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Introduction

Belgium has three Communities, each responsible for its educational system and policy ([1]). Key competences are provided by compulsory education, including initial VET.

In view of the specifications (guidelines) for drafting this article, it is not possible to note all the specific features of these systems, or all the initiatives. Moreover, by virtue of the educational freedom in Belgium, measures can be taken directly by the educational institutions and teachers according to the needs of the students.

The partners of ReferNet Belgium have also decided by mutual agreement to highlight the principal features of the general policies implemented in this area.

In Belgium, key competences are central to compulsory education from age 6 to 18, including initial VET (ISCED levels 1-3). They are assessed at the end of elementary school and at the end of the second year of secondary education.

After two years of secondary school (ISCED 2) students may continue in general education or VET (school-based or apprenticeship) leading to a vocational qualification. VET comprises vocational and general courses. Most key competences (languages, history, geography, civic education, mathematics) are part of general courses. Learning outcomes of these courses are defined by the Communities (Apprenticeship is provided by four regional public services managed in cooperation with social partners).

This article focuses on the acquisition of key competences in initial VET. The data are not exhaustive, given the extreme fragmentation of the information due to the highly decentralised VET in the three Belgian Communities. The Communities (and Regions, for apprenticeships outside schools) define national qualifications frameworks, learning outcomes and quality standards (in some cases, also external evaluation procedures) for VET. School 'networks' ([2]) define the VET curricula.

The OECD PISA survey (2012) (Annex 1) show that the results are improving in the French-speaking educational system, but remain below the OECD average in sciences, while in the Flemish educational system, they are generally good but decreasing slightly. At the same time, the vast majority of young people embarking upon vocationally-oriented secondary education (technical secondary education or vocational secondary education) appear on average to be in more difficult social

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([1]) Vlaamse Gemeenschap, Communauté française and Deutschsprachige Gemeinschaft.

([2]) Public education organised by the Communities, public education organised by the municipalities and provinces, private Catholic subsidised education and independent private subsidised education.

situations than those undertaking general education. [...] The ISCED 3 level initial VET curricula are seen by young people, their families and teachers as less valuable than general education. Indeed they operate as 'relegation sectors': pupils register after a series of successive failures. […] So, there are more and more young people reaching age 15 and even 18 with major shortcomings in key competences (language skills, maths, independence, behaviour, etc.) and with undiagnosed learning difficulties ([3]).

General developments of the Communities' initial VET

Vlaamse Gemeenschap (Flemish Community, BE-fl)

Key competences are not explicitly mentioned in the national qualifications framework (NQF) level descriptors but include some elements of the key competences defined at EU level in 2006. Key competences are acquired as part of general education courses in programmes for young people in initial VET schools and apprenticeship centres. In 2010, the action plan on literacy was renewed until the end of 2016; it promotes knowledge of/literacy in Dutch, the national language.

The 2006 key competence agenda promoted the development of social skills, a healthy work attitude, entrepreneurship skills, the environment and sustainability, and socio-economic relationships (employer-employee). An education policy document (2009) refers to supporting creativity in education. For the development of entrepreneurial skills, an ongoing policy on Entrepreneurial Education across policy fields has been developed, implemented and adapted several times; the offer of two foreign languages in all school-based initial VET has gradually been implemented (since 2010).

As far as centralised assessment of key competence is concerned, the Flemish Ministry of Education and Training organises national tests on a regular basis. Each year a specific subject and level are tested. These tests are organised for the purpose of policy evaluation and future policy-making. The results of the tests have no impact on the advancement of the individual pupil or on the evaluation of the school. Sample-based national tests in years 6 (ISCED 1, i.e. end of primary school), 8 (ISCED 2) or 12 (ISCED 3) can be conducted for monitoring purposes. The government decides on the subject(s) to be tested each year ([4]).

([3]) Adapted from Apprenticeship – type schemes and structured work-based learning programmes. Belgium, ReferNet, Cedefop, 2014,
http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/country-reports/apprenticeships-WBL-Belgium-2014

([4]) http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/curriculum/peilingen/

Communauté française (French Community, BE-fr)

The decree of 24 July 1997 (reviewed in 2015) defines the objectives of primary and secondary education. They include acquisition of 'core skills' by the end of the first eight years of compulsory education (ISCED 2) and the final competences that pupils are expected to have developed by the end of compulsory education. While these skills guide teachers on what to teach, schools decide how to teach.

