1 The education system of the German-speaking Community of Belgium in comparison

This chapter provides an overview of the main contextual features of the German-speaking Community's education system, including recent reforms, developments influencing educational planning and the use of resources in the education sector. It also presents the main characteristics of the German-speaking Community's education system itself (from pre-primary to upper secondary education), including its structure and governance, its main educational goals and mechanisms for quality assurance. The chapter further presents the available evidence on the system's performance and equity in international comparison, and highlights ongoing policy developments that provide the context for the Community's development of its overall vision for the education system.

Governance, population and economy of the German-speaking Community

Governance

The German-speaking Community is divided into two cantons situated in the Eastern part of Belgium, bordering the French Community. The German-speaking Community extends from the Dutch border in the North to the border of Luxembourg in the South. In the East, the Community shares a border with the German states of North-Rhine Westphalia and Rhineland-Palatinate (see Figure 1.1). The German-speaking Community's capital city is Eupen. There are three tiers of government in Belgium: the Federal State, the Regions and the Communities. The Federal Government has responsibility for areas including social security, justice and defence. The responsibilities of the three Regions (the Flemish, Walloon and the Brussels Capital Regions) revolve mainly around matters related to the territory and the economy, including competencies related to transport, the funding of local municipalities, regional planning, energy, environmental protection and social policy. The three Communities (the German-speaking, French and Flemish Communities) are responsible for matters related to social affairs, culture, media, tourism youth, language and education. The German-speaking Community is part of the Walloon Region.

The Minister of Education and Scientific Research is one of four ministers forming the German-speaking Community's executive government for the legislative period 2019-24.[1] The Community's public administration is the Ministry of the German-speaking Community (*Ministerium der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft*, MDG). As of as of 30 June 2021, the Ministry counted about 350 full-time equivalent staff members, organised in 19 departments covering areas ranging from infrastructure, finance and tourism to pedagogy, teaching staff and the organisation of learning.[2] Since 1989, each of the three Communities has been responsible for its own education system. Only a small number of responsibilities for education remain at the level of the Federal Government, namely determining the beginning and end of compulsory education, the conditions for the award of recognised qualifications, and the retirement regulations for education staff.

Population and student numbers

The German-speaking Community is the smallest of the three Belgian Communities and, in January 2021, was home to a population of around 78 - 100 (0.7% of the overall population of Belgium). Birth rates have been steady since 2012, following a decrease between 1992 and 2008 and an increase until 2012. In the aggregate, the German-speaking Community has experienced a population growth of 3.9% since 2010 (slightly below that of the French and Flemish Communities).[3] The German-speaking Community comprises nine municipalities, divided into the Northern Canton of Eupen (which contains the eponymous municipality and seat of the government, Eupen, as well as Kelmis, Lontzen and Raeren) and the Southern Canton of St. Vith (which contains Amel, Büllingen, Burg-Reuland, Bütgenbach and the municipality St. Vith). The northern municipalities are more urbanised and densely populated, while the southern municipalities are more rural and sparsely populated (see Figure 1.1 and Table 1.1).

Figure 1.1. Map of the German-speaking Community of Belgium

Population density and student numbers across municipalities (NUTS 3)
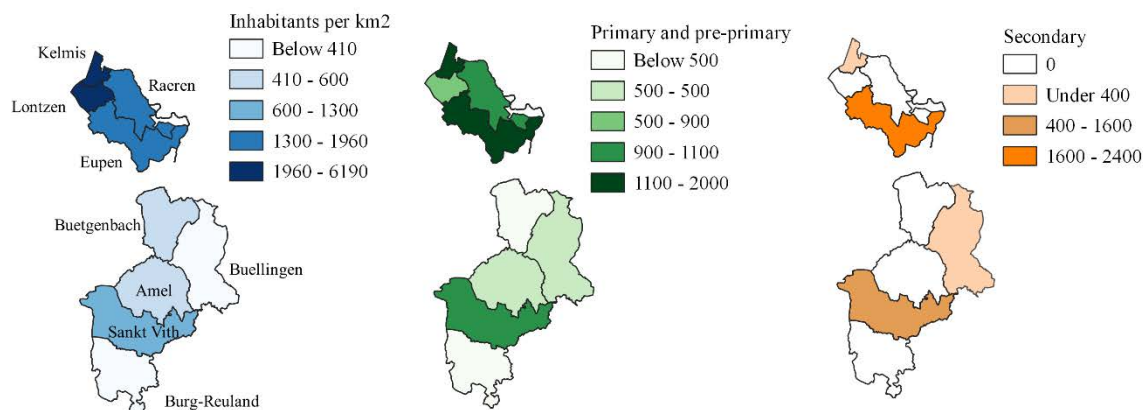
Sources: OECD model map for administrative boundaries; FÖD Wirtschaft, Generaldirektion Statistik und Wirtschaftsinformation Darstellung und Auswertung : W S R, http://www.ostbelgienstatistik.be/desktopdefault.aspx/tabid-2569/4686_read-32765/, for population data, *Ostbelgien Statistik*, www.ostbelgienstatistik.be (accessed on 15 December 2021).

As is described in more detail in Chapter 3, the German-speaking Community has a significant immigrant population and a large French-speaking linguistic minority. In 2020, around 78.7% of the German-speaking Community's residents held Belgian citizenship. Another 17.7% were citizens of other EU countries, the majority of them German and living in the canton of Eupen. The remaining 3.5% held non-EU citizenship. The proportion of foreign residents is considerably higher in the northern municipalities (29.7%) than in the South (8.0%).[4] In addition, around 22% of the Belgian citizens living in the Community had foreign roots (i.e. at least one parent who had a foreign nationality when they first registered or had a foreign nationality themselves when they first registered) - 8% with roots outside the EU (Das Statistikportal - Ostbelgien, 2020[1]).

Table 1.1. Distribution of inhabitants and students across municipalities, 2020

| Municipality	Inhabitants	Inhabitants per km2	Pre-primary students	Primary students	Secondary students
Amel	5 486	43.8	153	353	0
Büllingen	5 456	36.3	168	293	238
Bütgenbach	5 629	57.8	168	281	0
Eupen	19 762	190.5	625	1 335	2 379
Kelmis	11 212	618.8	360	727	342
Lontzen	5 833	203.0	187	363	0
Raeren	10 818	145.8	359	582	0
St. Vith	9 779	66.6	326	705	1 575
Burg-Reuland	3 974	36.5	109	212	0

Note: The numbers of students refers to those enrolled in a given municipality, not their place of residence.
Source: Ostbelgien Statistik (2021[2]), *Bevölkerung*, https://ostbelgien.inzahlen.be (accessed on 15 December 2021).

While student numbers in other parts of Belgium have risen significantly over the past decades, those in the German-speaking Community have steadily declined. Between the school years 2008/09 and 2020/21, the number of students in mainstream education dropped by 12% in primary education (from 5 487 to

4 851) and by 15% in secondary education (from 5 347 to 4 534). Only in pre-primary education did enrolment increase by 12% from 2 386 to 2 455 (see Figure 1.2). Based on forecasts conducted by the Federal Planning Bureau and Statistics Belgium, the total number of students is expected to start rising again in the coming years – until 2026 in pre-primary education, until 2029 in primary education, and until 2035 in secondary education. Overall student numbers in pre-primary to secondary education and special needs education are forecast to grow by 10% from 2020/21 to 2026/27 (from around 12 200 to 13 400), followed by a period of further, more moderate growth and a slow decline starting in around 2033/34.[5]

Figure 1.2. Trends in student enrolment in the German-speaking Community, 2008-2020
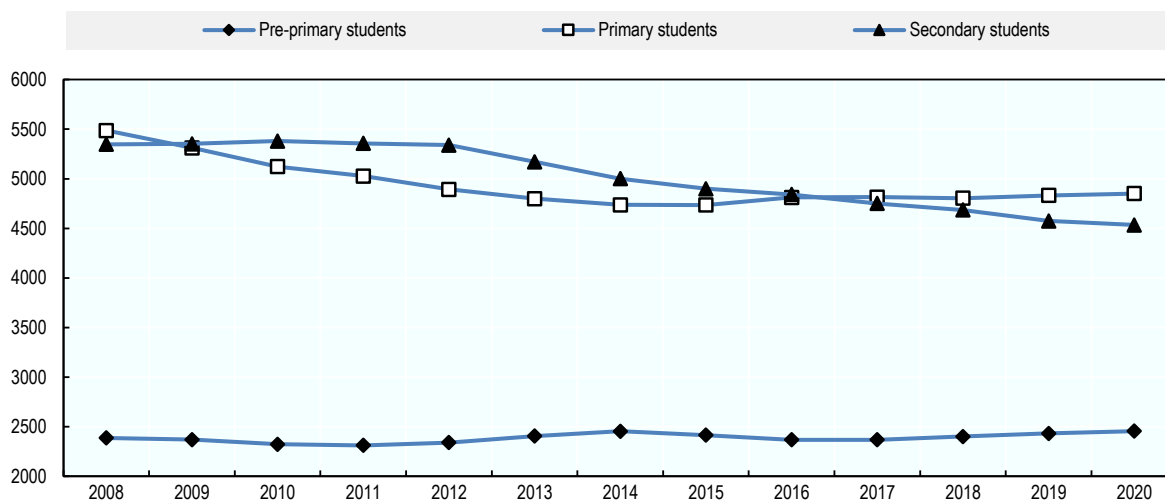
Note: Mainstream education only.

Source: Ostbelgien Statistik (2021[2]) *Schüler und Studierende*, https://ostbelgien.inzahlen.be/dashboard/ostbelgien-in-zahlen/schule-und-bildung/ (accessed on 15 December 2021).

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Economy and labour market

According to the National Accounts Institute (*Institut des Comptes Nationaux*, ICN) the German-speaking Community's gross value added (GVA) stood at EUR 1 933 million in 2019, corresponding to 0.45% of the Belgian economy (MDG, 2022[3]). The German-speaking Community's gross domestic product (GDP) at market prices per capita is below the national and European average. In 2019, it stood at 89% of the EU27 average and at 67% of the national level (66% of the Flemish Region, 39% of the Brussels capital region, and 92% of the Walloon Region [which includes the German-speaking Community]).[6] Since many of the German-speaking Community's residents are commuting to work in the French Community, Germany or Luxembourg, the GDP per capita somewhat underestimates the region's wealth. The GDP per employee working in the German-speaking Community was slightly higher than the GDP per inhabitant, but still stood at only 79% of the national average in 2018.[7]

In 2017, labour productivity (i.e. GDP per employee) in the German-speaking Community was significantly below the other Belgian Communities, at just 79% of the national average, which may be partly explained by the composition of the local economy. In 2017, the primary sector contributed about 2% of GPD (twice as much as the national average), whereas the tertiary service sector contributed around 68% of GPD (compared to 78% at the national level).[8] The German-speaking Community has a significant secondary sector, accounting for 30% of GDP (compared to 22% across Belgium in 2017) and around 21.5% of

employees worked in manufacturing, including firms specialising in electrical equipment, rubber and plastics, metal-processing and food production (Eurydice, 2020[4]). The German-speaking Community also has a high share of small businesses with 82.25% of businesses counting fewer than ten employees (Ostbelgien Statistik, 2017[5]). As of July 2021, based on national statistics, the unemployment rate in the German-speaking Community stood at 6.7%. This was below the national level of 9.2% and those of the Walloon Region (13.2%) and Brussels capital region (16.7%), but slightly above that of the Flemish Region (5.9%) (Arbeitsamt der DG, 2021[6]). Seasonally adjusted unemployment rates in Belgium overall were slightly below the EU average (Eurostat, 2021[7]).

