

**BELGIUM
FRENCH SPEAKING COMMUNITY**

Summary

**Country Report on the Vocational Education and
Training system, REFERNET Cedefop**

and

**Summary report on Vocational Education and
Training (VET) for learners with Special
Educational Needs (SEN)**



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1 VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEM

1.1 Objectives and priorities of the national policy development areas of VET

In the light of the European Youth Pact, the Belgian authorities have implemented measures to promote the integration of young people into the labour market. Initially, the aim was to upgrade technical and vocational education. Heavy investments were made in equipping the schools in question, and via specialised centres, which were set up by the employment services with various partners, high-tech equipment will be made available for education, both for pupils and for teacher training.

In Flanders, sandwich courses were bolstered by increasing the number of places available for work experience; this was done in consultation with the sectors and within the government itself. In addition, the 'full-time commitment' was introduced: pupils in part-time education must be able to gain work experience.

The French Community and the Walloon Region have set themselves the goal of increasing the number of young people in part-time education by improving support and by expanding the system to include the government sector and large companies, thereby simplifying the coordination mechanism. A service has been set up that makes it possible to work with the same vocational standards for 1) the various training systems and 2) the system of recognising acquired skills. This service will also make it possible to strengthen links with the labour market. This will further enhance the readability and consistency of the training pathways.

Within the framework of a more flexible labour market, entrepreneurship is also encouraged. The average Belgian has not yet sufficiently developed the reflex to create his own job by becoming self-employed. Training in entrepreneurship was also pursued after school. When beginning self-employment, young people can still receive the benefit allocated for job-seeking school-leavers and will be given longer support when they arrange a start-up loan. In addition, Flanders began systematically screening job-seekers for their entrepreneurial qualities and Wallonia solidified its pilot project, with job-seekers being given the opportunity to test out a project 'in real life conditions' within a protected environment.

1.1.1 More equal opportunities in education and recognition of skills for everyone who pursues lifelong learning

Within the framework of the open method of coordination for 'Education and Training 2010', the Communities pursued their efforts to guarantee equal access to education and to upgrade technical and vocational education. The French Community worked on implementing its sizeable reform plan that runs until 2013 by bolstering the Community foundation in secondary education. Flanders introduced a bonus system in order to put pressure on the cost of expensive courses of study.

1.1.2 Priority spheres of action

Belgium is guided by the objective of achieving a targeted approach to working life guaranteeing easy transitions to and within the labour market and making it possible to increase the participation of target groups that have been excluded from it. In this respect the beginning and end of working life are the chief focus of attention; this is where the main challenges are posed for our country. To ensure efficient entry of young people into the labour market, the first necessity is to strengthen secondary education, in particular the subjects which have a direct bearing on the labour market.



1.2 Background to the IVET system

Secondary education, from the age of 12 to 18, includes three two-year cycles:

an initial common (*gemeenschappelijke*) (Flemish Community) or foundation (*observation*) (French Community) cycle;

a second cycle where education is organised in four streams: general, technical, art and vocational;

a third two-year cycle (sometimes three years – a seventh class of secondary education is added – especially in the Flemish Community).

In theory there are bridges between streams in the secondary education cycles but in practice, transition generally takes place in one direction: downwards as a result of failure. From the age of 15/16, students can attend **alternance education**. It is organised in three ways:

The alternance education and training centres *Centrum voor Deeltijds Onderwijs - CDO* in the Flemish Community. (*Centre d'éducation et de formation en alternance – CEFA*) in the French Community and *Teilzeitunterrichtszentrum* in the German-speaking Community. Students attend two days of classes at the centre per week and spend three days in an enterprise.

The industrial apprenticeship contract (*contrat d'apprentissage industriel – CAI*) or *contrat d'apprentissage* (apprenticeship contract) for workers in employment; apprenticeship organised for the 'middle classes', i.e. self-employed occupations (with practical training, in trade skills, commercial training and training for service occupations).

