

COUNTRY POLICY REVIEW AND ANALYSIS

Belgium (Flemish community)



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Section 1: Country priorities for education

The text below presents the main country priorities in the field of education, with special attention to the development of inclusive education.

Country priorities

The coalition agreement of the new Flemish government (2019–2024) puts forward five major challenges to enhance excellence in education:

- focus on quality in education;
- address the shortage of teachers and their professional status;
- provide the right support for pupils in the right place;
- address school capacity shortage;
- increase study duration in higher education.

Quality in education is key for emancipation and raising the achievement of all pupils. Among other things the focus will be on the knowledge of the Dutch language and foreign languages. Pupils with language deficiency in Dutch will be offered a language integration trajectory to avoid learning disadvantage and early school leaving and to promote equal opportunities.

Special attention will also be given to pre-primary education, with more operating budget and additional childcare workers.

Because the upgrade of knowledge is important, alongside skills, attitudes and personality development, general standardised tests and upgraded attainment goals will be introduced. The tests will monitor and measure quality of education on micro, meso and macro levels. Schools with low achievement are obliged to engage in a guidance trajectory. The government determines what pupils need to know and need to be able to do, and schools and teachers are free to decide how to achieve these goals. Educational freedom goes together with responsibility for quality education and a goal-oriented use of people and budget to benefit the pupils. In secondary education a transparent structure of study fields shall be developed to ensure early choices for pupils in relation to their talents and interests. Bullying and early school leaving without a qualification must be reduced.

To make the **teaching profession** attractive again the focus will be on the teaching process in the classroom, with a reduction of administrative, organisational, policy and professional consultation tasks. Personnel and budget are used to facilitate teaching and learning in the classroom.

The support for teachers and directors must be strengthened. Therefore, pedagogical support services must work in a more efficient and effective way. The professional status of teachers must be restored, giving teachers ownership of their job again. The class council and the director of the school will get more decision-making authority. The



Country priorities

quality of teacher training will be monitored and adapted. Parental involvement and responsibility are necessary to create a strong education environment and study results.

In order to offer the **appropriate support to pupils** in the right place, the [Decree regarding measures for learners with specific educational needs](#) (M Decree) will be replaced by a 'support decree' for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) and their teachers. This will be a pragmatic and realistic implementation of support for pupils with SEN: special education if needed, inclusive education if possible. Special attention will be given to upgrading the basic care/support in mainstream schools. This could be done by implementing models such as Response to Instruction (RTI). RTI consists of permanent screening and monitoring of the achievement of pupils and intensive intervention and remediation in case of learning disadvantage. The upgrading of basic care/support in mainstream schools must consider the carrying capacity of teachers and the achieved learning progress of pupils.

Pupils with special educational needs can follow mainstream education with support. However, the Flemish government is convinced that special education is the best educational environment to offer the right support for many pupils with special educational needs. Therefore, the quality of special education will be strengthened. Mainstream schools can decide not to enrol pupils with severe support needs, when they are not able to follow the mainstream curriculum, unless the school and the parents agree on an individual adapted curriculum. In case of disagreement, the school and the teachers take the decision on the basis of an objective diagnostic process.

The support model that was introduced in 2017 has been evaluated. The results will be used to adjust the support mechanism in order to bring support quickly and efficiently to pupils and teachers. Support must be visible in the classroom and beneficial for pupils and teachers.

Special policy measures will be taken, targeted to the specific needs of gifted pupils. Gifted pupils will be challenged, and teachers will get the necessary training to recognise them. Teachers must also receive the necessary support and tools to adapt their teaching to the needs of these pupils.



Section 2: Analysis grid

Measure 1: To improve inclusive education and to ensure that good quality education is accessible for all

Agency recommendation	Findings
<p>1.1 There is a clearly stated policy for the promotion of quality in inclusive education.</p> <p><i>(Policy aims to widen access to education and to promote full participation and opportunities for all learners vulnerable to exclusion to realise their potential. Policy outlines how education policy-makers need to take responsibility for all learners.)</i></p>	<p>1.1.1 The Belgian Constitution (art. 24) stipulates freedom of school choice. This means that parents can enrol their child in a school in the community where they live. Access to education is free of charge until the end of compulsory education. (Decree on Basic Education, 1997, art. 27; Codex Secondary Education, art. 35)</p> <p>1.1.2 Art. 8 of the Decree on Basic Education (1997) defines mainstream basic education as a pedagogical and didactical environment where children can benefit from an uninterrupted learning process and the environment is adapted to the progress pupils make. Mainstream basic education is, in principle, responsible for the education of all children belonging to the corresponding age category. Permanent attention and extension of care must ensure the necessary support. To achieve this, schools have to work together with the pupil guidance centre and with parents in a systematic, planned and transparent way. Schools make reasonable accommodations, e.g. in terms of remediation, differentiation, compensation and dispensation measures, according to the needs of the pupils. The special needs of the pupils and the support needs of teachers and parents are central issues. The same responsibility is placed on secondary schools. (Codex Secondary Education, Art. 136/2)</p> <p>1.1.3 Mainstream schools for basic and secondary education are obliged to develop an equal educational policy, including a policy for foreign-language newcomers. (Decree on Basic Education, art. 138–139 sexies decies and art. 153 septies; Codex Secondary Education, art. 224–241/1 for mainstream secondary education, art. 317–322/1 for special secondary education)</p>



Agency recommendation	Findings
	<p>1.1.4 The Decree regarding measures for learners with specific educational needs (M Decree) (2014) guarantees the inclusion of learners in mainstream education. It is no longer based on a purely medical model. It is more focused on providing adapted support for each learner's SEN. (Decree on Basic Education, art. 15 and 16; Codex Secondary Education, art. 294 and art. 352)</p> <p>Pupils who can work within the mainstream curriculum with reasonable accommodations receive an unrestricted entitlement to enrol in ordinary education through the M Decree. These pupils have a motivated statement (<i>gemotiveerd verslag</i>) from the pupil guidance centre. When schools are unable to work with pupils with SEN within the mainstream curriculum, they develop an individual adapted curriculum (related to the mainstream curriculum). Pupils get a statement (<i>verslag</i>) and can remain in the mainstream school or enrol in a special school. The M Decree contains a framework for special schools based on types of disability as a parallel and equal system to mainstream education. (Decree on Basic Education, art. 10 and 37/48; Codex Secondary Education, art. 259)</p> <p>1.1.5 The Decree on pupil guidance in basic education, secondary education and the pupil guidance centres (April 2018) stipulates the different roles of schools, pedagogical counselling services and pupil guidance centres with regard to student counselling. The pupil is always at the centre. This decree promotes the total development of all students, enhances their well-being, prevents unqualified school leaving and creates more equal opportunities. Student counselling has four components: educational, career, learning and study counselling, psycho-social functioning. These components always have an integral and holistic approach and start from a 'continuum of care'. This continuum consists of basic care, increased care, expanded care and an individually adapted curriculum.</p> <p>1.1.6 In September 2017, a new support model was introduced to assist mainstream basic and secondary schools to deal with pupils with SEN (Decree on Basic Education, art. 172 quinquies and 172 quinquies/1; Codex Secondary Education, art. 314/8 and 314/9). The new support model has been evaluated. The results will be used to adjust the support mechanism to bring support quickly and efficiently to pupils and teachers. Support must be visible in the classroom and beneficial for pupils and teachers. (Coalition Agreement 2019–2024, Flemish Government). (See also 1.9)</p>



Agency recommendation	Findings
	<p>1.1.7 The Coalition Agreement of the new Flemish Government emphasises excellence in education as an important lever for individual development and to move forward as a society. The promotion of quality in education is one of the objectives to enhance excellence. Knowledge of the Dutch language is seen as an essential condition to achieve learning gain. Specific support measures will be taken to avoid learning disadvantages and early school leaving. Standardised tests must provide the necessary data to improve at pupil, school and system level.</p> <p>At the same time the Flemish government wants to strengthen the quality of special education, and special schools will keep their place in the school system due to their specific expertise. Pupils with SEN can follow mainstream education with support, but the Flemish government is convinced that special education is the best educational environment to offer the right support for many pupils with special educational needs (Coalition Agreement 2019)</p> <p>1.1.8 The Flemish Government holds on to the principal of inclusive education, but wants to move forward in a pragmatic and realistic way. By delivering good education for as many pupils as possible, the government wants to keep pupils in mainstream education and avoid referral to special education. Investment in basic care by introducing models like RTI must keep most of the pupils within the mainstream curriculum. (Decision of the Flemish Government, October 2019)</p>
<p>1.2 Legislation and policy are consistent with the principles of the UNCRC and the UNCRPD.</p> <p><i>(Legislation and policy and upholds the right of all learners to full participation in school with their own local peer group.)</i></p>	<p>1.2.1 Belgium signed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) in 2007 and ratified it in 2009. The M Decree (2014) is based on the existing legal framework of the UNCRPD and the Flemish Framework Decree on equal opportunities and equal treatment (Flemish Parliament Act July 2008). It transposes these basic principles into the legislation on education by incorporating the right to reasonable accommodation (Decree on Basic Education, art. 8; Codex Secondary Education, art. 136/2).</p> <p>The M Decree does not contain mechanisms for a systemic change to move from a two track system of mainstream and special education towards an inclusive education system. Pupils with special educational needs can follow mainstream education with support but the Flemish government is convinced that</p>



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	<p>special education is the best educational environment to offer the right support for many pupils with special educational needs. Therefore, the quality will be strengthened. Mainstream schools can decide not to enrol pupils with severe support needs who are unable to follow the mainstream curriculum, unless the school and the parents agree on an individual adapted curriculum. In case of disagreement, the school and the teachers take the decision on the basis of an objective diagnostic process (Coalition Agreement 2019–2024, Flemish Government). See also 1.1.4 on the rights of pupils to enrol in mainstream education.</p> <p>1.2.2 When parents, schools or pupil guidance centres disagree on the identification of a child on the basis of a statement (<i>verslag</i>) for an individual adapted curriculum (IAC), they can appeal to the Flemish mediation commission (<i>Vlaamse bemiddelingscommissie</i>). This commission was created by the M Decree (2014, art. II.4 and III.47) and made operational by the Decision of the Flemish Government, 10 July 2015 (art. 4–16).</p> <p>1.2.3 If the accommodations needed for pupils to work within the mainstream curriculum are considered unreasonable or insufficient, they still have the right to enrol in a mainstream school. Parents can ask the school to put an IAC in place for their child. This right of enrolment goes together with the right of the school management to terminate the learner’s enrolment on the basis of a judgement about the unreasonable character of the accommodations needed for the IAC, setting out the reasons. These pupils have a statement (<i>verslag</i>) from the pupil guidance centre. In weighing up whether this is (dis)proportionate, the criteria set out in the Protocol of 19 July 2007 on the concept of reasonable accommodation in Belgium should be applied (UNCRPD: Reply to issues, p. 37). The criteria include financial impact and organisational impact. If the necessary accommodations are evaluated as disproportionate, mainstream schools can unsubscribe a pupil with a statement at the end of the current school year. In those cases, parents often have no other choice than to enrol their child in a special school.</p>



Agency recommendation	Findings
	<p>1.2.4 The M Decree provides parents of children with SEN with the right to appeal to a Student Rights Commission (<i>Commissie inzake leerlingenrechten</i> – CLR) if they disagree with a mainstream school’s refusal to enrol their child. The CLR is comprised of experts in equality and education law and representatives from disability groups, schools and school staff. It was created by the Parliamentary Act of 2002 on equal educational opportunities. (Decree on Basic Education, art. 37/69 and 37/70; Decree of Equal School Opportunities, 28 June 2002). If parents agree, the CLR can refer a case to the Centre for Equal Opportunities (UNIA) which is the independent organisation in Belgium which follows up the implementation of the UNCRRPD. Parents can also go to court if they disagree with the decision of the school board concerning the refusal of their child. (Flanders also ratified the optional protocol of the UNCRRPD).</p> <p>1.2.5 On 20 July 2018, the Flemish government subsidised the creation of a Flemish participation council for people with disabilities. The council acts as a representative discussion partner for Flemish policy development, implementation and evaluation in subjects concerning people with disabilities.</p>
<p>1.3 The concept of inclusion is clarified in education policy as an agenda that increases quality and equity for all learners. <i>(Policy aims to address underachievement of all vulnerable groups including children with disabilities.)</i></p>	<p>1.3.1 There is a policy on equal education opportunities. A financing system also provides schools with a higher percentage of pupils from lower socio-economic backgrounds with more financial means than other schools.</p> <p>1.3.2 The M Decree, the decree on measures for children with special educational needs (March 2014), introduced a ‘continuum of care’ that schools need to embed in their ‘care policy’. (Degree on Basic Education, art. 3)</p> <p>1.3.3 The Decree on pupil guidance in primary education, secondary education and the pupil guidance centres (April 2018) made the schools’ policy on pupil guidance one of the recognition conditions for schools. A school’s pupil guidance policy includes their care policy and equal educational opportunities policy. (See also the Decree on Basic Education, art. 47/ter; Codex Secondary Education, art. 123/21–24)</p>



