



RECOGNITION OF NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING

THEMATIC REVIEW

**BELGIUM – FLANDERS
COUNTRY NOTE**

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INTRODUCTION

1. *Recognition of non-formal and informal learning* is becoming a top priority on the policy agenda in many OECD countries. In 1996, the OECD education ministers agreed to develop strategies for “lifelong learning for all”. The approach has been endorsed by ministers of Work, ministers of social affairs and the OECD Council at the ministerial level. It is an approach whose importance may now be clearer than ever. Learning is a continuous process that takes place throughout life and in many settings. The concept of “from cradle to grave” includes formal, non-formal and informal learning. If learning is only recognised as the outcome of formal teaching, most of what is learnt then is not recognised. From a policy point of view, when developing learning for economic and social benefits, this wider recognition of learning is clearly more effective. From the point of view of an individual, learning for its own sake may be sufficient for some but, for others, recognition of learning outcomes may need to be incorporated into formal qualifications. The outcome of the process of recognition of non-formal and informal learning may bring benefits to the individual and to society.

2. How much evidence exists on the benefits of such recognition? Do governments know enough about the impact of national policies on such recognition? Under what conditions can such recognition be beneficial for all? To begin to answer these questions, a project entitled *Recognition of Non-formal and Informal Learning* was launched in 2006. The purpose, working methods, and issues for analysis are detailed in the project proposal¹.

3. The specific purpose of the Thematic Review (TR) component of the project is to advance in the understanding of stakeholder behaviour and to investigate what is working and not working with current practices. This TR Country Note should be read in conjunction with the Country Background Report (CBR) produced by CESOR, a cabinet linked to the Free University of Brussels (*Vrije Universiteit Brussel*), on behalf of the Department of Education and Training in preparation for the visit. The CBR contains abundant descriptive commentary and statistical information about the Belgian education and training system as well as observations on the process of recognition of non-formal and informal learning.

4. The OECD team visited Flanders from 21 to 23 May 2007 and engaged in a full programme of visits and meetings arranged by the Flemish Steering Group coordinated by the Department of Education and Training. Annexes 1 and 2 show details of the programme and the participants in all the meetings that took place. This Country Note has been prepared by the Rapporteur of the team, Michel Feutrie, with the assistance of Eeva-Inkeri Sirelius and Patrick Werquin. It is based on the information collected during the working sessions with representatives of the ministries involved in the process of recognition (the Ministry of Education and Training and the Ministry of Work and Social Economy and the Ministry of Culture, Youth, Sports and Media), with social partners and with representatives of institutions in charge of the programme implementation, during the visits to different assessment centres, or using information available in documents provided or requested.

5. The OECD team would like to thank the Flemish hosts for their warm welcome during the review visit and for preparing an informative and interesting itinerary. The OECD team is grateful to the Flemish Steering Group and to other individuals who assisted in ensuring that the Thematic Review visit be collaborative, substantive and productive. The policy makers, researchers, practitioners, and target beneficiaries interviewed during the visit were helpful in describing current practices and key issues that were not always covered or explained in depth in the Country Background Report, and were open in discussing the problems that they face (see Annexes 1 and 2). The team also wishes to convey its special gratitude to Ms. Rita Dunon and Ms. Debby Peeters who accompanied the team during the visit, helped in the preparation of the Country Background Report and/or organised the review visit.

¹ <http://www.oecd.org/edu/recognition>

6. This Country Note on Flanders forms part of the OECD's Thematic Review of the Recognition of Non-formal and Informal Learning (RNFIL).

1. THE CONTEXT

7. Belgium is a federal state presenting a particular situation that can appear rather complex for a non-Belgian. This Country Note covers only policy and practices on recognition of non-formal and informal learning in Flanders.

8. The process of federalisation was a slow process of political debate, which took almost a quarter of a century. Between 1970 and 1993, the federal parliament approved four state reforms. During this period, the federated states were granted, step by step, their own government, their own parliament and their own administration. The competences of the federated states were systematically enhanced. Since the federalisation, Belgium is a State which is simultaneously a federal, a regional and a community State. It is integrated by three economically autonomous regions, the Flemish Region, the Walloon Region and the Region of Brussels-Capital; and three linguistic communities, the Dutch-speaking community, the French-speaking community (Walloon and the French-speaking part of Brussels) and the German-speaking community. Also, Belgium has six parliaments:

- The Federal Parliament;
- The Flemish Parliament which is unique for the region and the Dutch-speaking community;
- The Walloon Parliament;
- The Parliament of Brussels-Capital;
- The Parliament of the French-speaking community; and
- The Parliament of the German-speaking community.

9. These regions and communities have been granted competences at legislative and executive levels encompassing: use of language (in conformity with federal laws), culture, education and training, scientific research, health, family, social support, youth and sports as well as cooperation (intra-community or international) and finance. They have their own administrations and their own financial resources. The laws voted by the Federal Parliament apply to the entire country; the laws voted by a region or a community are called decrees and only apply to the people who live in those areas. Recognition of non-formal and informal learning is a specific approach which does not fall within the jurisdiction of the federal state. But Flanders must respect federal laws in implementing RNFIL arrangements, especially those regulations concerning the minimal conditions required for awarding diplomas and certificates related to formal educational programmes.

10. The Flemish Region covers 44% of the Belgian territory and hosts 58% of the population (6 million inhabitants). It is made up of five provinces: Antwerp, Limburg, Western Flanders, Eastern Flanders and the Flemish Brabant. It is economically the most powerful region, contributes to close to 60% of the Belgian GDP and generates 80% of the country's foreign trade. It concentrates close to 60% of the employment. The rate of unemployment is low; it does not exceed 4% in the 25-65 age group. It is higher in the 15-24 age group (14%). Employment policy priorities are therefore quite specific in Flanders. In the short term, priorities are focused on eliminating Work shortages in some sectors and in some occupations and on solving underemployment of young people without qualifications or low-skilled individuals. In the mid-term, it is to face the ageing of the workforce and the replacement of older employees by younger ones at a moment when demographic changes are not favourable. On the basis of these shared analysis, recognition of non-formal and informal learning is seen by authorities as a possible solution to facing current and future problems.

11. In 2004, education and Work authorities were brought together for the first time; a unique minister, the Minister of Work, Education and Training is now responsible for all political issues concerning:

- Employment and vocational training linked to employment (vocational training for unemployed people and employees);
- Education and vocational training in initial education.

The policy areas of work and education are however still two separate domains from the administrative point of view resulting in two different departments and administrations.

12. However, the minister is not responsible for issues related to pensions of teachers and employees of learning and training institutions, definition of compulsory school (up to age 18), minimum conditions required to obtain a diploma that would ensure a minimal degree of coherence between the educational systems of the three communities, relationships between employers and employees or laws concerning employment which are of the federal minister's responsibility.

13. The population at school or in higher education is made up of 1.3 million pupils and students, distributed as follows: basic education, 52%, (19% in nursery school and 33% in primary school); general, artistic, technical and professional secondary education (35%) and higher education, 13%, (8% in non-academic higher education and 5% in universities).

In addition, the Department of Education and Training develops continuing education programmes in two main domains:

- Part-time artistic learning (150 000 trainees); and
- Adult education in the following areas:
 - Social promotion (300 000 trainees) provided by accredited adult education centres at the secondary level (270 000 trainees) and in vocational higher education institutions (30 000 trainees);
 - Open and distance learning (29 000 trainees);
 - Basic education (25 000 trainees distributed in 29 centres). This is training provided to people who do not possess the required pre-requisites to access a learning or training programme;
 - The Dutch language houses (8 houses) inform, test and orientate non-Dutch speaking people to the most appropriate language courses.

14. Parallel to the education and training system placed under the responsibility of the Ministries of Work, Education and Training, there are two other systems that run under the responsibility of the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Culture, Youth, Sports and Media.

15. The Minister of Work, Education and Training works closely with the Minister of Culture, Youth, Sports and Brussels. Together they tried over the past two years to strengthen the structural basis for the development of an integrated education and training policy. This policy aims at:

- Promoting lifelong and life-wide learning, starting from compulsory education and including learning throughout life, covering all forms of learning, both general and vocational;
- Strengthening the link between education, formal and non-formal learning and the labour market. This involves the articulation of the changing demand for competences; the valorisation of competences; the appreciation of vocational-oriented learning; the tuning between education and non-formal learning in view of achieving greater efficiency and more adequate mobility in the labour market.

16. Since the beginning of 2005, the Flemish government decided to establish the Ministerial Committee for Education, Training and Work (*Ministerieel Comité Onderwijs, Vorming en Werk*) to ensure the coordination of the decisions of the two ministries in these fields. The ministerial departments involved in this Committee form an Inter-departmental Steering Group whose role is to draft policies and to establish an executive body, a non-profit organisation, in charge of implementing the policies defined by the ministers (DIVA, Service for Information, Training and Harmonisation or *Dienst Informatie Vorming and Afstemming*).

2 IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOGNITION OF NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING

17. Several documents and policy papers have progressively created the conditions for the implementation and development of current recognition of non-formal and informal learning arrangements.

18. On 7 July 2000, the Flemish Government approved an **action plan** for lifelong and life-wide learning. **This plan entitled “Lifelong Learning on the Right Track” (“Een leven lang leren in goede banen”)** proposes an integrated policy for lifelong learning. It identifies priorities and defines a framework for all activities likely to be integrated in this system. This plan, which gives to all individuals the right to lifelong learning, is based on four pillars:

- The right to information, guidance and counselling;
- The right to recurrent access to learning and training programmes;
- The right to participate in the development of lifelong learning policies;
- The right to recognition of non-formal and informal learning.

19. This plan is susceptible to be reviewed each year on the basis of the results of an annual report. And new initiatives are likely to be launched as a result.

20. Based on this plan, a survey was conducted by a working group involving experts and representatives from the government and the administration, social partners and various institutions (VOIs, the Flemish Public Institutions – *Vlaamse Openbare Instellingen* –; Syntra Vlaanderen, the Flemish Training Organisation for Entrepreneurship.–; VDAB, the Flemish Public Employment Service – *Vlaamse Dienst voor Arbeidsbemiddeling en Beroepsopleiding* –; SERV, the Flanders Social and Economic Council – *Sociaal-Economische Raad van Vlaanderen* –; VLOR, the Flemish Council for Education – *Vlaamse Onderwijsraad*) to work on the models and practices of “recognition of acquired competences” (RAC). This working group produced some recommendations for the implementation of a system of recognition of non-formal and informal learning in Flanders (see Box 1).

Box 1 – Recommendations of the RAC Working Group

- Concrete and feasible projects must be started and evaluated in consultation with social partners and education circles. Special attention should be paid to ethical aspects during the development of these projects. Project assessments will serve as the basis for examining ways and means by which a framework may be established for RAC (recognition of acquired competences) through decree;
- Measures for the protection of the individual’s privacy and integrity are necessary, e.g. in the form of a code of conduct to be adopted by the concerned organisations; and through supervision of the applied procedures and instruments;
- Aspects such as equal treatment of individuals and non-discrimination not only require monitoring of the RAC procedure, but also of the accessibility to the provisions available for RAC;

- The introduction of a RAC procedure and its different steps of coaching, assessment and recognition, is not possible without the associated financial framework;
- Thought must be given to making the system accessible to individuals in terms of visibility, proximity and affordability of its provisions;
- Targeted publicity must accompany implementation of the system, especially for specific groups;
- Use of RAC must be encouraged by a short and simple RAC procedure.