Special education take the form of eight types of education, is available for children and adolescents with physical, mental or instrumental disabilities. It is organised at primary and secondary levels. At the secondary level, students are prepared for social-occupational integration. *Pupil assessment* takes place within the class. Primary teachers are educators, assessors and judges. At secondary level, assessment and guidance are the task of the *Conseil de classe* (Class council) made up of the school's principals and class teachers. Pupils obtaining the Certificate of Upper Secondary Education may enter higher education (university and non-university). The new system, known as the learning disability framework, should ensure that every child in the Flemish education system gets tailor-made care. This includes both special needs and ordinary education. On the basis of in-depth discussions, including with the Flemish Educational Council, the plan has been expanded with extra guarantees for a successful outcome.

Apprenticeship training Part-time education: Under the Law of 29 June 1983 on compulsory education, part-time compulsory education was introduced in 1984 for young people who have either reached the age of 15 and have already had two years of secondary education or who have already reached the age of 16. It consists of both general education (including social and personal development) and preparation for employment. The institutions which are responsible for the organization of apprenticeship for the middle classes are: Syntra Vlaanderen in the Flemish Community, IFAPME in the French Community and IAWM in the German-speaking Community. There are theoretical and vocational training courses. Apprenticeship contracts may be concluded for occupations related to commerce, trade, small industries, craftsmanship and non-manual occupations in the services sector. According to the apprenticeship contract, a monthly minimum salary is paid to the apprentice by the head of the firm on a progressive basis.



Industrial apprenticeship Since 1983, apprenticeships in occupations exercised by salaried workers are recognized under the "industrial apprenticeship". This type of apprenticeship is intended for young people, aged between 16 and 21, with a poor school record, who have lost interest in attending school. Practical training may take place in several firms successively and theoretical training is provided in school. The apprentice receives an allowance, a percentage of the minimum wage in the chosen sector, from the head of the firm.

Advanced apprenticeship training The '*leerlingwezen voor werknemersberoepen*' (advanced apprenticeship training) targets youngsters between 15/16 and 18 who are subjected to part-time compulsory education. On the one hand, students receive a practical study course in a company and on the other hand follow additional theoretical lessons in part-time education (in a '*Centrum voor Deeltijds Beroepssecundair Onderwijs*' (Centre for Part-time Secondary Vocational education) in the Flemish Community, in a '*Centre d'éducation et de formation en alternance*' in the French-speaking Community or in a '*Teilzeitunterrichtszenter*' in the German-speaking Community or in other types of training institutes (VDAB, FOREM or Bruxelles - Formation, continuing education, etc.).

Employment-training agreement Set up in 1986, apprenticeship training is available to all young people between the ages of 18 and 25 who are seeking employment, and do not already possess a diploma of long or short higher education or university education, or of technical upper secondary education. The agreement is signed by the young person and the employer and lasts for a minimum of one year or a maximum of three years. This agreement includes a contract for part-time work of indeterminate duration and training.