The acquisition of the core and final competences is checked by standardised external exams for some courses at the end of year two and year six of secondary education (ISCED 2 and 3). The exams are prepared by special commissions in the central administration. Since 2014/15, a test in upper-secondary education has been mandatory. This external exam is organised in two fields (French and History, see Annex 2), as part of the certification giving access to higher education. This exam in French concerns general academic, technical transitional and vocational education (technical qualifications, vocational and reduced hours). Assessment of other subjects (including the weighting in the final grade) is organised by school. VET (full-time or alternating) students can also complete an additional year (7th P) and sit the exam externally ([5]). These educational and assessment profiles primarily relate to technical skills but they also define some core skills essential to a trade, such as verbal and written communication in French, calculation and measurement, etc. Self- sufficiency and responsibility are also taken into consideration.

The Decree of 10 December 2015 ([6]) approved a new cooperation agreement (between the French Community, the Walloon Region and the French Community Commission in Brussels). It is a step forward for the world of vocational education, vocational training, validation of skills and companies. This allows a student from vocational education or a job seeker in vocational training to acquire the same professional skills for the same jobs. The aim is to have 105 new job standards by the end of 2017.

Apprenticeships outside schools are organised by the Regions (this applies also for the BE-fl). Apprentices follow compulsory general education courses at the apprenticeship centres, focusing on languages and mathematics.

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[5]   The standards have not yet been established for all sectors. All VET will gradually become fully modular. For more information see http://www.sfmq.cfwb.be/ and http://www.cpu.cfwb.be/

[6]   http://www.gallilex.cfwb.be/document/pdf/42051_000.pdf

Deutschsprachige Gemeinschaft (German-speaking Community, BE-de)

In the BE-de, the decree of 16 June 2008 (last reviewed in 2014) ([7]) defines key competences and teaching frameworks for the general courses in the second and third stages of secondary education. Nevertheless, there are no standardised external exams at any point in secondary education in the BE-de.

The contents of the general and specialised courses for work-based VET (apprenticeships) are fixed by the centres for initial and continuing VET of the middle-class (Zentren für Aus- und Weiterbildung des Mittelstandes) themselves. Individual adaptations, both for highly skilled and weaker apprentices, are undertaken on a regular basis.

1. Key competence: communication in the native language

The title(s) in the national context	First language (French, Dutch or German)
The acquisition of the key competence at upper secondary VET is promoted at national/regional level	Yes (at Community level)
How is it promoted?	
• national/regional policy document(s)	The language of instruction is a compulsory subject in all school curricula at all levels (in BE-fl technical VET schools (*Technisch secundair onderwijs*, TSO) ([a]) and vocational schools (*Beroepssecundair onderwijs*, BSO) ([b]); in BE-fr 'final competences' in French for all initial VET students according to the 2014 decree ([c]) (see example in Annex 2).
• national/regional law(s), regulation(s)	Authorities responsible for education (i.e. the Communities) define the learning objectives for the language of instruction in initial VET programmes ([d]) (Language abilities, specified as learning objectives).
• national/regional curricula, standards and qualifications	In BE-fl, technical VET schools (*Technisch secundair onderwijs*, TSO) provide listening, conversational, reading, writing, etc. skills in Dutch. In vocational schools (*Beroepssecundair onderwijs*, BSO), language learning objectives are integrated into the objectives for Project *Algemene Vakken* under the heading of functional language proficiency. In BE-fr, since 2014, the new learning objectives in French include listening, reading receptive skills, speaking and writing skills. They are formulated in seven learning units (explaining to others, searching for information in printed and digital publications, synthesising information). Linguistics and grammar are not taught

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([7]) *Bildungsserver: Rahmenpläne.* Ministerium der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft, 2016. http://www.bildungsserver.be/desktopdefault.aspx/tabid-2221/4415_read-31778/