Source: CBR

21. The second founding document which is regularly quoted as a reference by Flemish actors is the "**Pact of Vilvorde**" ("*Pact van Vilvoorde*") signed on 22 November 2001 between the Flemish Government and its social partners. This pact defines twenty-one objectives for the 21st century which are essentially based on the goals of the Lisbon Process. One of these objectives is to make Flanders a learning society by 2010. According to the Pact of Vilvorde, lifelong and life-wide learning must be embedded in society. Expressed in concrete figures, this means that at least 10% of the Flemish population between the ages of 25 and 64 will be taking part in continuing education programmes and that acquired competences could be recognised no matter where or how they were gained. By September 2005, this objective had been reached and in fact it had exceeded its 10% target by 2.5% points, corresponding precisely to the European objective. But, this positive result masks the fact that persons who have no or very few qualifications still participate in significantly smaller numbers.

22. The policy papers published after these two important documents aim at defining and building up the recognition process. Several decrees organise this process.

23. **With regard to higher education**, the recognition process of non-formal and informal learning is defined by the 30 April 2004 decree on making higher education more flexible. This process is linked to the Bologna Process and in particular to the introduction of the BMD (Bachelor-Master-Doctorate) structure and of the ECTS (European Credit Transfer System). It aims at the recognition of "knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes acquired through learning processes for which no diploma was awarded". *It recognises* learning pathways in other establishments to encourage student mobility in initial education, learning gained through personal and professional experience for adults wishing to enter or re-enter universities. It allows non standard access, course exemptions (partially or in totality), and credit transfers.

24. Previously, the Adult Education Centres (*Centra voor Volwassenenonderwijs – CVO*) offering specific diplomas (2 March 1999 decree) had started a process of recognition of non-formal and informal learning providing exemptions and shortening learning and training pathways. These practices considered as "local", and placed under the responsibility of the directors of the centres, required more legibility and uniformity. A decree which entered into force on 1 September 2007 tries to organise these practices, by asking for more transparency, better cooperation between adult education centres and between these centres and those in charge of basic education. The objective is, via consortia, to bring the procedures and methods of assessment closer together.

25. With regard to **the Department of Work**, the 30 April 2004 decree creates a new qualification: a Certificate of Professional Competences (*Titel van Beroepsbekwaamheid*). This certificate is linked to professional standards which are defined by social partners. It offers the opportunity to recognise formal, non-formal and informal learning. A Decision of the Flemish Government of 23 September 2005 and published on 30 November 2005 details its modes of application (see Box 2).

26. These regulations focus on two arrangements: the recognition of competences gained at work or in informal activities related to professional sectors (Department of Work); and arrangements concerning vocational qualifications for people over 18 (Department in charge of Education). The two Departments will examine the relationship between the Certificates of Professional Competence and vocational qualifications awarded in formal education.

Box 2 – The decree of 2004 focuses on the following points

1. The individual is given the right to have his or her competences validated and to obtain a Certificate of Professional Competence (experience certificate), which is a proof of proficiency. It is issued by the Flemish Government;
2. The right extends to the recognition of competences acquired by formal learning and by non-formal learning, but the results or outcomes of both learning paths must relate to a specific occupation;
3. The Flemish Government will determine the conditions under which students in part-time compulsory education shall have access;
4. The Flemish Government will determine the conditions under which an individual shall pay a charge;
5. The Flemish Government, acting on the advice of SERV, will determine the occupations for which a title of professional competence (certificate for professional competence) may be conferred and will determine the variants of a title (experience certificate) for each occupation;
6. The Flemish Government, on the basis of the occupation profiles and acting on the advice of SERV, will determine the standards;
7. The installation of a procedure for identification, assessment and recognition of competences by an assessment centre. The assessment centre is accredited by the Minister for Work and must satisfy quality conditions and respect a code of conduct;
8. Assessment will be effected by reference to the standards derived from the SERV occupation profile;
9. Each recognised study certificate covering the competences required for a particular occupation or partial occupation is regarded as a title of professional competence. Degrees, including those awarded for satisfying specific final terms developed from a particular occupation profile are, at all times, taken to include at least the competences required in respect of the occupation or partial occupation concerned;
10. The Flemish Government, acting on the advice of SERV and VLOR, will determine the procedure on the basis of which study certificates from education and vocational training programmes corresponding with an occupation or part of an occupation shall be identified and recognised and thus regarded as a Certificate of Professional Competence; and
11. The installation of an Appeals Board.

27. **In the departments of Culture, Youth and Sports**, on policy level, no general vision encompassing the different sectors has been published yet, since the principles of recognition provoke some resistance within the sectors, from leaders of associations as well as from practitioners. Some of them are reluctant to the idea of formalisation and assessment. The issue of recognition is still in debate and no official framework regarding the process has been published announcing the launch of the process. These sectors consider that they are already practicing recognition to a certain extent but in a non-formalised manner, except for Sports (e.g. the diplomas of the Flemish Trainers School).

2.1. Current arrangements

2.1.1. Higher education

28. In higher education, the process of recognition of non-formal and informal learning is in place in universities and colleges since September 2005. The process set up aims at a double objective: on the one hand, it proposes to students a recognition of prior formal learning acquired in other establishments in order to facilitate their mobility; on the other hand, it widens the process of recognition to populations who can demonstrate that they have acquired knowledge, skills and competences through professional or personal experience. The immediate result of a successful recognition process is a proof of competences (*bewijs van bekwaamheid*), which then in turn may lead to award of credits or a full degree (on the basis of exemption). Non standard access to higher education (bachelor's level) is usually not granted on the basis of recognition of competences, but rather on a predictive evaluation of the capabilities of the student to succeed in higher education. Admission to master's programmes is always granted on the basis of a bachelor's degree (which may be obtained on the basis of a successful recognition procedure).

29. To implement the BMD structure, universities have set up associations. These associations are confederations of one university and at least one non-university higher education institution. An association is an authority organising, on a geographical basis, cooperation between a university and several colleges providing vocational education and training programmes. Currently five associations exist:

- The Catholic University of Leuven Association (*Associatie Katholieke Universiteit Leuven*);
- The Ghent University Association (*Associatie Universiteit Gent*);
- The Antwerp University and Colleges Association (*Associatie Universiteit en Hogescholen Antwerpen*);
- The University Association of Brussels (*Universitaire Associatie Brussel*); and
- The University-Colleges Association in Limburg (*Associatie Universiteit-Hogescholen Limburg*).

30. Universities have made the decision to entrust these associations with recognition of non-formal and informal learning. Each association is therefore responsible for the implementation of its own arrangements. There is currently no coordination between the associations to facilitate students' mobility, notably by a reciprocal recognition of their arrangements. Discussions have been launched but they meet reluctance and hesitation; to date, there is not a system capable of establishing mutual confidence and guaranteeing the quality assurance set up by the associations.

31. Recognition of non-formal and informal learning arrangements in higher education proposes two procedures:

- The first procedure relates to the recognition of prior learning (*EVK – Erkennung van Verworven Kwalificaties*). The objective is to facilitate students' mobility between learning and training institutions and to open new opportunities for students in a lifelong learning perspective. It recognises "any national or foreign proof of study indicating that a formal learning path, within or outside education, has been successfully completed with the exclusion of a proof of credit in the higher education institution and programme wherein the student wishes to valorise the qualification or element of qualification acquired" (Neetens, 2007). There are three essential and cumulative conditions for EVK: 1) a formal learning path, 2) a successful assessment and 3) a certificate attesting the learning path and assessment. The responsibility for this type of recognition lies with the higher education institution (HEI) organising the programme aimed at by the applicant. A candidate for EVK applies normally when registering at the HEI. Assessment and

recognition are achieved by the academics responsible for the programme, on the basis of the documentation provided by the applicant.

- The second relates to the recognition of competences gained through professional and personal experiences (*EVC – Erkennung van Verworven Competenties*). By this procedure, the HEI can recognise knowledge, skills and attitudes acquired via learning processes which are not necessarily formal. Responsibility for this type of recognition falls under one of the five associations and not under HEIs. The associations have to set up a recognition service and define a procedure. Nevertheless, they are free to establish their own arrangements (centralised or decentralised organisation, application receivable all along the year or at fixed periods, etc.). They only have to respect two restrictions introduced in the decree: to define a regulation offering methodological and procedural guarantees to the candidate and, to respect minimum rules concerning standards, methodology, procedure and quality assurance. Moreover, all associations propose a four-phase procedure: 1) information and guidance, 2) identification of the elements of competences gained through experience, 3) assessment and 4) recognition. The methods of identification of learning outcomes are common and are used according to various configurations: structured interview, observation in situation, collection of information and evidence, interpretation of data, portfolio. Nevertheless, associations nowadays give greater importance to portfolios. The decision essentially lies on the following assessment criteria: authenticity (is the evidence a proof of the applicant's performance?), topicality (does the evidence reflect the applicant's current competence level?), relevance (is the evidence sufficiently matched with training courses?), quantity (does the evidence refer to a sufficiently long period of experience?) and variety of contexts (does the evidence refer to more than one context?). The experienced staff guide applicants during the preparation of their file in EVC (but also in EVK). In some associations, they are clearly and nominally identified in the association information documents (see Boxes 3 and 4).

Box 3 – RECOGNITION OF NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION (EVC). THE CASE OF THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF LEUVEN ASSOCIATION (*ASSOCIATIE KATHOLIEKE UNIVERSITEIT LEUVEN*)

The Catholic University of Leuven Association was set up in July 2003. Thirteen higher education institutions are members of this association:

- European University College Brussels (*EHSAL - Europese Hogeschool Brussel*)
- Group T College Leuven (*Groep T Leuven Hogeschool*)
- College Saint Luke Brussels (*Hogeschool sint Lukas Brussel*)
- College Sciences and Arts Wentenschap and Kunst (*Hogeschool voor Wentenschap en Kunst*)
- Catholic College Bruges Ostend (*Katholieke Hogeschool Brugge-Oostende*)
- Catholic College Kempen (*Katholieke Hogeschool Kempen*)
- Catholic College Leuven (*Katholieke Hogeschool Leuven*)
- Catholic College of Limburg (*Katholieke Hogeschool Limburg*)
- Catholic College Mechelen (*Katholieke Hogeschool Mechelen*)
- Catholic College Saint Liven (*Katholieke Hogeschool Sint Lieven*)
- South and West Flanders Catholic College (*Katholieke Hogeschool Zuid west Vlaanderen*)
- College Lessius (*Lessius Hogeschool*)
- Catholic University of Leuven (*Katholieke Universiteit Leuven*)

The recognition of non-formal and informal learning process is placed under the responsibility of the Board of the CU Leuven Association which delegates it to an APEL (Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning) Committee involving each of the concerned institutions. This Committee has developed an important activity in teachers' training. Its goal is to create a common culture of competence.

