

# **Analytical report: Education for pupils with a migrant background in Flanders.**

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## **1 Context**

The Vlor has written this report for the 'European policy network on the education of children and young people with a migrant background' (Sirius). Sirius is a European platform where policy makers, researchers and practitioners exchange ideas, insights and practices on national and European policy in the field of migration and education. The platform is granted by the European Commission.

The Vlor commission on diversity and equal opportunities approved this report.

## **2 Introduction**

From the beginning of the nineties, the Flemish Community in Belgium has been developing a policy that allows to pay special attention to vulnerable pupils, such as pupils at risk of an educational gap because of their socio-economic and cultural background, often combined with a migrant background.

This report only concerns compulsory education. In Flanders there is compulsory education until the age of 18 years. Until 16 years, there is full time compulsory education; from 16 years, there is part time compulsory education.

The Flemish Community provides education. The Flemish Community delegates this power to autonomous school groups throughout Flanders. Next to this type of education, the Flemish Community subsidizes education provided by local governments, in this case cities and communities, and by private school governments. Those private school governments merely provide confessional education, in most of the cases catholic education.

The Flemish Community finances and subsidizes the Dutch speaking education in the Flemish Region and in Brussels Capital Region. In the Flemish Region, there is only Dutch speaking education. In the Brussels Capital Region, there is also French speaking education, financed or subsidized by the French Community.

Policy related to pupils with a migrant background has evolved from a policy with extra support for pupils with a migrant background towards an integrated policy, offering to schools additional opportunities to meet the needs of pupils at risk of an educational gap or early school leaving, because of their socio-economic or cultural background. The Flemish Community also foresees education for newcomers between 5 and 18 years old, speaking another language who enter the Flemish education without knowing the Dutch language.

## 3 State of play

### 3.1 Pupils with a migrant background in Flemish education<sup>1</sup>

#### 3.1.1 Pupils with a migrant background in compulsory education

In order to map the number of pupils with a migrant background in the Flemish schools, the government has two types of data: the number of pupils with non Dutch home language, and the number of pupils with a foreign nationality. The number of pupils with a foreign nationality is much lower than the number of pupils with a migrant background, because a lot of pupils born in Belgium from parents with a foreign nationality have the Belgian nationality.

The home language of the pupils is non Dutch if the pupil speaks Dutch in the family with no one, or, in a family with three members (not counting the pupil), with maximum one family member. The number of pupils with non Dutch home language is higher than the number of pupils with a migrant background, given the fact that, in Flanders, a lot of Belgian pupils speak French at home, instead of Dutch.

Pupils with a foreign nationality and non Dutch home language 2010-2011

Type/level of education	Foreign nationality	Non Dutch home language
Mainstream nursery education	6.2%	17,7%
Special nursery education	5,5	Not available
Mainstream primary education	6,7	14,6%
Special primary education	7%	Not available
First degree secondary education	6%	11,1%
General secondary education	3,1%	7,6%
Technical secondary education	4,0%	7,1%
Arts secondary education	5,3%	5,8%
Vocational secondary education	8,6%	14,2%
Special secondary education	9,4%	Not available
Part time vocational secondary education	18,3%	22,4%

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<sup>1</sup> Studiedienst van de Vlaamse Regering (2013) Vlaamse Migratie- en Intergratiemonitor 2013, p. 138 a.f.

### 3.1.2 Grade retention in primary education

In 2011, 42 % of the pupils with a foreign nationality had one or several years of grade retention in the last year of mainstream primary education. For pupils with the Belgian nationality, the percentage is only 14 %. The grade retention for pupils with non Dutch home language is 35 %, a little bit lower than the percentage for pupils with a foreign nationality.

### 3.1.3 Grade retention in secondary education

In 2011, 66 % of the pupils with a foreign nationality had on one or several years of grade retention in the last year of mainstream secondary education. For pupils with a Belgian nationality, the percentage is 27 %. The grade retention for pupils with non Dutch home language is 59 %, lower than the grade retention for pupils with a foreign nationality.