	as a specific skill but as a means to reach the key competences. As such, they are not supposed to be learning outcomes.
• training VET teachers trainers	In BE-fl, the Education Minister annually determines one or two priority topics for the continuing professional development of teachers. The training courses undertaken within this framework are free to schools and teachers. In 2014/15, the language policy was selected, including screening of pupils' competences in the language of education, Dutch for those learning it as a second language, content and language integrated learning (for those learning a second language). In BE-fr, a three-day session of continuous professional development for teachers is compulsory; they may also participate on a voluntary basis. An annual CPD programme is endorsed by the Education Minister. All key competences are part of this programme. The training courses undertaken within this framework are free to schools and teachers.
• centralised assessment of the key competence in VET	In BE-fl, the Dutch language was subject to centralised testing in technical VET schools (TSO) in 2010; in vocational schools in 2013.(See global answer about 'centralised testing' in BE-fl) In BE-fr, external certified testing in French has been compulsory for all initial VET students who want to access tertiary education since 2014/15. In apprenticeships outside schools in Wallonia and Brussels (francophone), French is part of the general knowledge curriculum.
• other instruments (e.g. ways of working, teaching/ learning methods)	BE-fl: As a measure to improve pupils' Dutch language skills, all children have been tested at entry to primary and secondary school (including initial VET) since 2014/15. Currently schools can choose the assessment tools for implementing language screening. Schools are expected to use the screening results to tailor language (of instruction) learning. In regular full-time secondary education (including BSO and TSO), there are structural instruments to support pupils in acquisition of the Dutch language (for example, up to three hours a week of extra Dutch lessons or remedial classes). Schools can use elective and complementary parts of the curriculum and implement flexible learning pathways that offer extra Dutch lessons. Schools receive extra funding from the Government for teaching language to pupils who do not speak Dutch at home. In 2015, the apprenticeship programmes piloted more intensive screening of labour maturity and employment readiness, particularly of general learning competences, and detecting possible learning needs as soon as possible. Since 2013/14, SYNTRA (The Flemish agency for apprenticeship) made 'Bringing a presentation' compulsory in VET (subject courses). In BE-fr, schools welcome more pupils arriving from foreign countries with no knowledge of French. These students require individualised teaching and guidance. So for a period varying from one week to 18 months, they are welcomed into specific classrooms (DASPA) to adapt to the school system and to the local culture and community ([e]). These DASPA classes exist in 20 schools in Brussels and 27 in Wallonia (2015-16) It is possible to enter at any time of the academic year. The programme targets pupils who reside in Belgium for less than one year.

	In the Walloon apprenticeship outside schools (IFAPME), remediation for apprentices with difficulties has been integrated into the general curriculum. It covers French, mathematics, and social and civic skills to help students overcome difficulties during their studies.	
The progress in improving key competence levels/ learning outcomes among upper secondary VET students is monitored		Yes (in BE-fr only)
How is it monitored?		
• through international or national statistical data	BE-fr: annual external certification tests in French since 2014/15. Each year 'external non-certificate evaluations' are organised. This involves reading and writing skills, math, sciences and early stimulation activities. Modern languages may also be considered. These assessments involve all pupils in initial VET education from the 3rd to the 5th secondary year. They are of a 'diagnostic' nature, intended to inform the educational teams about student achievement. To support the adaptation of their pedagogical and organisational strategies, the General Department of the educational system publishes and distributes analytical tools each year: the results and comments, and pedagogical advices.	
• survey(s)	No	
• benchmark(s)	No	
• other instrument(s)	No	
Key competence level improved among upper secondary VET students since (+/-) 2010		No data

(a) http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/curriculum/secundair-onderwijs/derde graad/tso/vakgebonden/nederlands/algemeen.htm

(b) http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/curriculum/secundair-onderwijs/derde-graad/bso/vakgebonden/eerste-en-tweede-leerjaar/project-algemene-vorming/eindtermen.htm

(c) http://www.agers.cfwb.be/index.php?page=25189&navi=296

(d) As a reminder, there are three national languages in Belgium; in each of the three Communities of Belgium one of the national languages is the only legal instruction language in education. For example, in the Flemish Community it is the Dutch language.

(e) Package for welcoming and schooling new pupils arriving from abroad, http://www.enseignement.be/index.php?page=23677&navi=117

Example of projects focusing on acquisition of the Dutch language

IQRA-project (IQRA-Vlaanderen) ([8])

The project intends to diminish or prevent learning deficiencies in children with migrant backgrounds. The focus is also on mastering the instruction language.

([8]) http://www.bredeschoolhetkeerpunt.be/index.php?section=1&page=27

Digibib (ADIbib)

This project of the NGO *Die-'s-Lekti-kus* has been implemented to support 10-13 years old pupils (before starting initial VET). The objective is to tackle the limitations in written communication of pupils who can learn well at all levels of education if they are supported. This project aims to offer digital tools for treating texts so that they become more accessible for pupils with dyslexia. Two objectives are central: development and refinement of technical tools (such as specific software for listening and reading) and making digital books available via a digital library; and training and increasing the expertise of teachers and caretakers to make use of the tools by pupils and teachers possible (http://www.letop.be).