The EVC procedure takes place in the associations. Assessment is done by its members, the result is exemption. This exemption is recognised by each institution member of the association (but not yet by other associations). This is an issue which is currently under discussion among the associations, but no concrete decision has been made in this respect.

The EVK procedure takes place at the institution level. The result is exemption.

Quality standards (for procedure and tools – portfolio, interview, practical assignment) have been defined for members.

Box 4 – THE APEL PROCEDURE AT THE CATHOLIC COLLEGE OF LEUVEN (KATHOLIEKE HOGESCHOOL LEUVEN)

The Catholic College of Leuven is a polytechnic. 6 000 students are registered in 5 departments: teaching, business management, industrial sciences and technology, healthcare and social work.

The case presented concerns the Teacher Training Department. It offers three programmes: initial education – 180 credits – (preschool teaching, primary school teaching, lower secondary school teaching); post initial education (60 credits), this programme addresses special needs; post-graduate training (20 credits).

The first step consists in defining the "job-profile" based on a description of the tasks and competences and on the definition of level indicators (from 1 to 4 = strict application, application with contribution, active involvement and initiative) for each competence.

Applicants are invited to reflect on their own experience and to fill in a portfolio; a counsellor can assist in this process. Next, candidates are interviewed by two assessors; an experienced teacher from the regular programme, and a mentor from associated primary school partners. Special attention needs to be paid to the selection of the assessors. If the applicants are successful, they receive an official certificate. Guidance and Assessment are independent.

During the last four academic years, 211 applicants have been assessed, 124 in the EVC procedure and 87 in the EVK procedure. The number of candidates in the EVC procedure is declining (there were 52 in 2003-2004; there are only 12 in 2006-2007). The main reason provided by those in charge of the recognition process is the cost of the procedure, which is at a maximum 590€. EVC entails a considerable investment which for the moment offers limited results. But it can make the institutions attractive in the future, because of the declining number of regular students, EVC offering new opportunities to attract and register nontraditional or mature students.

Three applicants have already been awarded certificates on the basis of their experience.

32. Recognition of non-formal and informal learning is also provided by adult education centres (*Centra voor Volwassenenonderwijs –CVO or Adult Education Centres- and Centra voor Basiceducatie –CBE or Basic Adult Education Centres-*) for awarding diploma's and certificates related to their educational programmes.

2.1.2. Department of Work

33. The arrangements set up by the Department of Work essentially aim at the recognition of non-formal and informal learning through a "Certificate of Professional Competences" (*Titel van Beroepsbekwaamheid*) created by the 30 April 2004 decree. The objective is to recognise a professional (formal and informal learning) and non-professional (informal learning) experience by a **new qualification** (which can be based on education and training). What is actually being assessed and certified are the competences required to function adequately in a specific occupation. The certificate is awarded by the Department of Work. The organisations wishing to assess applicants have to apply for accreditation by responding to a call for proposals by the ESF-agency. The Flemish Government has imposed a number of criteria for the selection of professions for which a certificate for professional competence can be useful:

- First and foremost, start from professions for which no (or no full) training programme exists and which people mostly learn by experience.
- Heterogeneous mix of professions (in terms of competence levels, sectors, professions which are appealing to both men and women)
- Start from key professions, new 'niche' professions or professions that are highly in demand on the labour market
- Finally, special attention for vulnerable groups (e.g. for example professions in which particular groups of occupationally disabled workers usually are employed)

It goes without saying that these criteria are of importance at the launch of the initiative, later on they may be altered or their importance may be reduced.

The authorisation to perform assessment procedures for "*Titels van Beroepsbekwaamheid*" is given by the Ministry.

34. The procedure is as follows:

- Selection of occupations. Each year, the Flanders Social and Economic Council (SERV), launches a call for proposals of occupations to the sectoral social partners. These proposals are then prioritised by the interprofessional social partners. Criteria for priority are: occupations with labour shortages, occupations for which there are no or few initial training options, occupations which could attract more target groups to active participation in the labour market. The Flemish government sets the final list of occupations.
- Development of the standards by the SERV. For each occupation on the final list the SERV starts the procedure to set the standard by which candidates for a certificate will be assessed. Standardsetting is done by following a specific methodology: i.e. interviews with professionals, with persons responsible for in company training, expert groups then assess the different drafts of the standards. These experts are nominated by the sectoral organisations of employers and trade unions.
- Definition of key competences. These standards focus on key competences (10 at a maximum). Key competences are competences which are crucial to adequately perform on the work floor and therefore must be included in the standard for assessment of the candidates. Each key competence is described in observable behavioural or performance indicators called "success criteria".
- Currently (the first standards were published in 2006) about 20 standards exist for which an assessment centre is already accredited (crane operator, industrial painter, weaver, hairdresser, butcher, bus and coach driver, call centres operator, etc.). The Flemish Government has since 2005 approved a list of 54 professions for which a standard has been/will be made by the SERV.

Box 5 – RECOGNITION OF NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION. THE VDAB CASE

The VDAB (*Vlaamse Dienst voor Arbeidsbemiddeling en Beroepsopleiding*) or Flemish Public Employment Service, is an important operator in Flanders in the field of recognition of non-formal and informal learning. The OECD experts were invited to visit a centre for the assessment of competences for bus drivers. This centre offers tests in simulated reality (only simulator available in the region).

The recognition process is based on a standard of competences developed by SERV. The bus driver standard is based on 6 key competences. One of these is defensive driving (weather, traffic jam) travelling, controlling the bus, facing breakdown or accident, planning and organising, relationship with passengers. For each key competence “success criteria” are defined.

The procedure includes four steps:

- First step: applicants are invited to reflect on their own experience on the basis of the standard identifying their work and personal experience and training and learning periods which contributed to the development of each competence.
- Second step: a portfolio is filled in. A counsellor can help applicants at this stage. At the end of this “pairing” with the standard, and depending on the quality of the portfolio, they can decide following their counsellor’s advice to continue or not with the process. If they decide to carry on, then the third step begins.
- Third step: the portfolio is examined by two assessors. These assessors know the profession well, have experience in assessing candidates and have received an extra two-day training programme. Based on this assessment, applicants can be exempted from the practical assessment (this is not the case currently for bus driver).
- Fourth step: applicants take part in a practical assessment, which is presently the main part of the evaluation process. The applicants’ competences are evaluated independently by the two assessors. At the end of the process, they compare their assessment and decide together about the results.

The applicants receive a “certificate for professional competence” from the Department of Work or are invited to continue to develop their competences in the domains where they have shown to be weak.

The guidance stage is free of charge for all candidates. The practical test is free of charge for unemployed people; self-employed or semi-skilled or unskilled candidates have to pay between 25 and 50€; other applicants pay 100€ at a maximum. At the moment all assessment centres decided not to charge applicants for the assessment, but to offer the service for free.

The test Centre visited by the OECD experts admitted 2 candidates in 2006 and 13 since the beginning of 2007 (they expect 40 applicants by the end of 2007). Three applicants have not completed the portfolio and two were not successful after the practical test.

Box 6 – RECOGNITION OF NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION. THE ATEL CASE

A TEL, a non-profit organisation that offers vocational training especially to unemployed people and at-risk groups (disabled, immigrants, over 55, etc.), has been accredited as a test centre for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, more specifically the assessment of the competences necessary to obtain a certificate for professional competence as call centre operator. The OECD experts were invited to visit the ATEL Test Centre in Antwerp.

The process is based on the standard designed by SERV for call centre operators. This standard is founded on three key competences: conducting different activities simultaneously, managing data in a call centre system, mastering information technology.

The procedure is similar to that developed by VDAB: completing a portfolio and then performing a practical assessment based on 16 calls (4 concerning information about products or services, 4 complaints, 4 tele-sales, 4 inquiries).

At the end of the process, if they are successful, applicants receive a call centre operator certificate awarded by the Department of Work. If they do not succeed, they are invited to apply again six months later.

Since its inception, the centre has tested 42 applicants, 35 belonged to at-risk groups.

35. In 2006, a first call for proposals was published. It was aimed at institutions desiring to become test centres ("*Test Centrum*"). ESF and the Flemish Government finance the entire process. ESF, Department Work, Department Education and the SERV examine the proposals and give an advice to the Minister for Work. The Minister accredited the first assessment centres. The Commission of Agreement is integrated by representatives from the ESF Agency, SERV and the administrations of the involved ministries. The institutions that were chosen are the VDAB (with several occupations) and SYNTRA (government coordinator for entrepreneurial training), training organisations linked to certain professional sectors (construction, textile, removal and hairdressing), public agencies such as CPAS Ghent or other institutions such as non-commercial training organisations or non-profit organisations.

36. The procedure identifies three main tools for assessment:

- **A portfolio** ("*portfoliobeoordeling*"). This is an important step, but it is not compulsory. It consists of a detailed CV that must establish a link between the experience acquired by the applicant at work and the key competences identified by the standard. In fact it constitutes, prior to the assessment process, a means for applicants to foresee their chances to be successful in the final assessment and to decide if they should continue or not.
- **Observation in situation either reconstituted or simulated** ("*praktijkassessment*"). Applicants must demonstrate that they are able to perform all the tasks described in the standard. There is no partial recognition. If applicants cannot demonstrate all the competences stipulated by the standard, they are encouraged to reinforce them or to widen their professional experience.. They can apply maximum twice in a year, so when they have acquired the required competences (at work or in training sessions) they can come back to the assessment centre.
- **Observation in real situations**. This is only the case for the profession of nursery.

37. The evaluation is conducted by two assessors. They both fill out a grid separately and compare results at the end. The test takes generally about one day (4-8 hours)

38. Discussions are taking place between the ministries with a view to recognising these certificates of professional competence within the framework of the classical system of vocational qualifications. Discussions with social partners have shown that this new certificate, which is currently awarded to few people in a limited number of sectors or activities, needs to establish itself for a longer period of time. Even though stakeholders consider that this certificate could be useful in some sectors or for some activities, or in cases of job reconversion or redeployment, or that it could be beneficial for low qualified employees, they have not yet integrated it as an item in the negotiations between professional organisations and trade unions. The output is related to other issues such as the development of a qualification structure (for instance a National Qualifications Framework)

2.1.3. Departments of Culture, Youth and Sports

39. At the moment, general arrangements concerning recognition of non-formal and informal learning inspired by these new orientations in regional policies do not currently exist at policy level. The main reason is that these sectors remain relatively impervious to global approaches, and to what could appear to the authorities as some kind of standardisation. We can only identify local (as well as interesting and diverse) experiences and initiatives of a single association or institution. Presently, there are standards that could be applied to this type of activities. Certificates issued to participants in these type of learning or training activities are in general known as “certificates of participation”, which are mainly based on self-assessment practices rather than on institutional or formal assessments, except for the – formal - procedures and diplomas within the Flemish Trainers School.

