations. In addition, there are 180 *Centres d'expression et de créativité* (Expression and Creativity Centres – CECs).

Distance learning is financed by the French Community. A decree of the French Community Executive of 28 September 1992 laid down

payment of a single enrolment fee of 37.50 euros. Certain people – in particular the unemployed and convicts – may be exempted from payment of this enrolment fee.

Since 1989, social advancement courses have been financed by the French Community. Operating costs are covered firstly by subsidies and funds from the budget of the French Community and, secondly, by very low enrolment fees (but certain categories can be given exemption, in particular the unemployed and convicts).

7.4 Organisation

FOREM

The FOREM provides training appropriate to all sectors of industry and services, and at all skill levels. It is not aimed only at job seekers. The FOREM also works with several hundred enterprises, offering training adapted to their needs (individual in-company training programmes, training programmes created with the help of an enterprise, group in-company training programmes). The training programmes are designed in the form of very flexible modules, enabling everybody to develop their own training schedule. The primary objective of FOREM training is to increase individual employability. The training must be skills training.

FOREM training takes place either in its own vocational training centres (104 training centres) or in agreed centres, or indeed in partnership. Training is geared to practice, is provided by experienced instructors, and is in step with the labour market and individualised.

No strict conditions as regards qualifications are imposed for admission to training. People with vocational experience or adequate knowledge – which is determined by selection tests – are also accepted.

Once the vocational training is completed, the FOREM issues trainees with a certificate specifying the training or module(s) followed. This certificate has no value within the education system and it does not assure access to specific studies or to social advancement courses. However, it is valued by enterprises, which take on new employees on the strength of it.

The social partners and vocational organisations are involved in planning the training.

Bruxelles-Formation

Bruxelles-Formation organises skills training in six fields: a) technical and industrial occupations; b) office and service techniques; c) IT and management proficiency courses; d) guidance and support; e) in-company training; f) self-directed training and distance training.

The target groups are workers and enterprises as well as job seekers.

Bruxelles-Formation provides tailor-made training at the request of Brussels-based companies.

Certain training programmes may be implemented in cooperation with occupational sectors. However, Bruxelles-Formation also works in partnership with other actors, in particular on the implementation and educational monitoring of training programmes organised in the context of the regional scheme for socio-occupational integration (9 local missions and 34 partner associations).

Bruxelles-Formation helps promote social advancement courses. It is also responsible for training of the disabled in the Brussels Region.

Inter- or intra-enterprise manual, technical and industrial vocational training programmes are made to measure in accordance with enterprise needs. Trainees are integrated into existing training in a Bruxelles-Formation centre, or a trainer is delegated to the enterprise, or specific training elements and modules are implemented in the enterprise or in a Bruxelles-Formation centre.

Conditions for admission to training vary. In some cases, prior knowledge is required before commencing training. Knowledge tests are also provided for.

The methods used are essentially practical, based on the realities of working in an enterprise (workshops, simulations, case studies, etc.).

Trainees who are also job seekers are covered by a training contract specifying rights and obligations. After each training course, trainees receive a certificate confirming their attendance.

IFAPME

The IFAPME training network seeks to meet the needs of the employment and training market by guaranteeing genuine possibilities for vocational integration while pursuing a general training mission and developing the spirit of initiative and enterprise in its target population.

By setting up the IFAPME (*Institut wallon de formation en alternance et des indépendants et*

petites et moyennes entreprises), the Walloon Government has boosted this sector and given it fresh impetus to increase its scope of action.

The aims of the IFAPME are twofold:

As a training operator, it is responsible for undertaking training missions tailored to the specific needs of self-employed operators and small and medium-sized enterprises. These missions can be subsumed into a number of key functions:

- Implementation of block release training (apprenticeships, training of employers, etc.) and cooperation with the training centres (approval, coordination, subsidies, pedagogical assessment, etc.).
- Implementation of continuing training for self-employed operators and small and medium-sized enterprises, with the help of the training centres;
- Monitoring and follow-up of practical training in industry;
- Creation of partnerships with the bodies responsible for providing advice and support for self-employed operators and small and medium-sized enterprises.

The second aim is to create a structure that supports block release training in the Walloon Region by anticipating needs, coordinating operators and systematically monitoring actions.

Training programmes are intended for young people and adults who wish to learn or improve their knowledge of a craft, commercial or intellectual occupation that they wish to practise as self-employed operators or skilled workers in SMEs.

The apprenticeships are designed for teenagers from 15 years of age wishing to learn a craft or a commercial or intellectual profession through the apprenticeship contract approved by the IFAPME. Those who complete this training course (which lasts 2 or 3 years) are awarded an apprenticeship certificate which is homologated by the French Community and gives the holder eligibility for further training, in particular managerial training.

Business management training is intended, firstly, for people with a qualification in a craft or a commercial or intellectual occupation who wish to improve their skills while preparing themselves to manage an SME and, secondly, for those who, despite their prior technical qualification, also have a satisfactory level of general studies. The skills of the trade can be acquired through an in-house training agreement approved by the IFAPME.

On completion of this training, which takes two to three years, a management certificate and a

"business manager" training diploma approved by the French Community are awarded, fulfilling, inter alia, all the requirements of the law governing access to occupations.

Continuing training is designed for the self-employed and business managers. Regular improvement seminars are organised in the centres, enabling technical and management skills to be regularly updated. Retraining courses offer a response to the very rapid changes experienced by SMEs in terms of the technological, economic and management environments.