2. Key competence: communication in foreign languages

The title(s) in the national context	Foreign languages
The acquisition of the key competence at upper secondary VET is promoted at national/regional level	Yes (at Community level)
How is it promoted?	
• national/regional policy document(s)	In BE-fl, French is a compulsory subject from age 10, English from age 13. Both French and English are part of the core curriculum in TSO. In BSO, one foreign language is compulsory, either French or English. Specific learning outcomes are defined for the last four years of secondary VET (second and third grades, for TSO and BSO ([a9]). In BE-fr, 'final competences' in modern languages for all initial VET students are provided by the 2014 decree. (Dutch is compulsory in Brussels, as first language; other languages may be English, Spanish, German, etc.) ([b]).
• national/regional law(s), regulation(s)	The Communities define learning objectives for foreign languages in initial VET. Schools design programmes.
• national/regional curricula, standards and qualifications	In BE-fl, TSO and BSO school curricula for modern foreign languages (French and English) focus on listening, reading, speaking, oral interaction, writing, grammar, etc. In apprenticeships outside schools, 32 hours of foreign language (French or English) are integrated into the general courses. In BE-fr, the Decree of 5 December 2013 ([c]) strengthens general education that is essential to the student to acquire skills and knowledge in the field of citizenship and to possibly continue in higher education or skills training. Two periods a week for foreign languages are now part of the common compulsory training programme ([d]). This is also the

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([9])   http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/curriculum/secundair-onderwijs/index.htm

	case in dual VET.
	In the Walloon apprenticeship outside schools (IFAPME), training in a foreign language is underdeveloped. Only students in a 'catering training' must follow a foreign language course (English or Dutch).
• training VET teachers trainers	In BE-fl, the Flemish Education Minister annually determines one or two priority topics for the continuing professional development of teachers. The training courses undertaken within this framework are free to schools and teachers. In 2014/15, the Minister has chosen the language policy as a topic, comprising content and language integrated learning (CLIL, for those acquiring the second language). In BE-fr, a three-day-continuing professional development of teachers is compulsory; they may also participate on a voluntary basis. An annual CPD programme is endorsed by the Education Minister. All key competences are part of this programme. The training courses undertaken within this framework are free to schools and teachers.
• centralised assessment of the key competence in VET	In BE-fl, French as a second language in TSO was subject to centralised testing in 2012.
• other instruments (e.g. ways of working, teaching/ learning methods)	No, the choice of teaching methods is entirely the responsibility of the schools (autonomy). Central steering from the Ministry is not allowed.
The progress in improving key competence levels/learning outcomes among upper secondary VET students is monitored	No
How is it monitored?	
• through international or national statistical data	Achievement of the final learning objectives is compulsory for all students, including initial VET.
• survey(s)	No
• benchmark(s)	No
• other instrument(s)	No
Key competence level improved among upper secondary VET students since (+/-) 2010	No data

(a)   http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/curriculum/secundair-onderwijs/index.htm
(b)   http://www.agers.cfwb.be/index.php?page=25189&navi=296
(c)   http://www.gallilex.cfwb.be/fr/leg_res_00.php?ncda=16421&referant=l00
(d)   Circular 5352 (BE-fr inside tools for regulation implementing policy decisions)

3.   Key competence: competences in maths, science and technology

The acquisition of the key competence at upper secondary VET is promoted at national/regional level	Yes (at Community level)
How is it promoted?	
• national/regional policy	Maths and Science are compulsory subjects at all education

document(s)	levels in all school curricula. In BE-fl, specific learning outcomes are defined for specific skills (subjects) in second and third grades, for TSO and BSO, and for math and Science ([a]). In BE-fr, 'final competences' in science and mathematics are established for all initial VET students according to the 2014 decree ([b]).
• national/regional law(s), regulation(s)	Communities define learning objectives for maths and Science in initial VET. Schools design and implement the programmes based on the defined learning outcomes.
• national/regional curricula, standards and qualifications	In BE-fl, *Beroepssecundair onderwijs* (BSO) school curricula comprise maths and sciences as part of the Project *Algemene Vakken*, which includes functional numeracy, being aware of time and space and science and society.
• training VET teachers trainers	In BE-fr, a three-day continuing professional development course for teachers is compulsory; they may also participate on a voluntary basis. An annual CPD programme is endorsed by the Education Minister. All key competences are part of this programme. The training courses undertaken within this framework are free to schools and teachers.
• centralised assessment of the key competence in VET	In BE-fl, maths in TSO schools was subject to centralised testing in 2014; in BSO – in 2013 (Project *Algemene Vakken*) (see global answer). In apprenticeship outside schools throughout the country, maths is part of the general knowledge courses. Exams are compulsory for every pupil and for every course/subject. However, to access higher education, learners have to get another diploma. There is no entrance examination.
• other instruments (e.g. ways of working, teaching/learning methods)	In BE-fl, maths and science are part of the Flemish strategy for STEM education (2015), including measures to improve motivation ([c]). In BE-fr and BE-fl, in apprenticeships outside schools (organised by SYNTRA, IFAPME or SFPME in Brussels see above), apprentices with learning difficulties are offered support covering French, mathematics, social and civic skills.
The progress in improving key competence levels/learning outcomes among upper secondary VET students is monitored	Yes
How is it monitored?	
• through international or national statistical data	In BE-fl, each school can decide whether they help pupils with difficulties in mathematics and how this remediation is organised. No centrally-defined numerical targets for low achievement exist, but achievement of the final learning objectives is compulsory for all students. In BE-fr (see key competence 1)
• survey(s)	No
• benchmark(s)	No
• other instrument(s)	No