40. Pilot projects have been launched since 2003 to test such an approach in favour of specific groups: immigrants, young people without qualifications, people working with young children, etc. It led SoCiuS² to propose a more balanced approach between formative and summative processes. SoCiuS is an independent organisation that receives grants from the Ministry of Culture, Youth, Sports and Media and whose goal is to support the socio-cultural adult work sector. SoCiuS serves as a point of reference to the sector and to those who work in it. It provides practical assistance, training, guidance, expertise, research and development, data collection, representation, international cooperation and information and promotion.

41. The proposal consisted in recognising non-formal and informal learning by means of certificates intending to valorise the individual's competences acquired by participation in non-formal learning activities and voluntary work:

- **A learning certificate** (*leerbewijs*) to attest participation in learning and training sessions. The scope of this certificate is limited to the description of objectives and content of the programme.

- **A certificate of competences – competency certificate** - (*competentiebewijs*) is the same as a learning certificate except for the fact that a certificate of competences proves that a coherent whole of competencies have been acquired indeed. To acquire a certificate of competences it is necessary to previously pass a successful judgement or assessment. The body granting the certificate of competences guarantees that the competences have been acquired and guards the quality of the process and the autonomous standards that have are being used.

- **A function certificate** (*functiebewijs*) that describes the activities and tasks performed by an individual in voluntary work, the length of her/his participation and the competences demonstrated.

² According to the organisation, “SoCius” means “companion, a person who travels with us”, “SoCius is the travelling companion for the sector and those who work in it”.

**Box 7 – RECOGNITION OF NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING IN THE SOCIO-CULTURAL SECTORS,
THE SoCiuS PROPOSAL: A LEARNING BOOKLET**

In 2005, SoCiuS established a “Recognition of Acquired Competences (RAC) Group” whose objective was to produce a broadly shared vision on RAC in different socio-cultural work sectors (associations, training-plus centres or adult education centres, certified training organisations for target groups or specific themes, movements, etc.).

The results of this consultation are presented in a document entitled “Recognition of Acquired Competencies (RAC) in the Socio-cultural Work Sector”. In the recommendations of the RAC Group three kinds of evidences are identified: the “learning certificate”, the “competency certificate” and the “qualification certificate”. However, the Socio-cultural Work Sector wants to develop only the first two and wishes to introduce a new “performance certificate” that fits more the needs of the sector, namely the “function certificate”. It also plans to promote a “learning booklet”³ that would compile these certificates into a coherent unit. This approach is inspired by the Finnish and Slovenian models.

“The learning booklet is a method that consists in gathering knowledge, skills, attitudes and competences acquired in a non-formal and informal learning environment. Each activity is registered separately in this process. The organiser or the person responsible for the activity arranges the registration. The users can decide themselves at any moment what goes or not into the learning booklet. This can be interesting when the booklet is used in function of a specific goal, e.g. when applying for a job” (SoCiuS, 2006).

The arguments developed by SoCiuS in favour of this booklet are the following:

- Motives for the learners: to become aware of what they learnt in different ways, situations and activities, to develop self-esteem. As it is an easily accessible tool, it can be useful for semi-skilled or unskilled people.
- Motives for organisations: to understand that they can also be learning organisations.
- Motives for the sector:
 - . To increase interest in RAC in the socio-cultural sector;
 - . The booklet respects the specificity of the sector and does not lead to formalisation, standardisation;
 - . The booklet can be used in a flexible manner;
 - . The booklet increases the visibility of the sector by promoting the knowledge, skills, attitudes and competences that are developed in it;
- Social motives: more attention paid to the value of non-formal and informal learning, especially by employers.
- Motives for the decision-makers: input for a global policy on cultural matters.

At this stage, SoCiuS wishes to create a separate tool because of the dominant role played by formal learning; this is the only way for them to make non-formal and informal learning more visible.

³ The learning booklet was the original name for the project; meanwhile it has changed into the plain “portfolio project”.

The learning booklet will contain learning certificates, certificates of competences – *competency certificate* e- and function certificates and other documents: reports, photos, paintings, etc.

These documents are either provided by the organisers or the information is included by organisers in each individual booklet. SoCiuS recommends completing them not only in Dutch, but also in English, French or German.

Finally, SoCius has identified the conditions required to successfully introduce this tool:

- Cooperation of all parties involved;
- All providers in non-formal and informal learning must include their activities in it;
- Common terminology, uniformity of standards and certificates;
- Monitoring of the users;
- Monitoring those who issue the certificates;
- Strong Commitment in the promotion and dissemination of the learning booklets;
- Acceptance of a slow progression in the use of this tool.

For the socio-cultural sector, the challenges are:

- To develop a system supported by all sectors involved;
- To provide a tool accessible and usable by everybody, including specific target groups;
- To make it compatible with other existing systems.

42. The purpose of this proposal is to record these certificates in a “learning booklet” and to attach as a complement all other documents or evidences that the person may consider useful (photos, reports, files, etc.).

2.2. Statistics

43. The recognition system is still in its starting phase. There is no global systematic collection of quantitative data. The figures presented below have been collected by different recognition providers. The number of participants is still limited.

2.2.1. Higher education

44. There is no consolidation of results in higher education. Statistics must be gathered through each of the five associations. We have only at our disposal the results of the Catholic University of Leuven Association (*Associatie Katholieke Universiteit Leuven*). The opportunity offered by the decree of 30 April 2004 allowing associations to award full degrees is effectively recorded there. Three applicants have benefited from this new programme in Leuven, two of which in the social work sector. During the 2003-2004 and 2006-2007 academic years, the Catholic University of Leuven Association examined 211 application forms, 124 in the EVC procedure and 87 in the EVK procedure. However, people in charge of the recognition programme are worried about the decreasing number of applicants in EVC.

2.2.2 Department of Work

45. Statistics cover an active period from November 2006 to May 2007. Recognition of non-formal and informal learning focuses on six occupations (bus driver, coach driver, industrial painter, tower crane operator, nursery worker and call centre operator) at four different assessment centres. 123 candidates have registered, 112 are at present at the end of the process and 60 certificates of professional

competence have been awarded. New statistics have been published in November 2007, the Assessment Centres have received 317 applicants for 10 professions. 223 have been awarded.

The Department of Work is working, in cooperation with the Departments of Education and Culture, Youth on an annual report (November 2006- November 2007) which will be published in the spring of 2008.

2.2.3 Youth, Culture and sports

46. Data are not available in the education and social promotion sectors, or in the sector of culture and youth. For Sports however, the Flemish Trainers School registers data concerning applications for equivalences.

Year	approved applications for equivalence	
1998	92	
1999	99	
2000	74	
2001	858	abnormally high because of the once-only assimilation procedure diving
2002	1202	abnormally high because of the once-only assimilation procedure football
2003	125	
2004	90	
2005	68	
2006	697	abnormally high because of the once-only assimilation procedure fitness
2007	61	

Taking no account of the once-only equivalence procedures, it can be said that the average number of approved applications for equivalences dealt with by the Flemish Trainers School per year is about 87.

3 ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

47. From the interviews and meetings held with the main actors involved in the system during the experts visit to Flanders, different levels of debates and stakes were identified. These will be analysed and discussed in the following sections.

3.1. Lack of conviction or excessive caution

48. The arrangements presented to the experts are more or less at a starting point. The first steps (except in the sector of adult education) were launched in 2005 in the higher education sector and in 2006 in the Work sector. The landscape and the perceptions and reactions of the main actors involved differ widely. The experts believe that the people in charge are rather on the side of caution, or even scepticism, than on the side of fostering a rationale of development. Five categories of actors were identified; each adopted a specific position in relation to the recognition process.

3.1.1. First category: authorities

49. Flanders decided in a resolute manner to enter into a process aiming to encourage lifelong and life-wide learning. Authorities, after consultation with social partners, defined a regulatory framework to develop this policy. The political positioning is guided by two objectives: to reach the goals fixed by the Lisbon Process and to surmount current or future tensions in the labour market. RAC constitutes one major element of this policy, but it appears less as an element chosen on a deliberate manner than as an element involved in a global logic of implementation of a lifelong learning process linked to the Lisbon

Process. Such a standpoint is fully justified in a system that is already in place and fully functioning, but it is problematic at a starting phase that requires strong political involvement, incentives, heavy investment and strict monitoring and evaluation systems. The development of recognition of non-formal and informal learning processes requires such a break with traditional learning cultures and practices that obliges authorities to give clear orientations and recommendations to all actors and stakeholders involved, in order to avoid resistance and the risk of obstruction and backtracking. At present, these measures are not clearly and fully demonstrated.

3.1.2 Second category of actors: the institutional actors

Today, institutions placed under the responsibility of the ministries have adopted a pragmatic logic of progressive implementation, specific to each ministerial department. They conceive their role more as a role of guidance and facilitation than of promotion based on a clear vision of the future which can be translated into action. Decisions seem to be guided by prudence and most depend on the results of the first experiments and the reaction of other actors. This attitude is encouraged by the fact that recognition of non-formal and informal learning inevitably poses new challenges to the administration which require new approaches in the way they must be solved. An administrative routine does not exist in this new field (and this may alarm some people). Besides, at this moment, this initiative is perhaps not as important or as pressing as others. For many representatives in the administration, it is one more project and it may not be necessarily useful for their careers.

3.1.3. Third category of actors: operational actors

50. This category includes those who are more closely involved in the recognition of non-formal and informal learning and work in institutions which have designed this new process and developed the first experiments. Some of them have been militants for years, convinced of the importance of non-formal and informal learning for personal progress and development. Others, designated by their institutions, found in this process an opportunity to put into practice their conceptions of lifelong and life-wide learning. In all cases, these actors present themselves as strong defenders of recognition of non-formal and informal learning. They are often deeply involved in their institutions and work with passion and determination. Typically, they do not track their working hours and appear as enthusiastic “supporters” ready to contribute to the promotion of the process and to the dissemination of their experience at other interested institutions. They are very demanding and expect a lot from this process. However, they often appear to be isolated (or even “enclosed” behind a “cordon sanitaire”) within their institution, and have to permanently provide evidence of the benefits of the process or demonstrate its relevance. They usually lack the means to influence strategic orientations.

51. Selling the praises of recognition is a difficult task. Most institutions do not see a real immediate economic return in the process. The usual sources of funding are found in learning and training activities. Giving exemptions to an applicant signifies that institutions lose money because the recognition process currently does not generate new incomes and requires heavy investments. This is a particularly sensitive issue because the staffs involved in this process are often very competent, experienced people who become more scarce in the classical activities of the institution. The “economic” resistance is in most cases doubled by a “cultural” resistance, since many teachers and trainers are particularly reluctant to accept the new process or are even against it because they think that it differs widely from traditional assessment processes. For these teachers and trainers, experience does not have a real value or, in any case, cannot replace classical learning and training processes based on a programme, on mastered content and disciplines.