### 3.1.4 Transition to tertiary education

An important part of those with a foreign nationality enrolled in the Flemish tertiary education, comes to Flanders to study, and leaves after the studies. This table only looks at the participation in tertiary education of the pupils who have been in secondary education in Flanders. This shows that 7 out of 10 pupils with a Belgian nationality who have obtained a diploma of secondary education in 2010, follows a professional or academic bachelor. For the non Belgians, this is the case for only half of the pupils.

Percentages of students enrolled in 2010-2011 in a professional or academic bachelor compared to the number of pupils who have obtained a diploma secondary education in 2009-2010:

	Belgian students	Students with foreign nationality
Professional bachelor	37,2%	23,6%
Academic bachelor	32,9%	24,9%
Total	70,1%	48,5%

## 3.2 From a targeted policy towards an equal opportunities policy

From the beginning of the nineties until 2002, the Flemish Community conducted a priority policy in order to enhance the educational chances of pupils with a migrant background. For schools counting at least 10% of pupils with a migrant background, the Flemish Community granted extra support. A pupil is considered belonging to this target group if the grand mother from mother's side is not born in Belgium nor had the Belgian nationality. Moreover, the maximum education level of the mother is the school year in which she became 18 years old. With additional teachers, schools had to plan specific actions in order to enhance the educational chances of pupils with a migrant background. The guidance services of the overarching organizations of school governments were given a limited number of additional staff in order to guide their schools in the elaboration of their educational priority policy.

In 1993, the Flemish Minister of Education, the overarching organizations of school governments, the representatives of migrant organizations, the trade unions of educational staff, the centre for equality of opportunities and the fight against racism and a number of civil society organizations signed a non-discrimination declaration, within the Flemish Education Council. They agreed not to refuse pupils with a migrant background wanting to enroll in a school, and to initiate intercultural education at school. A commission was put in place for the implementation and the follow-up of the declaration. This commission mediated when there were complaints in case of discrimination based on origin and initiated in a number of communities with a large amount of pupils with a migrant background consultation platforms with the local school authorities and with migrant organizations. Those local consultation platforms (Lokale overlegplatforms, LOP's) agreed on measures to avoid segregation and to work towards a non-discriminating learning environment. They laid down those measures in local agreements.<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless, the school career of pupils with lower educational opportunities remained problematic. Too often, those children were stuck in study options offering very little or no chances at all to lead to higher education, or they left the school without a qualification relevant for the labour market. The important gap between the best performing and the lowest performing pupils remained important. Not so much the migrant background, but rather the socio-economic background seemed to be determining the chance to school success.

For those reasons, the Flemish Government has elaborated from 2002 on an equal opportunities policy with an integrated support offer for pupils

- who don't have Dutch as home language
- who have the right to receive a school allowance
- whose mother does not hold a diploma of secondary education
- who are living temporarily or permanently out of the own family
- whose parents are part of migratory population.

Schools with relatively much pupils meeting the criteria above, have extra support so that they can work in a planned and integrated way towards a structural improvement of the educational opportunities of all their pupils, focusing on

- Prevention and remediation
- Language education
- Intercultural education
- Guidance and counselling
- Socio-emotional development<sup>3</sup>
- Participation of pupils and parents.

This means that, from that moment, there are no more data on pupils with a migrant background in the statistical data that the government asks directly from the schools.

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<sup>2</sup> Cf Flemish Parliament (2002): [\*Ontwerp van decreet betreffende gelijk onderwijskansen I, Memorie van toelichting, stuk 1143 \(2001-2002\) – Nr.1.\*](#)

<sup>3</sup> Only for primary education

### **3.3 Right to enrolment**

In the Flemish Community, in principle, all the pupils have the right to enroll in all the schools. Every school has the obligation to enroll every pupil who meets the admission conditions. The only condition is that the parents, or the pupils if they are major, agree with the pedagogical project and the regulations of the school before the inscription, and that the school has sufficient capacity. This right to enrolment and its modalities are, from 2002 on, not only subject of a declaration of engagement, they are laid down in the Act on equal opportunities.

The right to enrolment aims at optimizing the chances of all pupils to register in the school of their choice, and to avoid segregation.