Main features of the German-speaking Community's education system

In the 2020/21 school year, the German-speaking Community's education system comprised ten secondary schools (one of them the centre for special needs pedagogy [*Zentrum für Förderpädagogik*, ZFP]) and 57 primary school sites, serving around 9 400 students in total. In 2018, the German-speaking Community's primary and secondary schools enrolled around 0.47% of the Belgian student population.[9] While each of the nine municipalities is served by at least one primary school, the secondary schools are concentrated in four municipalities: Büllingen, Eupen, Kelmis and St. Vith.

Given the German-speaking Community's shared borders and economic ties with the French Community of Belgium, Germany and Luxembourg, there is some cross-border movement of students. A sizeable number of students living in the municipalities of Raeren and Kelmis, for example, attend schools in Germany and schools in Kelmis serve around 80 students from Plombières in the neighbouring French Community of Belgium. In turn, a significant number of students living in the German-speaking Community attend schools in the French Community (MDG, 2022[8]).

The principal language of instruction is German, but the Community emphasises multilingualism as an important goal of its education system. French plays a particularly prominent role due to the Community's francophone minority and the importance of French-language skills for students' success in the regional labour market, given its close ties with the French Community of Belgium. According to an analysis of job vacancies carried out by the Economic and Social Council, 40% of job openings in the German-speaking Community required French-language skills in 2020 (MDG, 2022[3]). French is taught as a first foreign language starting in pre-primary school. Since 2011/12, primary schools can also offer bilingual instruction as part of pilot projects and one primary school of the Official Subsidised Education System (*Offizielles subventioniertes Unterrichtswesen*, OSU) in Eupen operates classes exclusively in French, teaching German as first foreign language. Although there are no secondary schools with French as a medium of instruction, secondary schools can offer up to 65% of classes in French during the first stage and 50% during the second and third stages, in order to facilitate the integration of students that attended French primary schools and to promote multilingualism (MDG, 2022[8]).

Structure of the education system

Compulsory full-time education in the German-speaking Community starts in the calendar year in which children turn five, since it was brought forward by one year in 2020, and usually begins with one year of pre-primary education (*Kindergarten*). The Community is thus one of about a third of OECD and partner countries where compulsory education starts before the age of six (OECD, 2021, pp. 446, Table X1.5[9]). Compulsory full-time education ends in the calendar year in which students turn 15 and typically comprises the first two years of secondary education. However, unlike in the majority of OECD countries, where compulsory education ends at age 16, it remains compulsory for students in the German-speaking Community to engage in some form of education, including part-time vocational education (see below) or an apprenticeship until the age of 18 (or the completion of secondary education). Schooling is free of

charge for the entirety of compulsory education. Figure 1.4 provides a schematic overview of the structure of the German-speaking Community's education system, which is explained in more detail below.

Stages and pathways in the school system

The German-speaking Community's education system is organised in four main stages, preceded by pre-primary education, which is non-compulsory until age 5. The school system is stratified and a first streaming of students occurs at the beginning of secondary education (typically at age 12), when around 10% of students who have not successfully completed primary education enter a separate "B-stream". For students who successuflly completed primary education, the first tracking occurs at the second stage of secondary education, typically at age 14, compared to the majority of EU and OECD countries, which start tracking at age 15 or 16 (European Commission, EACEA and Eurydice, 2020[10]).

- **Pre-primary education** (typical ages: 3-6) is available free of charge to children from the age of three and, starting in 2024/25, will be opened to children from the age of two and a half. The attendance of pre-primary education is mandatory from age five. In 2020, there were 55 pre-primary school sites in the German-speaking Community, all but one of which were attached to a primary school.

- **Primary education** (typical ages: 6-12) lasts for six years. Students who achieve the objectives of the curriculum at the end of primary education receive a certificate of completion.

- **The first stage of secondary education** (typical ages: 12-14) lasts for two years and is organised in two streams: the "A-stream" and the "B-stream". The A-stream, or "observation stream" (*Beobachtungsstufe*), is intended to provide students with a shared curriculum of basic general education and orient them in their further education pathway. The A-stream is attended by the majority of students. In the school year 2020/21, 92% of students were enrolled in the A-stream in the first year and 89% in the second year (see Figure 1.3). Students who did not receive a certificate for the successful completion of primary education enrol in the differentiated B-stream, or "assimilation stream" (*Anpassungsstufe*). The B-stream aims to provide students with targeted support to make up for their deficits and prepare them for completing their primary school certificate before entering a technical or vocationally-oriented pathway. Students can switch from the B-stream to the A-stream on recommendation of the class council[10] (and, in case students have not successfully completed their primary school certificate, a positive evaluation from the admissions council [*Zulassungsrat*] and Kaleido Ostbelgien)[11] (MDG, 2022[8]).

- **The second and third stages of secondary education** (typical ages: 14-18) are divided into three tracks: general, technical and vocational. Students who completed the A-stream have the choice between all three tracks. Students who completed the B-stream can enter the vocational track and the "qualifying classes" in the technical track (see below). To enter the 9th grade of the general track, students who completed the B-stream need to first complete a year of vocational education (9th grade). Lower secondary education comprises the first stage of secondary education as well as the first year of the second stage of secondary education in the general and technical tracks and both years of the second stage of secondary education in the vocational track. After its successful completion, students receive a certificate of lower secondary education.

  The third and final stage of secondary education lasts three years. Like the second stage, it is divided into a general, a technical and a vocational pathway, all three of which allow students to obtain a certificate of upper secondary education on successful completion, which permits them to enter higher education. When transitioning from the second to the third stage of secondary education, students have the option to switch between tracks, although switching from the vocational track to the technical or general tracks is not common and requires a positive evaluation from the admissions council. After successfully completing 12th grade of the vocational track,

students have another option to enter 11th grade in the technical track ("qualifying classes") (Arbeitsamt der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft, 2021[11]).

- o **General secondary education** (*allgemeinbildender Sekundarunterricht*) offers a broad general education programme that prepares students for progression to tertiary education. The choice between different optional subjects allow students to specialise as they progress in the general pathway while maintaining the opportunity to enter a wide range of tertiary programmes. Successful completion of the 12th year of general secondary education allows students to enrol in higher education. In 2020/21, 54% of students in the second stage and 52% of students in the third stage of secondary education were enrolled in the general track (864 of 1 600 and 723 of 1 401 students respectively).

- o **Technical secondary education** (*technischer Sekundarunterricht*) offers a combination of general, technical, theoretical and practical subjects. Students following the technical pathway can choose between transitional classes (*Übergangsunterricht*) and qualifying classes (*Befähigungsunterricht*). The transitional classes are offered in ten areas of specialisation (incl. applied business and economics, education, social science, sports or electro mechanics) and are designed to prepare students for a technical profession or further tertiary education. The qualifying classes are offered in 26 areas of specialisation (incl. public relations, applied art and graphic design, mechanics or carpentry) and are designed for students who seek to practice a profession after the end of secondary school. Successful completion of the 12th year of technical secondary education allows students to enrol in higher education. In 2020/21, 28% of students in the second stage and 28% of students in the third stage of secondary education were enrolled in the technical tracks (446 of 1 600 and 313 of 1 401 students respectively).

- o **Vocational secondary education** (*berufsbildender Sekundarunterricht*) focuses on practice-oriented education preparing students for entry to the labour market. Four secondary schools[12] offer the vocational track, covering over 30 different areas (e.g. in sales, office management, gastronomy, hospitality or agriculture). In order to obtain a leaving certificate qualifying for entry into tertiary education, students of the vocational track need to complete an additional, 13th year of studies. In 2020/21 18% of students in the second stage and 20% of students in the third stage of secondary education were enrolled in the vocational tracks (290 of 1 600 and 275 of 1 401 students respectively).

From the age of 15, students are no longer obliged to engage in full-time education. They can opt to pursue an apprenticeship (mittelständische Ausbildung) after completing the first two years of general secondary education (8th grade), or the first three years of vocational secondary education (9th grade). Students who have not successfully completed these years need to pass an entrance exam in order to start an apprenticeship (Arbeitsamt der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft, 2021[11]).

Students who do not engage in an apprenticeship can also enter a **part-time vocational education** (*Teilzeitunterricht*, TZU) programme from the age of 15 (or from the age of 16 for those who have not yet completed the first two years of secondary education). Introduced in 1983, TZU combines two days a week of school-based education with three days of work-based learning. At the end of the first year of part-time vocational education, students can obtain a certificate of completion of primary education (in case they had not yet obtained it), or – depending on their success – a certificate that permits them to start an apprenticeship or transition to vocational secondary education. As of September 2020, 26 students were engaged in part-time vocational education, offered by two technical secondary schools.

Figure 1.3. Distribution of students across pathways in mainstream secondary education, 2020
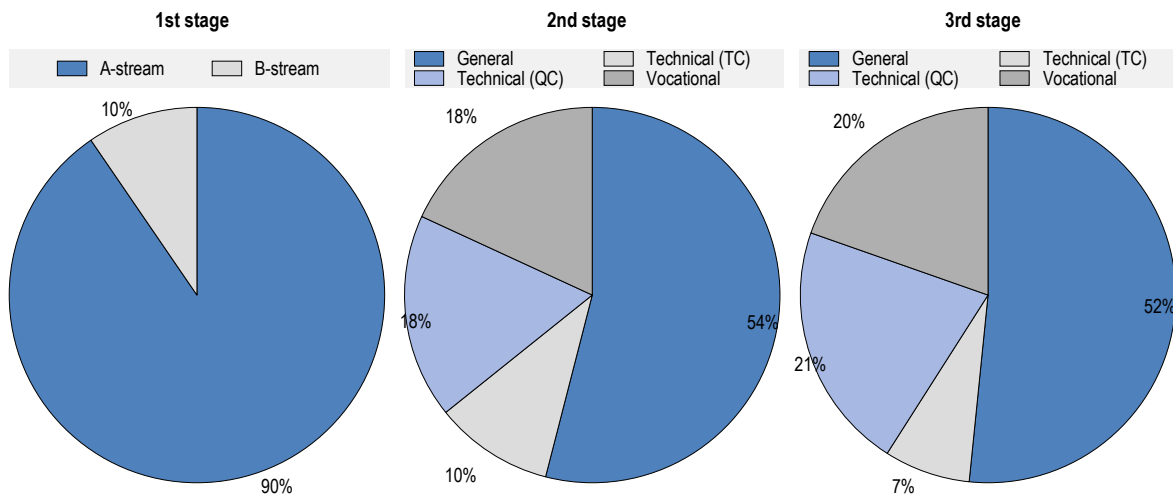
Note: TC = transitional classes; QC = qualifying classes.
Source: Ministry of the German-speaking Community of Belgium.

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Offer for students with special education needs (SEN)

Students with special education needs (SEN) can enrol in one of four SEN primary schools and one SEN secondary school or attend classes in mainstream schools as special needs *projects* (*Förderprojekte*). There is one integrated primary school in Bütgenbach that places special emphasis on the individual support of SEN in mixed learning groups. Special needs education in the German-speaking Community of Belgium remains largely governed by a 1970 legal framework, although a 2009 reform (*Förderdekret*) sought to modernise the Community's SEN system by providing additional financial support and advice for students with SEN (MDG, 2022[8]). Furthermore, different levels of support are available to support students with SEN in mainstream schools, which is described in more detail in Chapter 4.

Higher education

The *Autonome Hochschule Ostbelgien* (AHS) is the only higher education institution in the German-speaking Community of Belgium. The AHS was created in 2005 following the merger of three higher education institutions, including two teacher education institutions run by the Community Education System (*Gemeinschaftsunterrichtswesen*, GUW) and the Free Subsidised Education System (*Freies subventioniertes Unterrichtswesen*, FSU), respectively. Today, the AHS is governed by an autonomous board of directors and, legally, part of the OSU network. The AHS offers professional bachelor programmes in health care and nursing, pre-primary and primary education. The AHS also co-operates with the Institute for Vocational and Educational Training in Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (*Institut für Aus- und Weiterbildung des Mittelstandes*, IAWM) to offer joint vocational and bachelor studies (*duales Studium*) in accounting, banking, insurance and, since 2019, public and business administration. In the academic year 2020/21, 238 students were enrolled in the AHS (MDG, 2022[8]).