Key competence level improved among upper secondary VET students since (+/-) 2010	No data

(a) http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/curriculum/secundair-onderwijs/index.htm
(b) http://www.agers.cfwb.be/index.php?page=25189&navi=296
(c) http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/stem/Beleidsdocumenten/Default.htm

4. Key competence: digital competence

The title(s) in the national context	ICT
The acquisition of the key competence at upper secondary VET is promoted at national/regional level	Yes (at Community level)
How is it promoted?	
• national/regional policy document(s)	In BE-fl, a Flemish strategy on the use of ICT in education (a) aims at: • integrating national (regional Flemish) ICT curriculum for all (10 cross-curricular final objectives); • in-service training for all teachers; • infrastructure provision for all schools. (hardware, broadband and e-safety policies); • strengthening the policy-making capacities of educational establishments; schools can decide autonomously about these matters. (ICT coordination at school levels, specific projects on e-inclusion, support tools for schools); • digital learning objects policies (educational portal); (joint policy on the use of digital tools); • ICT monitoring and research in secondary education, including initial VET). In BE-fr, the Digital Plan (adopted on 9 June 2011 by the Governments of the Walloon Region, the French Community and the German-speaking Community) forms the third largest ICT investment plan for the Walloon schools. This plan has the special feature of taking account of the specific needs of the educational teams and encouraging innovative teaching approaches. The objective of the Plan is threefold: • to increase the use of ICT through the teaching approach; • to train young people to use ICT efficiently and wisely; • to provide adequate ICT tools. Primary and secondary schools are targeted by this plan (mainstream education and special needs schools) as well as social advancement education schools and teaching sections of the high schools in the Walloon Region. As for the Brussels-Capital Region, a multimedia Plan, implemented since 1999 by the Computer Centre for the Brussels Region (CIRB), allows all primary and secondary schools in the territory of the Brussels Capital Region to benefit from ICT equipment (PCs, tablets, servers, projectors, etc.), associated services (maintenance plan, training, helpdesk,

	insurance) and internet access via the IRISnet network.
• national/regional law(s), regulation(s)	Communities define learning objectives for digital competences in initial VET. Schools design and implement the programmes based on the defined learning outcomes.
• national/regional curricula, standards and qualifications	In BE-fl, policy and regulation documents define digital competences as a learning outcome at all education levels, including initial VET. They recommend using ICT as a general tool and/or for specific tasks across the curriculum. The use of ICT is recommended for teachers and students in class, not for any complementary activities (e.g. homework, projects, and research). In BE-fr, in French-speaking schools, there is no ICT subject but digital skills are part of transversal and optional curricula. VET students fill in a skills record book, the ICT passport ([b]), as they progress. It is evaluated by internal testing once the teacher considers that students have acquired the skills necessary to move to the next level of ICT.
• training VET teachers trainers	In BE-fl, the Flemish Education Minister annually determines one or two priority topics for the continuing professional development of teachers. The training courses undertaken within this framework are free to schools and teachers. In 2014/15, one of the two topics chosen was digital literacy. In BE-fr, three days of continuing professional development of teachers are compulsory; they may also participate on a voluntary basis. An annual CPD programme is endorsed by the Education Minister. All key competences are part of this programme. The training courses undertaken within this framework are free to schools and teachers.
• centralised assessment of the key competence in VET	No
• other instruments (e.g. ways of working, teaching/ learning methods)	No
The progress in improving key competence levels/learning outcomes among upper secondary VET students is monitored	No
How is it monitored?	
• through international or national statistical data	No
• survey(s)	No
• benchmark(s)	No
• other instrument(s)	No
Key competence level improved among upper secondary VET students since (+/-) 2010	No data

([a])   BE-fl country report on ICT in education, available on http://www.eun.org/observatory/country-reports;jsessionid=2634C97E81D28A9FF2601285AF5C726F

([b])   http://www.enseignement.be/index.php?page=27183&navi=3685

Example of an educational programme focusing on the acquisition of the key competence: Digital school project

In 2011, the Walloon Region launched a 'Digital school project' to equip schools, including teacher training colleges and schools in the German-speaking Community ([10]). Each year, a call for projects attracts schools. Three hundred schools (general and initial VET) were involved in the first three years. In addition to the costs of the equipment, the programme provides logistic and educational support (maintenance, tools and training). The project created a team of digital school advisors who help streamline communication and share expertise between the projects in order to support alternative uses or to disseminate positive experiences. The institutions for compulsory education may also free up the working time of a bridging teacher, financed by the French Community, to support monitoring of the experiment.