Agency recommendation	Findings
	<p>1.3.4 The Coalition Agreement of the Flemish Government (October 2019) put forward a new ‘Guidance decree for pupils with special needs’, which will replace the M Decree. With the new decree the Flemish government wants to evolve towards inclusive education but in a pragmatic and realistic manner. One of the aims is to keep as many pupils as possible in mainstream schools by offering good quality education. Special education remains a separate track that will be strengthened in quality where needed.</p>
<p>1.4 Legislation and policy for inclusive education is cross-sectoral.</p> <p><i>(Policy outlines procedures to ensure the efficient co-ordination of services, as well as clearly defining roles and responsibilities.)</i></p>	<p>1.4.1. Since 2008 there has been a Commission on equal opportunities. The commission is installed by the Ministry of Equal Opportunities. Policy-makers (at civil service level) of different ministries are involved in the commission: education, welfare, work, etc. The commission focuses on equal opportunities for a wide range of minority groups, including people with disabilities. (Decree concerning a framework for an equal opportunity and equal treatment policy, art. 12)</p> <p>1.4.2 Education and Work: The Ministry of Education and Ministry of Work developed joint policy and legislation concerning dual learning and working trajectories for secondary school pupils. For learners with SEN there is a dual learning-working programme, also within the context of special schools in forms 3 and 4. Form 3 (accessible for types 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9) aims at acquisition of knowledge and skills with a view to integration into a sheltered living and working environment. Form 4 (accessible for types 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9) aims at acquisition of the same knowledge and skills as mainstream secondary education.</p> <p>The Decree on dual learning in mainstream secondary education was adopted in parliament on 21 March 2018. Dual learning will also be possible in forms 3 and 4 in special needs secondary education. The Flemish Parliament approved the decree on 21 November 2018. From 2019–2020 onwards, all schools can apply to organise courses in dual learning for pupils aged 15 or older.</p> <p>1.4.3 Education and Welfare: Within the Ministry of Welfare there is policy development on person-following financing for children with disabilities. Future policy on person-following financing for children will have an impact on education, both for pupils who are currently in special schools and make use of welfare facilities, and for children with special needs in mainstream schools who qualify for a</p>



Agency recommendation	Findings
	<p>person-following budget. (Decision of the Flemish Government concerning the development of a person-following budget for minors with a disability, 29 May 2019)</p> <p>A new type of support for children with special needs, global individual support (GIO), was developed by Welfare in collaboration with Education. GIO is directly accessible support that can be used for young children in inclusive contexts, with a focus on moments of transition (from home to childcare, from childcare to pre-primary school, from pre-primary school to primary school), as these are vulnerable moments in inclusive trajectories.</p> <p>Colleagues in the department of Welfare were involved in creating a reform of the pupil guidance system in Flanders. The operational decree was legislated by both the Minister of Education and the Minister of Welfare. (Decree on pupil guidance, April 2018)</p>
<p>1.5 There is a long-term multi-level policy framework for implementing quality inclusive education at national, regional and / or organisational levels.</p>	<p>1.5.1 Education is a jurisdiction of the Flemish government, therefore all policy concerning education and inclusive education is developed at regional level. There is no general framework for implementing quality inclusive education. There is a framework on quality of education in general (see 1.5.3).</p> <p>1.5.2 The Decree on quality of education (2009) outlines the framework for schools and the pupil guidance centre. Every six years, the education inspectorate visits every school and pupil guidance centre. The Decree on quality of education outlines that every school and pupil guidance centre must have an internal quality framework. However, the schools and centres themselves can choose how to formalise this framework. This because of the freedom of education, included in the constitution.</p> <p>1.5.3 The education inspectorate drew up a frame of reference that outlines the expectations for schools and pupil guidance centres. The development and progress of every pupil is a central element in the framework, as well as pupil guidance.</p> <p>1.5.4 In 2014, the M Decree was introduced. It developed a framework for inclusion of children with special needs (e.g. the obligation for schools to work with a continuum of care and the right for pupils with special needs to enrol in mainstream schools). The M Decree will disappear and a new Guidance decree for pupils with special needs will be put in place (Coalition Agreement October 2019). The new</p>



Agency recommendation	Findings
	<p>legal framework will be implemented in the 2021–2022 school year. (Note of the Flemish Government, 25 October 2019)</p>
<p>1.6 Policy outlines how education policy-makers need to take responsibility for all learners.</p>	<p>1.6.1 Mainstream schools must implement reasonable adaptations. To a large extent these are not a matter of resources but of training and education of teaching staff. (M Decree, GR SOC maart 2018, p. 2)</p> <p>1.6.2 The M Decree outlines the obligation for schools to follow a continuum of care and implement reasonable adjustments for pupils with special needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuum of care: The policy on pupil guidance gives substance to each phase in the continuum of care. The school is committed to this by developing a broad basic care provision for all pupils. In this basic care provision, actions are formulated to enhance all pupils’ development, as well as actions that are necessary to professionalise the teachers and the school with regard to pupil guidance. Furthermore, the school offers increased care to pupils for whom the broad basic care provision is not sufficient. In this phase schools must make clear internal agreements about who takes on which roles and tasks. Pupils who need an individual adapted curriculum (IAC) can be referred to special education if the mainstream school evaluates the necessary adaptations recognising the IAC as unreasonable. • Reasonable adjustments: Every school is obliged to implement reasonable adjustments for pupils with special educational needs. ‘Reasonableness’ is judged according to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ financial and organisational impact of the adaptation; ○ how long and how often they are used; ○ impact on environment and on others; ○ presence or absence of equivalent alternatives; ○ qualitative impact on life of people concerned. (M Decree, GR SOC maart 2018, p. 2)



Agency recommendation	Findings
	<p>1.6.3 The Decree on pupil guidance in basic education, secondary education and the pupil guidance centre (April 2018) stipulates the different roles of schools, pedagogical counselling services and pupil guidance centre with regard to pupil counselling (see 1.1). The school has primary responsibility for pupil guidance and is in charge of directing the entire pupil guidance process. The decree prescribes that every school develops, implements and evaluates a policy on pupil guidance. It is important that the policy is supported by the entire school staff and by the pupils and parents. For this reason, it is essential to establish, implement and evaluate the policy on pupil guidance in a participatory manner. In the future, pupil guidance will become a pre-condition for recognition of the school, which is important for schools. It will thus become part of the global policy on quality assurance of each school and will be evaluated by the Education Inspection.</p> <p>1.6.4 Legislation also contains rules about preventive suspension and temporary and final exclusion of pupils. (Decree on Basic Education, art. 32 and 33; Codex Secondary Education, art. 123/8)</p>
<p>1.7 Policy has the goal of supporting all teachers to have positive attitudes towards all learners.</p>	<p>1.7.1 The support model that was implemented in 2017 aims to support teachers in mainstream schools in the guidance of and attitude towards pupils with special needs.(Decree on Basic Education, art. 172 quinquies and 172 quinquies/1; Codex Secondary Education, art. 314/8 and 314/9)</p> <p>1.7.2 In Flanders there are two sets of competence frameworks, introduced by law in 1996 and reviewed in 2007, as a result of the new decree on teacher education of 2006.These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a career profile: a competence framework for experienced teachers, who should strive towards these competences throughout their career (Besluit van de Vlaamse Regering van 5 oktober 2007 betreffende het beroepsprofiel van de leraar); • basic competences: a competence framework which describes what a beginning teacher should be able to know and to do. These competences must be attained at the end of initial teacher education (Besluit van de Vlaamse Regering van 5 oktober 2007 betreffende de basiscompetenties van de leraren).



Agency recommendation	Findings
	<p>The main purpose of these competence frameworks is to provide a guideline for professional development, enhance quality, create a common language and stimulate teachers' responsibility and awareness of their own professional development. Both the career profile and the basic competences are structured by the same set of ten job components/specifications and contain several elements that support positive attitudes towards all learners. The government expects teachers to be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• design a powerful learning environment that takes the heterogeneity of the learners into account;• cope with the diversity in the group;• communicate with learners and parents from diverse (learning) backgrounds;• implement care broadening initiatives in consultation with the team and align them with the overall approach of the school, etc. <p>1.7.3 Teachers do not need to become specialists in (learning) disorders or disabilities. The specific knowledge is often already available in mainstream schools with the support staff from special schools, the special educational needs co-ordinators and other learning support staff. In order to adapt teaching to support all learners, teachers need some basic competencies. These include the ability to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• get a clear picture of all learners' needs;• develop and/or choose the appropriate learning targets;• provide reasonable accommodations, such as remediation, differentiation, using compensatory tools, dispensation and adapting the curriculum. <p>(Raising the Achievement of All Learners in Inclusive Education – Belgium (Flemish community) Report).</p> <p>1.7.4 The Flemish Minister of Education initiates tutoring around key themes each year. In 2015–2017 the key theme was the implementation of the M Decree: support in schools and development of staff competencies. The school management's role was crucial in this tutoring. In 2018–2020 the key theme</p>



Agency recommendation	Findings
	<p>was 'supporting the support staff'. In the support model, support staff receive training and professional development in order to enhance quality of support in mainstream schools and for regular teachers.</p> <p>1.7.5 The Ministry of Education communicates through circular letters, a weekly newsletter and its website. When adaptations in the regulation are approved, they are announced to all the schools via these methods. One of the topics of communication is providing of good practices concerning the M Decree.</p>
1.8 Policy requires learning material to be accessible.	<p>1.8.1 The Flemish Government finances special educational resources, such as technical equipment and adapted school materials that learners with disabilities in mainstream primary, secondary or higher education need (e.g. conversion to (digital) Braille for pupils with visual impairment, Braille reading rules, interpreters for the deaf and hard of hearing, conversions or adaptations of textbooks or study material to (digital) large print, magnifying copies, copies of notes from fellow learners, speech-to-text device, reading magnifiers, etc.).</p> <p>1.8.2 With the start of the M Decree, reasonable adaptations were introduced as a right for pupils with special needs. The school has the requirement to set up reasonable adaptations for a pupil, if necessary (see 1.6).</p> <p>1.8.3 In 2016 the target group for interpreter support and a more uniform way of working across different policy areas for this group was defined with education, welfare and work. This required amendments to article 91 of the primary education decree and article 357 of the Codex Secondary Education. A new joint regulation with education and welfare was also written in 2016.</p> <p>1.8.4 The Flemish Ministry of Education finances the ADIBib project to create opportunities for learners with (any) written communication impairments to fully participate in social life and achieve higher academic goals (unrestricted by their impairment). The project targets primary and secondary education learners with serious reading and writing disorders. Eureka ADIBib makes digital versions of ordinary, printed textbooks available to these learners. The adapted versions must be usable irrespective of the user's software application. The participation of publishers was key to make a wider selection of</p>



Agency recommendation	Findings
	<p>materials available to learners with learning disabilities. Accordingly, a long-term agreement between ADIBib and publishers was drafted.</p> <p>In 2017 ADIBib expanded with the Leesvoor Vlaanderen programme. An annual additional budget is allocated for software purchase by pupils. This makes it possible for these pupils in primary and secondary education to use reading software free of charge. The school or parents must register the learner and the learner must prove their rights with a specific certificate.</p>
<p>1.9 Policy describes an effective framework of support for schools to implement inclusive education.</p> <p><i>(Support structures focus on different forms of educational resource centres that are locally organised to offer support to individual or clusters of schools.)</i></p>	<p>1.9.1 The M Decree stresses the importance of strong support for schools and teachers in order to achieve the inclusion of learners with SEN in mainstream system. (National Overview, p. 15)</p> <p>1.9.2 The Decree regarding the quality of education (2009) sets out support to school from Pedagogical Counselling Services (PBD) and Pupil Guidance Centres (PGC). PBD fosters support networks, supports and trains managers and supports professional capabilities. (RA report, p. 9)</p> <p>1.9.3 The reform of the pupil guidance system in Flanders was adopted by the Decree of 27 April 2018 of the Flemish Parliament, implemented on 1 September 2018. Pupil guidance in Flanders has been reformed with the aim of (more) clearly demarcating the roles and responsibilities of the various actors concerned: schools, PGCs and PBDs. It is important that the elaboration of a high-quality and integrated policy on pupil guidance becomes a pre-condition for recognition for the schools.</p> <p>1.9.4 Every school must appoint a pupil guidance officer. The school itself interprets the role and tasks of this officer its own way, depending on the school context and the needs of its learner population and teachers. In addition, the school can rely on the pedagogical counselling services or on other external professionalisation services to strengthen its policy on pupil guidance. Before the reform this was a shared task with the PGC. Since 1 September 2019 it is an exclusive task for the PBD.</p>