Figure 1.4. Structure of the German-speaking Community's education system, 2021
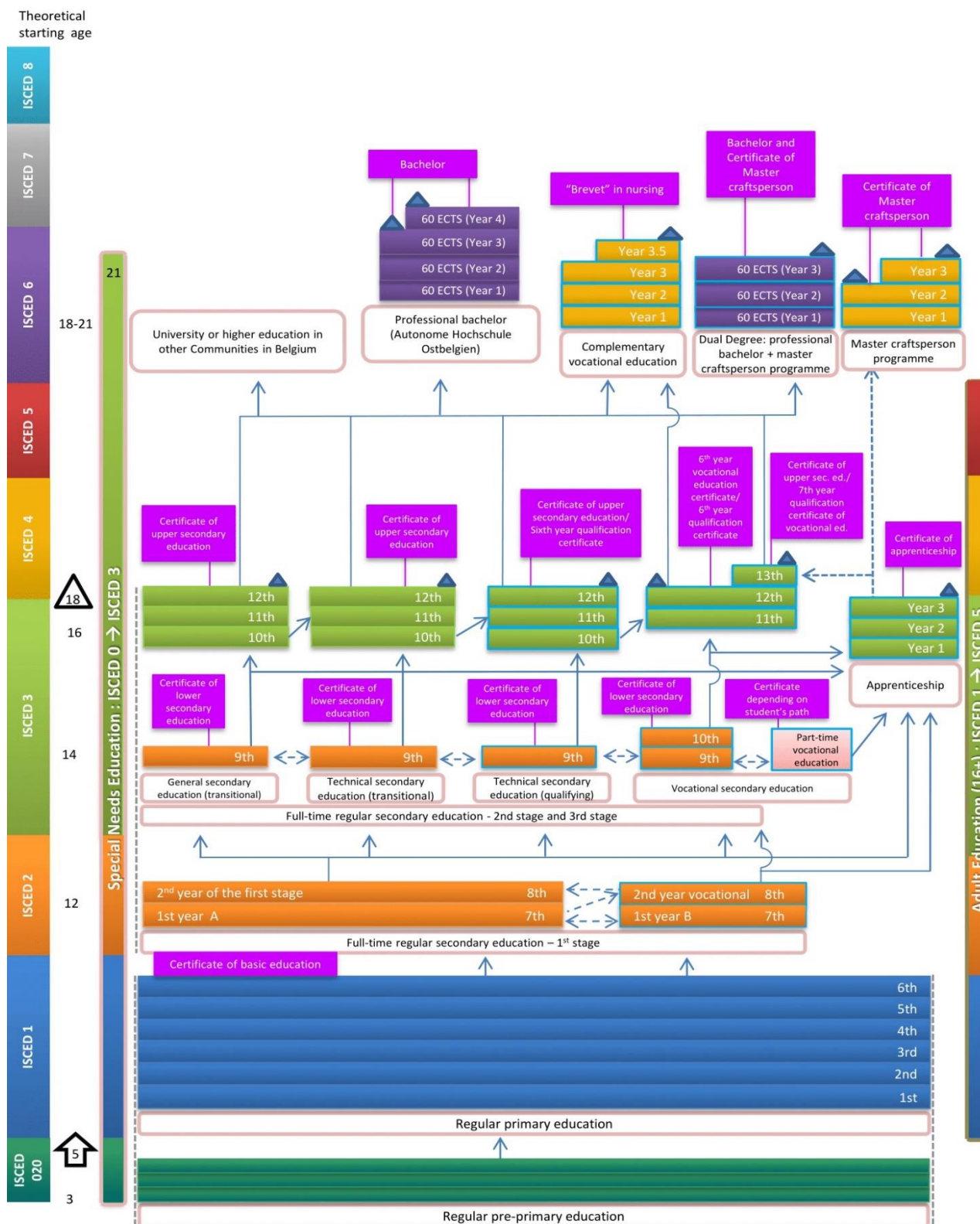
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Note: For a detailed legend, see https://gpseducation.oecd.org/.
Source: OECD (2021), *Education GPS*, https://gpseducation.oecd.org/ (accessed on 15 December 2021).

Structure of the school year and school day

The school calendar of the German-speaking Community is determined by the Community's government, which decides on the first and last days of the school year and the timing of holidays and Community-wide days of no instruction. On average, the school year includes 181 days of instruction (MDG, 2022[8]) – close to the OECD average of 184 days in primary education and 183-186 days in secondary education (OECD, 2021, pp. 393, Table D4.1[9]). In addition, each school in the Community can decide on three or four instruction days a year to dedicate to the collective professional learning of all staff.

As per the 1999 Decree on Mainstream Primary Education, primary school students engage in 28 weekly hours of instruction, taking place on weekdays between 8am and 4pm with a lunch break of at least 60 minutes. Wednesday afternoons are free of instruction (Parlament der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft, 1999[12]). The exact times of the start and end of instruction are decided by the school leadership. At the secondary level, students engage in at least 28 and in up to 36 hours of instruction per week, taking place on weekdays between 8am and 5pm, including a lunch break of at least 50 minutes (MDG, 2022[8]).

In Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2018, 15-year-old students in the German-speaking Community reported to spend on average 30.3 hours learning in regular lessons per week. This was significantly above the OECD average of 27.5 hours and one of the longest times reported in any OECD country, with the exception of the United States and Chile (OECD, 2020, p. Table V.B2.6.1[13]). Correspondingly, a large share of students (23%) reported to spend 32 hours or more in regular lessons per week, compared to just 18% of students across the OECD (OECD, 2020, p. Table V.B2.6.13[13]). This is partly explained by the German-speaking Community's strong emphasis on foreign language learning, which 15-year-olds reported to engage in for 6.4 hours of regular lessons per week. This was the largest amount in any OECD education system and above the OECD average of just 3.6 hours.

In 2021, the French Community of Belgium has announced plans to revise its school calendar starting in 2022-23 with a view to shorten the summer holidays by two weeks and instead lengthen the All Saints holidays in November (*congé d'automne*) and the Carnival holidays (*congé de détente*) in February. The German-speaking Community is weighing the benefits and risks of engaging in a similar reform and has conducted a stakeholder survey in 2019 in which a majority of respondents expressed a preference for maintaining the status quo (MDG, 2022[8]).

Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic

Since its onset in early 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused disruptions to school systems across the world, including the German-speaking Community of Belgium. The OECD has documented its impacts using a Survey on Joint National Responses to COVID 19 School Closures, carried out in collaboration with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Bank, which was complemented in by additional surveys administered by the OECD for its member and partner countries. On average across the 30 OECD members and partner countries with comparable data for all levels of education, pre-primary schools were closed for 55 days, primary schools for 78 days, lower secondary schools for 92 days and upper secondary schools for 101 days between 1 January 2020 and 20 May 2021 (OECD, 2021[14]).

In the German-speaking Community of Belgium, in-person teaching was suspended in pre-primary, primary and secondary education from 16 March to 15 May 2020. During this time, schools transitioned to distance learning and decided by which means (digital or analogue) they would ensure the continuity of students' learning. A gradual return to in-person teaching was implemented by level of education over the course of May and June 2020. Starting with the 2020/21 school year, a traffic light system was introduced to regulate the hygiene and social distancing measures as well as the mode of instruction (in-person, hybrid or remote) and scope of in-person activities based on the current severity of the pandemic. (In the context

of travel restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic, the OECD review visit took place virtually via video-conference). During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry has also provided students in need with laptops and reaffirmed its commitment to expand internet connectivity, to hire additional personnel to manage information and communications technology (ICT) resources and to provide teachers and secondary school students with laptops (see Chapter 2).

Governance of the school system

The school networks and the role of school providers

Schools in the German-speaking Community are organised in three school networks (*Schulnetze*):

- **The Community Education System** (*Gemeinschaftsunterrichtswesen*, GUW) includes public schools funded and run directly by the Minister of Education and Scientific Research of the German-speaking Community. The network comprises three schools with integrated pre-primary, primary and secondary levels (in urban areas), one stand-alone secondary school, one centre for part-time vocational education, as well as the ZFP centre for special needs pedagogy, which works in three primary schools, one secondary school and one boarding school (see Chapter 3).
- **The Official Subsidised Education System** (*Offizielles subventioniertes Unterrichtswesen*, OSU) is the public municipal school network run by the nine municipalities. As of 2020, the OSU network was responsible for 52 of the 57 primary school sites and most pre-primary schools in the German-speaking Community.
- **The Free Subsidised Education System** (*Freies subventioniertes Unterrichtswesen*, FSU) includes publicly subsidised private schools, which can be managed by organisations or private individuals. Currently, all recognised FSU schools are run by a single provider, the Association of Episcopal Schools (*VoG Bischöfliche Schulen in der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft*, BSDG). The network comprises two primary schools with integrated pre-primary schools (one of which has an integrated SEN primary school), five secondary schools, two of which have an integrated boarding school, and a centre for part-time vocational education. There are no independent private schools in the German-speaking Community that do not receive public funding.

Table 1.2 illustrates how students in the German-speaking Community are distributed across levels of education and the three school networks.

Table 1.2. Distribution of students across levels of education and school networks, Sept 2020

Type of school / School network	GUW	OSU	FSU	Total
Pre-primary school	340	1 965	150	**2 455**
Primary school	861	3 609	381	**4 851**
Secondary school	2 329	-	2 205	**4 534**
Part-time VET	14	-	12	**26**
Special needs education	271	-	48	**319**
Total	**3 815**	**5 574**	**2 796**	**12 185**

Note: GUW = Community Education System; OSU = Official Subsidised Education System; FSU = Free Subsidised Education System; The 528 apprentices associated with the Centre for Training and Continuing Education (*Zentrum für Aus- und Weiterbildung des Mittelstandes*, ZAWM) and the 253 master craftsmen students (Sept 2020) are not included in the table.
Source: German-speaking Community of Belgium (2022[8]), *OECD Education Policy Reviews: Background Report of the German-speaking Community of Belgium*.

Due to the principle of free school choice and public funding of private providers, the German-speaking Community has a large private sector, particularly at the secondary level. In September 2020, 49% of

secondary students in the German-speaking Community attended private schools (see Table 1.2), slightly below the private enrolment in secondary schools across Belgium (58%), but significantly above the OECD average of about 19%. The private sector is smaller at the primary level, where 8% of students in the German-speaking Community attended a private school in 2020, compared to 54% across Belgium and around 12% on average across the OECD in 2019 (MDG, 2022[8]).[13]

The Ministry of the German-speaking Community is responsible for formulating the Community's education policy and oversees its implementation in all schools. It provides most of the public subsidies for education and validates schools' curricula. In addition, the Minister of Education and Scientific Research assumes responsibilities as a school provider (*Schulträger*) of the Community schools. The school providers (the minister in the case of GUW schools, the municipalities in the case OSU schools and the BSDG in the case of FSU schools) are responsible for approving their schools' curricula, for the pedagogical methods applied in their schools, for the recruitment of staff and the organisation of learning.

The schools of the OSU network are supervised by school aldermen (*Schulschöffen*) who are political representatives in their respective municipalities and intervene on behalf of their schools, primarily in budgetary, structural and political matters. A network co-ordinator facilitates the communication and co-ordination between the nine municipalities' aldermen and school leaders in monthly meetings. In the FSU-network, the co-ordinator of the Catholic Education Secretariat (*Sekretariat des Katholischen Unterrichtswesens*) plays a similar role, facilitating the co-ordination between the leaders of their schools. All schools of the GUW network are supervised directly by the minister. At the time of the OECD review visit, there was no separate co-ordination structure in the GUW network but a co-ordinator position was introduced in September 2021.

