



VET STUDY VISIT HASSELT, BELGIUM

25 - 27 January 2012

Visit details

Study visit participants:

Maria Ciappara (expert from Malta)

Ilva Berzina (expert from Latvia)

Inge Placklé (expert from Belgium and host)

Mary Kyriazopoulou (European Agency staff member)

1st day

Welcome, introduction and overview of the Vocational Education and Inclusion system in Flanders

The meeting began with a welcome and introduction from Vera Goossens, the Head of Department for Teacher Education, XIOS University College and Inge Placklé, Teacher educator, XIOS University College and VET national expert.

Emphasis was placed on the importance of the meeting in terms of exchanging and sharing experiences with colleagues from other countries and learning from each other.

An introduction was then given as to the aims of the VET project, the activities undertaken so far and the aims of the study visit, namely, to understand **What** Works well and **why** in the selected example.

Vocational Education and Inclusion in Flanders, by Els Exter, Representative of Department of Education and **GON-counseling BuSO-KIDS**, by Lieve Vaes and Katrien welkenhuysen, Gon-coordinators BuSO Kids

An overview of the education system in Flanders was presented, from preschool to higher education, covering the different types of education available for students with SEN and disabilities and with a focus on the structure of secondary education and vocational education in particular.

In Flanders, the compulsory education stage lasts from the age of 6 to 18. Pre-primary education takes place between the ages of 2.5 and 6 years old and primary education lasts from the ages of 6 to 12. Secondary education lasts from the age of 12 to 18. This time is divided into 3 stages of 2 years and an additional 1 year. The first stage is for students aged 12-14. In the second (aged 14-16) and third (aged 16-18) stages, students



can choose from different types of education:

- ASO (general 25% of all students): a broad theoretical education that leads to higher education
- TSO (technical 20%): general education, technical subjects and practical classes that lead to higher technical education
- KSO (artistic 1%): general and broad education and artistic courses that lead to higher artistic education
- BSO (vocational 17%): general education and specific vocational skills are covered in a 3 year course, certified by a diploma. There are 30 study areas and approximately 250 different courses of study.

During the fourth stage, lasting one year, the vocational education can include optional nursing courses. Since 2009-2010 this course has been known as the 'associate degree' or HBO5 (1%)

The DBSO is part time vocational education (2%), which includes alternating between work and learning and includes training programmes but no stages or study areas. The 40 weeks of 'alternating' work include 15 hours of study and 13 hours of on-the-job learning, as well as preparatory pathways, such as a bridging project and personal development pathways.

Integrated education (GON) was designed in 1983 for pupils with a special education admission certificate who attend mainstream education with support from a teacher connected to a special education school. The teacher carries out supplementary hours in the mainstream school and receives an integration allowance (transport costs).

An integration plan is created for each pupil with details about the type of support required from the teacher (pupil oriented - teacher oriented - parent oriented), support with materials and adaptations (e.g. braille translations, changes to the curriculum, e.g. replace subjects/parts of subjects). There is a common curriculum and certificate.

The support provided is usually 2 supplementary hours per week and an integration allowance for 2 years. 4 supplementary hours per week are sometimes provided to assist a student throughout an entire level of education.

In the academic year 2010-2011, there were 11,677 pupils in GON. There has been a strong increase in numbers in the last 10 years, particularly of pupils with autism (2000-2001: 1755 pupils in GON). GON exists at all levels: primary, secondary and higher education and its pupils amount to 0.95% of the entire school population.

Inclusive education (ION) was created in 2002 for students with a type 2 special education admission certificate (moderate or severe mental impairments), who attend mainstream (primary or secondary education) with support from a special education school. They use individual curricula and alternative forms of certification. The project involves 100 students annually (a fixed number, which was initially 50). From 2002-2008, 17% of students in secondary education were in ION. Most students in secondary education ION are in BSO (vocational). The support provided is 5.5 supplementary hours per week, for 6 years, with an integration allowance of 250 euro. An integration plan is created for each individual pupil.



The equal educational opportunities policy (GOK – 2002) in primary and secondary education gives all students, including students with SEN and disabilities, the right to attend mainstream schools, although the schools are permitted to refuse a student if they feel they can not provide them with adequate support. Local consultation platforms oversee the implementation of the GOK policy at local level. Schools with a high number of disadvantaged pupils receive additional support (GOK-teachers) for 3 years (e.g. to provide language-skills education).

Special class for newcomers (immigrant pupils) in secondary education (OKAN): a one year course distinct from the standard 3 x 2 stages plus 1 year structure of secondary education, which aims to teach Flemish to newcomers.

Special education: Special education has been adapted to the training and education needs of disabled pupils since 1970 and is offered within special schools. The majority of pupils with disabilities attend special education, which accounts for more than 4% of all pupils. Across the education levels the respective percentages are: nursery: 0.78%, primary: 6.79%, secondary: 4.24%. The percentage of pupils who attended special education in the last 20 years is more than 40%.