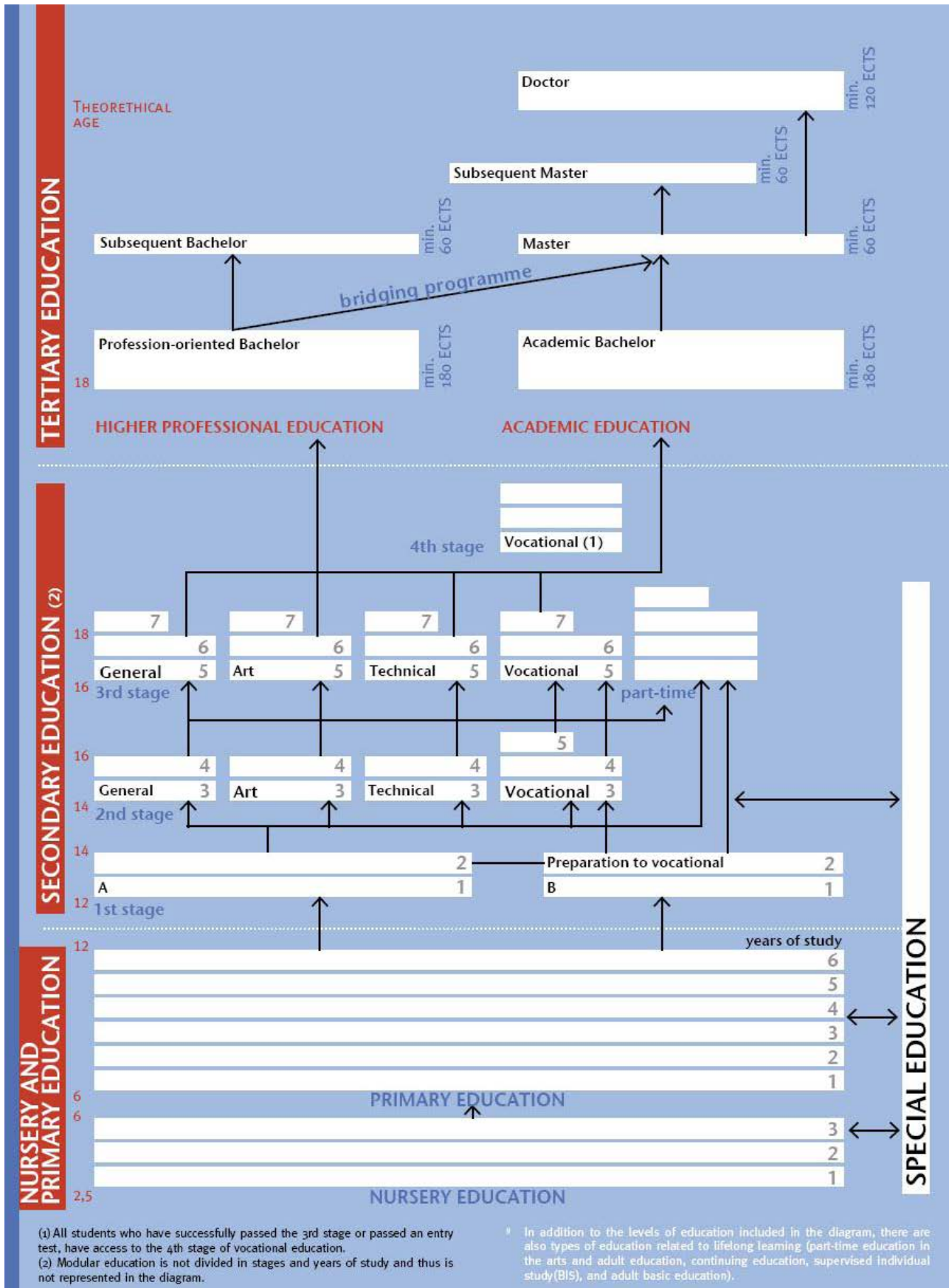
Socio-occupational integration agreement Under this agreement there is alternance between training in enterprise and theoretical training given by a CEFA/CDO. It is targeted at students in part-time compulsory education and students regularly registered in a CEFA/CDO prior to 31 December of the year in which they reach the age of 18. The agreement lasts 12 months but may be renewed in order to enable students to complete their training cycle (2 or 3 years). Theoretical training and practical training may not exceed 38 hours per week.

Education for social advancement Students enrolled in Dual Vocational Education and Training Centres and apprenticeship contracts for Independent professions to fulfil their part-time scholastic obligation may also enrol in education for social advancement.

Other youth programmes and alternative pathways

Pathways to integration are part of a scheme fulfilling an ESF requirement aimed at a global concept of the processes of hosting, guidance, advice, monitoring, training, job-seeking and employment. These pathways are arranged in stages, which are not necessarily successive. These pathways comprise different components in Wallonia and Brussels. The aim of this approach is to offer support to all young people (< 25) within three months of their leaving school without upper secondary qualifications. They will also benefit from specific measures designed to improve their chances of labour market integration, particularly in the context of a first-job agreement. An integration agreement is concluded with the young persons concerned, taking account of what they specifically need in order to obtain a first-job agreement.