Agency recommendation	Findings
	<p>1.9.5 The PGCs remain partners with which schools are obliged to co-operate. PGCs must always focus their activities on the pupil. Every school makes an alliance agreement with the PGC. This agreement is wider than the tutoring plan. On the basis of a new frame of reference the education inspectorate will perform audits in the PGCs.</p> <p>1.9.6 In September 2017 a new support model was introduced to assist mainstream basic and secondary schools to deal with pupils with special educational needs (Decree on Basic Education, art. 172quinquies and 172quinquies/1; Codex Secondary Education, art. 314/8 and 314/9). A mainstream school can make use of support, starting from the extended care phase (of the care continuum). The model consists of two tracks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • support for mainstream schools with pupils with mental, physical, visual or auditory impairment and pupils with speech and language development problems. Schools choose one or more special schools to co-operate with, together with parents and the pupil guidance centre; • support for mainstream schools with pupils with severe learning problems, behavioural or emotional problems and pupils with autism. Mainstream and special schools work together in support networks. Support can be child-, teacher- or school-centred and is based on the support needs mainstream schools formulate together with parents and the pupil guidance centre.
<p>1.10 Policies outline a continuum of support for children and young people in schools, to meet the full diversity of learners' needs.</p>	<p>1.10.1 Each child has the right to follow mainstream education. A school may refer a child to special education, if the reasonable adaptations required by the child are disproportionate. Parents can choose to refer their child to mainstream or special education (Decree on Basic Education; Codex Secondary Education).</p> <p>1.10.2 Flanders has a firmly established system of special education. The Flemish Government enabled 'Integrated Education' (GON) for specific groups of pupils with disabilities in 1980 and 'Inclusive Education' (ION) in 1999, whereby a special education teacher provides additional support to a pupil in mainstream education. Furthermore, the Decree on Elementary Education (1997), the Codex Secondary Education (2010) and the Codex Higher Education (2013) provide pupils with specific educational needs,</p>



Agency recommendation	Findings
	<p>through the Cell Special Educational learning tools, with hours of sign language, interpretation support, Braille conversions, adapted furniture in schools and dyslexia software, among other things. (RA report, p. 12)</p> <p>1.10.3 The continuum of support, implemented by the M Decree, consists of four phases of care for pupils (basic care, increased care, expanded care and individually adapted curriculum – see 1.1). The continuum of support is also the framework schools and pupil guidance centres use to decide whether the support model is needed or not.</p> <p>1.10.4 The reform of the pupil guidance system in Flanders aims to clarify the roles of all actors involved in the continuum of support for learners in schools. The school is the first actor responsible for pupil guidance. The school elaborates a high-quality and integrated policy on pupil guidance and is responsible for implementing and evaluating this policy. This applies to the four domains of pupil guidance (learning and studying; school career; preventive health care; socio-emotional development) and for all phases of the care continuum.</p> <p>1.10.5 The Decree regarding pupil guidance (Art. 2, 99, 110) sets out support to school from Pedagogical Counselling Services (PBD) and Pupil Guidance Centres (PGC) in the whole pupil guidance process. The decree outlines the role and tasks of every actor for all phases of the care continuum.</p>
1.11 Policy outlines strategies for awareness-raising with all stakeholders in inclusive education.	<p>1.11.1 Different instruments are used to inform different stakeholders (schools, teachers, parents) about new legislation, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Update to the M Decree• Circular letters, e.g. support model• Websites, e.g. for parents• the tools of the communication division of the Ministry.



Agency recommendation	Findings
	<p>1.11.2 UNIA issued an information brochure for schools and parents about the right to enrol a child with special needs in mainstream education. ('At the school of your choice with a disability', UNIA October 2016, third edition)</p> <p>1.11.3 A school for higher education (Artevelde, Gent 2013) issued a brochure about reasonable accommodations in education.</p> <p>1.11.4 Since the implementation of the M Decree, competence development projects have been run for schools, teachers and support staff (priority competence development initiated by the Ministry of Education). (See 1.7)</p>
<p>1.12 Policy outlines the development of the role of special schools as a resource to increase the capability of mainstream schools and improve support for all learners.</p> <p><i>(The specialist knowledge and skills of special school / resource centre are maintained and further developed so as to enhance support for learners, such as those with low-incidence disabilities.)</i></p>	<p>1.12.1 In the support model that was installed in September 2017 (see 1.9), special schools were given an important role in supporting mainstream schools in guiding pupils with SEN. Supporters in the former systems of 'integrated education' and 'inclusive education' and staff from special schools could choose to become supporters in the new support model. Due to extra budget invested in the support model, new staff also entered the support model.</p> <p>In total there are around 2,300 full-time equivalent support staff in the support model. They are hired by special schools to provide support in mainstream schools. (Decree on Basic Education, art. 172quinquies and 172quinquies/1; Codex Secondary Education, art. 314/8 and 314/9)</p>



Measure 1 evaluative comments

In Flanders, equal education opportunities and inclusion are seen as different goals with different policies. Equal education opportunities mainly refer to children from families with a lower socio-economic status and pupils with a migration background. Inclusion is focused upon pupils with special needs.

Recently, the ministry received legal advice (KULeuven, 2019) on art. 24 of the UNCRPD and General Comment n°4 and the impact on the Flemish education system and the M Decree in particular. The advice recognises that the M Decree and the amendments so far aim to reach the goals of inclusive education, and that it is currently the most substantial legal document. However, it is insufficient, not on the level of reasonable accommodations, nor on the level of progressive realisation of inclusive education:

1. The legal framework doesn't create a system change where mainstream and special education turn into an inclusive education system. Mainstream and special education are considered on an equal basis, although State parties who ratified the UNCRPD are responsible for moving towards qualitative inclusive education.
2. Parents have an equal choice between mainstream or special education for children who cannot follow the mainstream curriculum, which is not in line with the UNCRPD. Inclusive education depends on the choice of parents and the willingness of mainstream schools to make the necessary reasonable accommodations.
3. Transfer of budget and expertise from special to mainstream schools is the result of the abovementioned choices of parents and schools. At the same time, the Flemish community is obliged to invest all the budgets available to realise inclusive education in a progressive way.

Measure 2: To support improved co-operation, including greater involvement of parents and local community

Agency recommendation	Findings
2.1 The full involvement of families in all educational processes is outlined in legislation and policy.	<p>2.1.1 School boards must take into account parents' expectations and actively involve them in consultation and decision-making.</p> <p>Under the M Decree, a pupil can only enter special education after an official statement of the pupil guidance centre (PGC) in charge. Parents are an important stakeholder in the action-oriented diagnostic process, set up by the PGC. Only PGCs can give permission for a pupil to enter special education. This is</p>



Agency recommendation	Findings
	<p>formalised in a 'statement' (<i>verslag</i>). This statement is the result of an elaborated action-oriented diagnostic process, of which medical labelling is only part. Depending on the type of disability, different sorts of statement are delivered, giving access (but no obligation) to a specific type of special education.</p> <p>If refused a mainstream school placement, parents can complain to the Commission on Students Rights, which includes representatives of people with disabilities. The Commission will consider the appeal and the reasons given for terminating the enrolment. The Commission may suggest a sanction to the Flemish Government, and/or, if the parents agree, refer the case to the inter-federal Centre for Equal Opportunities. (Source: Replies by Belgium to the list of issues CRPD/C/BEL/Q/1/Add.1, 2014, p. 37)</p> <p>2.1.2 One of the competencies of the professional profile of teachers (Decision of the Flemish Government, 2007) is teachers acting as partners of parents (<i>typefunctie 6</i>). They must deal discreetly with information about pupils, be able to give information and advice to parents, involve parents in classroom and school practice, respect diversity among parents, be able to talk to parents about education and parenting and to communicate with parents from different language backgrounds.</p> <p>2.1.3 Since the Decree on participation at school and the Flemish education advisory board (2004), schools are obliged to organise a school board (<i>schoolraad</i>) with a delegation of parents, school personnel and the local community. In secondary education a delegation of pupils also takes part in the school board.</p> <p>2.1.4 Legislation about the new support model states that parents should be involved in formulating the support needs of the pupil, teacher and school and in the choice of the school for special education that will deliver support to the mainstream school. If there is discussion, the parents' choice is decisive. (Decree on Basic Education, art. 172quinquies/1; Codex Secondary Education, art. 314/9)</p> <p>2.1.5 Representatives of parents and advocacy organisations can also take part – on invitation – in steering groups with stakeholders of school organisations, trade unions and pupil guidance centres. These groups follow up the implementation of the M Decree and the support model. (Decree on Basic Education, art. 172quinquies; Codex Secondary Education, art. 314/8)</p>



Agency recommendation	Findings
<p>2.2 Policy for inclusive education places learners and their families at the centre of all actions.</p>	<p>2.2.1 The Decree on the legal position of minors in youth welfare (art. 5) states that the interest of the young person is the most important consideration in delivering youth assistance. This Decree applies to the work of the pupil guidance centres. Pupil guidance must also be developed in a participative way.</p> <p>2.2.2 Pupil guidance centres aim to support the well-being of pupils. In performing this task, the centre puts the pupil's interests first. The centre:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • works alongside the school and parents. The centre, the school and the parents have a common responsibility; • counsels and guides. The centre's guidance is preventive if possible and corrective if needed. The centre works in a systematic, structured and transparent way with the school and parents. • is multidisciplinary and approaches the pupils from a somatic, psychological, pedagogical and social perspective. (Raising Achievement report, p. 10/11)
<p>2.3 Sharing information among professionals and families is a policy priority.</p>	<p>2.3.1 The government expects teachers to communicate with learners and parents from diverse (learning) backgrounds. (Career profile and the basic competences of teachers – see 1.7)</p> <p>2.3.2 The Ministry of Education subsidises three associations for parental involvement. These associations support local parent school involvement and participation of parents in the school community. They inform parents about the educational system and policy choices and reforms, and capture the voice of parents through surveys, communicating their positions towards the schools and the government. The Ministry expects the three associations for parental involvement to put a special focus on the involvement and participation of parents of vulnerable groups. Since the beginning of the M Decree, the minister has asked the associations to pay particular attention to communication and raising awareness of inclusion and SEN, and to support parents of children with SEN. (Decree on the financing of associations of parental involvement, June 1996)</p>



Agency recommendation	Findings
	<p>2.3.3 Regular individual school reports provide parents with information on results, progress, learning behaviour and personal development. (National Overview, p. 12)</p> <p>2.3.4 Schools and pupil guidance centres are obliged to transfer information about the (motivated) statement of a pupil with SEN to the new school and centre in case of change of school. (Decree on Basic Education, 1997, art. 31). Primary schools often inform secondary schools about the results and progress pupils have made at the end of primary school with a transfer document ('BASO-fiche'). Pupils with SEN who can work within the common curriculum with reasonable accommodations can get a motivated statement delivered by the pupil guidance centre if external support is needed. Pupils with SEN who require an individual adapted curriculum get a statement from the pupil guidance centre.</p> <p>2.3.5 In the new support model, schools are obliged to involve parents in discussions about the support needs of their child and the school for special education they want to collaborate with. (Decree on Basic Education, art. 172quinquies and 172quinquies/1; Codex Secondary Education, art. 314/8 and 314/9)</p>
<p>2.4 Policy has the goal of supporting parental interaction and communication with professionals.</p>	<p>2.4.1 Admission to inclusive education and support in mainstream education requires a certificate, as does admission to special education. This certificate refers to an 'inclusion plan'. This plan is the result of consultation among all parties involved: the learner or their parents, the mainstream school, the supporting special school, and the PGC's advisory teams. (National Overview, p. 13)</p> <p>2.4.2 Support for schools (see 1.12): Parents must be heard before the start of the bilateral collaboration between mainstream and special schools for support for intellectual disability, motor disability, visual impairment or hearing impairment. Parents have the authority to co-decide which special school is co-operated with.</p>



Agency recommendation	Findings
<p>2.5 Schools are expected and supported to involve a wider range of partners and foster formal and informal networks that support their practice.</p>	<p>2.5.1 Within the support model a continuous collaboration between mainstream schools, special schools, parents and pupil guidance centres is expected to determine effective support interventions in mainstream schools for teachers and pupils. This is supported by the Reference Framework for quality in education which requires partnerships with parents and other stakeholders.</p> <p>Mainstream schools, together with parents and pupil guidance centres, identify the support needs for the guidance of identified pupils (pupils with a motivated statement or statement that opens the right to support – see 2.3.4). The school then requests support from a special school or support network (depending on the expertise needed). (Decree on Basic Education, art. 172quinquies and 172quinquies/1; Codex Secondary Education, art. 314/8 and 314/9)</p> <p>2.5.2 Mainstream schools can be supported by a pedagogical counselling service (PBD) in order to strengthen their school policy or their policy concerning pupil guidance in general or the guidance of pupils with SEN. (Decree on Basic Education, art. 47ter; Codex Secondary Education, art. 123/22)</p> <p>2.5.3 See work of pupil guidance centres (route to multi-agency support – 2.2.2).</p> <p>2.5.4 Schools can make use of internships to strengthen their team and daily support for pupils.</p> <p>2.5.5 See links for VET and work experience – measure 11.</p> <p>2.5.6 Schools, pupil guidance centres and parents can collaborate with partners in the welfare sector. Directly accessible support (RTH) for pupils with a disability can be organised in the context of a school. In April 2019, extra budget for RTH was accredited, with a specific focus on mainstream pre-primary and primary school contexts and transitions between early childhood care and school – between pre-school and primary school. For this purpose a new type of RTH for children was introduced, called global individual support (GIO). (Decision of the Flemish government to adapt the decision of the Flemish government of 22 February 2013 on directly accessible support for persons with a disability)</p> <p>2.5.7 If available, a personal assistance budget accredited to a child with a disability can also be used to strengthen the child’s support within the mainstream school context. From 1 January 2020 onwards, a</p>



