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About National Curricula of Arts in Belgium

The educational system in Belgium consists of three separate systems with distinct characteristics and it reflects the division of the country in three Communities: the Flemish in the north, the French in the south and the small German-speaking Community in the very east.

Nursery education is for children 2.5 to 6 years (3 to 6 years in German-speaking Community). It is not compulsory but it helps develop socialization and allows in some cases to identify possible difficulties and disabilities children before they enter primary school.

In the French Community, nursery education is part of an educational continuity which is organized in three stages of entry into kindergarten to the second year of secondary education. These steps correspond to the learning objectives included in the [Socles de compétences\(link is external\)](#)".

In the Flemish Community, the learning objectives are called "Ontwikkelingsdoelen (link is external)" (development goals) for nursery education and "eindtermen (link is external)" (final objectives) for primary education.

In the German-speaking Community, the learning objectives are called "Entwicklungsziele" (development goals) for nursery education and "Kompetenzen" for primary education.

In general primary education is for children six to twelve years and is mandatory. It consists of six years of study and is based mainly on learning the reading and mathematics.

In the French Community of Belgium freedom of education is guaranteed by the Belgian Constitution. This implies for example that every school organizer (s) (Public (s) or private (s)) , named organizing body is free to implement the programs of their choice. And to create programs in collaboration with teachers from its schools or decide - and this is the most frequent case – to implement programs from other backgrounds such other affiliated organizing body or network.

The creation of the artistic program is the responsibility of the organizing authority and the implementation of the artistic program belongs to the school level. The French Community of Belgium has defined specific goals for arts education and the art education is integrated into the main objectives of teaching and artistic activities for contributing to the general objectives of compulsory education (basic education and secondary education).

The main goals are:

- Promote self-confidence and the personal development of each student ;
- Lead all pupils to acquire the appropriate knowledge and skills that enable them to learn throughout their lives and participate actively in the economic, social and cultural ;
- Prepare all students to be responsible citizens , capable of contributing to development of a democratic, united, pluralistic society and open to other cultures ;

- Ensuring that all pupils have equal opportunities for social emancipation;
- The multicultural approach of the artistic activities by Decree of "Missions" (1997) contributes also to the goal of education for promoting citizenship and social inclusion.

In the French Community arts education holds its place in any educational activity because art allows self-consciousness and consciousness of the others and of the world. Using different art forms the school raises awareness of all forms of expression through visual and auditory perceptions. Through the art students acquire the necessary skills for the transfer of knowledge and the ability for developing self-critical spirit, tolerance, etc.) such to become citizen of the world, responsible and therefore free.

In the Belgium Flemish Community the Flemish Ministry of Education and Training is responsible for almost every aspect of the educational process and the Ministry is responsible also for setting the aims for cultural and creative dimensions of education and takes decisions about the creation of the curriculum related to arts, cultural and creative education. It is the prerogative of the Flemish Parliament to decide on the contents of the curricula.

The implementation of the curriculum related to arts, cultural and creative education is treated on different levels as the Flemish school system is complex and layered:

Central level

On the one hand in Flanders the curricula are being dealt with by the different educational umbrella organisations. These different (almost autonomous) school networks are:

- Catholic Education (VSKO)
- Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities (OVSG)
- Provincial Education Flanders (POV)
- Community Education (GO)
- Method schools

The school boards and/or networks (*onderwijsnetten*) have the right to determine their own curricula, but within the framework of the final educational objectives. It is also important to note that within any of the networks, there can be a huge variation in approaches to learning

School level

The schools have the autonomy – within certain boundaries – to adapt these curricula to their own specific needs and purposes.

The organization of Arts Education represents a combination of integrated and separate subjects. In basic education (2.5-12 years) this area is called *Muzisch-creatieve vorming* (expressive education) and is a broad approach of culture and arts education

- Visual Arts
- Music
- Drama
- Media arts
- Dance
- Crafts

- Cultural heritage
- Architecture
- Others.