The highest decision-making body in schools is the school council (*Pädagogischer Rat*), which is appointed by the school provider and consists of the school leader, the deputy and at least five other members of staff (pedagogical, medical or socio-psychological staff). Members of the school council are elected for a term of three years by secret ballot and meet at least four times annually to be informed and consult on all questions related to the organisation of the school and its pedagogy. Members of the school middle management that are not elected to the school council serve as consulting members. The school leader usually adopts the decisions taken by the school council.

School autonomy and school choice

Education in the three Belgian Communities is subject to the principle of "freedom of education" guaranteed by Article 24 of the Constitution. Parents are free to select a school of their choice and are guaranteed a place for their child as long as they meet the general admissions criteria for a given level of education and school type. Admissions criteria are regulated by the 1998 Basic Decree on Education (*Grundlagendekret*, henceforth, "the 1998 Decree"),[14] which generally require subsidised schools to admit all Belgian citizens and registered residents living in the German-speaking Community (Parlament der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft, 1998[15]). OSU schools are required to admit students residing within their municipality or those from neighbouring municipalities if they are the closest school. Admission to FSU schools requires the students or parents' agreement with the school's pedagogical project and any denial of admission needs to be justified in writing (MDG, 2022[8]).

The principle of freedom of education extends to the right of any natural or legal person to set up a school, recruit staff and determine the (educational, religious or ideological) principles of the school. Schools also enjoy considerable autonomy in developing curricula, organising teaching and student assessment within the boundaries set by the regulatory framework (Nusche et al., 2015[16]). Parents can also choose to engage in home schooling, which is subject to the oversight of the school inspectorate and requires students to pass exams administered by the external school examination board in order to obtain certificates at the end of primary, lower secondary and upper secondary school. In 2020/21, 69 students registered for home schooling in the Community, almost twice as much as in the preceding school year,

which may be linked to the COVID-19 pandemic context (MDG, Community, Ministry of the German-speaking, 2021[17]).

Since the German-speaking Community funds public and private schools for each student they enrol, this creates incentives for schools to attract students and promotes parental choice. Given its small size and relative density, the great majority of parents in the German-speaking Community can choose among several schools within a reasonable distance from their homes. According to principals surveyed for PISA 2018, 72% of students in the German-speaking Community attended schools that competed for students with at least two other schools in the area (compared to 63% on average across the OECD). Only 1.1% of students were in schools that reported no direct competition from another, significantly below the OECD average of 22.1%, as well as those in the Flemish Community (5.3%) and the French Community (8.5%) (OECD, 2020, p. Table V.B2.7.7[13]).

In other OECD countries with a high level of school autonomy, schools often face increased accountability for their performance (OECD, 2017[18]) and systems with extensive parental choice often undertake efforts to ensure that parents can make their choices based on information about school quality and performance. However, the German-speaking Community makes little use of assessment data to inform parents' choices and the accessibility of data on school performance is rather limited, which is similar to the approach taken by the Flemish Community of Belgium (Nusche et al., 2015[16]).

As shown in Figure 1.5, many students across the OECD attend schools whose principal reports to publicly share achievement data (38%), to share achievement data with parents (83%) or to have their achievement tracked by an administrative authority (67%). All of these practices were significantly less common in the German-speaking Community, even when compared to the lower-intensity accountability systems in the Flemish and French Communities. Only 57% of schools in the German-speaking Community provided parents with achievement data, compared to 90% in the Netherlands, and 84% in France. While a similarly low proportion of schools in Germany provided achievement data directly to parents, 8% shared this data publicly and 40% reported to have their performance tracked by public authorities, compared to 0% and 20% in the German-speaking Community respectively (OECD, 2020, p. Table V.B2.8.7[13]).

Figure 1.5. Using achievement data for accountability purposes, 2018

Percentage of students in schools whose principals report the following practices
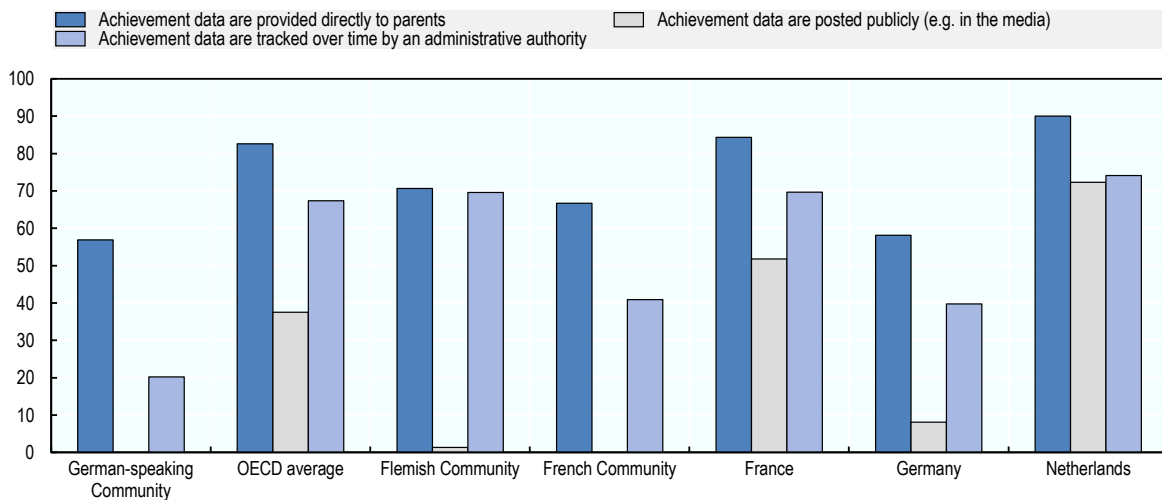
Source: OECD (2020[13]), *PISA 2018 Results (Volume V): Effective Policies, Successful Schools*, https://doi.org/10.1787/ca768d40-en, Tables V.B2.8.7 and V.B1.8.7.

StatLink 🖳 https://stat.link/59w4zs

System-wide and student learning goals

System-wide core curricula and student learning goals

The German-speaking Community sets core curricula (*Rahmenpläne*) describing the competencies that students are expected to develop (*Kompetenzerwartungen*) in specific subjects at key stages of their primary and secondary education (MDG, 2022[8]). At the primary level and the first stage of secondary education, core curricula have been developed for German as a language of instruction or first foreign language, physical education, music, art, ethics, mathematics, science and technology, history, geography and French as a first foreign language or language of instruction and for professional orientation. Most of the current core curricula have been in place since 2008 and are currently being revised.[15]

Each of the original core curricula was developed by working groups comprised of subject teachers (two appointed by each school network) under the leadership of a Ministry official and drawing on the advice and support of an external expert. The ministerial leaders of the working groups evaluated the drafts' quality and coherence and – after the working group's revisions – submitted the draft curricula for comments from an "impulse group" consisting of the school networks' co-ordinators as well as representatives of the AHS, the minister's cabinet and the external evaluation. The network co-ordinators were responsible for eliciting feedback from school leaders, who in turn were asked to consult their teachers. Based on this feedback, the working group revised the draft core curricula and finalised them in co-ordination with the impulse group before their submission to the Parliament (MDG, 2022[8]). For the revision of existing curricula, the ministerial working group leaders prepare a first draft with the external expert before submitting them for further input to the teachers' working group and ultimately to the impulse group, which elicits input from the school leaders (and their teachers'). For a more detailed discussion of the core curricula's revision and implementation, see Chapters 2 and 4.

For the second and third stages of secondary education, core curricula have been developed for German as a language of instruction, physical education, mathematics, sciences, history, geography and French

as a first foreign language, English as a second foreign language, Dutch as a third foreign language, ethics, school-based career preparation and orientation, and for nursing assistants. Where applicable, the core curricula are differentiated for the different pathways: general education, vocational education and the transitional and qualifying classes in technical education.

Every subject's core curriculum contains a chapter on the concept of competency-oriented pedagogy, a chapter on the subject's contribution to the attainment of general and subject-specific competencies, expectations for subject-specific competencies to be attained at the beginning and end of each stage, and a chapter with methodological and didactic recommendations for high-quality lessons. The core curricula also contain broad suggestions for contents (*Inhaltskontexte*), but teachers and schools are encouraged to design their own lesson plans and emphasise different aspects within these suggestions to develop the competencies.

At the pre-primary level, developmental goals (*Entwicklungsziele*) have been in place for all schools since 2002. They describe the skills that students should attain before entering primary school and serve as a basis for the activity plan (*Aktivitätenplan*) that serves as a pedagogical reference in pre-primary schools of the GUW and OSU networks (the activity plan does not apply to pre-primary schools of the FSU-network). The pre-primary developmental goals are currently being revised.

The three network providers have the option to develop their own network-wide curricula ("*Lehrpläne*") in compliance with the system-wide core curricula, but have generally opted not to do so for those subjects where system-wide core curricula had already been developed. For subjects where no core curricula exist, the GUW network uses the curricula developed by the Community schools in the French Community of Belgium their network-wide curricula instead.[16]

Curricula for 21st century skills

Globalisation and rapid changes in technology are accelerating social, economic, and environmental challenges worldwide, but also provide opportunities for human advancement. In order to thrive under these changing circumstances and to shape their own future in holistic, inclusive, and sustainable ways, education systems must equip citizens with a wide range of skills and the ability to apply their knowledge in unknown and evolving circumstances. The skills needed to successfully navigate the 21st century include cognitive and meta-cognitive skills (e.g. critical thinking, creative thinking, learning to learn and self-regulation); social and emotional skills (e.g. empathy, self-efficacy and collaboration); and practical and physical skills (e.g. using new information and communication technology devices) (OECD, 2020[19]).

Governments across the OECD recognise the importance of developing these 21st century skills through schooling. Over the past decades, many of them have therefore engaged in reforms to update their curricula to account for the changing demands placed on future students. By 2015, for example, the majority of OECD education systems had included explicit references to the development of social and emotional skills in general and specific skills (e.g. achieving goals, working with others or managing emotions) in particular, both in their system-wide objectives and in their national curricula (OECD, 2015, p. 97[20]). In many cases, these reforms have been guided by student profiles, or visions articulating the skills, knowledge, attitudes, and values students should achieve at school, which have often focused on concepts such as student agency, co-agency and their transformative competencies (e.g. creating new value, taking responsibility, and reconciling tensions, dilemmas, trade-offs and contradictions) (OECD, 2020[19]). Nevertheless, many OECD countries provide less guidance for teachers on how to best teach these skills and design their lessons so as to enhance students' social and emotional development (OECD, 2015, p. 109[20]).

All of the German-speaking Community's core curricula make reference to the development of students' social and personal competencies, including the development of self-confidence, empathy, critical thinking, collaboration etc.[17] In addition, they emphasise the concept of media and information competency (*Informations- und Medienkompetenz*, IMK) as a transversal set of skills to be developed across subjects

from the first year of primary school to the end of secondary education. To support teachers in fostering media and information competency, the Ministry provides them with a teachers' guide (*IMK-Leitfaden*), developed in 2013, as well as a list of learning objectives for each stage of education and corresponding learning materials (MDG, 2013[21]).[18] The guide complements the core curricula and is intended to provide a richer description of the expected learning outcomes students are expected to obtain and to support teachers from all subjects to integrate relevant material into their lessons. A similar guide has been developed for the promotion of civic education across subjects and the Institute for Civic Education (*Institut für Demokratiepädagogik*, IDP) at the AHS has been charged with developing relevant materials and professional development opportunities for teachers.