In BE-fl – An important step in supporting schools was the establishment of a Knowledge Centre for Media Literacy in 2012. Key tasks of the Knowledge Centre are:

(a) developing a media literacy competence framework and supporting schools, libraries, youth organisations, etc., in implementing media competences;
(b) developing a permanently updated map of media literacy initiatives, projects and stakeholders in Flanders;
(c) organising in-service training incl. MOOCs for professionals such as teachers as well as for the public;
(d) supporting media industry and e-inclusion initiatives;
(e) raising awareness on different Media Literacy topics and in different target groups;
(f) proving advice and recommendations for policy makers;
(g) funding relevant projects in the field of media literacy;
(h) stimulating networks between stakeholders at regional and national and at EU level.

5. Key competence: learning to learn

Learning to learn is seldom taken into account in education policies in Belgium.

In BE-fl, *Beroepssecundair onderwijs* (BSO/initial VET) school curricula integrate objectives regarding information acquisition and processing, organisational skills, etc.

In BE-fr, the 'learning to learn' skill is a 'final competence' for some general subjects in secondary education, for example, science, history and social sciences.

([10]) http://www.ecolenumerique.be

6. Key competence: social and civic competences

The title(s) in the national context	Citizenship education
The acquisition of the key competence at upper secondary VET is promoted at national/regional level	Yes (at Community level)
How is it promoted?	
• national/regional policy document(s)	In BE-fr, 'final competences' in economic and social education for all initial VET students are integrated into the curricula according to the 2014 decree ([a]) and the 2015 decree on the organisation of philosophy and citizenship education ([b]).
• national/regional law(s), regulation(s)	Communities define learning objectives for social and civic competences in initial VET. Schools design and implement the programmes based on the defined learning outcomes.
• national/regional curricula, standards and qualifications	In BE-fl, the ISCED level 3 curriculum (2010) defines cross-curricular objectives for citizenship education (active involvement, human rights and basic liberties, the democratic system and the European and international aspect) that are provided in secondary VET through courses, educational projects, and other activities. The secondary education curriculum ([c]) comprises both cross-curricular objectives referring to broad objectives (e.g. taking responsibility, showing respect, being critical, etc.) and other objectives within the political-judicial, socio-economic and socio-cultural context. The main focus for citizenship education is the political-judicial context: • for active citizenship, one needs insight into crucial laws defining the rights of the citizen and the role of political parties, and into the political constellation of the country. This presupposes basic knowledge of rights and duties, enquiry procedures and the value of active involvement; • human rights and basic liberties, as laid down by the constitution and international treaties; • insight into features, procedures and mechanisms of a democratic system; • the European and international aspect, as stated in the regulation text. In BE-fr, a specific 'citizenship education' course will be compulsory in 2017-18. These competences are also developed in other courses in a cross-curricular way. In the Walloon Region apprenticeships outside schools (IFAPME), social and civic competences are included in the compulsory 'contemporary world' and 'commerce' subjects that include topics on family, democratic and multicultural society, sustainable development, and geographic and economic environment.
• training VET teachers trainers	In BE-fl, the Flemish Education Minister annually determines one or two priority topics for the continuing professional development of teachers. The training courses undertaken within this framework are free to schools and teachers. In 2011/13, one of the two topics chosen was 'Education in sustainable development as part of citizenship'.

• centralised assessment of the key competence in VET	Nationally standardised assessment of civic competences at ISCED 1-3 does not exist ([d]) However, in BE-fl, citizenship education is one of the centrally assessed subjects in upper secondary VET in 2016. 'Social skills and citizenship' is also a compulsory general knowledge course in VET. Its results are considered in the final assessment of students.
• other instruments (e.g. ways of working, teaching/learning methods)	In BE-fr and BE-fl, participation of students (and parents) in school life has been structured with a view to practical education in citizenship. Since 1997, all francophone schools have established 'participation councils' ([e]) that meet at least twice a year to discuss for instance: the school plan, its implementation and/or adaptation; the cost of schooling and the mechanisms for solidarity between students.
The progress in improving key competence levels/learning outcomes among upper secondary VET students is monitored	No
How is it monitored?	
• other instrument(s)	BE-fl: Flanders participates in the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (2009-10 and 2016). The study encompasses a representative sample of schools and therefore also includes upper secondary VET.
• survey(s)	No
• benchmark(s)	No
• other instrument(s)	No
Key competence level improved among upper secondary VET students since (+/-) 2010	No data