There are no specific hours for art education: In primary education arts can be taught in an integrated way or on its own, so it is the autonomy of the school to determine how many hours are spent on arts education and therefore hard to quantify the number of hours

In secondary education (13-14 years) the separate subjects within the field of expressive arts are called *Music education* and *Visual arts education*.

The study of arts is compulsory for all pupils in *basic education and secondary education*.

It belongs to the autonomy of each school to organize this subject. The organisation of this subject mainly happens within the 'free space' (*vrije ruimte*). The study of arts is therefore optional for pupils in *secondary education (15-18 years)* in the shape of a separate subject, such as aesthetics.

The Flemish community has special provision for part-time artistic education and a maximum level of financing by the government.

In primary education :

Deeltijds Kunstonderwijs (DKO) (1):

- 66 academies for visual arts
- 101 academies for music, word and dance

In part-time artistic education which is outside the normal school curriculum children can take courses in different artistic subjects (music, dance, word, etc.). Within this context there are different forms of assessment (tests, jury, exams) to get access to the following class, grade, etc.

After completing their studies, pupils get a certificate which does not guarantee access to higher arts education or to a job in the arts sector.

For secondary education Kunstsecundair Onderwijs (KSO) is arts secondary education (2):

- Ballet (admission test required)
- Visual arts
- Stage arts

(1) <http://data-onderwijs.vlaanderen.be/onderwijsaanbod/default.aspx/dko>

(2) <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/onderwijsaanbod/so/studiegebieden.asp?vorm=KSO&graad=2&hs=311>

In the German Speaking community the freedom of education is guaranteed by the Belgian Constitution and each school organizer (s) (Public (s) or private (s)) , named Schulträger , is free to implement programs decided at the central level his choice. Schools can create programs in collaboration with the teachers and this is the most frequent case - implement programs from other affiliated organizing body or networks.

The minimum educational objectives , including those in the cultural and creative dimension, must be pursued by all the schools organized or subsidized by the German Community and are formulated in the form of development goals (*Entwicklungsziele*) for preschool education (CITE 0 or ISCED 0, Kindergarten) and as a disciplinary core competencies (*Schlüsselkompetenzen*) for primary education (ISCED 1) and for the first degree of the secondary education (ISCED 2)

The decisions about the implementation of the program are taken at school level.

Different art forms are found in the various programs, these art forms are:

- Visual arts;
- Music ;

- Drama;
- Dance ;
- Arts of communication;
- Art and Craft;.
- Les arts visuels;
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Sometimes these art forms are taught as a separate subject (under the label of Plastic arts *Bildende Kunst* at pre-primary level (ISCED 0) and under the label of Artistic and musical education, and Plastic Arts *Musische Erziehung and Plastische Kunst* at primary level (ISCED1). Sometimes they are integrated in other subjects programs (eg dance in the physical education program, drama , drama in the program of the mother tongue classes) Usually the content of such an integrated subject it is not so rich and there are no cross-curricular connections among the arts subjects and other curriculum subjects .

At the pre- primary education (ISCED 0) and primary (ISCED 1) from 3 to 12 years , arts education is compulsory program in all schools. At the 1st degree of secondary education (12 to 14 years ISCED 2) , art and music education are taught in the group of 8 or 7 class periods reserved to the optional activities organized either as separate courses, either in an interdisciplinary course. In the 2nd and 3rd degree in secondary education (14 to 18; level ISCED 3) the students have the opportunity to choose a sector of study in the artistic field.

Regarding pre-primary and primary education (ISCED 0 and ISCED 1) it is difficult to specify the time devoted to arts education since for these courses because teaching time is not set by the central level, but under the autonomy of powers organizers and schools.

Specialized offer for Arts Education in the German community

There is an inter-municipal cooperative society called INTERKOMMUNALE der Musikakademie Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft . It is a music academy that organizes in each Municipality music and artistic courses during the Wednesday afternoon , Saturdays and in the late afternoon and evening (at the end of course in mainstream education). The primary area of activity is music and other areas are the arts of speech and theater.

The Musikakademie is subsidized by the German-speaking Community which bears the all costs of the director and teachers and provides grants for cover the operating costs.