School projects, school development plans and school-based curricula

Schools must meet a number of conditions in order to be recognised by the German-speaking Community's authorities and to be eligible for public subsidies. Schools need to comply with a number of regulations to ensure that their facilities, equipment and staff fulfil a range of quality standards. All recognised schools also need to develop a school project (*Schulprojekt*), which forms the basis for mandatory external evaluations every five years (MDG, 2022[8]) and which contains the following elements:

- An assessment of the school's current state of development.
- The school's assessment concept (*Leistungskonzept*), its professional learning concept (*Weiterbildungskonzept*) and its means of involving students and parents in the school life.
- A statement on the school's pedagogical vision and guiding values.
- The school development plan (*Schulentwicklungsplan*) and implementation programme (*Ausführungsprogramm*), which formulates the school's development goals, reports on the steps that have been taken to attain them, assesses the school's progress towards them and formulates new development goals.
- The school-based curriculum (see below).

The school projects need to be developed in alignment with the educational projects (*Erziehungsprojekt*) developed by each of the three network providers. The educational projects provide an opportunity for the networks to develop their own pedagogical profile, methods and approach, in compliance with a broader set of societal objectives for education (*Gesellschaftsprojekt*), which were formulated for the entire Community and passed by the Parliament.

The school-based curricula (*schulinternes Curriculum*) are developed based on the centrally defined core curricula and each school's educational project. The school-based curricula are comprised of subject curricula (*Fachcurricula*), which describe the didactic approach, teaching contents and assessment pratices for each subject taught at the school, as well as "partial curricula" (*Teilcurricula*), which describe to the school's approach to teaching selected inter-disciplinary competencies. The school-based curricula are intended to be developed in teams and should be explicitly oriented towards the development of competencies, replacing the traditionally used material distribution plans (*Stoffverteilungspläne*) (MDG, 2016[22]).

Student assessment and examinations

The development of school-based formative and summative assessment practices is the responsibility of the school providers and school leadership. From the first year of primary school, students are assessed on a continuous basis throughout the year, usually at the end of learning units. These assessments can take a range of formats, including presentations, written assignments and group projects. In addition, network providers can organise exams twice a year in December and June at the secondary level (during the first stage of secondary education, the GUW schools administer only one exam period in June), as well

as additional dates in August for those who failed their first exams. The frequency of exams in primary education is not centrally regulated and most primary schools organise one exam at the end of Year 6.

The different forms of summative assessment should be guided by the competency levels described in the core curricula and form the basis of students' biannual formal reports. They also inform students' certification at the end of primary or secondary school, as well as the decision whether students can be promoted to the next grade, which is taken by the class council (*Klassenrat*) drawing on students' assessment results and their personal development.

Teachers are also expected to conduct regular formative assessments, but it is not regulated by a central policy framework and school providers and teachers determine their methodology (MDG, 2022[8]). The German-speaking Community is among a minority of OECD countries that do not conduct central examinations, i.e. standardised assessments that have a formal consequence for students or affecting students' grades or certification, at any level of education (OECD, 2013, p. 155[23]).

In addition to the school-based summative and formative assessment, students in the German-speaking Community participate in a number of standardised tests with no stakes that are conducted at specific points over the course of their time in school. Each year, the Community administers tests for the Diploma in French Language Studies (*Diplôme d'études en langue française*, DELF) to assess students' competency in French as a foreign language. The DELF tests are administered to students in Year 6, the last Year of primary school (Level A2), and in Year 6 of technical secondary education (Level B1), Year 7 of vocational secondary education (Level B1), Year 6 of general secondary education and transition classes of technical secondary education (Level B2), or in Year 3 of students' apprenticeship (Level B1 or B2).

Since 2008/09, students in the German-speaking Community, alongside students in Germany, have participated in comparative assessments (*Vergleichsarbeiten*, VERA) in Year 3 of primary education (VERA-3) and in Year 2 of secondary education (VERA-8). In 2019, the VERA-3 test assessed language skills and the VERA-8 test assessed mathematics skills. Participating school can use their VERA results for diagnostic purposes, to benchmark their students' learning levels and to target their school improvement initiatives. VERA assessments do not have stakes for students and its results are not used for international comparisons,

The German-speaking Community also regularly participates in the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), which provides the Community with additional international comparative results on students' performance (see a discussion of the results below). However, in contrast to the French and Flemish Communities, the German-speaking Community does not participate in international assessments at the primary level (e.g. the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study [TIMSS] and the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study [PIRLS] of 4th grade students).

School evaluation

Since 2009, the internal and the external evaluation of schools has been compulsory and an important level for school improvement and quality assurance in the German-speaking Community (Parlament der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft, 1998[15]). The external evaluation is carried out by a specialised unit within the AHS, which closely co-operation with the school, the school inspectorate and school advisory services.

Internal school evaluation

Internal school evaluations are carried out at least once every three years and may cover specific topics decided by the school council (*Pädagogischer Rat*) or the network provider. The goal of the internal evaluation is to assess the school's progress towards the goals defined in its school development plan (*Schulentwicklungsplan*) and, if necessary, to inform adjustments of the school's structure, methods and

activities (see Chapter 4). The Community's authorities ensure that the internal evaluation has taken place (MDG, 2022[8]). The external school evaluation team can support schools in their internal evaluation.

Principals' responses in the PISA 2018 survey confirm that the great majority of secondary schools engage in self-evaluation processes. While all principals reported that their school has a written specification of its curricular profile and educational goals, however, only two thirds of students (66%) attended a school that specified performance standards for their students in writing (compared to 78% on average across the OECD) (OECD, 2020, p. Table V.B2.8.11[13]). Compared to other OECD education systems, there are also fewer secondary schools in the German-speaking Community that systematically collect data for quality assurance purposes (see Figure 2.6 in Chapter 2). The system's collection and use of data is discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.

External school evaluation and school inspection

Since 2009, schools in the German-speaking Community have been subject to an external evaluation carried out every five years by the respective unit within the AHS. It evaluates whether schools fulfil their societal objectives and evaluates their performance based on criteria related to the school's results, the quality of teaching, the school culture, school leadership and management, the professionalism of teaching staff, and the school's improvement strategy.

The external evaluation process has been reformed in the 2016/17 school year, with a view to involve schools earlier and more closely in the process, e.g. by deciding on the date of the evaluation visits with the external evaluation team. The reform also alleviated the administrative burden on schools by reducing the number of documents they need to prepare.

The external school evaluation now takes place in two phases. The first phase consists of a dialogue between the school and the evaluation team. Following an initial conversation, the school shares a number of documents that form part of the school project, including the latest versions of its development plan and school curriculum, its approach to formative and summative assessment (*Leistungskonzept*), as well as a professional learning concept (*Weiterbildungskonzept*), in order to prepare the main evaluation. Nine weeks after the initial conversation, the evaluation team meets the school leadership for a second preparatory discussion to agree on the organisation and timing of the main evaluation visit as well as the focus areas of the evaluation.

The second phase of the external evaluation consists of a 3-5 day main evaluation in which the evaluation team visits the school premises, conducts interviews with key stakeholders and observes lessons. The evaluation is guided by an orientation framework for school quality (*Orientierungsrahmen Schulqualität*), which contains compulsory criteria, as well as optional criteria whose selection is decided by the school (Autonome Hochschule Ostbelgien Abteilung für Externe Evaluation, 2016[24]). The criteria are derived from a quality framework (*Qualitätstableau*) developed and used in the German state of North-Rhine Westphalia and are currently in the process of being revised. The assessment of the quality of teaching is based on lesson observations in which external evaluators assess whether a series of standardised quality indicators "apply" or "do not apply".[19] The evaluation also includes a questionnaire distributed to students, non-teaching personnel and parents. The revisions of the evaluation process will focus on digital change in teaching and learning, bilingual and foreign language instruction and the latest empirical evidence on high-quality teaching (MDG, 2022[8]).

At the end of the process, the external evaluation prepares a report that is shared with the government, the Ministry, the school provider and the evaluated school. If desired, the school leadership can invite the evaluation team for a feedback conference six weeks after receiving the draft evaluation report. After the report has been finalised, the school leadership has six months to submit a school development plan detailing the steps the school will take to address the shortcomings identified during the evaluation. The development plan is sent to the school inspectorate and – on an optional basis – to the external evaluation team and the school development advisory service.

Pre-primary schools in the German-speaking Community of Belgium are not separately evaluated, since many of them only count one or a few staff members. Instead, pre-primary schools are evaluated alongside the primary schools in which they are integrated and the evaluation team seeks to provide suggestions relevant to the pre-primary offer in both its final report and the feedback conversation. Pre-primary schools may also be suggested to use the school development counselling service of the AHS's advisory service if additional support may be needed.

In addition to the evaluation of individual schools, the external school evaluation is required to publish regular monitoring reports on the system-wide strengths and weaknesses identified through its school evaluations every three years. Following a first report in 2010, a second report covering the period 2010-13 was presented in 2014 (Breuer, Müllender and Schieren, 2014[25]). The reporting lapsed during the period 2014-15 and resumed in 2021 with a report covering the period 2016-20 (Cormann and Goor, 2021[26]). The school inspectorate complements the external evaluation's findings with the observations derived from its inspection of schools' development plans, which are submitted as part of the school projects (MDG, 2022[8]).

The school inspectorate, which is under the authority of the Ministry's department of pedagogy, is responsible for ensuring that schools abide by administrative and legal standards and contributes to quality assurance and school development in a number of ways. The inspectorate checks whether schools achieve the goals defined in their school development plans, whether their school-internal curricula are aligned with the core curricula and whether they have sufficient teaching materials and equipment. In addition, the inspectorate conducts summative evaluations of teachers before they can obtain permanent contracts (see Chapter 4) and oversees the development and implementation of core curricula. Members of the school inspectorate also participate in the oral feedback that schools receive at the end of their external evaluation. [20]

Advisory services

The school development counselling service (*Schulentwicklungsberatung*) provides schools with a range of services aimed at developing and implementing school improvement projects. This can include analysis, advice, coaching, facilitation and training. The external evaluation may refer schools to development counsellors to receive support in working on their school improvement project.

The Community's pedagogical advisory services (*Fachberatungen*) provide professional support to teachers and school leaders. School leaders, groups of teachers or individual teachers can call upon the advisory services to receive support on pedagogical and methodological questions, for example related to the planning of lessons on a specific topic or the implementation of core curricula. The advisory service for primary education is situated in the AHS and is organised into different subject-specific groups, as well as a group for pre-primary education. Each group brings together specialists from the AHS, staff from the Ministry's department for pedagogy and a teacher. At the time of the review, the pedagogical advisory services for secondary education were in a piloting stage and situated in the Ministry's department for pedagogy (MDG, 2022[8]).

Afterschool support, enrichment and youth assistance

The Ministry runs or supports several programmes offering extra-curricular enrichment in the fields of arts, theatre, and sports.[21] In addition, a variety of external actors provide services that complement the educational and extra-curricular offer of schools. Parents and schools usually approach these providers directly and there is little external co-ordination between them (MDG, 2022[8]). The main providers include *Kaleido Ostbelgien*, the ZFP's competency centre (*Kompetenzzentrum*), the so-called "homework schools" (*Hausaufgabenschulen*), the Time-Out centres, various sport clubs and youth clubs, the music academy, the Institute for Civic Education at the AHS and others.