([a])   http://www.agers.cfwb.be/index.php?page=25189&navi=296
([b])   http://www.gallilex.cfwb.be/document/pdf/41979_000.pdf
([c])   http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/curriculum/secundair-onderwijs/vakoverschrijdend/index.htm
([d])   There are national standardised tests for stimulation activities (ISCED 1 for end of primary school certification – CEB; and ISCED 3 at the end of secondary school – TESS).
([e])   http://www.enseignement.be/index.php?page=25526

Example of an educational programme focusing on the acquisition of social and civic competences

The Flemish Community is concerned with behavioural problems in initial VET schools. It is currently testing a new approach in which over 40 institutions participate. The SODA certification (punctuality, order, discipline, good conduct) ([11]) is a yearly award for students who have a positive professional attitude. The recognition of these four social skills

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([11])   http://www.sodajobs.be

provides better access to in-company training and employment. This whole process takes place at the school level, thus neither centralised nor monitored by the Ministry.

7. Key competence: entrepreneurship

The title(s) in the national context	Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship
The acquisition of the key competence at upper secondary VET is promoted at national/regional level	Yes (at Community level)
How is it promoted?	
• national/regional policy document(s)	In BE-fl, the Entrepreneurship education action plan (2015) promotes an entrepreneurial spirit in students and teachers, including initial VET, through many measures.
• national/regional law(s), regulation(s)	Communities define learning objectives for entrepreneurship competence in initial VET. Schools design and implement the programmes based on the defined learning outcomes.
• national/regional curricula, standards and qualifications	In BE-fl, a sense of entrepreneurship and social-economic literacy are explicitly recognised as cross-curricular objectives for all pupils in ISCED 2 and 3. A guide for the implementation of cross-curricular attainment targets was published in 2010 ([a]). Apprenticeships (outside schools) may be extended by adding in-depth the so-called business leader entrepreneurship studies that are available for learners of age 18 or more. In addition, apprenticeship training centres organise 'accelerated management training' allowing fulfilment of the minimum legal requirements for starting a business ([b]). In Belgium, it is required that entrepreneurial competences be proven to start a business. One way, among others, is to get this certificate. Any person wishing to exercise a trade or craft activity in Belgium must demonstrate entrepreneurial skills, that is to say basic management knowledge. How? Either via sufficient professional practice or via a diploma or a recognised qualification. The Basic Knowledge Management Certificate issued by the IFAPME is one of the credentials that are recognised.
• training VET teachers trainers	In BE-fr, the Walloon Agency for Enterprise and Innovation Agency (AEI) has developed a plan to foster entrepreneurial spirit in schools ([c]). It offers a complete support package of teacher training, grants, teaching aids and traineeships. During the first six years, the programme involved 63% of all Walloon secondary and higher education schools.
• other instruments (e.g. ways of working, teaching/learning methods)	Apprenticeship inside schools includes an additional optional year offering a certificate in business management in addition to VET qualification. In BE-fl, there are several initiatives promoting entrepreneurship education, including the 'Competento' virtual knowledge centre for entrepreneurial building ([d]) and the 'Plan (k) gas' business plan competition for ISCED 3 pupils in Flanders ([e]).

	In BE-fr, entrepreneurship days are organised in the Francophone Walloon apprenticeships outside schools (IFAPME) for most apprentices enrolled in the final year. The aim of these days is to raise the awareness of entrepreneurship and business creation through games and fun activities aimed at developing these skills.
The progress in improving key competence levels/learning outcomes among upper secondary VET students is monitored	No
How is it monitored?	
• through international or national statistical data	No
• survey(s)	No
• benchmark(s)	No
• other instrument(s)	No
Key competence level improved among upper secondary VET students since (+/-) 2010	No data

(ᵃ)   http://www.sodajobs.be
(ᵇ)   The establishment of a business/enterprise is regulated in Belgium. This kind of training focuses on these legal requirements, including skills requirements.
(ᶜ)   http://as-e.be/article/entrepreneuriat-3-15-kesako
(ᵈ)   http://www.competento.be
(ᵉ)   http://www.flandersdc.be/nl/plankgas

Example of an educational programme focusing on the acquisition of entrepreneurship competence

In BE-fr and BE-fl, associations (LJE and Vlajo) work with schools to engage students in mini-enterprises. They provide a framework for the creation and management of small businesses in a few months during the school year. Students ('mini-entrepreneurs') develop skills by taking key positions in human resources, financial, technical, and commercial departments, and by working in management, advertising, marketing, accounting, and sales [12].

The programme is being adapted in the Dutch-speaking apprenticeships outside schools [13].