52. At the present stage and without new incentives or responses to basic questions posed by learning and training institutions, the system risks to disappear rather quickly. Professionals engaged in this process feel themselves isolated. They invest a lot in these activities, but at the same time are not

sure that their institutions recognise what they have achieved. They might be even aware that their institutions are not ready to develop recognition of non-formal and informal learning. Having to justify their activities at every step, they may become discouraged, especially considering the weak internal links that exist within the institution's hierarchy. If, for one reason or another, these actors abandon their institutions or return to more traditional activities, there is a risk that the arrangements in place may disappear with them. Sustainability requires, in the short term, concrete responses and new perspectives for these essential actors.

3.1.4. Fourth category of actors: social partners

53. The position adopted by employers' organisations and trade unions appears more that circumspect. Fundamentally, they agree globally on the principle of recognition of non-formal and informal learning. No one, on both sides, contests the importance of identifying and recognising competences gained at work or elsewhere. Most of them underline the positive dimensions of this process as well as the opportunity that is therefore given to recognise the formative dimension of work. They recognise that the process can be useful when it comes to identifying cross-cutting competences as in the case of mobility or reconversion. But, at the same time, every actor measures the possible disruptive effects of this process on the systems in place, and on the existing agreements and practices between social partners. At this stage, they wonder about the "value" of the certificates awarded comparatively with traditional diplomas. Consequently, they prefer to wait and see but they are willing to get more involved once the system passes the current stage of experimentation and the number of applicants increases.

3.1.5. Fifth category of actors: potential applicants for recognition

54. To date, information and "sensibilisation" campaigns have not been developed in the right direction. These are starting now to target potential users more systematically, mainly at the Department of Work. This department has set up an information telephone line, posters have been put up in employment centres and leaflets describing the application process for each certificate of professional competence have been distributed. In the area of higher education, recognition is part of the information and orientation process of each HEI. However, only in a few cases specific information is provided. The caution that seems to be exercised at the different levels identified in this report and the reduced number of certificates open for recognition and of institutions mobilised seem currently to restrict the dissemination process.

3.2. Parallel arrangements

55. New political orientations have prompted the introduction of a global framework associating the Departments of Education, Work and Culture. However, each department has defined and designed its own arrangements based on its particular view on this project, its specific logic, the characteristics of the populations that they wish to reach, and the limitations that they face. The arrangements set up function therefore in parallel. The Interdepartmental Steering Committee, created to coordinate the work of these three departments, has not been effective until now in promoting a convergence of approaches and developing a common implementation strategy.

56. The experts met with the Steering Committee twice during this review, at the beginning and at the end of the visit, and with each department separately in connection with at least a visit to an institution operating in their field of activity. It is clear that each department defends its own logic, even when it comes to creating measures aiming to facilitate mobility between sectors. Progress for individuals who seize the opportunities offered by the three sectors is announced and even scheduled but it is not yet widely visible. Each department seems to operate rather distinctively, catering to very specific needs and groups, while applying its own methods of assessment. This distinctiveness is expressed in terms of:

- Objectives: social promotion of individuals (Department of Education and Training), employability and the link with the labour market (Department of Work), social inclusion (Department of Youth) and personal development (departments of Culture, Youth and Sports);
- Learning fields: formal learning (Department of Education and Training), non-formal learning but also formal learning and informal learning (Department of Work) and non-formal learning⁴ and informal learning (departments of Culture, Youth and Sports);
- Target groups: populations searching advanced diplomas for professional or social promotion (Department of Education and Training); employers, employees and unemployed people especially at-risk groups such as the low skilled or unskilled people, etc. (Department of Work); sportspersons, the young, people volunteering or taking courses in the socio-cultural sector (departments of Culture, Youth and Sports);
- Support for assessment: for knowledge and skills (Department of Education and Training), competences demonstrated at work (Department of Work) or proofs of participation in activities (departments of Culture, Youth and Sports);
- Methods of recognition in use: access to learning programmes, exemptions from parts of the programmes, and diplomas (Department of Education and Training); new certificates of professional competence (Department of Work) and certificates of participation and individual learning booklet (departments of Culture, Youth and Sports);
- Different assessment tools: application form, dossier or portfolio (Department of Education and Training); portfolio or/and assessment in situation (Department of Work) and production of evidence (departments of Culture, Youth and Sports).

57. However, at least one point of convergence exists between these different departments: the process proposed to the applicants. This process consists of four steps which are differently developed in every sector: information and guidance, identification of learning outcomes, assessment and recognition. Also, an institution which relies on the Department of Education and Training to become an assessment centre for the Department of Work would not meet any obstacle; and the Department of Education and Training depends on the Department of Work in the process of accreditation of the assessment centres.

58. Such a system cannot be considered as global, and this is an obstacle to transparency. Also, it may not be attractive to people who would be potentially interested in it or who are targeted by promoters, but who seem to be hesitant or reluctant to undertake recognition programmes. And we doubt at this stage about its efficiency from a lifelong and life-wide perspective.

59. The general opinion expressed during the meetings is that the departments are not in favour of harmonising the procedures. They are willing to work in a complementary manner and they want to improve coordination, but they do not want to question the basic principles of their approaches and institutional cultures. However, if they choose to work in a lifelong learning perspective, as stated in the founding texts, then they should be willing to move from an institution-centred approach to an applicant-centred approach; i.e. from an approach centred on the transmission from someone who knows to someone who does not know, to a process centred on the learning process of each individual; from an assessment that verifies what is expected, to an assessment that starts from what the applicant is able to

⁴ The socio-cultural sector is –more than any other educational provider- oriented towards lifewide learning. There is an extensive range of (non-formal) training courses available while participation in socio-cultural associations is an important source of informal learning. Besides adult education, there are a range of other areas that are involved in the recognition of informal and non formal learning, such as libraries, amateur arts, popular culture, participation in cultural and community centres and youth work. In the broad Culture policy area, moreover, non formal learning is also on the agenda in the professional arts and heritage sector.

provide from his/her experience. Traditional borders are progressively disappearing. Lifelong and life-wide learning need a global approach, they impose a holistic vision. Individuals cannot be cut in slices especially if we admit that they now have to think about their personal and professional lives as if both were one continuous pathway, or better, a progressive and developmental pathway. And learning and training institutions should not conceive of their contributions as mere competition but as an exercise in complementarity. This holistic vision should not be limited to the transmission of knowledge and skills. For the individual, this vision should be a work in progress as they learn continuously in different situations in life, both professional as well as personal. Knowledge or skills acquired in a voluntary activity can be useful and can be recognised in a professional activity and vice-versa.

60. Presently, this divided approach prevents the expression of a global vision and its translation into a qualitative and quantitative plan. Achieving an integrated lifelong and life-wide learning policy cannot result from the addition of sectoral policies, however successful and interesting they may be. It imposes a measure of consistency and the creation of bridges to help the development of individual successful pathways.

3.2.1. The Department of Education and Training

61. For the Department of Education and Training, which plays a pilot role in the implementation and development of the system, the stake is first internal. It is to convince the actors, in particular the directors of learning and training institutions who have full responsibility for the implementation and management of the process of recognition of non-formal and informal learning. The general impression that dominates at the Department of Education and Training is of scepticism, and even reluctance toward recognition of non-formal and informal learning, and paradoxically, in the sector of vocational education and training. It is also its intention to ensure appropriate articulation between the different education sectors: higher education (where the system is now implemented), adult education which essentially practices recognition of prior learning for exemptions and shortening of courses (recognition is rather well implemented in this sector, but there are no statistics), general education and vocational education and training (weak results). The Department of Education and Training is considering elaborating recommendations aimed at the participating institutions based on the results of present experimentations, but it is not yet an item on its agenda. The Department of Education and Training recognises that the current funding process of learning and training institutions, based on participation in courses of pupils, students or trainees, represents an obstacle to the implementation of non-formal and informal learning. In fact, costs have been identified as the main reason why registration in recognition programmes has declined. Finally, the Department of Education and Training considers that it is necessary to change the culture of learning and training organisations and actors, that they should be encouraged to accept the idea that everyone can learn everywhere and at any time, whether it be at work, for example, or in associations, and not necessarily in a classroom. A view that has currency in the department is that more flexibility should be introduced in the organisation of their learning and training provisions in order to come up with more individualised answers when considering shortening programmes.

3.2.2. The Department of Work

62. The Department of Work defined its position in part according to the choices of the Department of Education and Training, offering an alternative to the diplomas awarded by the latter, and partly as an answer to the initiatives of the Work sector in the French-speaking community. This approach was adopted half way into 2003 when a consortium involving six institutions piloted by FOREM⁵ decided to propose a recognition system based on the award of certificates of competences, which can be accumulated and considered toward the attainment of a vocational diploma, after a global assessment.

⁵ *Formation Emploi*: Walloon Bureau for Vocational Training and Employment, public body in charge of adult vocational training, it delivers training programmes to unemployed people and offers information and guidance before, during and after the training period.

The strategy of the Department of Work is closely linked to the employment policy in that it seeks to lower the number of non-qualified or under qualified people and to respond to the needs of the labour market. It stresses the complementary dimension of its qualification (certificates of professional competence) and it is based on occupations and activities that are not covered by existing diplomas. These certificates fill the gap where there are currently no formal qualifications. This has been verified in the first six certificates that were created, but it is possible that, as the production of standards by SERV increases, competition and tensions may appear. The Department of Work also insists on the proposal of another "culture" of vocational certification. The Department of Work has also detected a lack of value in the labour market of the certificates of professional competence. At present, economic actors are only familiar with qualifications awarded by the education sector (professional sectors do not propose their own qualifications). Therefore, the department should ensure that these certificates of professional competence become better known and more susceptible to be recognised. For example, individuals who possess these certificates are not allowed to work as civil servants. Authorities at the department expect that the implementation of the National Qualifications Framework would offer better opportunities to obtain a more recognition of this qualification.

3.2.3. The departments of Culture, Youth and Sports

63. The position of the Ministry of Culture, Youth, Sports and Media is not homogeneous considering the diversity of the departments that compose it. The socio-cultural and cultural sectors consider that their educational activity is not primarily linked to employment, the labour market, or to certification, but mainly to the pleasure of learning. That is the reason why there is no individual assessment and why attestations of participation, and not qualifications, are awarded at the end of the learning or training sessions. The department of Youth is mainly preoccupied by the question of social and professional inclusion of young people. They consider that they only offer a complementary approach to one of the other sectors and, in particular, to the sector of Education. The Flemish Trainers School of the Administration of Physical Education, Sports and Outdoor Life (BLOSO) considers that its process of certification is mainly linked to teaching activities; it is through cooperation with universities, colleges and sports federations that the issue of recognition of experiential learning must be considered.

3.3. Social partners

64. No direct contacts with social partners and experts were organised during this country review. The experts met them during the meeting with the Department of Work. Representatives from professional sectors and from trade unions appear very cautious. In Flanders, there is a well-established system among social partners for the recognition of qualifications. Opening the field to a new system will necessarily cause some disruptions. What is interesting about the proposed system is that it recognises competences acquired outside the formal education system and that it favours the transfer of competences from one employment to another in case of rupture in the professional pathway. Nevertheless, this recognition introduces new problems. What can be the value of these new certificates which are awarded to very few people, cover only some occupations, of which the immediate and medium-term contribution to the development of professional pathways cannot be measured when compared to traditional qualifications? In addition, some employers acting in activities which were not yet covered by qualifications are afraid to be obliged to recognise these new qualifications but, in the same sectors, other employers are happy with this new initiative because it can offer some sort of guarantee of competences to customers.