Agency recommendation	Findings
	<p>'person following financing system' has been introduced for minors with a disability. Instead of a supply-driven model, a demand-driven model of support for children with disabilities is in place. (Decision of the Flemish Government concerning the development of a person following budget for minors with a disability)</p> <p>2.5.8 Universities and university colleges offer tutoring. In the university colleges this should be within the framework of their decree duty for community services and research. (Raising Achievement report, p. 24)</p>

Measure 2 evaluative comments

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Measure 3: To develop monitoring strategies, establishing a comprehensive accountability and evaluation framework for inclusive education

Agency recommendation	Findings
<p>3.1 Policy describes clear mechanisms to evaluate effectiveness and quality in inclusive education.</p>	<p>3.1.1 The Decree on Quality of Education (2009) guarantees the quality of primary and secondary education in general. The Government monitors quality by means of two institutions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The agency for adult education, higher education, qualifications and study grants (AHOVOKS) conducts quality assurance on the system level. It creates development goals and final attainment levels which constitute the basis of the curriculum for all pupils in primary and secondary education and ensures quality achievement of the education curriculum. • The education umbrella organisations are transforming the development goals and final attainment levels into learning plans which are inherent to each educational network. The Education Inspectorate controls them and officially validates them. It also organises screenings in



Agency recommendation	Findings
	<p>individual schools, as each school is subject to external quality assurance on the school level at least every six years. The framework for education quality (ROK) that determines the expectations for quality education is used as reference in these screenings.</p> <p>3.1.2 In 2014, the agreement was made to monitor the impact of the M Decree on the education of learners with special educational needs and on the school staff. Among other things, data will be collected on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learner movements• Referrals by the pupil guidance centres for support in mainstream schools or enrolment in special schools• Refusals of pupils with special needs by schools• Teacher movements. <p>A progress report on this data will be published annually. The first report is expected in December 2019.</p> <p>3.1.3 With the start of the new support model in 2017, it was set in law that the government would need to carry out monitoring and evaluation (by September 2019) of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• mechanisms to distribute the resources between the schools involved;• the staff effects;• support in the classroom for the pupil and the teacher and the pupils' movements;• the efficient use of resources. <p>3.1.4 The Education Research Centre (Steunpunt onderwijsonderzoek, SONO) has a role in the evaluation of effectiveness and quality in inclusive education.</p>



Agency recommendation	Findings
	<p>SONO (a partnership between several universities and university colleges) conducts scientific research on the themes that the Flemish government consider to be a priority for policy preparation and evaluation (2016–2020). Themes include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is the M Decree implemented? • Are the objectives of the M Decree realised at macro, meso and micro levels? • What is the impact of the M Decree on pupils, parents, teachers and schools, ordinary and extraordinary education, on personnel in the pupil guidance centres, on referral processes and on the development of health care policy and practice in schools?
<p>3.2 Monitoring procedures ensure that inequalities in access to educational resources at regional or organisational levels are addressed.</p>	<p>3.2.1 Education policy also focuses on promoting the accessibility of school buildings. Since March 2010, a new Flemish urban development regulation on accessibility has applied (<i>Gewestelijke Stedenbouwkundige Verordening inzake toegankelijkheid</i>).</p> <p>To map the state of all the Flemish school buildings, the Agency for infrastructure in education (AGION) performed the second school building monitor in 2013. The monitor is carried out every five years. Governing bodies must pay increased attention to full accessibility of their school buildings. They must undertake initiatives to ‘screen accessibility’ to identify barriers to full accessibility and draw up a phased action plan. (National Overview, p. 6)</p> <p>3.2.2 Other measures to ensure that inequalities in access to educational resources are addressed are the M-monitor and the evaluation of the new support model (see 3.1).</p> <p>3.2.3 UNIA (Centre for Equal Opportunities) and the Department of the General Delegate for the Rights of the Child also have a role in this regard.</p> <p>3.2.4 Currently mainstream schools do not have access to the same resources (teaching staff, non-teaching staff and budget) as special schools. This is the case for pupils with learning problems, behavioural and emotional disorders and pupils with autism.</p>



Agency recommendation	Findings
<p>3.3 Accountability measures that impact upon educational professionals' work reflect the importance of wider learner achievements.</p>	<p>3.3.1 The inspectorate developed a 'reference framework for educational quality', together with the pedagogical counselling services and education umbrella organisations in Flanders. This framework resulted in a renewed functioning of the inspectorate, Inspectorate 2.0, which has run since 2017. It is designed to recognise the quality school–educational inspection–pedagogical counselling triangle. (See also evaluative comments below)</p> <p>3.3.2 The Reference Framework for Quality in Education includes: fostering well-being and involvement of all learners; guidance on learning, psycho-social functioning and preventative health care.</p>
<p>3.4 Policy outlines common standards for service and provision evaluation for use across health, education and social services.</p>	<p>–</p>
<p>3.5 Policy outlines how to involve families in the process of evaluating quality of services.</p>	<p>3.5.1 Parents' organisations are involved in the commission which is responsible for evaluating the new support model by September 2019. (see also 3.1)</p> <p>3.5.2 Parents are involved in the evaluation of individual schools. The Education Inspectorate evaluates whether schools meet the quality expectations of the 'reference framework for educational quality'. This uses multiple research methods and resources, including interviews with parents and pupils.</p> <p>3.5.3 Parents are also represented in the Flemish Education Council (VLOR). The VLOR is the strategic advisory board for education and training policy. Representatives from the entire educational landscape and from socio-economic and socio-cultural organisations discuss education and training policies in the VLOR. VLOR then gives advice to the Flemish Minister responsible for education and training and to the Flemish Parliament. (Decree on participation at school and the Flemish Education Council, April 2004; Decree on the strategic councils, July 2003; Decision of the Flemish Government on the composition of the Flemish Education Council, October 2005)</p>



Agency recommendation	Findings
<p>3.6. Policy describes mechanisms to evaluate demand for services.</p>	<p>3.6.1 The M-monitor, which will be published annually, collects data on the number of referrals to special education and demands for support in mainstream education made by the pupil guidance centres. This monitor will provide data on the increase or decrease of these referrals and demands for support.</p> <p>3.6.2 The evaluation of the new support model will provide information on the demand for services. (see also 3.1)</p>
<p>3.7 Policy supports opportunities for school teams to evaluate their practice through involvement in research and development activities.</p>	<p>3.7.1 Teacher teams learn how to reflect in a more focused way about adaptations such as remediation, differentiation, the implementation of aids and making sure the curriculum is more tailor-made. Among other things, they discuss specific education needs more with pupils and their parents. They are working together more intensively, along with the PGC and other support teams. (Raising Achievement report, p. 26)</p> <p>3.7.2 School administrators provide concrete assessment procedures. The school administrators and teachers decide how teachers work with and assess educational content. Each school's work plan explains how the pupils will be assessed and how the school will report the results. (National Overview, p. 16)</p> <p>3.7.3 The Reference Framework for Quality in Education supports reflection, dialogue and sharing expertise in schools.</p> <p>3.7.4 Schools are actively involved in the research carried out by SONO (the Education Research Centre) on the M Decree, e.g. through case studies. See also 3.1</p> <p>3.7.5 Schools can participate in professionalisation projects (prioritaire nascholingsprojecten) initiated by the Flemish Minister of Education. Every two years, the Minister establishes a number of priority themes for the development of educational innovation. A call invites interested organisations to translate the chosen themes into a specific training offer for teachers, directorates, pedagogical supervisors and teacher trainers. The Minister selects the most qualitative projects. Schools can then step into these projects, as a way to evaluate and improve their own practice.</p>



Measure 3 evaluative comments

Research was carried out by the Education Inspectorate and the Court of Audit (*Rekenhof*). During the school year 2016–2017, the Education Inspectorate [visited 72 pupil guidance centres](#) in Flanders to explore how they implement the M Decree.

In 2018, the Court of Audit asked 60 mainstream schools about their [care policy and the measures they took for pupils with specific educational needs](#).

In [Inspection 2.0](#), each partner plays its own role to realise quality education for every learner. By explicitly examining the quality development of the schools, the Education Inspectorate wants to stimulate each school to take the lead in its own educational quality.

Measure 4: To improve the cost-effectiveness of the education system, combining efficiency, effectiveness, equity and inclusion

Agency recommendation	Initial findings
4.1 National level inclusive education strategies are linked to long-term financial support.	<p>4.1.1 Until the 2016–2017 school year, integrated education (GON – full/part-time for pupils with mild cognitive impairment, emotional/behavioural problems, physical, visual or auditory impairment and pupils with autism) and inclusive education (ION – for pupils with moderate or severe cognitive impairment) supported learners into mainstream primary and secondary education, with support from special education. The M Decree contains a mechanism whereby resources (personnel, expertise and budget) from special education can be used to offer support in mainstream education. If reducing numbers in special education leads to a reduction in lesson time and teaching hours, this time is recuperated and used in support of mainstream education. (M Decree GR SOC, maart 2018, p. 5). This was the case, starting in the school year 2014–2015 (primary education) and later on also in secondary education. (Decree on Basic Education, art. 173 septies; Codex Secondary Education, art. 314/5)</p> <p>4.1.2 These different forms of support were integrated to develop a new support system for mainstream primary and secondary schools, starting on 1 September 2017 (Decree on Basic Education, art. 172quinquies and 172quinquies/1; Codex Secondary Education, art. 314/8 and 314/9). The new support system started with a transition period of three school years. An evaluation of the support system has been completed and will be used to develop a final model for support of mainstream schools.</p>



Agency recommendation	Initial findings
	<p>This final model for support will be part of the new Guidance decree that will replace the M Decree. (Coalition Agreement and Note of the Flemish Government, October 2019)</p> <p>Schools for special education receive supplementary teaching periods and supplementary hours for therapy for the purpose of supporting mainstream schools, plus an allowance (among other things for staff member’s travel expenses) via the operating budget. The amount of support depends on the type of disability of the pupil and the type of statement document issued. For pupils with mental, physical, visual or auditory impairment and pupils with language and speech development problems, the support in mainstream will be the same as in special education (starting in the school year 2019–2020).</p> <p>Mainstream and special schools work together either bilaterally or in regional networks. Every school year the regional networks receive teaching periods and supplementary hours to support mainstream schools with children with learning problems, emotional or behavioural problems or autism. The budget can never be lower than the networks received in the school year 2018–2019.</p> <p>4.1.3 Learners with disabilities who attend mainstream education can also receive support via a personal assistance budget and other forms of support (<i>rechtstreeks toegankelijke hulp</i> – RTH). These support measures are financed by the department of welfare. The personal assistance budget is intended to support the learner in daily activities. (National Overview, p. 11)</p>
<p>4.2 Funding policies and structures provide flexible resourcing systems that promote inclusion.</p>	<p>4.2.1 The M Decree allows special education staff to share their expertise with teachers, welfare co-ordinators and student advisors in mainstream schools (see support model recommendation 1.9). The Government worked on punctual and reasonable distribution of resources for 2018–2019, following a report on the new support model. (M Decree GR SOC, maart 2018, p. 5)</p> <p>4.2.2 The support for mainstream schools with pupils with mental, physical, visual or auditory impairment and pupils with speech and language development problems depends on the number of pupils: the amount of support varies according to the number of pupils. (Decree on Basic Education, art. 172quinquies/1; Codex Secondary Education, art. 314/9)</p>



Agency recommendation	Initial findings
	<p>To support mainstream schools with pupils with severe learning problems, behavioural or emotional problems and pupils with autism, the networks receive an amount of teaching hours and additional hours. This budget is used flexibly to meet the demands for support from mainstream schools. Every year the budget is calculated based on the number of pupils in mainstream schools (for 70%) and the pupils with special educational needs (for 30%). This financing method is in a transition phase. As part of the complete evaluation of the support model, an evaluation took place in September 2019. The annual budget can differ, depending on the effect of the mechanism to transfer resources from special to mainstream education (see 4.1.1). The total budget can never be less than in the 2018–2019 school year. (Decree on Basic Education, art. 172quinquies; Codex Secondary Education, art. 314/8)</p>
<p>4.3 There are long-term funding commitments to support collaborative initiatives between various school-based, resource centre and research teams.</p>	<p>4.3.1 To support the implementation of the M Decree, some temporary measures were made in 2015–2017. Projects enabled personnel from special schools to coach teachers in mainstream schools, with regard to special educational needs. These projects were financed from special education (see 4.1.1).</p> <p>4.3.2 The new support model focuses on co-creation and participation between mainstream and special education. It aims to work together with learners and parents, teacher teams in mainstream education and other supporting services towards more inclusive education.</p> <p>In the 2017–2018 school year, the government invested EUR 107 million to support special needs in mainstream education. The budget increased to EUR 120 million in 2018–2019. (M Decree GR SOC, maart 2018, p. 5)</p>
<p>4.4 Policy outlines mechanisms for systematic data collection on expenditure and implementation that informs cost-effectiveness issues.</p>	<p>4.4.1 In order to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the M Decree a data warehouse is being developed. It contains information about the school career of pupils with special educational needs and the budget that is spent in special education (as a place) and support in mainstream education. The data warehouse will also contain information on certification of learners.</p>



Measure 4 evaluative comments

Due to increasing complexity of school budgets, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) suggests the Flemish Community would benefit from a community-wide reporting system on the use of school funding. This would ensure that funding reaches intended recipients at school level (OECD Policy Outlook)

The recent *OECD Review of School Resources: Flemish Community of Belgium* recognised there are a number of efficiency issues:

- Imbalances in the distribution of funding across the system, with more emphasis placed on later stages of the system.
- Inefficiencies in terms of provision of specific resources across the system (such as school places, and distribution of funding among educational institutions for educational disadvantage).
- Lack of clarity on how outputs relate to specific resource inputs, as there is no community-wide reporting system which brings together outcomes with financial indicators.