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[12] http://www.lje.be/index.php/nos-programmes/mini-entreprise and
https://www.vlajo.org/programmas/mini-ondernemingen/een-eigen-onderneming

[13] Starting a mini enterprise is not compatible with apprenticeship, although it is exceptionally done in the form of a non-profit enterprise.

8. Key competence: cultural expression

Cultural awareness and expression competences are not promoted in upper secondary VET in Belgium. They are acquired at lower education levels (ISCED 1 and 2) and in upper secondary general education.

Conclusions

The Belgian VET system is extremely compartmentalised. In such a context, general conclusions regarding key competences are difficult to establish. One can just try to make out different patterns in the organisation of provisions.

The first of these patterns generally applies to math, natural sciences and linguistic competences; these are organised as distinct course topics provided by teachers who have followed appropriate thematic initial training. Learning outcomes are certified through mainstream evaluation processes, external or other, with proficiency levels lower for VET learners than for general studies learners.

The second pattern mainly seen for digital and entrepreneurial competences; these are integrated into other courses and the level of integration depends on the participation of schools and teachers in regional programmes (compulsory or otherwise).

The third pattern emphasises the provision of additional courses leading to additional qualifications like 'Basic skills in management'.

The fourth pattern concerns competences like learning to learn or cultural expression, that have not (yet) been among policy priorities.

The general trend most specific to VET is to invest in key competences explicitly demanded by employer's unions. Some of them are becoming increasingly concerned by the fast evolution of technology and its impact on the nature of upcoming competence requirements in languages and ICT.

Reforms ahead

In 2016, the Flemish Government and the Flemish Parliament are discussing with stakeholders the curriculum for the 21st century and the use of learning outcomes as final objectives, including those for key competences that are at the centre of this debate supported by scientific research ([14]).

([14]) http://www.onsonderwijs.be

In 2014, the French Community adopted its 2014-19 Declaration on Community Policy (DPC) *Fédérer pour réussir* ([15]). Priorities include cultural and artistic education. The government also plans to focus on basic skills and key competences (reading, speaking and writing, mathematics, science and technology, languages and ICT skills). It intends to generalise for all (including VET schools) the system of a summative external examination at the end of secondary school (ISCED 3), as it is the case in France with the French *baccalauréat*. In order to prepare these reforms, a 1.5-year *Pacte pour un enseignement d'excellence* ([16]) was launched that tackles the issues around key competences.

In 2014, the German-speaking administration launched a plan for improving technical/vocational education (*Technisch-berufliche Ausbildung aufwerten*) in all schools (up to ISCED level 3) and in apprenticeship training centres. It intends to focus on so-called 'MINT+H' subjects, i.e. Mathematics, IT, Natural sciences, Technologies and craft (the letter 'H' stands for the German noun *Handwerk* (craft)). Therefore, a future-oriented project was established within the scope of the Regional Development Concept: *Ostbelgien leben 2025* ([17]). The project 'Improving technical/vocational training' (number 16 of the Regional Development Concept) contains planned measures (such as the intensified use of the teaching framework 'vocational orientation in schools' as well as the early and intensified improvement of scientific and technical competencies in primary schools), socio-political considerations such as sustainability and innovation, impact indicators, cooperation intentions with communities, and best practices and cooperation with external institutions.

([15]) http://www.federation-wallonie-bruxelles.be/index.php?id=dpc2014-2019

([16]) http://www.pactedexcellence.be

([17]) *Ostbelgien leben* 2025: Regional Development Concept for the German-speaking Community. Executive Summary – Volume 4. Belgium, Ministry of the German-speaking Community, September 2016.
http://www.dglive.be/PortalData/2/Resources/downloads/rek/Regional_Development_Concept_-_Executive_Summary_Volume_4.pdf

ANNEX 1.
Results of the PISA surveys in 2006-12

	2012	2009	2006
French Community			
Mathematics	493	488	490
Science	487	482	486
Written Comprehension	497	490	473
Flemish Community			
Mathematics	531	537	543
Science	518	526	529
Written Comprehension	518	519	522

ANNEX 2.

Example of 'final competences' in French for initial VET learners in BE-fr

| 5th and 6th years of secondary education – Units of learning outcomes – qualifying chain of ordinary secondary education | Justify an education response/explain a procedure to a fellow student and/or the teacher Search for information: navigate through several texts including at least one printed text, one multimedia and one hypermedia Reduce, summarise and synthesise:
– summarise a text
– synthesise a set of texts on the same subject Defend an opinion in writing: respond and take a position Verbally defend an opinion and negotiate: discuss/negotiate in order to reach a common decision/position Take part in a cultural work Relate and share cultural experiences |