Homework support

The education system in the German-speaking Community has a strong homework culture. The proportion of students reporting help from their teachers in completing their homework has increased in recent years. While in 2015, only 37% of 15-year-old students in PISA reported that staff provides help with homework (considerably below the OECD average of 60%), this proportion had risen to 69% in 2018 (OECD, 2016, p. Table B2.II.47[27]). In several OECD countries, homework support is targeted to those students most at risk of falling behind or unlikely to receipt his help elsewhere in order to reduce inequalities in education outcomes (OECD, 2020, p. 59[28]). On average across the OECD and in countries such as Australia, Estonia and France, students in disadvantaged schools were more likely to report receiving homework support than their peers in advantaged schools in PISA 2018. This was not the case in Belgium, as a whole (OECD, 2020, p. Table V.B1.6.19[13]).

Most students in the German-speaking Community (71.5%) also reported having a room at their school where they could do their homework (OECD, 2020, p. Table V.B2.6.19[13]). Nevertheless, a significant proportion of homework support in the German-speaking Community is provided outside of schools. Several providers offer homework support in so-called homework schools.[22] These services are open to all students in primary and secondary schools free of charge of for a small fee of about EUR 1 per hour or EUR 5 a week. The Parliament has commissioned a study to evaluate the extent to which students rely on afterschool support, whether parents helped with students' homework and whether there were any socio-economic discrepancies either type of support (Moroni, 2020[29]). Even though no figures are available, it is assumed that students in the German-speaking Community – as in many other European countries – have increasingly drawn on paid tutoring services, including those of private tutoring institutes, during and after the suspension of in-person teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 (Zhang and Bray, 2020[30]). The accessibility of homework support is discussed in more depth in Chapter 3.

Time-Out

Since the school year 2018/19, the Time-Out centre offers supervision to youth who have dropped out or are at risk of dropping out of formal full-time or part-time education and apprenticeships due to socio-emotional and behavioural problems. The Time-Out centre is located in the ZFP's competency centre and enrolled 15 people in the 2018/19 school year.[23] The Time-Out centre aims to support those who enrol in reflecting on their educational or professional goals, to build their long-term motivation and to help them develop the competencies needed to pursue these goals with a view to reintegrate them into an educational or professional pathway after a limited period of time.[24] Those who join the Time-Out programme remain institutionally affiliated with a secondary school or one of the Centres for Vocational and Educational Training in SMEs (ZAWM) in Eupen and St. Vith. According to the Ministry, young people who join Time-Out remain in the programme for about 12 months on average.

Kaleido Ostbelgien

Kaleido Ostbelgien, the "Centre for the Healthy Development of Children and Youth", was created in 2014, resulting from the merger of a range of previously separate services, including the previous psycho-medical social centres (PMS), the school health centres and the child and family services. Kaleido is a multidisciplinary and intersectoral institution with a headquarter in Eupen and four local service points in Eupen, St. Vith, Kelmis and Büllingen.[25] Its work focuses on preventive (not therapeutic) work related to the healthy development of children and young adults aged 0-20. This encompasses information campaigns, counselling services and support (including pedagogical consultations) for students, parents, teachers and school leaders, career guidance, and the assessment of special education needs. (Kaleido's role in supporting students with SEN is described in detail in Chapter 3). Kaleido's counselling work is carried out by inter-disciplinary teams of social workers, psychologists, nurses, and doctors. Kaleido's services are free of charge for families (MDG, 2022[8]).

Performance of the education system

Education performance

Process quality in pre-primary education

There is growing evidence on the importance of high-quality pre-primary education and its positive impact on children's development (OECD, 2018[31]; Heckman, 2006[32]), including early childhood education and care (ECEC) provision for children under age 3 (Cadima et al., 2020[33]), particularly for the most disadvantaged children (Kottelenberg and Lehrer, 2017[34]). Students who had attended pre-primary education for longer also showed a better reading performance in PISA 2018 at age 15. On average across OECD countries, the mean reading score of students who had attended pre-primary education for one year (471 points), two years (491 points) or three years or more (493 points) was higher than the score of students who had not attended or had attended for less than one year (444 points). This difference was even more pronounced in Belgium as a whole, where students who had attended pre-primary education for three years or more scored 501 points compared to 391, for those who had attended less than a year (OECD, 2020, pp. 49, Table V.B1.2.4[13]).

However, the benefits of pre-primary education depend on the quality of the interactions between children and staff and children's exposure to stimulating developmental activities, among other factors (OECD, 2019[35]). Little information is available on children's learning and development outcomes at the pre-primary level in the German-speaking Community. Nevertheless, pre-primary schools are evaluated alongside the primary schools with which they are connected and data are regularly collected on several aspects related to process quality, such as the ratio of children to adults and group sizes in early-childhood education. Across the Community, there were on average 17.2 children per class in pre-primary education in the 2020/21 school year (MDG, 2022[8]).

In 2014, the Ministry commissioned a study on children's German language competency at key stage of schooling, including year 3 of pre-primary school (as well as years 3 and 6 of primary school). The study tested the passive and active vocabulary, listening comprehension, grammar and verbal expression of a sample of students. The study identified low levels of German language competency among a significant proportion of children and, overall, significant heterogeneity. Particularly children whose families did not speak German at home (and to a lesser extent whose families spoke German and other languages at home) had lower levels of German language competency at the end of pre-primary school.[26] Further improving language education and promoting multilingualism has since been included as one of the goals of the regional development concept for 2019-2024 (REK III) (MDG, 2019[36]).

Education performance is good overall but there are few top-performers and an increasing share of low-achievers

In 2018, 15-year-old students in the German-speaking Community that participated in the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) performed statistically significantly above the OECD average in mathematics (505 vs. 489) and at the average in science (483 score points vs. 489) as well as reading (483 vs. 487). Students in the German-speaking Community performed similarly to those in the French Community, but worse than those in the Flemish Community in all three subjects. They scored at the same level (i.e. statistically not distinguishable) as students in France, but fared worse than German students in reading and science and Dutch students in science and mathematics. Compared to 2015, 15-year-old students in 2018 performed significantly worse in reading and science, losing 18 and 22 score points respectively, while the performance in mathematics remained stable (OECD, 2019[37]). This drop in performance can be related to changes in education policy, the learning environment (both in and outside of school), the composition of the student population or a combination of all three.

In recent years, the share of low achievers has increased in reading and science with around 20% of 15-year-old students failing to perform at Level 2, which is considered the baseline level of proficiency that is required to participate fully in a knowledge-based society, compared to around 14% in 2015 (see Table 1.3). While the share of low achievers remains below the OECD average across the three domains of the PISA test, this implies that a significant proportion of students do not have basic literacy and numeracy skills and cannot engage in more complex reasoning to solve the kinds of problems that are routinely faced by today's adults in modern societies (OECD, 2019, p. 136[37]).

Table 1.3. Selected indicators of educational performance and equity, based on PISA 2018

	OECD average	German-speaking Community (2018)	German-speaking Community (2015)	French Community (2018)	Flemish Community (2018)
Percentage of top performers					
Mathematics	10.9	9.1	9.0 (17.3 in 2006)	11.8	18.8
Reading	8.7	5.4	5.4 / (9.7 in 2006)	6.7	11.7
Science	6.8	3.2	6.1 (11.8 in 2006)	5.0	10.4
Percentage of low achievers					
Mathematics	24.0	15.1	17.1 (16.9 in 2006)	22.8	17.3
Reading	22.6	20.6	14.3 (19.3 in 2006)	23.8	19.3
Science	22.0	20.0	14.2 (15.5 in 2006)	22.6	18.0
Difference in performance between the 90th and 10th percentiles (in score points)					
Mathematics	235	207	210 (251 in 2006)	246	254
Reading	260	243	224 (263 in 2006)	263	275
Science	244	233	222 (254 in 2006)	251	266
Percentage of variance in student performance explained by students' ESCS					
Mathematics	13.8	10.0	m	19.6	21.8
Reading	12.0	5.1	m	16.2	17.3
Science	12.8	7.0	m	18.8	20.0
Percentage of resilient students (reading)*	11.3	14.1	m	7.1	10.7
Difference in reading performance between immigrant and non-immigrant students after accounting for gender and ESCS (in score points)	24	32	m	11	32
Between school variation in reading performance (as percentage of total)	29.0	19.1	m	32.6	45.5
Within school variation in reading performance (as percentage of total)	70.8	65.2	m	60.6	60.3
Percentage of 15-year-old students that have repeated a year at least once	11.4	28.4	30.5	41.1	23.2

*Differences are not statistically significant
Note: Top performers = students performing at PISA Level 5 and above; Low achievers = students performing below PISA Level 2; ESCS refers to the PISA index of economic, social and cultural status; Resilient students = students in bottom quarter of ESCS who perform among the top 25% of students after accounting for ESCS; PISA 2006 scores for the German-speaking Community were not internationally adjudicated.
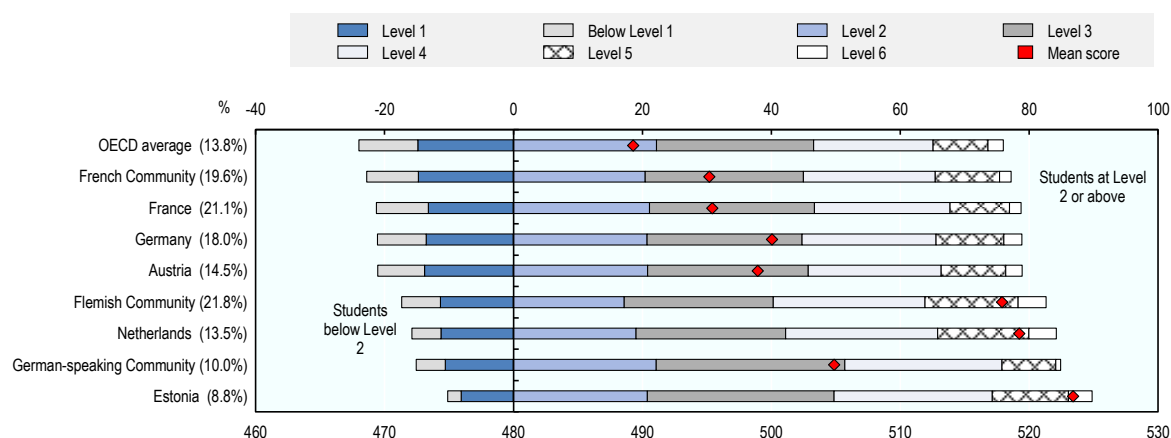Sources: OECD (2019[38]), *PISA 2018 Results (Volume II): Where All Students Can Succeed*, https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/b5fd1b8f-en, Tables II.B2.3/4/5, II.B1.2.3/4 and II.B1.3.1; OECD (2020[13]), *PISA 2018 Results (Volume V): Effective Policies, Successful Schools*, https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/ca768d40-en, Tables V.B1.2.9 and V.B2.2.9; OECD (2016[39]), *PISA 2015 Results (Volume I): Excellence and Equity in Education*, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264266490-en, Table B2.I.1/5/9; OECD (2016[27]), *PISA 2015 Results (Volume II): Policies and Practices for Successful Schools*, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264267510-en, Table B2.II.33.

The gap between high-performing and low-performing students in the German-speaking Community of Belgium has narrowed significantly between 2006 and 2018 and is below the OECD average as well as

the gaps observed in the Flemish and French Communities. As can be seen in Figure 1.6, this narrow performance distribution is not only explained by the small share of students at the bottom of the performance spectrum, but also by a relatively small share of top-performing students. In 2018, the share of students performing at proficiency Level 5 or above was close to the OECD average in mathematics (9.1% vs. 10.9%) and below the OECD average in reading (5.4% vs. 8.7%) and science (3.2% vs. 6.8%). The share of top-performers was also smaller than in the Flemish and French Communities, suggesting that a smaller share of young people in the German-speaking Community can successfully use their reading, mathematics and science competences to creatively and autonomously apply their knowledge to navigate through a volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous environment. It is particularly noteworthy that this share of top-performers has halved in all three domains since 2006 (see Table 1.3 and Annex 1.A).