The Coalition Agreement states that there will be control on the use of means schools receive for pupils with a background of low socio-economic status (SES). The SES means must be used as intended so that children with a difficult home situation receive targeted support and their chances of unskilled outflow are reduced. The use of SES means will be monitored based on samples of schools that will be controlled. If the controls show the resources are not used efficiently, the resources will be more clearly earmarked.

Measure 5: To increase participation in good quality inclusive early childhood education and care and enrolment rates in pre-school education

Agency recommendation	Initial findings
5.1 Policy clearly respects the rights and the needs of children and their families.	5.1.1 In 2016, an Action Plan on pre-primary school participation was launched. Participation of children in pre-primary schools (ages 2.5–5) is very high in Flanders (97% in 2016). The action plan focuses on those groups who do not attend pre-primary school yet or are subscribed but often absent. There is no specific focus on children with disabilities. The focus is on identifying – at the local level – those children who do not attend school and lead them to school participation. From September 2020 onwards, compulsory education will start from the age of five, instead of six.



Agency recommendation	Initial findings
	<p>5.1.2 Since 2001, the Flemish government has supported childcare settings (for 0–3-year-olds) to develop inclusive childcare with specific subsidies. In 2014, 16 pilot Centres for Inclusive Childcare (CIC) were introduced in 16 regions of Flanders. The CIC are childcare settings that must create inclusive childcare in a proactive way. They must spread their expertise in their region, raise awareness of inclusive childcare among parents and other stakeholders, support other childcare settings in realising inclusive childcare and develop a network of relevant partners. (Decision of the Flemish Government of 22 November 2013 concerning subsidies and requirements for the provision of services of family and group care for babies and toddlers)</p>
<p>5.2 Support is available for families to recognise and understand the needs of their child.</p> <p><i>(Support focuses upon what is in the child's best interests.)</i></p>	<p>5.2.1 The Flemish Community gives priority access to childcare for children under three to single parents and/or low-income parents who are unable to care for their children during the day due to their work or study, or for whom childcare can facilitate socio-economic integration and increased labour market participation.</p> <p>The points allocation system offers the chance to appoint a special needs counsellor or special needs co-ordinator to promote pre-school participation. The special needs counsellor co-ordinates special needs provision within a school, counsels pupils and teachers and can also form the link between pupil, school, parents, PGC (pupil guidance centre) therapist and other bodies to help ensure better support for the child.</p> <p>5.2.2 From the age of two and a half, children can attend a special nursery. They may be registered there until age six or seven if it is in the child's best interest.</p> <p>5.2.3 The support model established in September 2017 (see measure 1) also applies to mainstream pre-primary schools. With the introduction of the support model, it became possible to support toddlers with a mental disability, which was not the case before.</p> <p>5.2.4 Families with children with disabilities, or even with presumed disabilities, can rely on home counselling.</p>



Agency recommendation	Initial findings
	<p>In Welfare, 'directly accessible aid' (RTH) is available for children with a (presumed) disability. This can also be used in other contexts, like childcare centres or schools.</p> <p>In September 2019, a new form of directly accessible aid was put in place: 'global individual support' (GIO). This support focuses on moments of transition in inclusive trajectories for young children: the transition from home to inclusive childcare, from childcare to mainstream pre-primary education, from pre-primary education to mainstream primary education. (Decision of the Flemish Government to adapt the Decision of the Flemish Government of 22 February 2013 on directly accessible aid for people with a disability)</p>
<p>5.3 Policy outlines how ECI services should be provided for children and families as early as possible and as quickly as possible, following identification of need.</p>	<p>5.3.1 A pillar of the Flemish system is to make sure children go to school from as early an age as possible. The government has several facilities which accompany families during pregnancy and birth, such as '<i>Huizen van het Kind</i>' and '<i>Kind en Gezin</i>'. (RA report)</p> <p>5.3.2 The action plan on pre-school participation focuses on identification and stimulation of parents to enrol their children and participate in pre-primary education.</p> <p>5.3.3 An action plan directed at the transition from home to home-based or centre-based provision and from childcare to pre-primary education is currently under development. In this context, a joint working group with the Ministry of Welfare, Health and Family and the Ministry of Education and Training has been set up (global individual support is part of this work).</p>
<p>5.4 Policy states that in risk situations, the child's rights should come first.</p>	<p>5.4.1 The Child and Family (<i>Kind en Gezin</i>) service follows up on young children before school age and will refer them to other services when needed.</p> <p>Once in (pre-primary) school, the Pupil Guidance Centre (PGC) follows up on children in risk situations and refers to or collaborates with other services when needed.</p>



Agency recommendation	Initial findings
<p>5.5 Policy measures and guidelines clearly define quality standards for early childhood services and provision.</p>	<p>5.5.1 The developmental objectives constitute the common core curriculum. They are formulated for five areas of learning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• physical education: motor skills, a healthy and safe lifestyle, self-awareness and social functioning;• arts education: visual arts, music, drama, dance, media and attitudes;• Dutch: listening, speaking, reading, writing, linguistics;• world studies: nature, techniques, humankind, society, time and space;• mathematical initiation: numbers, measuring, space (geometric initiation). <p>The school boards or the educational umbrella organisations draw up a curriculum containing the developmental objectives. The curriculum is approved by the government upon advice by the education inspection, which subsequently checks whether the curriculum is implemented. Objectives and activities are set for all age groups in a continuous learning pathway towards primary education.</p> <p>Teaching methods and materials are decided by the school board. (Eurydice: Teaching and learning in pre-primary education)</p> <p>5.5.2 There is a Reference Framework for Educational Quality, which also covers pre-primary education. For schools and inspection this is the framework for qualitative education.</p> <p>The framework is the result of a co-creation process between inspection and the main education providers in Flanders. School teams, parents and pupils were also involved in the process. The framework was created in the 2015–2016 school year.</p>



Agency recommendation	Initial findings
	<p>5.5.3 There is a pedagogical framework for pedagogical quality in day-care centres. It highlights six dimensions: well-being, engagement, emotional/educational support, environment, parents and diversity. The framework also includes a self-evaluation tool for day-care centres and the monitoring tool for Care Inspection.</p>
<p>5.6 Early childhood guidance is developed jointly by departments of health, education and social services.</p>	<p>5.6.1 The new support function, global individual support, was developed through a collaboration between the departments of welfare and education. (Decision of the Flemish Government to adapt the Decision of the Flemish Government of 22 February 2013 on directly accessible aid for people with a disability)</p>
<p>5.7 Policy for early childhood services supports cross sectoral, multi-disciplinary working at regional and local levels.</p>	<p>5.7.1 The school, together with the multi-disciplinary PGC (Pupil Guidance Centre), starts a pathway for pupils from pre-primary education whose development and learning progress are jeopardised by their poor attendance record in pre-primary class. (Eurydice: Guidance and counselling in early childhood and school education)</p> <p>5.7.2 Following the action plan of 2016, at the local level there is close collaboration between several actors (local platforms for equal education opportunities, <i>Huizen van het Kind</i>, local government, schools and pupil guidance centres) to identify children who do not attend school yet and to increase pre-school participation in the area.</p>
<p>5.8 Policy ensures there are pre-school places offered to children coming from ECI services/provision.</p>	<p>5.8.1 Participation in pre-primary education (on a voluntary basis) is very high. Those not participating or participating insufficiently are usually disadvantaged children and/or children from ethnic backgrounds. To increase their participation, a stimulus plan with various strands has been in operation since 2007. (See Circular BaO/2007/04)</p> <p>5.8.2 The action plan established in 2016 focuses on school participation of all toddlers. For every child of the corresponding age there is a place in pre-primary education.</p>



Agency recommendation	Initial findings
5.9 Policy outlines how cost-free services/provision are made available for families.	5.9.1 For pre-primary schools there is a maximum cost. 5.9.2 If they meet the criteria, families can also have access to an education allowance. 5.9.3 In 75% of childcare settings (0–3-year-olds), parents pay an income-related price.
5.10 Policy ensures the same quality of service irrespective of differences in geographical location. <i>(Such as isolated or rural areas).</i>	All schools must comply with the same quality standards (see 5.5.2).

Measure 5 evaluative comments

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Measure 6: To improve student-focused measures such as mentoring, personalised learning approaches and improved guidance

Agency recommendation	Initial findings
6.1 High expectations for all learners' achievements underpin policy for inclusive education.	6.1.1 After a broad-scale public debate and the formulation of advice by various organisations and advisory councils, the Flemish Parliament adopted a decree laying down the basic principles of the reform of the attainment targets on 17 January 2018. There are 16 key competences, based on the European key competences. These include: citizenship; economic, financial and digital competences; cultural and historical awareness, etc. The new attainment targets will have to be limited in number and clearly formulated. There must be coherence from



Agency recommendation	Initial findings
	<p>pre-primary to secondary education. Taking into account the fast evolution in society, the attainment targets will be subject to periodical evaluations and will be updated when needed.</p> <p>The reform of the attainment targets introduces the concept of basic literacy in the first stage of secondary education. It concerns the marking of certain attainment targets which must be reached by each pupil individually. They contain minimum requirements with regard to basic competences such as mathematics, digital literacy and the Dutch language. These minimal requirements should guarantee that all youngsters acquire the basic competences needed to take actively part in society.</p> <p>6.1.2 Since the introduction of the parliamentary act on pupils with specific educational needs in September 2015, more pupils with specific educational needs take classes in mainstream education. When these learners follow the mainstream programme, they can obtain the same qualifications as the other learners. Learners who follow a curriculum that is adopted to their personal needs receive a certificate of completion with a list of competences they obtained. (Codex Secondary Education, art. 115, § 1)</p> <p>6.1.3 The Coalition Agreement of the new Flemish Government focuses on excellence and high quality education for all pupils, raising the achievement of all pupils. One of the aims is to strengthen ‘basic care’ in mainstream schools.</p>
<p>6.2 Policy outlines that learners’ voices should be listened to in decision-making that affects them.</p>	<p>6.2.1 Pupil Guidance Centres focus on pupils’ well-being, putting learner interests first. (RA report, p. 10)</p> <p>6.2.2 On a macro level, learners’ voices are heard through the representational bodies. The participation of learners is co-ordinated by the Flemish student council. This student council covers primary, secondary, vocational and special education.</p>
<p>6.3 Teaching, support and guidance has the goal of empowering all learners.</p>	<p>6.3.1 In April 2018 the decree on (the reform of) pupil guidance was approved by the Flemish Government. The reform aims to clearly define the roles and tasks of all actors involved (pupils, parents, schools, Pupil Guidance Centre, School Advisory Centres, welfare sector, etc.) and to optimise the organisation of pupil guidance. In the new decree, pupil guidance will become a precondition for</p>



Agency recommendation	Initial findings
	<p>recognition of the school. It will thus become part of the global policy on quality assurance of each school and will be evaluated by the Education Inspection.</p> <p>6.3.2 In the future, Pupil Guidance Centres will have to be even more attentive to the guidance of disadvantaged pupils, the problem of truancy and early school leavers. The means centres' provision will be tailor-made to the needs of the pupils they guide. More means will be granted for pupils who receive a study grant, who do not speak Dutch at home, or whose parents have low qualification levels (so-called 'SES indicators'). This way pupils who need extra support will be guided as well as possible in the course of their school career.</p> <p>6.3.3 The Reference Framework for Quality in Education supports schools to work participatively with the involvement of learners.</p>
<p>6.4 Appropriate educational support is available as necessary and is fit for purpose in meeting personal learning needs.</p>	<p>6.4.1 Each school must provide care continuously. This means that schools must provide support tailor-made to each child's exact requirements. The first phase is broad basic care for all pupils, where schools work in a preventive manner in a powerful learning environment. If broad basic care is insufficient, the school may offer the pupil a higher degree of care with the necessary reasonable adaptations. This may include differentiation, remediation, compensation or exemption measures. If this does not suffice either, the school may put in place an expansion of the care, for which it must involve the pupil guidance centre (PGC) in any case. In this phase, it is assessed how the school may even better accompany the pupil, for instance, by putting in place external support for teachers from therapists or special education or providing individual therapy to learners. (RA report, p. 12) (See also measure 1.1.5 – continuum of care, and measure 6.3)</p>