1.3 Diagram of the education and training system





1.4 Institutional and legislative framework for IVET

The roles and impacts of the key administrative and regulatory bodies can be summarised as follows:

The European Union has its impact on the kind of qualifications that are valid in the three communities of Belgium. The European Union has initiated a number of educational and training programmes in view of the promotion of the European dimension and the improvement of educational quality through cooperation between countries. Actions are taken in each Community for following four partial aspects of European cooperation regarding vocational education and training:

European dimension;

Recognition of competences and qualifications;

Transparency, information and guidance;

Quality control.

The federal legislator retained responsibility for establishing the beginning and end of compulsory education as well as setting minimum conditions for the award of diplomas and certificates.

IN WALLONIA The vocational profiles set up by the social partners are rather important. This way the pupil is prepared for specific vocations and also for personal and social functioning is integrated. An agreement was reached between teachers of primary education and the first stage of secondary education on a working document relating to the core competences (*socles de compétences*) to be achieved at ages 8, 12, and 14. These are references designed to determine the notion of education level and to serve as the basis on which to elaborate curricula

1.5 Types of teacher and trainer occupations in VET

The main difference between Belgian VET teachers and VET trainers is their workplace. Generally spoken, teachers are employed in IVET and trainers are employed in CVET. In Belgium, most teachers are employed in regular education while trainers are employed in the non-regular system.

Differences between VET teachers and VET trainers in terms of entry requirements, professional experiences and background and qualifications can be reduced to the difference between regular and non-regular education. In regular education entry requirements and qualifications are defined by the Ministries of Education.

Foundation of colleges of higher education

The pre-service training of secondary education teachers is provided at three types of institutions: colleges of higher education, centres for adult education (social advancement education) and universities. Scaling-up by mergers has been in recent years one of the main developments affecting institutions offering teacher education programmes, especially colleges of higher education. As a matter of fact a few years ago all formal higher teaching education institutions have been integrated in the newly formed colleges of higher education. Recently the debate on setting up a unified structure for teacher education provisions, integrating all types of teacher training was re-opened.

1.6 Systems and mechanisms for the anticipation of skill needs

In Belgium, the anticipation of skill needs is a responsibility of employers, public employment services, education, research and training institutions.



As far as anticipation is concerned, the approach developed by Belgium is based on a contractual policy with the social partners, giving preference to an inter-sectoral and regional approach. Anticipation is given high priority. Actions include forecasting studies of the employment market, of qualifications and of needs with regard to vocational training. These studies are repeated on a regular basis to monitor any change or evolution. Support is also provided to the functioning of anticipatory structures. The results of the studies will help define the content of training measures aimed at the adaptation of workers. Training measures have to be accompanied by prospective and strategic thinking, in terms of development of skills and qualifications. In the same way, measures relating to the development of training systems have to demonstrate how they meet the anticipated needs.

Public sector initiatives:

In French-speaking Belgium, debate about the validation of non-formal and informal learning has centred on the concept *validation des compétences*, within the framework of a *bilan de compétences* or individual record of achievement. A law on the *bilan de compétences* was passed in December 2001 and, following the approval of implementation legislation, officially entered into force in September 2002. This legislation grants every worker a right to a *bilan de compétences* and to be assessed to identify and validate skills gained outside the formal education system.

1.7 Guidance and counselling for learning, career and employment

Until recently, guidance policies and systems focused separately on target groups like pupils, unemployed people or employed people. With the elaboration of the Skills Agenda, study and career guidance initiatives will be better co-ordinated and aligned strategically toward a lifelong guidance approach. For example: pupils, teachers and parents must be better informed about the world of work and its opportunities; a portfolio, useful for all policy domains and for the whole lifecycle, will be developed. The employment services in the three regions (VDAB, FOREM, ACTIRIS and Bruxelles-Formation) also offer opportunities for information, guidance and skill reviews for young people and adults.