Social advancement courses

Social advancement courses are held mainly in the evenings and at weekends, but also at the end of the afternoon or, indeed, throughout the day. Generally held in schools, in some circumstances they may also take place in the workplace or in any place where the people to be trained meet.

The target groups are:

- employees or job seekers with a vocational qualification, seeking to improve their skills, to specialise or update them or to engage in training with a view to vocational retraining;
- people with or without vocational qualifications who wish to acquire knowledge and know-how with a view to personal development;
- people wishing to obtain the prerequisites for a training course;
- unemployed persons wishing at least to keep up their vocational qualification and individual skills.

Social advancement courses offer training generally corresponding to occupational profiles. Each course is composed of one or more training units that can be capitalised on with a view to obtaining a qualification. Successful completion of training units is marked by the award of certificates.

Social advancement courses in the field of higher education consist of long and short courses, classified as long- and short-type higher education.

Within each institution, a Study Council takes decisions on the admission of students, educational monitoring of them, and certification of studies. With regard to admission, the course and its certification, the Study Council may take into account skills acquired in other education or other types of training, including vocational experience.

In addition to qualifications specific to social advancement courses, qualifications equivalent to those awarded in full-time education are also awarded. Social advancement courses in the field of higher education can lead to the awarding of the CAP, the certificate of teaching skills.

Two bodies play a part in the functioning, development and promotion of social advancement courses: the Higher Council ensures that the courses meet socio-economic and cultural needs and determine the training level on the basis of occupational profiles, and the Consultation Committee is responsible for adapting training courses in line with occupational profiles.

Ongoing education

The Ministry of the French Community promotes ongoing adult education by providing structural subsidies to around 700 non-profit associations or *de facto* associations. In addition, there are 180 *Centres d'expression et de créativité* (Expression and Creativity Centres – CECs).

These associations are recognised by various provisions. The main provision is the decree of 8 April 1976, of which article 2 laid down the definition of ongoing education that now applies, a definition that stresses the aspect of the active and critical sense of citizenship underpinning the action. The explanation of the reasons for the decree also mentions that the recognised organisations must pursue cultural aims to the exclusion of almost all other aims. Finally, article 10 of the decree introduces an important positive discrimination vis-à-vis culturally underprivileged groups. Furthermore, royal decrees of 1921 and 1971 still govern some 250 organisations operating in the field of cultural leisure activities. Finally, the CECs, which are devoted specifically to the development of the creative faculties of the participants and activity leaders, are governed by a ministerial circular.

The ongoing education organisations differ in terms of the geographical scope of their action, which may be general (throughout the Community), regional or local. They also differ in terms of their status as independent associations or sections depending on a larger organisation. Finally, those which are recognised under the terms of the decree of 1976 also differ in terms of the nature of their activities: movements, specialised groups and coordination services and bodies.

However, from 2004 the decree of 1976 will be superseded by a new decree provision passed in response to changes in the structure of organisations over the last 25 years. From then

on, a subsidy arrangement based on programme contracts will be applicable.

A decree specific to the CECs is also currently under review, as well as a new "active leisure" regulation, which is intended to replace older provisions.

Distance learning (EAD)

Distance learning is adapted to the level of the student and prepares them for the examinations of the French Community examining board, for the award of a CES2D or CESS. Success in one of these examinations enables pupils to resume on-site education at the level of either secondary education or higher education.

Distance learning also prepares students for competitive entry examinations as well as staff recruitment and promotion examinations at the various levels of the public service.

The EAD Department currently provides some 170 different courses to over 10,000 new students every year (including pupils of Belgian nationality who are French living outside the territory of the French Community, prisoners and hospital patients, etc.).

Teachers are qualified and specialised in the discipline taught.

The teaching provided in these courses is prepared in advance but individualised; in addition to many sample questions and answers, each lesson includes homework which must be returned to the Department, accompanied if necessary by questions and requests for additional explanations. They are returned to the student, corrected and with comments, and accompanied by a corrected model version.

The EAD Department's Higher Council is responsible for giving the Government of the French Community opinions on all issues relating to distance learning, either on its own initiative or on request.

Socio-occupational integration bodies (OISP)

In Brussels, the AFTs (*Ateliers de Formation par le Travail* – work-training workshops) are registered bodies whose activities are subsidised to cover implementation, in the context of socio-occupational integration measures, operations involving vocational skills training, vocational skills training involving block release training, basic pre-skills training, literacy measures or work-based training.

The AFTs also aim to provide basic education and training in the context of ongoing education. They target persons aged at least 18 who do not hold the CES2D, and are either

experiencing long-term unemployment or receiving minimum integration benefits.

On completion of training lasting a maximum of one year, the AFTs issue certificates of attendance

In the Walloon Region, two bodies are registered and subsidised either as EFTs (*Entreprises de formation par le travail* – work-based training enterprises) or as OISPs (*organismes d'insertion socio-professionnelle*). These bodies aim to take in and re-train job seekers without qualifications and to promote the socio-occupational integration of young people aged 18-25.

The EFTs are training centres which are both production centres and places where the skills required to practise an occupation can be acquired. They provide training based on the experience of status-enhancing work, either within the EFT or in an enterprise.

This scheme is aimed at unemployed young people who have not obtained their CESS and are not in receipt of social security or unemployment benefit.

The EFTs may accept persons aged under 18 provided that they are following a course of part-time secondary education in a CEFA and do not comprise more than 25% of the students in a centre.

A certificate of attendance is awarded on completion of these skills training courses.