### **3.4 Local consultation platforms**

Equal opportunities policy in Flanders not only has to do with extra means for schools with a lot of pupils at risks and the integration of the right to enrolment in the Act on equal opportunities. The Flemish Community also put in place local consultation platforms (LOP's), for primary and for secondary education, in the communities with a lot of children at educational risk because of their socio-economic or cultural background.

All stakeholders gather in the local consultation platform: the school leaders and school authorities that provide education in the area, the leaders and authorities of the centers guiding the schools, the parents, the local socio-economic and/or economic partners, people with a migrant background, the organizations where poor people take the floor, the integration sector, the welcome offices for newly arrived migrants, the school community work, the community authorities, and, for secondary education, the representatives of the pupils' councils.

The local consultation platforms have to make agreements related to the improvement of the educational chances of pupils at risk, to the improvement of the participation in early childhood education and care, and to the reception of newly arrived migrants.

They play an important role in the organization and the control of the implementation of the right to enrolment in their working area. They make agreements on the implementation of priority rules, on common registration periods and on communication on the enrolment policy of the schools. They approve central enrolment procedures that take place before the actual enrolment, or they organize these procedures in the bigger cities.

### **3.5 Pupils' right commission**

Together with the Act on the right to enrolment, a commission on pupils' rights has been put in place. The commission has the authority to treat complaints related to infractions of the right to enrolment. It also controls the procedures for enrolment that have been approved by the local deliberation platforms.

### **3.6 The engagement declaration: diversity as an asset**

Parallel to the process of the Act on equal opportunities and to the integration of the priority policy in an integrated support offer for equal opportunities, the partners of the non

discrimination engagement have renegotiated in 2003 in the Flemish Education Council their engagements taken in 1993. The treatment of complaints focused, as far as the right to enrolment is concerned, on the work of the new pupils' rights commission. The local consultation platforms were taken up in the much larger consultation platforms that were organized following the implementation of the new Act. This new engagement declaration was named 'Diversity as an asset'. At this very moment, in 2013, the partners in the Flemish Education Council are updating their declaration.

### **3.7 Pupils characteristics are taken into account in the operational budget**

Next to the staff costs of the schools, the Flemish Government is also paying the operational costs and the investments in the school infrastructure. Schools that have more meeting the criteria below receive relatively more operational means:

- The mother does not hold a diploma of secondary education or equivalent
- The pupil has the right to receive a school allowance
- The home language of the pupil is different from the instruction language
- The pupil lives in a neighbourhood with a high percentage of pupils with grade retention

This list of indicators chosen by the government is based on scientific research. Each of the indicators has proven to be related to educational gaps.

### **3.8 Pupils characteristics are taken into account in the support for primary education**

This procedure is also valid from the school year 2012 -2013 for the financing or the subsidies by the government of the staff costs in primary education. This model of financing replaces the additional support foreseen in the equal opportunities decree. Primary schools with an important number of pupils at risk of less educational opportunities because of their socio-economic and/or cultural background receive relatively more support than other schools. In order to decide on how many support a school gets, the authorities take into account the following data:

- The educational attainment of the mother
- Whether the family receives a school allowance
- The home language of the pupil.

Schools that receive this support, have to develop a policy tailored to the needs of the own pupils population, and formulate concrete, measurable and realistic objectives. At least two of the following themes have to be included:

- Prevention and remediation of gaps in development and learning
- Dutch language proficiency
- Guidance
- Socio-emotional development
- Pupils' en parents' participation
- Dealing with diversity.

### **3.9 Support in the centers for pupils' guidance**

The centers for pupils' guidance (CLB) who guide schools with a lot of pupils whose mother does not hold a diploma of secondary education or/and who don't speak Dutch at home, receive extra support.