1.8 Funding for initial vocational education and training

The federal government has its financial income from the social security resources. This financial income of the federal government is transferred to the other governing levels being the Regions, the Communities, the Provinces and Municipalities and it (this financial income) represents the public expenditure for education by student in Belgium. The public expenditure for education by student refers to an educational principle stipulated in the Belgian Constitution.

The Belgian constitution stipulates that access to education is free until the end of the compulsory education age (Initial Education and Training). This means that primary and secondary schools that are funded or subsidised by the Community government (organizing of education became a community matter with the revision of the Belgian Constitution Law of 1980) are not allowed to charge any registration fees.

The educational flows from the federal government to the other governing levels being the Regions, the Communities, the Provinces and Municipalities.

Since the revision of the Belgian Constitution Law of 1980 with its specific regional laws and community laws of 1980 education became a Community matter. This means that education is organised by the Communities for which they receive an annual contribution coming from the federal government and the respective regions.



The communities are paying for the personnel cost, for scholarships and study grants, for family allowance, for school buildings and for Initial education, including the apprenticeship until the age of 18.

Traditionally a distinction is made between three educational networks within each community.

1) Community education is education organised under the authority of the Communities by the public bodies that are called the Flemish Community education, The French – speaking Community education and the German – speaking Community education;

2) the subsidised publicly run schools comprise municipal education organised by the municipalities and the provincial education organised by the provincial administrations and

3) the subsidised privately run schools deliver education organised by a private person or private organisation on private initiative. Privately run education mainly consists of catholic schools. Hence, the competent authority receives financial means for the operation of the schools through funding or subsidies.

The Communities in Belgium also receive financial means for the financing of educational and training projects from the European Social Fund. (Initial and Continuing Education and Training).

Industrial training courses

The '*leertijd*' (an apprenticeship system) (*Syntra Vlaanderen* - IFAPME) or initial vocational training allows apprentices from the age of 15-16 to learn the basics via an apprenticeship contract with a manager -trainer to work as an employee in a company. This apprenticeship comprises a practical training course in a company or with a self-employed person for a period of 4 days a week and 1 day of theoretical training in a centre. The target groups are the apprentices older than 15 and all future or already established entrepreneurs in the context of the entrepreneurship training.

1.9 References

Refernet Belgium (2008): Overview of the Vocational Education and Training System Report within the Framework of ReferNet Belgium.



2 VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (VET) FOR LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

2.1 Population

Legal Definition of SEN

The definition relates to all young people, aged 14-21 (with some exceptions) that are capable of school learning, excluding those with multiple disabilities, who suffer from severe behavioural disorders (for example autism, with severe behavioural disorders) and severe mental disabilities. See legislation types 1, 2 and 3.

Training is provided in both special and mainstream schools, which includes both general and professional training.

See population types in Agency's annexes.

2.2 Organisation and Provision of Vet programmes

2.2.1 IVET system options for SEN learners: lower and upper secondary levels, apprenticeship training and other youth programmes.

Pupils with SEN predominantly attend special schools.

In these schools, they participate in general and professional training adapted to their intellectual and practical competences.

Specific certificates for these pupils have been designed by employer working groups.

All pupils with SEN participate in training and receive an identical qualification to that received by the rest of the student population who have completed the same course of study. Their training is adapted to their intellectual level and competences. The competences relating to the rest of the student population were subdivided into 'capitalised items' which enable the pupils with SEN to obtain an equivalent 'CQ'.

The specialised teaching includes a form of teaching (see question 4), which 'opens the door' to receiving the same certificates as the rest of the student population.

2.2.2 Different types of educational/VET settings

Legislation provides for all three systems listed above.