65. But to date, it can be considered that social partners are not really involved in the process, even though they have to decide about the activities for which standards will be developed by SERV and even though they are associated with the process of production.

3.4. Recognition or validation: confusions in the objectives and the vocabulary in use

66. In the current state of development of the system, it seems that the recognition process hesitates between several tendencies, creates areas of uncertainty and presents some ambiguities.

3.4.1. A first area of uncertainty

67. A first area of uncertainty appears in the orientation given to the system. Specifically, the system is embedded in a logic of **recognition**. In the English translation of the Flemish texts the expression "recognition of acquired competences" (RAC) is preferred to the expression "validation of non-formal and informal learning" or "recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning" that is used henceforth at the European level. The term "recognition" should be specified because it covers two different realities:

- A **formal recognition**, which is, according to the CEDEFOP glossary, the process of "granting official status to competences, either by awarding certificates or by granting equivalence, credit units, validation of gained competences";

- A **social recognition**, which is the "acknowledgment of the value of competences by economic and social stakeholders".

68. Based on what the experts could observe, the recognition process in Flanders falls exclusively into the first category. The reticence or caution exercised by social partners does not allow for a social recognition at present, except in the case where the process of recognition includes qualifications which already provide social recognition.

69. Up to this stage, the system put in place tends to propose an individual recognition. It has more a legal value, defined by the texts creating the recognition process, than a social value.

3.4.2. A second area of uncertainty

70. A second area of uncertainty appears in what is effectively recognised. On which standards is the assessment procedure based? The system seems to focus more on the recognition of knowledge than on the recognition of competences. In such a case, the system can appear as a complementary system in relation to the learning and training system working under the same logic. The objective is more to build competences in reference to a norm, that of the qualification, than to recognise and valorise knowledge. Recognition is a tool serving this objective, not a process in itself.

71. At the Department of Education and Training, the logic is mainly to shorten learning and training courses by authorising non standard access and awarding exemptions and credits. Even though it is possible to award a diploma in higher education, this concerns only vocational higher education programmes and a very reduced number of applicants could benefit from this measure. Even though the process identifies two methods of recognition, prior learning and competences acquired at work or in social life, the logic of assessment and the "culture" of the assessors again concentrate more on learning and training programmes than on learning outcomes. The principle of relevance, for example, begs the following question: is the evidence sufficiently matched with the training courses? Nevertheless, it should be underlined the important work that has been accomplished on the standards, and on what is effectively expected from the people who wish to obtain a diploma. The developed criteria have assisted in the decisions concerning the choice and training of the assessors.

72. The Department of Work chose to make an assessment in situation as proof of the relevance of the applicants' competences. This choice should guarantee a break-up with the existing learning and training logics because the assessment is solely based on a concrete demonstration. However, this

approach is not without ambiguities. Some assessment centres are at the same time training centres, and the advisors are often instructors. As there is no partial validation in the procedure set up by the Department of Work, the assessment centres usually propose to the applicant, who does not necessarily possess all the competences required to obtain the certificate of professional competence, training complements which will help her/him to acquire the necessary competences to succeed next time around. However, we must acknowledge the good will of this Department to set up a new logic in all initiatives. Currently they have chosen to call on assessors that don't take part in the training process. In the future, if the demand grows, independent assessment centres, especially dedicated to this activity, could be created.

73. In the socio-cultural sector there is no individual assessment. The sector provides tools that are put at the disposal of the people who volunteer or who take courses in the field. The recognition of competences is not an aim on itself. What is important is the awareness and the individuals' mastery of what they have learnt in the various activities that they perform in the field. The proposal of a learning booklet contributes to this general approach. It is a document gathering all the certificates that the booklet's owner decides to include in it: certificates of participation in learning and training sessions, certificates of competences demonstrated in activities, "function certificates" describing competences as a consequence of having a function or doing a task as a volunteer.

3.4.3. A third area of uncertainty

74. A third area of uncertainty appears in the purpose of the system. Does the system provide global answers or specific answers? Is this a tool that serves individuals in the management of their personal and professional pathways all along their lives? Is this a tool that serves employment policies or social policies? Facing shortage in employment, does it help unemployed people with non-adapted competences to be more in tune with the labour market? Does it solve the problem of employment of at-risk groups (disabled, low skilled or unskilled people, etc.)? Does it encourage the insertion of young people without qualifications? Is this a tool for the management of human resources in companies? Does it follow a logic of internal mobility or external mobility? Recognition of non-formal and informal learning can contribute effectively to achieve these different goals. The problem encountered by its promoters is that there is no clear understanding of the possible contribution of recognition to the attainment of these objectives and, as a consequence, there is no explicit demand coming from the workplace or from individuals. The system needs to establish mid-term objectives that could be linked to the lifelong learning perspective embedded in its founding texts. There is also a need for close cooperation with social partners and for greater public awareness campaigns because the process ultimately relies on these two actors: social partners and the working population.

3.5. Opportunities offered by the Flemish Qualifications Framework

75. Very often during the experts meetings and interviews with the different actors involved in the recognition process, the issue concerning the creation of a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) appeared as a solution to part of the problems. In 2005, the ministries had received a political mandate to develop and implement a Flemish Qualifications Framework. This initiative would require close cooperation between the Education, Training and Work and Socio-cultural sectors. Three main paths were presented:

- 1) Establishing bridges between the qualifications (diplomas, certificates, certificate of professional competence, job profile, etc.), to facilitate different types of access to qualifications, allowing individuals to pass from one type of qualification to another without encountering dead ends. The purpose is to encourage mobility and therefore to contribute to the creation of personal and professional pathways all lifelong, without people having to learn again what they already know. This would also limit competition between qualifications.

2) Working closely together, encouraging collaboration, surmounting current compartmentalisations and limiting the risk of competition. Defining a National Qualifications Framework imposes an agreement on the qualifications that should be included in it. It obliges all actors to define a certain number of common references which will be the basis for the description of each certification (descriptors) and its ranking (level) within the framework. Flanders does not wish to create its own Qualifications Framework from scratch, but it wants to lean on the structure proposed by the European Qualifications Framework. This means that it will adopt a structure based on eight levels. Each level will be identified by four descriptors: knowledge, skills, context and autonomy and responsibility.

3) Making qualifications visible, giving them a certain value and making them attractive. This is the result that the Department of Work is expecting from the certificates of professional competence which need this legitimacy to be clearly identified and recognised by the workplace and by individuals. It is also what the departments of Culture and Youth expect.

4 PERSPECTIVES

76. During the experts' exchanges, all actors involved in the recognition process emphasised over and over again the necessity to have more time to experiment, to improve the implementation process on the basis of the first results, and to convince their partners. Considering that the recognition process is complex and demanding and that it can be disruptive and impose a break-up with traditional ways of thinking, it is not difficult to understand why the actors have adopted such a cautious approach. But it is also known, from other countries' experiences, that if implementation is too slow, if some saturation points (critical mass) are not reached, and some attitudes or ideas are not changed, recognition of non-formal and informal processes risks to remain circumscribed to certain sectors or domains, or to certain institutions. Two conditions seem necessary to make a significant breakthrough in this area: actors should clarify their respective positions; and an agreement must be reached among the ministries, within the ministries themselves and between the ministries and social partners about the purpose of the framework. All these actors need to create the conditions that would ensure the sustainability of the system beyond the first experimentations and pilot tests.

77. As to the clarification of objectives, several models emerge from the exchanges between the partners involved and the experiences observed in different countries:

- A system based on an open competition between qualifications. A NQF that makes explicit its objectives, modalities and potential users (individuals, enterprises or organisations) would have to adopt qualifications that offer the best solutions to their challenges, plans and constraints;
- A system organising the certifications according to age groups. Qualifications accessible in initial education on the one hand, and those accessible by adults in their personal and professional pathways as soon as they leave school or university and enter the labour market;
- An open system based on cooperation and complementarity between the institutions and the qualifications that they propose. Such system would offer modalities of mutual recognition, would design possible pathways for individuals and potential schemes of mobility for companies.

78. As to the sustainability of the system, there are several conditions that need to be met. And beyond this, there is the issue concerning global management and the evaluation of the framework.

4.1. The first condition

79. First, it is essential to reach a certain critical mass:

- Critical mass in the number of qualifications open to recognition. This imposes an increase in the production of standards, especially those associated with the certificate of professional competence. This will increase awareness in training and learning institutions about this issue, principally in institutions that are in charge of vocational education and training in the education sector.
- Critical mass in the number of qualifications creates a movement in the population.

80. This is a necessary condition to ensure the credibility of the system. It is also important for the institutions that are mobilised in this process to share and, if possible, to seek returns on their investments. This is also a necessary condition for the staff involved in the process of recognition who wish for a more sustained activity that would justify their own investment and would guarantee the pursuit of an activity that is a source of personal fulfilment and that brings positive results to the applicants.

81. The increasing number of applicants and of qualifications opened for recognition constitute a guarantee for the actors of the sustainability of the system. It will encourage them to work in a more collective manner, and to limit the risks involved in personal or professional pathways. Reinforcing the teams of trained and competent professionals in this field of activity is also a necessity to ensure the sustainability of the system.

4.2. The second condition

82. Second, to achieve sustainability it is necessary to adopt a common vocabulary. For example, the translation of "*Titel van beroepsbekwaamheid*" refers to several definitions used indifferently that do not necessarily reflect the same meaning and the real objectives pursued: "certificate of professional competence", "certificate of work experience", "certificate of competences". Another example, frequent formulations for recognition of non-formal and informal learning is recognition of acquired skills (RAS), APL or APEL but also the recognition of acquired competences (RAC). More generally, a certain lack of precision or vagueness prevails in the definitions of what is linked to formal, non-formal and informal learning. Some clarifications are therefore necessary among the actors so that they can adopt the same references and show consistency with international standards.

4.3. The third condition

83. Third, it is necessary to define a process of quality assurance. Recognition of non-formal and informal learning imposes the establishment of an evaluation process that incorporates the applicant's experience in its positive and negative aspects. Advisors and assessors work on elements that are part of the individual's identity. In some cases, the applicants have shown not to be quite clear about who they are; in other cases, they have revealed a high or low opinion of themselves. This makes some of them reluctant to expose their personal experiences to outsiders. The assessment process must protect the integrity of the applicant. The authorities should work on the codes of conduct to be used by the assessment centres or institutions helping the applicants to prepare their portfolios. These codes should define the profiles and competences of the professionals in charge of the guidance and assessment processes, as well as the attitudes that they should adopt. They should also want to define the main steps of the process and the conditions of appeal for the applicants.