### **3.10 Plans for taking into account pupils characteristics in the calculation of support for secondary education.**

On the mid-long term, the Flemish Authorities want to integrate the extra support for schools with a lot of children from a disadvantaged background in the regular support. The masterplan for the reform of secondary education, on which the Flemish Government agreed in June 2013, foresees this integration.<sup>4</sup>

### **3.11 Education for newcomers speaking another language**

Pupils between the age of 5 and before 18, who just arrived in Belgium and who enter the Flemish Dutch speaking education system without any knowledge of the Dutch language, can go to reception classes. The objective of those reception classes is that the pupils learn Dutch as quickly as possible and to integrate them in the Dutch speaking education. In primary education, the newly arrived migrant pupils are together with the other pupils in the same class, and they are taught separately part of the time. In secondary education newly arrived migrant pupils receive in principle a Dutch language bath during one year, in order to make the transition to regular education.

### **3.12 Other supportive measures for schools**

Schools with a diverse pupils' population can also ask guidance from the overarching organizations of education providers. The attainment targets offer schools the possibilities to work, in their curricula, with a diverse pupils' population. The government supports the development of scientific expertise for a better support of schools with a very diverse pupils' population and for a better support for pupils meeting the indicators related to a higher risk at educational gaps.

## **4 Problems with the implementation of policy measures that support pupils with a migrant background.**

### **4.1 The gap between the best and the worst performing pupils**

According to the PISA results, the Flemish Community succeeds in delivering pupils from 'top level'. Nevertheless, in spite of many policy measures, the gap between the best and the worst performing pupils in Flanders remains high.

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<sup>4</sup> Flemish Government (2013). [Masterplan hervorming secundair onderwijs](#) p. 27.

Moreover, this gap is still determined to a large extent by the socio-economic background of the pupils. Belgium, and consequently also Flanders, belongs to the group of countries that show very important differences in performance of pupils from a migrant background and other pupils.<sup>5</sup> In Flanders, the differences in scores of pupils from a migrant background of the second generation and scores of other pupils can be explained largely – or even almost completely – by the socio-economic situation of the parents and the language spoken at home.<sup>6</sup> The extent to which the socio-economic situation of the parents and the home language explains educational disadvantage is different from school to school.

## 4.2 Segregation

The Flemish education system is, in the facts, strongly segregated. With the policy of the right to enrolment the Flemish governments tries to counter this evolution. This appears to be an important challenge in the context of the freedom of school choice for the parents and their diverse strategies. This segregation takes place mostly based on the social class to which the parents belong. Next to this phenomenon, there is increasing etnical segregation based on the national origin of the parents. This segregation is largely the result of a process whereby children of parents with a high socio-economic status leave certain schools in certain city neighbourhoods. Etnical segregation coincides for an important part with socio-economic segregation, especially in the cities.

Residential segregation is at the basis of socio-etnical segregation in the schools in the neighbourhood, but it is above all other things the quasi-marketisation of the Flemish education that causes segregation. All the parents want to register their children in the schools with the best reputation. This process of choosing can cause the so-called ‘white flight’: autochtonous parents consider the etnical composition of the school population as a proxi for quality, or simply prefer segregated education. If the percentage of pupils with a migrant background exceeds the tolerance limit, they send their child to another school. At the same time, parents with a migrant background and a high socio-economic status, will be avoiding these schools. On the other hand schools compete with each other in order to attract the maximum of advantaged pupils.<sup>7</sup>

## 4.3 Processes of study and school choice in secondary education

In secondary education, this segregation is related to the study offer. We see for instance an important overrepresentation of pupils with a migrant background in vocational education. This has to do with processes of study choice, guidance by teachers, preconceptions of the parents on the prestige of the profession, and the role of gender.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Jacobs, D. (2012). [\*Telt elk talent? De positie van kinderen met een migratie-achtergrond in de Belgische scholen\*](#). Itinera Institute, p. 1.

<sup>6</sup> Jacobs D. (2012). [\*Telt elk talent? De positie van kinderen met een migratie-achtergrond in de Belgische scholen\*](#). Itinera Institute, p. 12.

<sup>7</sup> Poesen-Vandeputte M., Nicaise I. (red., 2012). [\*Tien jaar GOK-decreet. Balans van het evaluatieonderzoek van het gelijke onderwijskansenbeleid Vlaanderen\*](#). Leuven: Steunpunt Studie- en Schoolloopbanen, 2013, rapport SSL/2012.03/5.1, p. 17.