Agency recommendation	Initial findings
<p>6.5 The learning process is based on flexible curricula based on learner centred approaches and the development and implementation of individual learning plans as necessary.</p>	<p>6.5.1 The aim is for the pupil to follow the common curriculum and obtain a certificate in primary education and/or a high school diploma. Within this common curriculum, the same final attainment levels or development goals are pursued as for other pupils. However, if it appears that the pupil, despite the reasonable adaptations, is unable to follow the common curriculum and needs more support, they may switch to an individually adapted curriculum (related to the mainstream curriculum) with goals formulated with the pupil guidance centre.</p> <p>With support from the PGC, class councils determine learning goals and the learner can access support from special education. (RA report, p. 13)</p>

Measure 6 evaluative comments

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Measure 7: To improve the school ethos (such as the creation of supportive learning environments, adapting learning environments to specific learning needs)

Agency recommendation	Initial findings
<p>7.1 Policy supports school leaders to value diversity among staff as well as learners, encourage collegiality and support innovation.</p>	<p>7.1.1 The support model provides support in mainstream schools. Support focuses on the strengthening and empowering of teachers in order to realise qualitative guidance of children with special needs. Support of school teams is also possible. While there is no specific legislation to support school leaders to value diversity among staff and learners, the Reference Framework for Quality in Education supports schools to deal positively with diversity. Schools are free to develop and implement their own pedagogical project and umbrella organisations offer courses for school leaders.</p>



Agency recommendation	Initial findings
	7.1.2 Pedagogical counselling services support school development. They can support school leaders and their teams in strengthening school policy and pedagogical-didactical action in classes. (Decree on quality of education, 2009, art. 14 and 15)
7.2 Policy outlines the responsibility of school leaders to effectively communicate their vision for inclusive education to the school teaching team and wider school community.	7.2.1 The policy on pupil guidance developed by a school must be communicated to parents and pupils, through the school regulations. (Decree on pupil guidance, art. 102 and 114) Government does not explicitly ask schools for a vision on inclusive education. However, the Reference Framework for Quality in Education supports schools to ‘develop [their] level of quality based on a supported vision that is translated into teaching/learning practice’. Schools have the freedom to develop their own pedagogical policy, within the boundaries set by the education legislation.
7.3 Policy aims to ensure the recruitment of teaching staff from diverse backgrounds, including those with disabilities.	7.3.1 The diversity of the learner population is not reflected in the teaching profession. (OECD Policy Outlook; 2017 Semester report)
7.4 Policy supports schools to ensure teaching staff are able to meet diverse learning needs. <i>(Teaching staff have competence and expertise to develop individual plans, implement learner-centred approaches and support learners in personalised learning.)</i>	7.4.1 Under the Decree regarding quality of education (2009), pedagogical counselling services support schools/teachers/leaders in pedagogical projects and support professional capabilities of staff members. Priority must be given to competencies in the framework of education for pupils with specific educational goals. (RA report, p. 10) Schools can request pedagogical support from the pedagogical counselling services (PBD). Schools are autonomous to decide whether they ask for pedagogical support or not and which professionalisation actions they want to undertake. 7.4.2 The focus of the in-service training initiated by the government (<i>prioritaire nascholing</i>) was competence development of school personnel with regard to the implementation of the M Decree from 2015–2016 to 2017–2018. In the 2018–2019 and 2019–2020 school years, the focus of the in-service training was competence development of support staff of the support model, who support school teams



Agency recommendation	Initial findings
	<p>and teachers in mainstream schools. Support staff strengthen teachers in guiding pupils with special needs.</p> <p>7.4.3 M Decree sets out that schools must draw up a plan with PGC for tutoring based on school/individual teacher needs. (RA report, p. 23)</p>
<p>7.5 The school ethos and culture is guided by school strategic plans that have high expectations for the academic and social achievements of all learners.</p>	<p>7.5.1 Every school sets out its own pedagogical policy.</p> <p>7.5.2 The Flemish Government implemented the new decree on pupil guidance on 1 September 2018. With the new legacy every school needs to set a policy for pupil guidance. Important for schools is the fact that pupil guidance is a precondition for recognition of the school. It is part of the global policy on quality assurance of each school and is evaluated by the Education Inspection. The Reference Framework requires a positive and stimulating school and class climate.</p> <p>Schools develop a policy for pupil guidance in line with their pedagogical project, the needs of the school population (the pupils in school), and the context of the school. The policy on care and the policy on equal education opportunities, as mentioned in the 'school work plan' (<i>schoolwerkplan</i>), are integrated in the policy for pupil guidance. (See also 6.4.1)</p> <p>7.5.3. The policy for pupil guidance covers the guidance of pupils, support of teaching staff and co-ordination of initiatives concerning pupil guidance at school level. Important principles of the policy for pupil guidance include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the interests of every pupil are at the centre;• the policy is the result of a participatory process and is supported by the full school team;• it is targeted, systematic, planned and transparent;• it is performed discreetly;



Agency recommendation	Initial findings
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • it is clear who takes up which task in the pupil guidance policy. (Decree on pupil guidance, art. 102 for basic education and art. 114 for secondary education) <p>7.5.4. Every school has a 'school work plan' (<i>schoolwerkplan</i>) that contains at least the following elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a description of the pedagogical project; more specifically, the set fundamental principles that are put in place for the school by the school board; • the organisation of the school, which is mainly the formation of groups of pupils; • how the learning process of pupils is assessed and how it is reported; • the measures in mainstream education for pupils with special needs, including the forms of collaboration with other mainstream schools and special schools; • how the school, through the policies on care and equal education opportunities, works towards optimal learning and development opportunities of all pupils. (Decree on Basic Education, art. 47)
<p>7.6 School strategic plans describe how universal design for learning approaches are used to provide individualised learning tools and opportunities.</p>	<p>7.6.1 See 7.5.4. The school work plan sets out measures in mainstream education for pupils with special needs.</p>
<p>7.7 School strategic plans stipulate that all learners are entitled to be active participants in the life of the school and community.</p>	<p>7.7.1 See 7.5.3. Pupil guidance is a participatory project; it needs to be developed as a participative process with all relevant actors, but pupils are not explicitly mentioned.</p>



Agency recommendation	Initial findings
7.8 School strategic plans have clear statements on the value of diversity.	7.8.1 See 7.5.4. The school work plan refers to the school’s policies on care and equal opportunities.
7.9 School strategic plans describe mechanisms for shared leadership, teamwork and collaborative problem solving.	<p>7.9.1 The school implements, evaluates and, if necessary, adjusts its policy on pupil guidance. In order to strengthen its policy, a school also conducts a professionalisation policy. The Reference Framework supports reflection, dialogue and sharing expertise.</p> <p>In the formulation and evaluation of the policy on pupil guidance, the school involves relevant actors. For additional expertise, the school consults the Pupil Guidance Centre (PGC). For school support, the school consults the pedagogical counselling service or another external service. (Decree on pupil guidance)</p> <p>7.9.2 Every school must make co-operation agreements with a pupil guidance centre. The school and the centre make agreements about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the division of roles and tasks of the school and the centre for the implementation of pupil guidance; • the exchange of relevant information between the school and the centre; • the information moments for pupils on the structure and organisation of Flemish education, the full range of educational supply and, specifically for secondary schools, the connection of education to the labour market; • how the co-operation between the school and the centre is evaluated and how the agreements on the school-specific co-operation can be adjusted. (Decision of the Flemish Government on the operationalisation of pupil guidance in primary education, secondary education and pupil guidance centres, 2018, art. 15)



Measure 7 evaluative comments

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Measure 8: To reduce the negative effects of early tracking (the early streaming of pupils by ability into different types of provision or schools) and to reduce the extensive use of grade retention¹

Agency recommendation	Initial findings
<p>8.1 Legislation across relevant public sectors has the goal of ensuring educational services enhance developments and processes working towards equity in inclusive education.</p>	<p>8.1.1 The support model (see 1.9.5) supports mainstream schools to guide pupils with special educational needs within the school. When pupils cannot follow the mainstream curriculum, they get a statement from the pupil guidance centre, on the basis of which parents can choose for an individually adapted curriculum in a mainstream school or for a placement in a special school. Mainstream schools can refuse to organise an individually adapted curriculum if they can prove the necessary adaptations are disproportionate. (See 1.10.1)</p> <p>8.1.2 A range of measures underpinned by the Equal Opportunities Parliamentary Act of 2002 (<i>Gelijke Onderwijskansen</i>, GOK), the Parliamentary Act on the Operational Budgets of Schools of 2008 and the Parliamentary Act on the Right to Enrolment of 2011 are in place to promote equal opportunities. Measures include the creation of local structures to increase the fairness of school admission procedures, weighted funding in favour of schools with higher levels of socio-economic disadvantage and safeguarding the right of enrolment and school choice for all children. (Decree on Basic Education: Right to enrolment, art. 37/7–37/34 and Operational budgets for schools (<i>SES-omkadering</i>), art. 133–134; Codex Secondary Education: Right to enrolment, art. 110–110/18 and Operational budgets for schools (<i>extra GOK-middelen</i>), art. 224–241/1)</p>

¹ Early tracking means the early streaming of pupils by abilities into different types of provision or school; this includes placing children into separate schools.

The extensive use of grade retention means holding students back to repeat school years, instead of providing flexible individual support.



Agency recommendation	Initial findings
	<p>8.1.3 In 2015 and 2016, a series of special measures were passed by the Flemish Parliament to enhance integration of refugees in the education system. These included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• New funding initiatives for language support in pre-primary schools: To organise reception education for foreign mother tongue immigrants, primary schools can receive supplementary teaching periods and additional operating grants for every non-Dutch speaking immigrant. A temporary measure was adopted for non-Dutch speaking pre-primary pupils in 2015: pre-primary schools received an allowance of EUR 950 for every non-Dutch speaking immigrant under the age of five during the 2015–2016, 2016–2017 and 2017–2018 school years. (Decree on Basic Education, art. 173 quinquies/2–4)• Increase of resources for welcoming classes in school education: Secondary schools and school communities are granted additional teacher hours for the provision of support and guidance to pupils who move on from reception education to mainstream secondary education (follow-up school coaches). (Besluit van de Vlaamse Regering van 24 mei 2002 inzake de organisatie van onthaalonderwijs voor anderstalige nieuwkomers in het gewoon voltijd secundair onderwijs, art. 5)• Adult linguistic integration• National Academic Recognition Centre (NARIC) to recognise refugees' qualifications• New funding initiative for recognising and handling traumatised pupils, especially refugee children.



Agency recommendation	Initial findings
<p>8.2 Policy outlines how support structures that impact upon inclusive education are diverse and easily available.</p> <p><i>(Support structures prevent early tracking and streaming of pupils at an early age).</i></p>	<p>8.2.1 Under the M Decree, schools must provide support tailored to each pupils' requirements. This may be achieved through support from pupil guidance centres, training from pedagogic counselling service.</p> <p>8.2.2 Support networks are formed as a co-operation of mainstream schools and special schools, to support pupils with special needs in mainstream schools.</p>
<p>8.3 Assessment mechanisms are in place to identify the support needs of learners at an early stage.</p>	<p>8.3.1 School staff identify needs. However, if provision does not meet needs, the Pupil Guidance Centre must go through an action-oriented diagnostic pathway to determine whether all conditions have been met to draw a motivated report which entitles the learner to extra support. It remains the objective to have the pupil follow the common curriculum with the same final attainment levels or development goals as the other pupils. However, if it appears that the school, despite the reasonable adaptations, is unable to work with the pupil within the common curriculum and the support in these phases appears to be insufficient, they may switch to an individually adapted curriculum. (RA report)</p>
<p>8.4 Data is available relating to learners' rights to age appropriate education.</p>	<p>8.4.1 Through AGODI (an Agency within the Ministry of Education and Training) the government acquires a lot of statistics, including the number of pupils re-sitting years.</p>

Measure 8 evaluative comments

The EU Commission country report noted high impact of socio-economic status on basic skills proficiency and that inequity will require a broad policy response going beyond education system. (OECD Policy Outlook)



Measure 9: To support improvement in schools with lower educational outcomes

Agency recommendation	Initial findings
<p>9.1 Clear mechanisms exist to identify schools with lower educational outcomes.²</p>	<p>9.1.1 Inspectors consider school’s own monitoring of quality and examine school data, including on underachievement. They verify the position of the school versus other, similar schools, for instance schools that are all located in a city, or schools with a similar pupil population.</p> <p>Inspection reports are meant for government and the Minister of Education decides on the further acknowledgement of the school based on the advice in the inspection report. (RA report)</p> <p>9.1.2 Every school gets a regular data report. The report gives schools insight into their pupil population, school team, pupil results, pupil school career, pupil movements and so on. The report is a working document in which every school can make more detailed reports.</p> <p>9.1.3 To measure the upgrade of knowledge, general standardised tests will be introduced. Schools with low achievement are obliged to engage in a guidance trajectory. (Coalition Agreement 2019–2024, Flemish Government)</p>

² This recommendation does not directly come from the Agency work covered in the CPRA activities. A number of project recommendations have implicitly, but not explicitly referred to this issue. However, the piloting work and detailed discussions with PG countries showed it is necessary to have this explicit recommendation linked to this measure.