5. SOME RECOMMENDATIONS

84. Based on the exchange process between promoters, actors and experts, the OECD experts formulated the following recommendations which propose improvements to the multilevel current system:

1. It would be necessary to move towards a more global dimension of the current process. If this process is to be embedded in a lifelong learning perspective. But we do not find in what is currently in place the signs of a strategy guaranteeing the attainment of this ambitious objective. It appears necessary to draw a global vision that would display global objectives and determine the responsibilities of each department and social partners. This global vision must be accompanied by documents defining orientations and criteria for self-assessment in each department that will permit to identify obstacles and to measure progress. It supposes, from the start, a common vision on medium-term objectives (quantitative and qualitative). It requires the adoption of a common language and a system of common trust. It also requires the designation of a "pilot" able to guarantee that the objectives will be reached.

2. In its current state of development, recognition of non-formal and informal learning arrangements appear more to rely on a summative logic than on a formative one. The "recognition of acquired competences" process seems to be based on a "weighing" logic of identification and traditional evaluation of knowledge, skills and attitudes leading to the allocation of modules, units, or credits. Some initiatives, particularly in the socio-cultural sector, seem to demonstrate that it is possible to insert the process in a developmental logic, mobilising the "recognition of acquired competences" as an instrument for organising and managing personal and professional pathways. Although the founding texts recognise the right of every citizen to benefit from guidance services for his/her career, this service is not yet efficient and the recognition of acquired competences is not identified explicitly as a key element in this perspective. A developmental approach calls for a holistic vision of experiential learning. It requires taking into account the learning outcomes in an articulated manner, this means that we have to surpass the specific assessment methods in use today in every sector. It is the responsibility of the ministerial departments to create the conditions for access to this new culture in the learning and training institutions that they supervise and to lead the change.

3. At the same time, organising such a system requires working on the definition of a new economic model:

- For the institutions that are likely to recognise non-formal and informal learning, so that they do not consider this framework as leading to additional expenses which cannot be compensated by incomes, and as absorbing a part of their experienced staff;
- For the individuals who hesitate to participate in the process because they have to incur in expenses and are not sure about the returns on their investment. Payments for registration and assessment (except in the Department of Work), even if not very high comparatively to those linked to learning or training sessions, are probably acceptable to individuals with high-incomes or who will understand the value of their investment later; but they can be a real obstacle for the promoters of the system if they want to attract under-qualified people or people from underprivileged groups;
- For the companies wishing to support their employees, since they will have to give them time to prepare their file, or pay for the expenses linked to the process or the required complements in case of partial recognition.

4. The process of recognition of non-formal and informal learning has to be inserted in a global approach of relationships between the education and training "world" and the employment sector. Initiatives could be developed in the following three fields:

- Information, advice and guidance for pupils and their families; students and trainees preparing them to become lifelong learners, to help them to understand what could be the role of recognition of non-formal and informal learning in personal and professional pathways;

- Articulation of this process with measures, tools or instruments aiming at a better identification of competences used by institutions in charge of unemployed people, of young people meeting particular difficulties in professional insertion, and of populations which are considered as unskilled. At this moment, these institutions or organisations do not consider that this process could be of some help, and they do not include it in the proposals or counselling services that they provide to the population that they assist.

- Discussions with social partners to encourage recognition of the new certificate of professional competence through agreements between the sectors and the trade unions. These discussions could start in sectors which were interested in the definition and the elaboration of this new qualification.

- Discussions with companies, especially with human resources managers, to help them to identify what could be the contribution of recognition of non-formal and informal learning to internal and external mobility, and to use this process as a tool for the identification of competences of their employees and the development of professional pathways.

5. The experts suggest the creation of an inter-ministerial agency that would ensure the promotion of the system and the organisation of public awareness campaigns targeting companies and individuals. The mission of this agency would be to support the institutions and organisations engaged in recognition of non-formal and informal learning in conducting evaluations, analysing and comparing methodologies, both tools ensuring a work of mutual recognition, capitalising on the results, promoting best practices, developing quality assurance procedures, gathering data and statistics, and making some proposals in terms of orientations or improvements.

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ANNEX 1 – PARTICIPANTS IN REVIEW

OECD-review RNFIL: Steering Group – 21 and 23 May 2007

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Tom Dekeyzer	Cabinet of the Flemish Minister of Work, Education and Training Advisor Higher Education	X	X
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OECD-review RNFIL: Stakeholders Education and Training - 21 May 2007

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Peter Van Der Hallen	Confederation of Christian Trade Unions (ACV) Advisor Labour Market & Education Policy
Lut Maertens	Union of Christian Employers' Organisations (ACW) Advisor Education and Competence Development
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ANNEX 2 PROGRAMME OF THE VISIT



Flemish Ministry of Education and Training
Flemish Ministry of Work and Social Economy
Flemish Ministry of Culture, Youth, Sports and Media

PROGRAMME REVIEW VISIT of OECD team 21-23 May 2007

“Recognition of non-formal and informal learning”

OECD review team

Michel Feutrie, Professor at Université des Sciences et Technologies de Lille, France (Rapporteur).

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The thematic review (TR) has been an integral part of working methods of the OECD Directorate for Education. The thematic review aims to enhance policy dialogue, transparency, capacity building and compliance among peer-reviewed countries. It also aims to advance understanding of stakeholder behaviour, to investigate what is working and not working with current practice, and to capture innovative case studies and unintended policy outcomes which may not be obtainable from the standardised questionnaires. It also aims at fact-finding which will complement information obtained through the Country Background Report.

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21 May 2007 – Location: Brussels and Leuven

0930-1100 Location: Ministry of Education and Training, Consciencegebouw, Koning Albert II-laan 15, 1210 Brussels
Meeting room G02
Interview Steering Group, authors CBR & Datateam
The background report has been prepared by consultant Michael Debusscher, Cesor, in close collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Training, the Ministry of Work and Social Economy and the Ministry of Culture, Youth, Sports and Media.
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1100-1300 Location: Ministry of Education and Training, Consciencegebouw, Koning Albert II-laan 15, 1210 Brussels
Meeting room G02
Interview stakeholders Education and Training
Stakeholders Education and training
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Walter Wens, Flemish Ministry of Education and Training, Central Examination Board (Secondary Education), Assistant Secretary
Chama Rhellam, Flemish Ministry of Education and Training, Division of Institutions and Students -

	<p>Secondary and Adult Education Roger Standaert, Flemish Ministry of Education and Training, Curriculum Division, Director Mia Douterlungne, Flemish Education Council (VLOR), Administrator-general Roos Herpelinck, Flemish Education Council (VLOR), Director</p> <p>Education and Training Department with several divisions: Secondary and Adult Education, Curriculum, Higher Education, VET- projects, Central Examination Board. All divisions are involved in RNFIL - policy.</p> <p>VIOR The Flemish Education Council, in Dutch: de “Vlaamse Onderwijsraad” (Vlor), is the official advisory body on the education and training policy of the Flemish Community. Representatives of all the different stakeholders in education and training meet in the Vlor. Together they look for ways to further improve education and training in Flanders. The task of the Vlor is threefold: advice, consultation and study.</p> <p>Some important advices related to RNFIL are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advice on the European Qualifications Framework • Recommendations on quality assurance and on the recognition of informal and non-formal learning in vocational education and training • Advice on Europass, the European framework for transparency in qualifications and competences <p>VLIR & VLHORA The Flemish Interuniversity Council (VLIR) advises and presents proposals to the minister with regard to university education. The VLIR carries out research itself or contracts out research. The Flemish Council for Non-University Higher Education (VLHORA) has a task analogous to that of the VLIR, but it was created for the colleges of higher education.</p>
1300-1400	Location: Ministry of Education and Training, Consciencegebouw, Koning Albert II-laan 15, 1210 Brussels VIP lounge – Lunch
1400	Transfer to Leuven by car
1430-1630	<p>Location: Katholieke Hogeschool Leuven (Leuven University College) -Teacher Training Department Naamsesteenweg 355, B-3001 Heverlee, Tel: +32 (0) 16 39 92 00, Fax: +32 (0) 16 40 70 87, Mail: dlo.heverlee@khleuven.be</p> <p><i>Visit Education: RNFIL in practice</i></p> <p>The KH Leuven is a large higher education institution – in association with the University of Louvain and other institutions of higher education. The KH Leuven provides a large range of study programmes in Higher Education. Like all Higher Education Institutions in Flanders, they operate a full-fledged credit system based on ECTS (European Credit Transfer System). Students are able to choose their personal learning paths. They can opt for a traditional route of circa 60 ECTS credits a year for an individual route. Students can be exempted from course based on credits acquired elsewhere (another program, another institution), and on competencies acquired outside a formal learning context (i.e. prior experiential learning).</p> <p>Courses are independent building blocks for which students may enrol according to their own choice and time, taking into account the semestrial system.</p> <p>Admission to the programmes and subjects is more flexible thanks to assessment procedures. Diploma contracts include several study routes. A model study route can be full time, half time or other part time variants. An individual study route is adjusted to a student’s specific needs. The student will get a degree after having accumulated all the credits allocated to the courses necessary to acquire all the competences linked to the qualification. Credits are based on the ECTS-principles. Each course stands for minimum 3</p>

	<p>credits, with a maximum of 12 courses per 60 credits. One credit represents 25 to 30 hours of a student's workload. Eventually students are able to choose their personal learning paths, opting for the traditional route of circa 60 credits a year, or for an individual combination of subjects. Higher education institutions may structure the academic year in semesters, evaluations included. The individual learning path may be a result of the recognition of prior learning and competences obtained through working experience. These competences are assessed by the institutions.</p> <p>The KHLeuven provides the opportunity - via prior learning-procedures - to put into action experience and acquired competences in study programmes and study routes e.g. in teacher training programmes and nursery programmes.</p> <p>Projects on RNFIL:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • United Colors of Nursing • Recognition and assessment of teachers' competences of people on the labour market. <p>Contact: An Peeters, Staff EVC-EVK (Prior Learning), Associatie K.U Leuven, Schapenstraat 34 B - 3000 Leuven, 016 32 09 06 - 016 32 40 88, http://associatie.kuleuven.be; and for the KH Leuven, Bjorn Callewaert and Kristien Karnel</p>
1700-1830	<p>Location: Leuven Language Center (Centrum voor Levende Talen - CLT), Dekenstraat 4, 3000 Leuven</p> <p><i>Visit Education: RNFIL in practice</i></p> <p>The language centre CLT is a language centre for adult education - in association with the Catholic University of Louvain. The language centre CLT organises intensive courses in several languages including French, English, Spanish and German. These courses aim at all those interested provided that they have a secondary school certificate and that they are 18 years old.</p> <p>For Arabic, German, English, French, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish electronic placement tests are used. These tests can be taken daily from 18 - 22 September between 4 p.m. and 8 p.m. The tests are held on weekdays only. Results are available immediately so students directly have to state the group they prefer within the appropriate level. Students who obtained a CLT certificate less than five years ago can enter the next module of the same language immediately and select a suitable group without taking any test. Students who wish to register as beginners do not have to take a placement test. They can immediately select their group. In any other case the placement tests are compulsory for all students who want to join a higher module and do not hold a certificate of the preceding module.</p> <p>Contact: Bart Van Thielen, Dekenstraat 4 B-3000 LEUVEN, 016- 32 56 61</p>
1830	Location: CLT, Dekenstraat 4 B-3000 LEUVEN; <i>Debriefing moment for the OECD-experts</i>
1930	Dinner in Leuven, Tijd - a – Tijd, Hogeschoolplein 15, 3000 Leuven, 016/29 12 12