Figure 1.6. Students' proficiency in mathematics, 2018

15-year-old students at each proficiency level and mean score (% of variance explained by ESCS in brackets)

Note: ESCS refers to the PISA index of economic, social and cultural status; Countries and economies are ranked in descending order of the percentage of students who performed at or above Level 2.
Source: OECD (2019[37]), *PISA 2018 Results (Volume I): What Students Know and Can Do*, https://doi.org/10.1787/5f07c754-en, Tables I.B2.9 and I.B1.9.

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The acquisition of French-language skills is an important condition for students' success in the local labour market and for students going on to pursue higher education in the French Community of Belgium. Authorities therefore emphasise the goal that all students should leave school with a good level of French language. The results of the latest DELF test in 2018/19 saw 81% of students at the end of primary school achieving their set goals (level A2), 78% of students at the end of vocational secondary education and technical qualifying classes (Level B1) and 80% of students at the end of general secondary education and technical transition classes (Level B2). Results were less satisfying for apprentices among whom participation was low and only 61% of those who took it passed Level B1 or B2 (Alliance Française de Bruxelles-Europe, 2019[40]). Nevertheless, in interviews with teachers and students, the OECD review team formed the impression that not all students were confident in their French-language skills, in particular their verbal expression, and that some students in secondary education did not feel adequately prepared to use French in a professional context or engage in French-language higher education.

Performance differences across schools are modest but there are considerable differences between tracks

Secondary schools in the German-speaking Community are more similar to one another, both in terms of their academic performance and their social composition, than in many OECD countries. Only 19.1% of the variation in performance is observed between schools, compared to 45.5% in the Flemish Community, 32.6% in the French Community and 29.0% on average across the OECD. This implies that, on average, one may observe more diversity in the performance of students who attend the same school than between two groups of students attending different schools.

The OECD's index of social inclusion further confirms that schools are more integrated in terms of their students' socio-economic profile than most OECD countries (OECD, 2019, p. Table II.B2.9[38]). Nevertheless, as can be expected in a highly differentiated and hierarchical school system, there are considerable performance differences across tracks. On average, 15-year-old students in the vocational track perform 93 score points lower in reading than their peers in general or modular tracks, significantly more than the OECD average of 68 points and the gap, for example, in Germany (68 points) (OECD, 2019, p. Table II.B2.16[38]). Socio-economic differences in student performance and inequities in the German-speaking Community's school system are discussed in Chapter 4 on equity and inclusion.

Access and participation

Access to early childhood education and care (ECEC) is widespread

Although precise data on enrolment in early childhood education and care in the German-speaking Community is not available,[27] participation at age 3 is estimated to be high. In 2018, 87.4% of 15-year-old students in the Community reported to have attended pre-primary education for at least three years, significantly above the OECD average of 56.4% and up from 81.6% in 2015 (OECD, 2016, p. Table B2.II.49[27]). In the rest of Belgium, as in most OECD countries with available data, enrolment rates of children aged 3 to 5 years have expanded over the past decade and reached near universal coverage in 2018 (98.5%) (OECD, 2020, pp. 183, Table B2.2[41]). Between PISA 2015 and 2018, the share of students who reported having attended pre-primary education for three years or more increased in 41 of 54 OECD countries and economies with available data (OECD, 2020, p. 49[13]). Given the benefits of pre-primary education, it is important to consider inequities in the access to and use of ECEC services. On average across OECD countries in 2018, 10% of socio-economically disadvantaged 15-year-olds had attended pre-primary education for less than one year or not at all, compared to only 3% of advantaged students. Although less pronounced, these differences also existed in Belgium as a whole (OECD, 2020, p. Table V.B2.2.1[13]).

The German-speaking Community has announced to lower the admission age for pre-primary school from three years to two and a half years, starting in 2024/25. Increasing enrolment at the early ages, particularly among low income and immigrant children can be a challenge, as can be seen in neighbouring countries and education systems. In the Flemish Community, for example, enrolment of children under the age of three is high, at 60%, but the gap in participation for children with a mother with a tertiary degree (65%) and without one (44%) is significant and twice as large as the EU average (OECD, 2018[42]). To increase enrolment among immigrant students the Flemish Community has introduced financial incentives to boost attendance for 3 and 4-year-olds in 2019 by granting a premium to schools for each enrolled child of non-Dutch speaking parents (OECD, 2020, p. 56[28]; European Commission, 2019[43]).

Early school leaving has been reduced but grade repetition rates remain high

Grade repetition is relatively frequent in the German-speaking Community, particularly in some schools. The Community's first regional development concept 2009-2014 (REK I) had included the target to reduce

the share of 15-year-olds enrolled below their age's typical grade level to the OECD average by 2020 (MDG, 2011[44]). Yet, the rate of grade repetition remains high and the Community's authorities do not regularly monitor the incidence of grade repetition as distinct from the share of students who are enrolled at a lower grade level, for other reasons, e.g. because they deferred their primary school entry or switched tracks. PISA 2018 data suggests that, among 15-year-old students in the German-speaking Community, 28.4% had repeated a grade at least once in primary, lower secondary or upper secondary school (OECD, 2020, pp. 308, Table V.B2.2.9[13]). This was significantly above the OECD average of 11.4%. In 2018, 13.0% of 15-year-olds reported to have repeated at least one grade in primary education and 12.6% to have repeated at least once in lower secondary education (compared to 6.7% and 5.5% respectively across the OECD) (see Figure 3.6).

Over the past decades, the Belgian Communities have made progress in reducing early school leaving, reducing the Belgium-wide drop-out rate from over 12% in the early 2000s to 8.6% in 2018, below the EU-wide objective of 10% (Governments of Belgium, 2020[45]). In 2018, according to principals' reports, the proportion of students in the final grade of school who left without a certificate that would allow them to enter post-school education or employment stood at 4.5% across Belgium (slightly below the OECD average of 4.8%) and there were no significant differences based on schools' socio-economic profile. This proportion was slightly lower in the German-speaking Community (3.4%) than in the Flemish or French Community (4.6% and 4.3% respectively) (OECD, 2020, p. Tables V.B1.2.12 and V.B2.2.12[13]).

The German-speaking Community has undertaken a number of efforts to reduce early school leaving in technical and vocational secondary education and students' premature termination of apprenticeships. These include the part-time vocational education, which is aimed at 15 to 18-year-olds who no longer can or wish to follow full-time education and who dropped out or do not fulfil the necessary requirements for an apprenticeship. It offers students another chance to obtain the necessary certificates to progress to the second or third year of vocational education or start an apprenticeship.[28] The *Time-Out* project (described further below) also seeks to prevent drop-out by supporting schools in an advisory capacity and offering to supervise students who left school with a view to reintegrate them at a later point.

Another project is the BIDA (*Berufliche Integration durch Ausbildungsbegleitung in der dualen Ausbildung*), a one-year pre-vocational programme supported by the European Social Fund. The programme combines three days of in-company training and two days of school-based learning per week and seeks to equip students with the social and personal skills needed to start an apprenticeship (Governments of Belgium, 2020[45]).

Attainment and labour market outcomes

Belgium as a whole has a highly qualified population and its general level of education has gradually increased over the past generation. In 2020, four out of five (80%) Belgians aged 25-64 had at least an upper secondary education (close to the OECD average of 83%) and 42% held a tertiary education degree (compared to an OECD average of 40% (OECD, 2021, pp. 48, Table A1.1[9]). According to the national labour force survey, the level of attainment in the German-speaking Community's working age population is slightly lower than the rest of the country. In 2020, 74% of 15-64-year-olds held at least an upper secondary qualification, but only 33% held a tertiary qualification (compared to 34% in the Walloon Region, 38% in the Flemish Region and 43% in the Brussels capital region) (see Figure 1.7). Nevertheless, the level of tertiary attainment in the German-speaking Community has improved significantly in recent years, from only 24% in this age group in 2015 (MDG, 2022[8]).

Figure 1.7. Level of educational attainment in the German-speaking Community and the Belgian Regions, 2020

Population aged 15-64
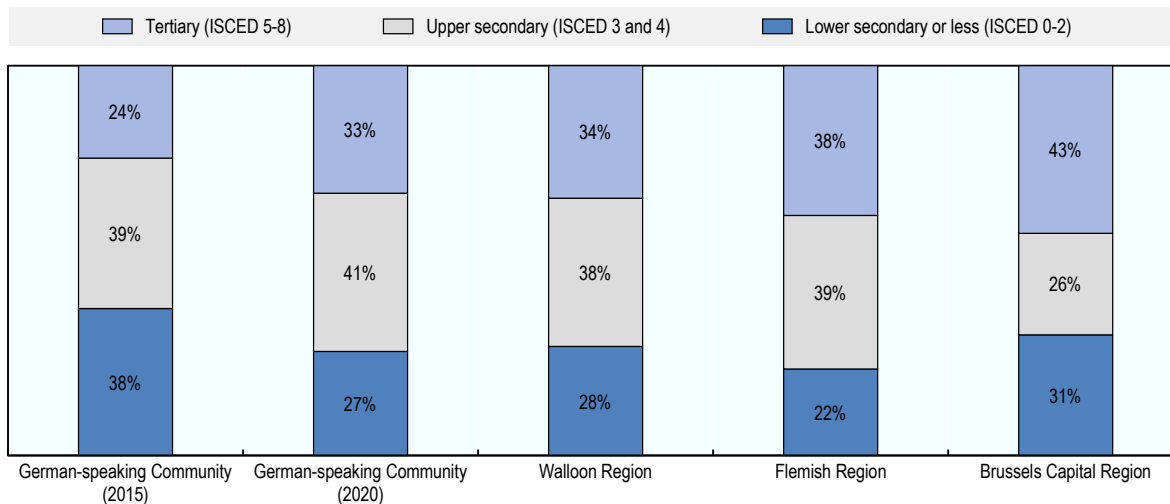
Note: Estimates based on a sample for the national labour force survey; All values for 2020, except where indicated; Values for the Walloon Region include the German-speaking Community.
Source: Ministry of the German-speaking Community (2022[8]) and Statistics Belgium (2021), *Education level of the Belgian population*, https://statbel.fgov.be/nl/themas/werk-opleiding/opleidingen-en-onderwijs/onderwijsniveau#figures (accessed on 15 December 2021).

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Among the younger generation of 25-34 year-olds across Belgium, 86% held at least an upper secondary qualification (the same as the OECD average), and 49% held a tertiary qualification in 2020 (compared to an OECD average of 45%) (OECD, 2021, pp. 49, Table A1.2[9]). In 2018, youth unemployment (among 15-24-year-olds) in Belgium stood at 15.8% (close to the EU average of 15.2%), but showed significant variations across the three Communities (OECD, 2020, p. 81[28]). According to national statistics, the unemployment rate among under 25-year-olds in the German-speaking Community stood at 8.1% in December 2019, significantly below the national rate (19%) and those in the French Community (28%) and the Flemish Community (13%) (Arbeitsamt der DG, 2020[46]). However, the relatively high outward mobility of young adults makes it difficult to track students' labour market outcomes and trajectories beyond secondary education.