Agency recommendation	Initial findings
<p>9.2 Policy outlines how methods of assessment, inspections and other accountability measures contribute to school improvement processes.</p> <p><i>(Accountability measures support inclusive practice and inform further improvement of provision for all learners.)</i></p>	<p>9.2.1 The government makes instruments available to the schools without any obligation and free of charge. They include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SALTO, a screening instrument at the start of primary education to assess language skills; • LVS, pupil voting system (CITO – Flemish version); • Parallel tests of surveys, tests for reaching final attainment levels or development goals. <p>For SALTO and the LVS schools may take the tests and calculate the results themselves. For the parallel tests, the website processes results and generates a feedback report free of charge. Individual pupil results are not calculated. Schools receive feedback on a school level about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the percentage of participating pupils who have reached the final attainment levels or development goals, and how this result corresponds to the results of the schools of the survey sample; • how the school performs compared to the Flemish average; • how the school performs compared to what may be expected from a school with a similar pupil population. <p>9.2.2 The education inspection may set out shortcomings and the deadline by which the school or centre must resolve them.</p> <p>9.2.3 Schools collect data on their pupils and can determine the data they need to further optimise their internal education quality, but also struggle with data literacy. (RA report)</p> <p>9.2.4 See 9.1.3. Schools can compare their own results with (anonymised) results of peer schools. Schools can use the obtained information for their own policy development.</p>



Agency recommendation	Initial findings
<p>9.3 Policy aims to increase the capacity of all schools to meet a greater diversity of needs and support learners within their local communities.</p> <p><i>(Schools are supported to use innovative teaching methods, practical learning approaches and individual plans, focusing on learners' capabilities.)</i></p>	<p>9.3.1 To ensure quality education in inclusive settings, it is important that all teachers receive relevant preparation on how to serve SEN populations in mainstream classrooms. Such training should be provided both during ITE and CPD. (M Decree CR SOC, 3 maart 2018, p. 4)</p> <p>9.3.2 Support in mainstream schools must be offered by support staff employed in special education with the necessary expertise to provide the required help. They can transfer their disability-specific knowledge into mainstream schools as required.</p> <p>9.3.3 Participants become more professional thanks to the range of training on offer to school teams with the following objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers know the conceptual frameworks which form the basis of working inclusively. • Teachers can translate concepts and frameworks in an educational and didactic manner to their own teaching methods. Schools are free to choose their didactical and pedagogical methods. • School teams can integrate frameworks, tools, instruments into school policy. Teams can involve all players in shaping education for learners with specific educational needs. (M Decree CR SOC, 3 maart 2018, p. 4)
<p>9.4 Policy outlines clear incentives for schools to take all learners from their local community.</p>	<p>9.4.1 The M Decree states that every child has the right to register in a mainstream school.</p>



Agency recommendation	Initial findings
<p>9.5 Policy requires school strategic plans to outline preventive educational action against dropouts.</p> <p><i>(Including necessary measures so that learners who become disengaged find new educational alternatives.)</i></p>	<p>9.5.1 The Early School Leaving Monitor system aims to monitor and track the outcomes, socio-economic characteristics and study progression of those who leave education without an upper-secondary qualification. The Monitor is one of the measures under the general framework of action, <i>Together Against Early School Leaving</i>, adopted by the government in 2016. (European Semester report, 2017)</p> <p>9.5.2 The Flemish government has, along with partners, developed an action plan against skipping classes and other forms of transgressive behaviour (2012) and an action plan against early school leaving (2013). These determine actions to realise the policy in practice. (Pact 2020).</p> <p>Skipping classes is a strong predictor of early school leaving, so follow-up of these pupils is crucial. In the action plan, the government established targeted actions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. map out; 2. inform/raise awareness; 3. preventive action; 4. accompany; 5. sanction; 6. actions directed towards specific target audiences such as non-Dutch speaking newcomers, illegal pupils and trailer park residents. (RA report) <p>9.5.3 The reform of the pupil guidance system in Flanders was adopted by decree by the Flemish Parliament on 27 April 2018. Pupil guidance in Flanders has been reformed with the aim of (more) clearly demarcating the roles and responsibilities of the various actors concerned. Since 1 September 2018, the implementation of a pupil guidance policy is an additional accreditation condition for schools. Pupils, parents and school teams are involved in the pupil guidance policy and each school designates a contact person for pupil guidance. This can be a care co-ordinator or pupil counsellor.</p>



Agency recommendation	Initial findings
	<p>9.5.4 In Flanders, early school leaving is monitored by two indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the common EAK indicator, which makes it possible to compare Flanders with other regions and countries; • the Flemish indicator for early school leaving. This indicator monitors on population level. The Flemish government can monitor for each learner in secondary education who did or did not qualify. <p>9.5.5 Since 2019, the Flemish government also report on the number of early school leavers subscribed to a second chance learning pathway after leaving secondary education. The results show that 35% subscribe in a second chance learning pathway in the five years after leaving secondary education.</p> <p>9.5.6 Young people can decide themselves to start second chance learning. This is mainly self-referral. Young people with no qualifications who are looking for a job opportunity contact VDAB. VDAB examine their motivation and options to get a qualification. VDAB provides them with information on second chance education. (Action plan: Together against school leaving, 2015, Action 13)</p>

Measure 9 evaluative comments

In the Flemish Community, the percentage of low achievers has been rising and is now close to 17% in all areas tested. Learners' performance is strongly linked to their socio-economic background, in particular for those with a migrant background. (OECD Policy Outlook)

National performance on early school leaving is slightly better than the EU average and close to the national target, although large differences in early school leaving between communities and regions persist.

Flanders aims to halve the percentage of early school leavers – a drop in the number of early school leavers of 8.6% to 4.3% by 2020. In 2018, the result for Flanders early school leaving was 7.3% (Belgium – 8.9%) (EAK data). The difference between men and women is still visible in the Flanders results: male – 9.5% versus female – 5.1%. Since 2016 there has been an increase of male early school leavers. Flemish indicators show early school leaving in 2017 was 11.0% (or 7,524 early school leavers). This shows an increase since 2015 (the result in 2015 was 9.6%).



Measure 10: To improve the quality of school staff, focusing on the quality of teachers, quality in continuing professional development, developing teacher competences and reinforcing school leadership

Agency recommendation	Initial findings
<p>10.1 Policy outlines how all school staff develop the skills to meet the diverse needs of all learners.</p> <p><i>(Appropriate training and professional development is provided to all school staff including teachers, support and administrative staff, counsellors, etc.).</i></p>	<p>10.1.1 Extra support initiated by the M Decree includes competence coaches. They offer support at school/classroom level, encourage co-operation with schools/teachers and work on development of expertise in support networks (with pupil guidance centres, pedagogical counselling service). (M Decree GR SOC, maart 2018)</p> <p>10.1.2 Schools and teachers have a lot of autonomy to develop their own continuous professional development policy based on their own specific needs. Schools are required to develop an in-service training plan (CPD) after which they can draw on limited financial support for the in-service training of teachers.</p> <p>10.1.3 The government also sets out priority topics for in-service training, in which in-service training projects can be followed free of charge (see below). Many in-service training initiatives are offered by the network-based educational counselling services, which receive an annual budget from the government.</p> <p>After the pre-service teacher training courses, various advanced bachelor programmes in education (including special educational needs education, special needs and remedial learning, school development) are available for further professional development and specialisation of the teaching staff.</p> <p>10.1.4 The government gives a small financial incentive (salary increase) to special needs teachers that follow an advanced bachelor programme. (Besluit van de Vlaamse Regering van 30 9 2005 betreffende de toekenning van een [niet-verworven salarisschaal] aan personeelsleden die houder zijn van een getuigschrift of diploma buitengewoon onderwijs). Teachers that switch from special needs education to mainstream schools are allowed to keep this incentive (ibid., art. 1, § 4). The measures serve to encourage teachers to invest in this specific type of CPD and to lower the threshold to employment in mainstream education.</p>



Agency recommendation	Initial findings
	<p>The decree on pupil guidance (see also 6.3.1) specifies that the school must not only have a pupil guidance policy but also that a person within the school must be appointed as designated contact. This person must guarantee that every member of the school team is responsible for the care and guidance of pupils. (Codex Secondary Education, art. 123/22 decret BAO 47ter)</p> <p>10.1.5 The Quality decree (2009) stipulates in art. 4, § 1 that every institution is responsible for guaranteeing the quality of its education according to its pedagogical project. Moreover, each institution is obliged to support the education it offers in a qualitative manner. This implies that it is the responsibility of the schools to develop proper policies to professionalise its personnel/teachers.</p>
<p>10.2 Policy supports the development of high quality and appropriately trained teacher educators.</p> <p><i>(With improvements in recruitment, induction and continuing professional development.)</i></p>	<p>10.2.1 Since 2017, a training course for teacher educators has been organised in Flanders, which is partly funded by the Flemish Government. The main objective of this training course is to strengthen the quality of all teacher educators.</p> <p>For now, the course is limited to teacher educators, associated with initial teacher training. In the near future the target group will be widened to include mentors and teacher educators associated with CPD and induction. The training course focuses on the professional learning of teacher educators, with a link to learning of prospective teachers and pupil learning.</p> <p>Increasing the quality of teacher trainers is expected to enhance the quality of the (initial) teacher training and therefore also on the quality of future teachers. The training course can be started after the induction phase of the teacher educator. It comprises a workload comparable to 20 ECTS. (Decision of the Minister, August 2019, to give a project subsidy to a training course for teacher educators)</p>



Agency recommendation	Initial findings
<p>10.3 Policy supports flexible training opportunities in initial and continuing professional development, for all teachers.</p> <p><i>(Schools and teacher education institutions will work together to ensure good models in practice schools and appropriate placements for teaching practice.)</i></p>	<p>10.3.1 In initial teacher training, every aspiring teacher must complete several internships in different contexts/schools. This ensures that from the start, they get used to teaching in different groups and contexts.</p> <p>10.3.2 Under the M Decree, free training (temporary project of two years) to all school teams is offered with following objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers know various conceptual frameworks for working more inclusively. • Teachers are open to dealing with various conceptual frameworks in an integrated manner. • Teachers can use reflective or application assignments to translate concepts into their own teaching methods. • School teams can integrate conceptual frames, tools, etc. into school policy. • School teams can involve all players in and around school, including parents and learners, in shaping education for learners with specific needs – emphasis on co-operation. <p>10.3.3 The Flemish Minister of Education and Training regularly chooses a topic that supports the implementation of innovations. For the 2015–2016, 2016–2017 and 2017–2018 school years, the topic was the implementation of the M Decree to support the creation of inclusive schools. School teams could participate in CPD projects for inclusion directly subsidised by the Flemish Government.</p> <p>For the 2018–2019 and 2019–2020 school years, the minister chose another focus, also related to improving the inclusive school for learners with special needs, namely the professionalisation of special needs coaches (see 10.6)</p> <p>10.3.4 In addition to the training opportunities directly organised by the Flemish government, there are many other opportunities for CPD available. Pedagogical counselling services, teacher education organisations, universities and private organisations offer many CPD opportunities on inclusive and special needs education. Schools can choose whomever they believe to be best for their CPD needs.</p>



Agency recommendation	Initial findings
	<p>10.3.5 Teachers and paramedical staff from special education schools are encouraged to become ‘support staff’ (special need coaches) to special needs children in an inclusive school and to share their knowledge with the teachers/school teams.</p> <p>During the transition period (three years from 2017) these functions are temporary, renewable each year. Personnel of the special needs schools can opt to make this career switch but cannot be obliged to take it up, since the function of support staff is completely different.</p> <p>Teachers and paramedical staff with tenure have their rights in the special school where they have a permanent position guaranteed during this transition period. (M Decree GR SOC, maart 2018)</p>
<p>10.4 All teaching staff are supported and develop a clear understanding of effective learning strategies.</p> <p><i>(Such as learning to learn and active learning approaches.)</i></p>	<p>10.4.1 The development of a clear understanding of effective learning strategies is included in the basic skills of every teacher and in the professional profile of a teacher.</p> <p>10.4.2 The government provides additional support and information through e-platforms such as KlasCement and by financing the Pedagogical Support Services.</p>
<p>10.5 Policy supports schools to develop strategic plans of staff training in inclusive education.</p>	<p>10.5.1 Professional development is not mandatory for teachers in the Flemish Community system, but the inspectorate’s new reference framework makes expectations concerning the in-service training plan (the strategic plan for staff training) and policy of schools explicit. This helps schools to understand and develop a qualitative CPD plan as a medium to work on the internal quality care system.</p> <p>Since September 2019, the inspectorate also focuses on schools’ ‘student counselling’ policy, which is now also a prerequisite for official recognition of schools (see 6.3.1).</p>