The main characteristics of special education are:

- a very flexible structure
- small groups
- individual action plans
- paramedical help

Admission to the special education system is based on a multidisciplinary examination (medical, psychological, social and educational). According to the results, parents receive a certificate allowing them to enrol their child in the special school of their choice, with the support of student guidance centres.

There are 8 types of special education in Flanders that differ according to their target groups, objectives and didactic contents.

TYPE 1: pupils with a mild mental disability (not at nursery level)

TYPE 2: pupils with a moderate or severe mental disability

TYPE 3: pupils with severe emotional and/or behavioural problems

TYPE 4: pupils with a severe physical disability, mostly motor deficiencies

TYPE 5: pupils who have been admitted to a hospital or other medical institution for a significant period of time

TYPE 6: the blind and partially sighted

TYPE 7: the deaf and hard of hearing

TYPE 8: pupils with severe learning difficulties (not at nursery and secondary level)

Special secondary education - 4 categories:

Category 1 (OV1):

- General training in social skills, leading to a sheltered living environment
- designed for types 2,3,4,6 and 7
- 20% of special secondary education



Category 2 (OV2):

- General social skills training and work skills training, leading to a sheltered living and working environment
- designed for types 2,3,4,6 and 7
- at least 4 years, divided into 2 phases
- 15% of special secondary education

Category 3 (OV3):

- General social skills training and vocational training (assistant level), leading to the regular workplace (LSE)
- designed for types 1,3,4,6 and 7
- a minimum of 5 years/28 different courses of study based on professional qualification profiles
- 3 phases: observation-training-qualification and 1 optional phase: integration (individual transition - lowers the threshold for entering the labour market)
- 60% of special secondary education

Category 4 (OV4)

- acquisition of the same knowledge and skills as in regular secondary education, leading to higher education or the regular workplace
- designed for types 3,4,5,6 and 7
- 5% of special secondary education

Future: They have undertaken scientific evaluation of and research on the implementation of integrated education (GON) and inclusive education (ION) policies and the results will be available in summer 2012.

Changes: The ratification of the UN convention on the rights of persons with disabilities has facilitated the capacity of mainstream schools to provide education for pupils with SEN. The effective implementation of Art. 24 UN Convention entails ensuring the right to enrolment in mainstream education. A new framework for SEN should clearly define special education e.g. a new specific 'type 9' for pupils with autism and a clear definition of the other types. (see presentation on Vocational Education and Inclusion Presentation-1.pdf)

Overview of the Belgian study visit, by Rita Philipsen, deputy director, Koninklijk technisch Atheneum 2 Hasselt (KTA2 – Hasselt).

Information was provided on the secondary school KTA2 – Hasselt and its activities.

The KTA2 – Hasselt is a mainstream technical and vocational secondary school with a total of 1150 students, 250 of whom have SEN. The school has 180 employees, including 150 teachers.

More than 50% of all students have been identified as needing special support according to the GOK-indicators (social disadvantaged background) in order to provide them with opportunities equal to those available to other students.

The school provides:



BSO: employment oriented courses (55% of all courses available) (hairdresser, graphic designer, window dresser, office worker, painter- decorator, nursing aids)

TSO: employment/high school oriented courses (35%) (beauty esthetician, bookkeeper-secretary, business administrator, chemical assistant, photographer, educators, health sciences)

DBSO: part time vocational education courses - 14h lessons/14h work - (5%) (material handler, painter - decorator, gardener, bike mechanic, shop assistant, kitchen assistant)

OKAN: Flemish lessons for non-Flemish speaking newcomers (5%)

Teaching and learning is child-centred with special attention being paid to their well being and individual needs. Students are treated as individuals, not numbers.

The school conducts a broad screening of all students in order to identify their needs and it determines the appropriate guidance and support on this basis.

Work is carried out with students within their wider environment, taking into account their family, neighbourhood and various issues or burdens experienced by the individual student.

The school offers a good balance between academic and practical subjects. Every course lasts up to 6 or 7 years. The general subjects (languages, mathematics, geography, history etc) are integrated within projects in order to facilitate diversity and ease transition into wider society, improve soft skills and key competences, acknowledge the range of people's strengths and encourage motivation for the learning process. The primary focus is on the educational, rather than the technical, aspect of vocational studies. Students are actively involved in their own learning processes (setting their own goals), participate in challenging activities and are continuously empowered. They carry out practical training in real working conditions (companies).

In order to promote equal opportunities for all students in practice, the school cooperates with and involves various services:

- OKAN classes for children who have just arrived in Belgium and do not speak Flemish. In addition to learning the language, they receive support in settling into life in Belgium and coping with their past (in the case of refugees, for example).
- GON guidance for students with SEN and their teachers
- Arktos: centre for the professional guidance of socially vulnerable young people. It offers guidance and training projects.
- Project "tutoring@home": students from Teacher Education XIOS support students from disadvantaged backgrounds in the students' homes.

(see also [Presentation-2.pdf](#)).

Equal Learning Opportunities at KTA: School staff presented an overview of the activities carried out at the school

Actions Equal Learning Opportunities, by Rita Drees, teacher.