The majority of pupils with SEN participate in system C.

Teaching is provided by the public sector; there are no private schools in this area.

2.2.3 The curricula of VET programmes, the assessment procedures, types of qualifications and assessment criteria (e.g. flexibility on curricula composition and individual adaptations, diploma etc.)

It is not possible to adapt the curriculum of regular Belgian education.

In special education, certification is based on the same evaluation criteria as in regular education.

The duration of the curriculum can be adapted to the various competences of the pupils, whereby they take the time necessary to acquaint themselves with, and acquire, the competences set out in the training profile.

Internships!

Chapter 3



VET Programmes

2.3 VET programmes and employment

2.3.1 Strategies and practices used to match the local labour market needs with the skills acquired by learners in the course of the VET programmes

There is no direct link between professional training (regular or specialised) and the requirements of the labour market

2.4 Data (relating to learners with SEN aged between 14 and 25 years old and enrolled in VET programmes in the academic year 2010/2011 and relating to their transition to employment)

2.4.1 Data on the number of learners with SEN aged between 14 and 25 years old who are enrolled in VET programmes, at national and/or local level

No statistics available

2.4.2 Data on how many of these learners are enrolled in mainstream VET programmes, how many are enrolled in special units within mainstream VET settings and how many are enrolled in special VET programmes.

377 pupils in mainstream education

16518 in special schools

2.4.3 Data on the number and percentage of learners with SEN aged between 14 and 25 who are enrolled in VET programmes, in comparison with the number and percentage of the general youth population of the same age enrolled in VET programmes, at national and/or local level

Data not available

2.4.4 Brief definition and explanation of “drop out”. Data concerning the drop out rate of learners with SEN aged between 14 and 25 who are enrolled in VET programmes, in comparison with the drop out rate of the general youth population, at national and/or local level.

See Committee on obligatory schooling

2.4.5 Data on the transition rate of learners with SEN from VET to employment in comparison with the transition rate of the general youth population from VET to employment at national and/or local level

The federation does not have statistics relating to this area. A study is currently underway at the level of the education bodies.

2.5 Legislation and policy

2.5.1 Brief description of existing legislation

There is no specific legislation relating to pupils with SEN. The PMS centres advise pupils in order to place them on the best possible path.

See the working group on PIT (individual transition plans)

2.5.2 Main objectives and priorities of the national/regional policy relating to VET for learners with SEN and the transition from VET to employment

Pupils complete their training but do not immediately find work.



After several years, they become involved with services that provide work to disabled people.

The current aim of the federation is to create a link between the school and these services in order to more quickly move them into the workplace.

Pupils that graduate from special schools for pupils that do not have a recognised disability are also assisted by these services. (For example, by the Walloon agency for the assistance of disabled people in Wallonia)

2.5.3 Roles and responsibilities within the institutional framework

Until recently there has not been a link between the different levels of power.

Each education level has been organised by different bodies.

However, there is now a Commission that serves to link education with the world of work.

2.5.4 The actors involved in improving standards and evaluating the VET programmes on offer for learners with SEN, relating to the job market

The francophone service for careers and qualifications gathers together the important stakeholders in school, training and the work place (trade unions, training bodies, employers)

2.6 VET teachers, trainers and other professionals

2.6.1 Information on the VET staff (teachers, trainers, career counsellors, transition officers, etc.)

General courses: French, History, Sciences etc = general training

Practical teacher: Professional training diploma, Certificate of pedagogical aptitude and relevant experience. Continuing professional training is mandatory (3 days a year)

Internship supervisors = workers, business owner etc

See PMS

2.6.2 Information on the careers/employment guidance and counselling services offered to learners with SEN who are enrolled in VET programmes

See PMS

2.7 Funding

Financial support and/or incentives for learners with SEN and families is not applicable.

Financial support and/or incentives for companies to employ young people with SEN include adapting the working environment. Part of the salary is provided by the Agency for employment assistance.