Agency recommendation	Initial findings
<p>10.6 Policy outlines the specialised training pathways for specialists who support school communities to implement inclusive education.</p>	<p>10.6.1 For the 2018–2019 and 2019–2020 school years, special needs coaches can participate in free professional development courses. The Flemish government subsidises five projects in which teams of special needs coaches can participate to develop their competences. The projects aim to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop strong partnerships with schools, teachers, learners; • develop strong partnerships with other special needs coaches in their team; • develop strong partnerships with external professionals.
<p>10.7 Policy supports research into the effectiveness of different routes into teaching. <i>(Including course organisation, content and pedagogy to best develop the competence of teachers to meet the diverse needs of all learners.)</i></p>	<p>10.7.1 In the Flemish Community, an evaluation of initial teacher training in 2013 prompted reform of the system. Measures in a 2016 concept note proposed to enhance teacher education and improve the profile of new entrants to the profession. Measures implemented to date include a test to evaluate the competencies of prospective teaching students, which was piloted during 2015/16 and further expanded in 2016/17. (OECD Policy Outlook)</p> <p>10.7.2 The Flemish government approved a reform of teacher training programmes to start in September 2019. This decree strengthens the existing teacher training programmes in the field of subject content, subject didactics, classroom management and dealing with diversity and the metropolitan context and also creates new programmes.</p> <p>Since September 2019 there have been six teacher training programmes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Associate Degree of education: secondary education – specific programme for teachers in technical and vocational subjects • Bachelor of education: pre-primary education • Bachelor of education: primary education • Bachelor of education: secondary education, choice of two subjects



Agency recommendation	Initial findings
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Master of Science in Teaching, choice of one or more subject didactics• Master of Arts in Teaching, choice of one or more subject didactics. <p>10.7.3 From 2019 onwards, at least one programme for students and one for ‘side-entrants’ will be offered in every teacher training programme. The trajectory for side-entrants must be adjusted to the needs of this target group. For example, lessons can be organised in the evening or at the weekends, offer more possibilities for distance learning, different locations where the training can be offered, etc.</p> <p>With these measures, more people will get the chance to follow a teacher training programme. Everyone will be able to choose to become a teacher. Eighteen-year-olds wishing to follow a university education will be able to make the choice for teaching from the start of their education through the introduction of the educational master’s programmes. There are also more opportunities to receive a study allowance and because the programmes are organised by the colleges and the universities, there will be more opportunities in the field of social services.</p> <p>10.7.4 Since the 2018–2019 school year, a pre-entrance test evaluating prospective students’ competences has been obligatory for all students starting a bachelor Education. However, the results cannot be used to exclude students from starting the programme.</p>

Measure 10 evaluative comments

Talis 2018 shows that 50% of primary teachers and 37.5 % of lower-secondary teachers participated in professional development activities which included the topic of teaching students with special needs in the last 12 months; this is a big increase compared to Talis 2013.

The school board hires school leaders, teachers and staff. The Flemish government establishes the legal framework and outlines the general rules on personnel matters and the financing of staff salaries. However, the specific HRM policy of schools is the unique responsibility of the school (board). Since Flemish schools enjoy this high degree of autonomy, the Flemish government has only limited impact on the CPD of teachers and can only turn to nudging or offering financial means. A higher involvement (obligations) could raise concerns regarding the freedom of education as guaranteed by the constitution.



Measure 11: To improve transition from education to work by increasing the coherence between employment incentives, education and VET; improving the quality and accessibility of apprenticeships; promoting cross-sector co-operation; simplifying the systems of qualifications

Agency recommendation	Initial findings
<p>11.1 Policy ensures that VET programmes should address labour market skill requirements.</p>	<p>11.1.1 In the Flemish Community, secondary vocational education can be followed in two strands: purely school-based and dual school and work-based (Codex Secundair Onderwijs, Deel IV, Titel 1, Afdeling 1/1 en Codex Secundair Onderwijs, Deel V/1).</p> <p>11.1.2 On 1 September 2019, the modernisation of secondary education started (Codex Secundair Onderwijs, art. 123/21). For special needs education, the modernisation started one year later, from 1 September 2020 onwards. This modernisation will be implemented year on year, being complete in the 2025–2026 school year. An important element of the modernisation is that VET programmes will be based on vocational qualifications, ensuring that the skills being taught are adapted to the skills requirements of the labour market.</p> <p>11.1.3 Furthermore, on 1 September 2019, dual learning started in secondary education of the second and third degree (Codex Secundair Onderwijs, Deel V/1). The system of dual learning was implemented as a reform of the existing system of learning and working, that was implemented in 2008. Courses in dual learning are already based on the vocation qualifications and a significant proportion of dual courses are taught in a workplace. Furthermore, dual learning is also possible in special needs education (Codex Secundair Onderwijs, Deel V/3).</p>
<p>11.2 Policy aims at matching labour market skill requirements and learners’ skills, wishes and expectations.</p>	<p>11.2.1 Within secondary education, there is flexibility for learners to have an individual learning pathway within a cycle. In part-time education and in the system of dual learning, learners have the possibility to combine different levels of professional training with a curriculum focused on general competences. This flexibility allows learners to progress within the set professional competences at a different pace.</p>



Agency recommendation	Initial findings
	<p>11.2.2 During professional qualification, learners are also trained at the workplace, where they learn a significant share of competences. During learners' work experience, employers can receive supportive measures ('reasonable measures', see also 11.6.3) in order to make learning at the workplace possible for all the learners involved. (Codex Secundair Onderwijs, art. 357/19).</p>
<p>11.3 Policy outlines the development of partnerships and networking structures.</p> <p><i>(Partnerships with a pool of local employers to ensure close co-operation with regard to learners' supervised practical training and finding employment after graduation.)</i></p>	<p>11.3.1 Provincial meeting fora are created for dual learning with representatives of the schools, labour market partners and other relevant stakeholders of the province. The aim of these provincial meeting fora is to foster co-operation of the stakeholders in the region. (Codex Secundair Onderwijs, art. 357/32–357/35)</p> <p>11.3.2 Sectoral partnerships and a Flemish partnership are responsible for finding enough workplaces for dual learning in Flanders. (<i>Decreet tot oprichting van het publiekrechtelijk vormgegeven extern verzelfstandigd agentschap 'Vlaams Agentschap voor Ondernemersvorming – Syntra Vlaanderen'</i>, art. 13–18).</p> <p>11.3.3 Regional Technological Centres (RTCs) ensure collaboration between education and enterprise and organise provincial level work experience and training.</p>
<p>11.4 Policy outlines how transition from education to employment is supported by adequate provision.</p>	<p>11.4.1 Learners with special needs in mainstream education can enrol with an individually adapted curriculum (IAC). This curriculum contains attainment targets adapted to the needs of the learner, aiming at the maximum development of these learners to become (full) participants in society. (Codex Secundair Onderwijs, art. 110/11)</p> <p>Normally, the IAC does not lead to the same qualification compared to mainstream education. This qualification can only be obtained after the formal approval of the educational inspectorate on the equivalence of the IAC compared to the mainstream curriculum. (Codex Secundair Onderwijs, art. 3)</p> <p>11.4.2 When making the transition to employment, a selection of learners can receive unemployment benefits straight after leaving school. In order to enjoy these benefits, learners must have graduated with a certain qualification. Learners who graduated with an IAC cannot enjoy this benefit immediately.</p>



Agency recommendation	Initial findings
	<p>11.4.3 The Flemish Public Employment Service (VDAB) created a tool called My Career, to monitor professional career development. Individuals can create a personal account with data, acquired competences, diplomas, etc. and VDAB in turn provide job applications that match their profile. The Flemish Government stimulates that teachers guide pupils in VET in the creation of their My Career profile. VDAB account managers will support pupils and stimulate them to get a job as soon as possible.</p>
<p>11.5 Policy supports the availability of meaningful VET options for learners to choose from.</p>	<p>11.5.1 See 11.1</p>
<p>11.6 Policy supports the availability of supervised practical training.</p>	<p>11.6.1 In special needs secondary education, some vocational/work related training is included. The training structure includes profiles detailing competences that allow courses to be tailored to individual pupils. Work experience and practical training is included. This, however, is not the case in each stance of special needs education; in level OV1 this is generally not included.</p> <p>11.6.2 In all VET courses, at least some practical training should be done by the pupil, whereas in dual learning, the proportion of practical training is strengthened. Also in special secondary education, vocational training in a workplace is possible. In levels OV3 and OV4 of special secondary education, dual learning can be done. Both in mainstream and in special secondary education, a teacher from school is responsible for the supervision of the workplace learning (Codex Secundair Onderwijs, art. 357/2). In dual learning, the trainers at the workplace are obliged to follow a training course. (<i>Decreet tot regeling van bepaalde aspecten van alternerende opleidingen</i>, art. 7)</p> <p>11.6.3 Reasonable measures/adjustments are possible in dual learning, and for this both school and the company play a part. By providing such measures for pupils with special needs, dual learning should become available to them. (Codex Secundair Onderwijs, art. 357/19)</p>



Agency recommendation	Initial findings
11.7 Policy outlines how sustainable employment opportunities are supported through the availability of appropriate, on-going support.	11.7.1 See 11.4.3 11.7.2 Legislation on reasonable adaptations is also applicable in the work context (Anti-discrimination law, 2007).
11.8 Policy outlines how VET programmes are reviewed periodically. <i>(Both internally and/or externally) in order to adapt to current and future skill needs.)</i>	11.8.1 When the modernisation of secondary education is implemented, the offer of courses will be evaluated and updated every five years to assure its relevance for the labour market.

Measure 11 evaluative comments

The Belgian NEET rate for 15–19 year olds is slightly below the OECD average of 14.3%. More than half of all Belgian NEETs are inactive, meaning they are not even looking for work. (OECD Education at a Glance, 2019)

OECD suggests that policy-makers:

- consider individual follow-up and tracking of early school leavers and of those at risk of dropping out;
- investigate whether introducing practical training and pre-apprenticeship programmes to entice school-tired youth back into the education system could help reduce Belgium's NEET rate;
- explore the scope of better local co-ordination and targeting of active labour market programmes to help young NEET into employment.



Measure 12: To improve educational and career guidance across all phases of inclusive education

Agency recommendation	Initial findings
<p>12.1 Policy outlines the mechanisms for ensuring effective transition across educational sectors and phases. (There are well-organised transition processes among services to ensure continuity in the support required when learners move from one form of provision to another.)</p>	<p>12.1.1 PGC support learners at times of transition. The decree on pupil guidance in basic education, secondary education and the pupil guidance centres (April 2018; see 1.1.5.) identifies the educational career as one of the four components of student counselling. The purpose is that schools and pupil guidance centres support pupils in the development of self-knowledge, insight in the structure and possibilities in education, training and the labour market and to make adequate choices in and outside the school.</p> <p>12.1.2 A pupil can only enter special education after an official statement of the pupil guidance centre in charge. This statement is the result of a diagnostic procedure, in co-operation with different stakeholders. The statement describes what special needs the pupil has and what kind of special needs education is best suited for the pupil.</p> <p>12.1.3 Legislation obliges schools and pupil guidance centres to transfer information about the special educational needs written down in statements (<i>gemotiveerd verslag en verslag</i>) when pupils change school.</p> <p>12.1.4 Primary schools often transfer information about learning results when pupils move on to secondary education (<i>BASO-fiche</i>), but this is not compulsory or expected on the basis of legislation.</p> <p>12.1.5 The master plan of secondary education aims to ‘smooth the transition from elementary to secondary education’ (RA report, p. 16). This means that the general competences in the first grade of secondary education will be strengthened to guarantee that all pupils have the opportunity to obtain the same level of general competences. In addition, pupils in the first grade can choose between several optional parts to discover new subjects.</p>



Agency recommendation	Initial findings
<p>12.2 Policy outlines how career counsellors/officers support learners and employers regarding employment possibilities.</p> <p><i>(Support is provided with job applications, inform and support employers and facilitate contact between both parties.)</i></p>	<p>12.2.1 Study choice and vocational guidance is a continuous process that starts in nursery school. The pupil should be surrounded by various parties within the guidance network: parents, peers, friends, individual teachers, teams of teachers, PGC personnel, pedagogical support services. (Eurydice Career Guidance. See also 11.7.1 and 12.1.1)</p> <p>12.2.2 See 11.4.3.</p>

Measure 12 evaluative comments

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