The 3 main objectives of the Equal educational opportunities policy (GOK – 2002) are:

- The right to register at any school
- Special needs education, integrated into common school activities



- Each school can develop the activities it wishes according to the needs of its students

5 indicators have been identified:

- Students living outside of the family home
- Transient population
- Study fund (meals at school)
- Educational level of the mother
- Foreign languages spoken at home

7 topics are covered:

- Overcoming learning deficiencies
- Intercultural education
- Student and parent participation
- Study orientation (orienting students towards studying)
- Socio-emotional development
- Language skill education
- Prevention and remediation

3 year project period:

1st year: analyse the initial state of affairs, choose topics, work out policy, initiate actions

2nd year: actions, self-evaluation, re-orientation if necessary

3rd year: actions, external evaluation (inspection)

In the school KTA2 – Hasselt, 47% of the students are GOK-students (according to the educational level of the mother and study fund indicators). There are 74 teaching hours per year for 2 main topics: prevention and remediation and language skills education. The main actions undertaken include: screening language skills, analysing exams, tests and papers, study class, training at all levels (teachers and staff), developing specific terminology for each subject, the development of remedial exercises and remedial classes, and help with the final paper (GIP).

[\(see Presentation on Equal Learning Opportunities at KTA 2 – Presentation-3.pdf\).](#)

Welcome class for foreign newcomers (OKAN), by Marina Mortans, coordinator, Lizy Daenen, coach, Krista, teacher, and **Student Counselling** by Reina Vincken, student counsellor

The OKAN classes are directed at:



- foreign students between 12 and 18 years old
- students attending secondary education classes
- students who have no or insufficient knowledge of the Flemish language
- students who need to learn Flemish as fast as possible

The OKAN class provides Flemish lessons to these students for one academic year before they enter secondary education. The class begins on 1st September and finishes on 30th

June, but students can join the class anytime. They do 26 hours of Flemish per week, 2 hours of Religion and Ethics and 2 hours of sport. They also experience various projects, excursions and a specific week aimed at helping them adapt to secondary school classes.

The OKAN classes cooperate with the Student Guidance Center (CLB), which supports the students throughout their education in respect of:

- learning
- future education
- future profession
- healthcare
- social and psychological support

The CLB provides support and follow-up to ex-Okanner:

- emotional support
- assistance with learning issues
- acts as a go-between for the secondary school and ex-okanner

The CLB also provides support to ex-okanner teachers:

- offering strategies how to work with an ex-okanner
- information about the curriculum of the ex-okanner

Local Consultation Platform, by Dirk Herfs, representative of LCP Hasselt and the Department of Education

The Local Consultation Platform unites all local educational providers and local organisations concerned with equal opportunities in education. Its main objective is to promote the registration of all students to the school of their choice. They offer every student an equal opportunity to learn and to develop. They want to promote social cohesion and social diversity and avoid segregation, discrimination and exclusion. The assignments required of them by Decree include environmental analysis, newcomers, local educational policy and registration.

When a student is refused registration at the school of his choice, he or she can ask the LCP for mediation.

The partners are: schools and their management, student guidance services, parents,



teachers, ethnic and cultural minorities, the disadvantaged, the socio-economic and socio cultural partners, local government and co-opted representatives.

2nd day

Visit to Arktos, Youth Guidance Centre

Veerle Vewinter and Gert Bortels presented the aims and activities of the centre. The Arktos is a centre providing professional guidance for the socially vulnerable (by reason of personal, cultural or social problems) young people between 6 and 25 years old. The aim is to support these young people in finding a self-determined place in society. Its 3 key tasks are: the education/guidance of young people, support to everyone who works with them (teachers, educators) and raising awareness in society (articles, making a film with youngsters about their opinion on and feelings towards juvenile justice).

The work entails four elements:

- project work
- active training (non-formal learning, guiding attitudes)
- individual attention/guidance
- a close network (engaging parents and other people significant for the youngsters)

Five areas of life:

- employment (preparatory training and guidance)
- leisure (training house AKIRA, express yourself)
- education (personal development, active learning within school, time out)
- neighbourhood (youth work)
- welfare

Between September 2009 and August 2010, Arktos has undertaken 61 projects, reaching 3859 young people with 123 staff.

Learning to learn at home, by Yvette Martens (student counsellor) and Ruth Joosten (lecturer XIOS)

The project “tutoring@home” involves students from the teacher Education XIOS who support students from disadvantaged backgrounds at home.

The project is valuable for:

- the experience of working with socially vulnerable families and learning to deal with diversity
- the experience of guiding and supporting individual children
- the opportunity to attend a class council and a parent contact meeting.



(see [Presentation on Learning to learn at home Presentation-4.pdf](#)).

In the afternoon participants had the opportunity to visit the different classes (OKAN class, hairdresser class, graphic designer class, window dresser class, beauty esthetician class, chemistry class etc) of the KTA2 – Hasselt school to see in practice how the courses function and have discussions with teachers and students.