22 May 2003 – Location: Brussels, Temse and Antwerp

0930-1130 Location: Ministry of Education and Training, Consciencegebouw, Koning Albert II-laan 15, 1210 Brussels
Meeting room G42
Interview stakeholders Work
Stakeholders Work
AnnVan den Cruyce, Flemish Ministry of Work and Social Economy, Policy Division, Head of Division
Lieselotte Bommerez, Flemish Ministry of Work and Social Economy, Policy Division, Assistant to the Director
Isabel Van Wiele, Flemish Ministry of Work and Social Economy, Policy Division, Assistant to the Director
Mieke Augustyns, Flemish Ministry of Work and Social Economy, Policy Division, Assistant to the Director
Kristel De Roy, Inter-sectoral employers' organisation for the social profit sector (VCSP0), Advisor "social consultation"
Stiene Van Rie, Socialist Trade Union (ABVV), Advisor Internal Affairs
Geert Mertens, Farmers' Union Organisation (Boerenbond), Advisor
Theo Leyman, VDAB, Manager European Projects
Geert Ramaekers, Organisation of the Self-employed (Unizo), Advisor Flemish Federation of the SME of the construction
Lieven Desmet, Flanders' Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Voka), Knowledge Centre, Advisor Education and Competence Development
Martine Taeymans, Agoria Flanders, Advisor Labour Market, Education and Training

Ministry of Work and Social Economy
The Ministry of Work and Social Economy is responsible for the coordination of the policy concerning the certificate for work experience.

Social Partners (SERV)
Flanders Social and Economic Council (Sociaal-Economische Raad van Vlaanderen, or SERV) is the consultative and advisory body of the Flemish social partners. The SERV comprises ten employer representatives (from Boerenbond, Unizo, VCSP0 and Voka/Vlaams Economisch Verbond) and ten representatives from the Flemish trade unions (ABVV, ACLVB, and ACV). The SERV is first of all the consultative body where the social partners gather to determine their common viewpoints and to formulate recommendations and advice. Its representative composition provides the SERV with a strong social anchoring.

The tripartite dialogue between government, trade unions and employers takes place within the Flemish Economic and Social Consultative Committee (Vlaams Economisch Sociaal Overlegcomité, VESOC). If a consensus is reached within VESOC, the Flemish Government commits to carrying out all resolutions for which there is consensus. The Flemish social partners defend this consensus towards their members and contribute to its execution. Within VESOC, the social partners and the government also reach agreements on the complementary policy regarding Flemish employment agreements.

Since 1997, the SERV has been working on occupational profiles - and, since 2000, on occupational structures as well. This is done in collaboration with the social partners and the sectors. The aim is to gather information on occupations and competencies amongst the various sectors. This information serves as a basis for educational programmes, to help young people in choosing their studies and occupation, as an aid for HRM policy, and for career guidance or assessment. (certificate for work experience - RNFIL).

1130	Transfer to Temse by car
1230	Lunch
1330-1500	<p>Location: Competence Centre VDAB (Competentiecentrum VDAB), Schoenstraat 26, 9140 Temse Tel: 03 771 91 21, Fax: 03 771 91 30, website: http://vdab.be/tests/ervaringsbewijs.shtml</p> <p><i>Visit Work: RNFIL in practice</i> On site visit of a test centre for acquisition of a certificate for work experience for two professions: coach driver and bus driver</p> <p>Contact: David Pappaert, david.pappaert@vdab.be</p>
1500-1530	Transfer to Antwerp by car
1530-1700	<p>Location: ATEL vzw ism Randstad CallForce, Duinstraat 102, 2060 Antwerpen, Tel: 03 641 08 65, Fax: 03 641 08 51, website: http://www.atel.be/ebewijs.html</p> <p><i>Visit Work: RNFIL in practice</i> On site visit of a test centre for acquisition of a certificate for work experience for call centre operator.</p> <p>Contact: ervaringsbewijs@atel.be</p>
1700	Transfer to Brussels by car
1800-1900	<p>Location: Ministry of Education and Training, Consciencegebouw, Koning Albert II-laan 15, 1210 Brussels Meeting room 5C 07</p> <p><i>Debriefing moment for the OECD-experts</i></p>
1900-2200	<p>Dinner Brussels La Vierge Noire, Art-Deco Restaurant, Rue de la Vierge Noire 12, 1000 BRUSSELS (CITY), Phone: 02.503 34 20 Fax: 02.513 03 18 , laviergenoire@skynet.be</p>

0900-1100 Location: Ministry of Education and Training, Consciencegebouw, Koning Albert II-laan 15, 1210 Brussels
Meeting room G52

Interview stakeholders Culture, Youth and Sports

Stakeholders Culture, Youth and Sports

Marijke Verdoodt, Flemish Ministry of Culture, Youth, Sports and Media, Policy Division, Assistant to the Director

Dirk Verbist, Cabinet of the Minister of Culture, Youth, Sports and Brussels, Advisor

Sofie Verhoeven, SoCiuS (Support point for Socio-Cultural Adult Work), Advisor RNFIL

Hugo De Vos, Federation of Organisations active in the popular (non-formal) adult education scene (FOV), Director

Marc Van der Beken, Administration of Physical Education, Sports and Outdoor Life (BLOSO), Sports Executive Training Division

Assistant to the Director

Tine Van Bossuyt, Flemish Sports Federation (Vlaamse Sportfederatie), Staff Member

Iris Van Riet, Flemish Ministry of Culture, Youth, Sports and Media, Strategic Advisory Council, Director

Jan Bal, Service Centre for Youth Policy (Steunpunt Jeugd), Advisor Youth Policy

The Ministry of Culture, Youth, Sports and Media supports the policy on the recognition of prior learning.

FOV and SoCiuS

The FOV is the Federation of Organisations active in the popular (non-formal) adult education scene. Popular adult education is a form of social-cultural work for adults, in which participants learn how to enlarge knowledge, insight and skills for themselves or others, aiming at their personal development and functioning in society, except for training aimed at obtaining a diploma, school education and/or vocational training. Adult education work is usually subdivided by kinds of work. There are three kinds of work: (1) socio-cultural associations (including migrant's associations), (2) Specialised socio-cultural institutions and Folk High Schools, (3) Socio-cultural movements.

All the organisations recognised by the Flemish Government are free to join the FOV. All associations, institutions, folk high schools and movements that are recognised by the Flemish Community are members of the FOV. They have to pay an annual contribution to become a member. Those organisations who are not recognised (yet) by the Flemish Community can become a provisional member. They will be invited to the meetings of the FOV but will not have a vote in the internal process of decision-making.

The FOV works in close contact with SoCiuS, which is the Flemish support centre for Adult Education. SoCiuS provides information, documentation, training and development in the adult education segment.

Bloso

Bloso is entrusted with the general organization, coordination and advancement of sports practice, sports recreation and outdoor recreation. More specifically, Bloso is in charge of:

- The study, planning, development and promotion of sports both at home and abroad;
- The supervision and implementation of regulations pertaining to sports and outdoor recreation;
- The organization and co-ordination of international relations and necessary collaboration related to sports and outdoor recreation at home and abroad;
- The provision of information and documentation concerning technical aspects of sports;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The provision of counselling, co-ordination and stimulation of activities organised by national, provincial and local associations and institutions; • Sports promotion through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The organisation of sports classes, sports camps, sports courses, etc.; ○ The organisation of national promotion campaigns, assistance initiatives and support activities, ○ support to school sports; • The organisation of staff training by creating training programmes for sports-technical and executive staff; • General sports counselling by granting subsidies to both private and public initiatives; • The collaboration in the development of a solid top-level sports policy; • The administration and stimulation of its own existing or planned sports centres and the co-ordination of all building activities; • The control of the Sport Fund (finances and expenditures).
1100-1130	Transfer to Asse
1130-1300	<p>Location: Arch'educ, Volkshogeschool Halle-Vilvoorde vzw, Stationsstraat 70, 1730 Asse, 02 454 54 01, 02 454 54 02, website: http://www.archeduc.be</p> <p><i>Visit Culture: RNFIL in practice</i></p> <p>On site visit of a socio-cultural training centre for adults and the way they work on RNFIL</p> <p>Contact: Werner Godfroid, werner.godfroid@archeduc.be.</p>
1300-1330	Transfer to Brussels
1330-1500	<p>Location: Ministry of Education and Training, Consciencegebouw, Koning Albert II-laan 15, 1210 Brussels</p> <p>Meeting room 5C18</p> <p><i>Lunch for the OECD-experts and debriefing</i></p>
1500-1700	<p>Location: Ministry of the Flemish Community, Boudewijngebouw, Boudewijnlaan 30, 1000 Brussels</p> <p>Meeting room 5E02</p> <p><i>Interview Steering Group</i></p> <p><u>Steering Group</u></p> <p>Micheline Scheys, Flemish Ministry of Education and Training, Project Strategic Education and Training Policy, Project Leader (president)</p> <p>Dirk Van Damme, Cabinet of the Flemish Minister of Work, Education and Training, Principal Private Secretary</p> <p>Ludy Van Buyten, Flemish Ministry of Education and Training, Secretary-general</p> <p>Daniël Samyn, Flemish Ministry of Education and Training, VET Project Division, Director</p> <p>Jeroen Backs, Cabinet of the Flemish Minister of Work, Education and Training, Advisor Adult Education</p> <p>Tom Dekeyzer, Cabinet of the Flemish Minister of Work, Education and Training, Advisor Higher Education</p> <p>Anne-Marie De Jonghe, Flemish Interuniversity Council (VLIR), General Director</p> <p>Joëlle Pletinckx, Flemish Interuniversity Council (VLIR), Coordinator Education Policy</p> <p>Dominique Berrier, Flemish Public Employment Service (VDAB), Competence Development Division, Advisor</p> <p>Walter Van Trier, Ghent University, Researcher</p> <p>Sofie Verhoeven, Support point for Socio-Cultural Adult Work (SoCiuS), Advisor RNFIL</p>

	<p>Ronny Leenknecht, Support point for Socio-Cultural Adult Work (SoCiuS), Advisor Policy Development Ann Van den Cruyce, Flemish Ministry of Work and Social Economy, Policy Division, Head of Division Christine Claus, Flemish Ministry of Culture, Youth, Sports and Media, Secretary-general Marijke Verdoodt, Flemish Ministry of Culture, Youth, Sports and Media, Policy Division, Assistant to the Director Mia Douterlungne, Flemish Education Council (VLOR), Administrator-general Roos Herpelinck, Flemish Education Council (VLOR), Director Jan Bal (or representative), Service Centre for Youth Policy (Steunpunt Jeugd), Advisor Youth Policy</p>
1700-1830	<p>Location: Ministry of the Flemish Community, Boudewijngebouw, Boudewijnlaan 30, 1000 Brussels Balcony 2 – Drink</p>