Given the limited opportunities for higher education in the German-speaking Community, many prospective students leave to pursue higher education in the French-speaking Community or (increasingly, especially in the northern part of the Community) in Germany. According to anecdotal information from the employment agency, many students also choose to pursue apprenticeships or work in Germany after completing their school education, although some of them continue to reside in the German-speaking Community. While no data is available, the proportion of young adults leaving the German-speaking Community after completing their studies can be assumed to be substantial. At the same time, surveys among young adults suggest that many of the young adults leaving the German-speaking Community plan to return after completing their studies or after having gained some professional experience abroad (Doerflinger and Knipprath, 2018, pp. 18, 61[47]). Since the employment agency can only track the labour market integration of recent graduates who remain in the German-speaking Community (and there are obstacles to the exchange of data between Communities and with neighbouring countries), it is difficult to

draw reliable conclusions concerning students' labour market outcomes or further education, including potential differences across students groups and educational pathways.[29]

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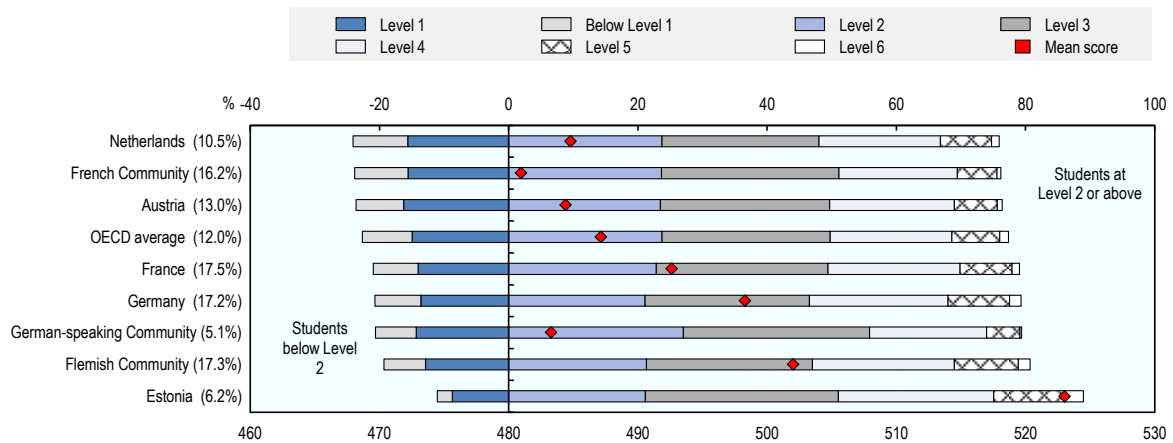
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Annex 1.A. Additional Figures

Annex Figure 1.A.1. Students' proficiency in reading, 2018

15-year-old students at each proficiency level and mean score (% of variance explained by ESCS in brackets)
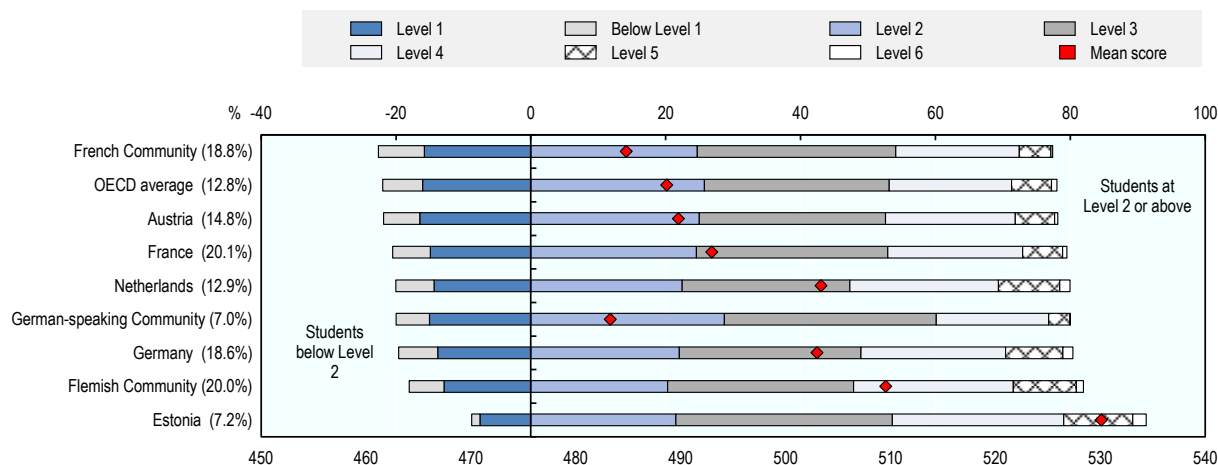

Note: ESCS refers to the PISA index of economic, social and cultural status; Countries and economies are ranked in descending order of the percentage of students who performed at or above Level 2.

Source: OECD (2019[37]), *PISA 2018 Results (Volume I): What Students Know and Can Do*, https://doi.org/10.1787/5f07c754-en, Tables I.B2.5 and I.B1.5.

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Annex Figure 1.A.2. Students' proficiency in science, 2018

15-year-old students at each proficiency level and mean score (% of variance explained by ESCS in brackets)

Note: ESCS refers to the PISA index of economic, social and cultural status; Countries and economies are ranked in descending order of the percentage of students who performed at or above Level 2.
Source: OECD (2019[37]), *PISA 2018 Results (Volume I): What Students Know and Can Do*, https://doi.org/10.1787/5f07c754-en, Tables I.B2.1 and I.B1.1.

StatLink 🖳 https://stat.link/nsqz75

Notes

[1] Besides the minister for education and research, the current executive government consists of a Prime Minister, who is also responsible for local administration and finances; a minister for health, social affairs, regional planning and housing; and a minister for culture, sport, employment and media.

[2] MDG (2021) *Organigramm des Ministeriums der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft*, https://www.ostbelgienlive.be/PortalData/2/Resources/downloads/divers/Organigramm_MDG_OSB_DE.pdf (accessed on 15 December 2021).

[3] Statistics Belgium (2021), *Structure of the Population*, https://statbel.fgov.be/en/themes/population/structure-population (accessed on 15 December 2021).

[4] Statistics Belgium (2021), *Structure of the Population*, http://www.ostbelgienstatistik.be/desktopdefault.aspx/tabid-2569/4686_read-32765/ (accessed on 15 December 2021).

[5] Data provided by the Ministry of the German-speaking Community.

[6] Eurostat (2021), *Gross domestic product (GDP) at current market prices by NUTS 3 regions*, https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=nama_10r_3gdp&lang=en (accessed on 15 December 2021).

[7] Statistikportal Ostbelgien (2021), *Bruttowertschöpfung und Bruttoinlandsprodukt*, https://ostbelgienstatistik.be/desktopdefault.aspx/tabid-2573/4672_read-32726/ (accessed on 15 December 2021).

[8] Statistikportal Ostbelgien (2021), *Bruttowertschöpfung und Bruttoinlandsprodukt*, https://ostbelgienstatistik.be/desktopdefault.aspx/tabid-2573/4672_read-32726/ (accessed on 15 December 2021).

[9] UOE education database (2021), *Enrolment by type of institution*, https://doi.org/10.1787/edu-data-en (accessed on 15 December 2021).

[10] The class council is comprised of the school leadership and all other personnel responsible for a given student.

[11] The members of each school's admissions council are appointed each year by the school leader from among the school's teaching and leadeship staff. The structure and role of Kaleido Ostbelgien, the "Centre for the Healthy Development of Children and Youth", is described in more detail below and in Chapter 3.

[12] Bischöfliches Institut Büllingen, Institut Maria-Goretti St. Vith, Robert-Schuman-Institut Eupen and Technisches Institut St. Vith.

[13] Authors' calculations based on OECD (2021) *Education at a Glance Database*, https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?QueryId=108594# (accessed on 15 December 2021).

[14] The official title of the 1998 Decree is *Dekret über den Auftrag an die Schulträger und das Schulpersonal sowie über die allgemeinen pädagogischen und organisatorischen Bestimmungen für die Regel- und Förderschulen* [Decree on the mandate of school providers and school staff as well as on general educational and organisational provisions for mainstream and special education schools] (Parlament der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft, 1998[15]).

[15] All core curricula can be accessed at Ministry of the German-speaking Community (2020), *Rahmenpläne*, https://www.ostbelgienbildung.be/desktopdefault.aspx/tabid-2221/4415_read-31778 (accessed on 15 December 2021).

[16] Ministry of the German-speaking Community (2021), *Lehrpläne*, https://ostbelgienbildung.be/desktopdefault.aspx/tabid-2488/4417_read-31783/ (accessed on 15 December 2021).

[17] Ministry of the German-speaking Community (2011), *Rahmenplan Fach Deutsch 1. Fremdsprache*, https://www.ostbelgienbildung.be/PortalData/21/Resources/downloads/schule_ausbildung/schulische_au sbildung/rahmenplaene_neu/RP_Deutsch_erste_Fremdsprache_PRIM.pdf (accessed on 15 December 2021).

[18] MDG (2013) *IMK-Leitfaden nach Unterrichtsstufen mit Handreichungen/Materialien für den Unterricht*, http://www.ostbelgienbildung.be/desktopdefault.aspx/tabid-2413 (accessed on 15 December 2021).

[19] Autonome Hochschule Ostbelgien (2020), *Kommentierung Unterrichtsbeobachtungsbogen*, https://static.ahs-ostbelgien.be/wp-content/uploads/2001ubb-kommentierung-abteilung-fr-externe-evaluation-deutschsprachig.pdf (accessed on 15 December 2021).

[20] For a full description of the inspectorate's responsibilities, see Parlament der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft (2013[48]) *Dekret über die Schulinspektion und die Schulentwicklungsberatung (25. Juni 2012)* [Decree on the school inspection and the school development counselling service]

21   Examples   include   the   programme   *Kultur   macht   Schule* (http://www.ostbelgienbildung.be/desktopdefault.aspx/tabid-3964/7104_read-41299/),   the *Schulsportprogramm*   (https://www.ostbelgiensport.be/desktopdefault.aspx/tabid-3388/5925_read-36721/), and a drama pedagogy project (*Theaterpädagogik*) run by AGORA and subsidised by the Education Minister.

22 Ministerium der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft (2021), *Familienportal - Hausaufgabenhilfe*, https://www.ostbelgienfamilie.be/desktopdefault.aspx/tabid-5917/10102_read-54896/ (accessed on 15 December 2021).

23 During a pilot phase carried out from 2010/11 to 2017/18, 10 students participated in Time-Out on average. (Figures provided by the Ministry).

24   Bildungsportal   der   Deutschsprachigen   Gemeinschaft   Belgiens   (2021),   *Time-out*, https://www.ostbelgienbildung.be/desktopdefault.aspx/tabid-3529/6363_read-37748/ (accessed on 15 December 2021).

25   Kaleido   (2021).   Tätigkeitsbericht   2021,   https://www.kaleido-ostbelgien.be/fileadmin/template/PDF/dokumente/ueberuns/Taetigkeitsbericht_Kaleido_2020_01.pdf (accessed on 15 December 2021).

26 The results of the study (McElvany [2014], "Sprachstanderhebung in der DG Belgien 2014: Kindergarten") have been shared with the authors.

27 The Ministry of the German-speaking Community estimates enrolment at age 3 to be around 96%, but there is some uncertainty around the enrolment rates since some students residing in the German-speaking Community attend pre-primary education in the French Community and vice versa. On average across the OECD, 87% of students aged 3-5 were enrolled in ECEC or primary education in 2019 (OECD, 2021, p. Table B2.1[9]).

28 Bildungsportal der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft Belgiens (2021), *Berufliche Ausbildung*, https://www.ostbelgienbildung.be/desktopdefault.aspx/tabid-2240/4392_read-31714/ (accessed on 15 December 2021).

29   Arbeitsamt   Ostbelgien   (2021),   *SAVE   -   Schulabgängervermittlung*, https://adg.be/desktopdefault.aspx/tabid-5403/9349_read-50719/ (accessed on 15 December 2021).
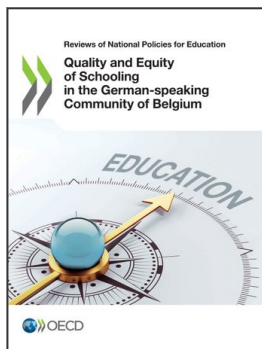
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