<sup>8</sup> Poesen-Vandeputte M., Nicaise I. (red., 2012). [\*Tien jaar GOK-decreet. Balans van het evaluatieonderzoek van het gelijke onderwijskansenbeleid Vlaanderen\*](#). Leuven: Steunpunt Studie- en Schoolloopbanen, 2013, rapport SSL/2012.03/5.1, p. 17.



Moreover, in secondary education, pupils and parents make - or have to make - irreversible choices very early in the school career, when the pupils are at the age of 12 years. Theoretically, the first degree of the secondary education is common, and pupils and parents only choose a study option after the first degree, when the pupils are 14 years old.<sup>9</sup> In reality however, it appears that parents and pupils make their choice when the pupil is 12 years old, at the transition from primary to secondary education, taking into account the structure of the second degree, and that their socio-economic background has major impact on this choice.<sup>10</sup>

Pupils who don't have a certificate of primary education have access to 1A only in very exceptional cases. They almost automatically go to 1B. When we look at the composition of 1B, it appears that pupils in 1B more often don't speak Dutch with other members of the family. They more often have a migrant background, and receive more often a school allowance. Almost all pupils that enter secondary education in 1B go to vocational education and training later on.<sup>11</sup> This contributes, amongst other things, to the overrepresentation of pupils with a migrant background in vocational education.

Same situation at the beginning of the second degree: the choice of a study option remains largely determined by the socio-economic status of the parents. This leads to a strongly segregated secondary education with an overrepresentation of pupils with a migrant background in the B-stream of the first degree and in the second degree of vocational education, which not always prepares well for the labour market.

Thus, in Flanders, social background still decides on the study choice and the study results. This leads to an important inequality in the benefits that pupils from different socio-economic backgrounds take from education. This inequality is not only the consequence of the on average lower achievement of pupils from parents with a low socio-economic background than the achievement of pupils from parents with a high socio-economic status, but also of the different choices they make at pivotal moments.<sup>12</sup>

Pupils in less academically oriented study options more often suffer from negative wellbeing, underperformance, grade repetition and early school leaving.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Die onderwijsvormen zijn: algemeen secundair onderwijs, beroepsonderwijs, kunstonderwijs en technische onderwijs

<sup>10</sup> Boone S., Van Houtte M. (2011). [\*Sociale ongelijkheid bij de overgang van basis- naar secundair onderwijs: een onderzoek naar de oriënteringspraktijk\*](#), brochure gebaseerd op resultaten OBPWO-project 07.03 in opdracht van Vlaamse minister van Onderwijs, Universiteit Gent.

<sup>11</sup> Janssen R., e.a. (2006). [\*Beginsituatie van leerlingen in het eerste jaar B van het secundair onderwijs\*](#), OBPWO in opdracht van de Vlaamse minister van Werk, Onderwijs en Vorming, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Universiteit Antwerpen, p. 12 env., [www.ond.vlaanderen.be/dvo](http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/dvo) en [www.ond.vlaanderen.be/obpwo](http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/obpwo).

<sup>12</sup> Boone S., Van Houtte M. (2011). [\*Sociale ongelijkheid bij de overgang van basis- naar secundair onderwijs: een onderzoek naar de oriënteringspraktijk\*](#), brochure gebaseerd op resultaten OBPWO-project 07.03 in opdracht van Vlaamse minister van Onderwijs, Universiteit Gent, p. 10.

<sup>13</sup> Boone S., Van Houtte M. (2011). [\*Sociale ongelijkheid bij de overgang van basis- naar secundair onderwijs: een onderzoek naar de oriënteringspraktijk\*](#), brochure gebaseerd op resultaten OBPWO-project 07.03 in opdracht van Vlaamse minister van Onderwijs, Universiteit Gent, p. 5.

## 4.4 Dealing with diversity

As a consequence of the educational priority policy and, later on, the equal opportunities policy, a lot of schools and teachers have made considerable progress: dealing with diversity has become common in more and more schools.

However, research shows<sup>14</sup> that there are still a lot of taboos related to dealing with diversity and with multilingualism. Schools have to counter the trend in society to consider, for pupils with a migrant background, the home language as a barrier for school success. When pupils from a migrant background do not succeed in education, the school staff always refers to a limited knowledge of the Dutch language and to the home situation as the most important causes. The role that schools can play in achieving educational success is less stressed.

The Flemish education still suffers with incorporating diversity at the heart of its policy. A lot of schools react in a positive way to a diversity that they consider to be evident, but there is still a long way to go.

The curriculum still does not take the existing diversity enough into account. Pupils only rarely see teachers that share their migrant background. Schools often punish pupils when they speak their home language at school. In education, there is only little space for the development of the home language, culture and identity.

In schools with a lot of pupils from a migrant background and with a lot of disadvantaged pupils, attracting and keeping good teachers is becoming a challenge. The composition of the school population and the presence – or the absence – of quality staff have proven to be two interrelated factors. In schools with a lot of pupils with a migrant background it is more difficult to keep up the level of education because there are a lot of changes in the staff, and the school not always has – or is able to keep – the right competences to teach well certain subjects.<sup>15</sup>

## 4.5 Functioning of the consultation platforms

The local consultation platforms (LOP's) have contributed to the insight that equality of opportunities in education only can be realized in a local dynamism of deliberation and cooperation between schools and other stakeholders. However, not all the LOP's work in an effective way towards the realization of their assignment. Decisions only have effect if the common will to execute them is present.

The implementation of the right to enrolment is high on the agenda of more and more LOP's. The right to enrolment is very complex. This involves the need for professionalization of all the members of the LOP.

There is an overlap between the assignments of the LOP's and the educational policy of the communities. This explains why it is difficult to bring the right subjects to the according

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<sup>14</sup> Clycq, N. (coörd.) (2012). [Oprit 14, naar een schooltraject zonder snelheidsbeperkingen](#).

<sup>15</sup> Jacobs, D. (2012). [Telt elk talent? De positie van kinderen met een migratie-achtergrond in de Belgische scholen](#). Itinera Institute, p. 14.

deliberation tables. Local partners tend to loose their engagement because of the pressure to participate at different deliberation tables.

## 5 Early school leaving and pupils with a migrant background

### 5.1 Facts and figures

A youngster is called an early school leaver if he does not have a diploma of secondary education, a certificate of the sixth year of full time mainstream vocational education, a certificate of special education, a certificate of part time vocational education or a certificate of a successful apprenticeship.<sup>16</sup>

There are also important geographical differences in the risk for early school leaving. The graph below illustrates this statement by giving the indicators for communities with more than one thousand early school leavers from schools on their territory in 2010. Next to the Brussels Capital Region, from the viewpoint of the Flemish education, these are exactly the 13 'centrum cities' from the Flemish Region.

In 2010, 26% of the school leavers in Antwerp were unqualified, the highest percentage of the 14 cities in the graph. Bruges, with 13%, has an indicator close to the Flemish average. The 13 Flemish 'centrum cities' and Brussels Capital Region together have 45,3% of the Flemish school leavers, but 60,8% of the early school leavers, when we look at the pupils that go to school on their territory. As far as the inhabitants are concerned, the percentages are 24,5 % of school leavers and 37,1 % of early school leavers. Thus, the risk to early school leaving is higher in the centrum cities than in Flanders.

*Early school leavers from the Flemish education in the centrum cities of the Flemish Region and in Brussels Capital Region in 2010.*<sup>17</sup>

Location	Location of the school				Location of the home of the pupils			
	Sch.	Indicator			Sch.	Indicator		
		Boys + Girls	B	G		Boys + Girls	B	G
Aalst	1671	17%	20%	14%	849	16%	17%	14%
Antwerpen	6289	26%	30%	21%	5105	28%	33%	23%
BHG	2159	23%	27%	19%	1292	27%	30%	24%
Brugge	3486	13%	16%	9%	1360	14%	18%	11%

<sup>16</sup> Van Landeghem G. De Fraine B., Gielen S., Van Damme J. (2013). [Vroege schoolverlaters in Vlaanderen in 2010. Indeling volgens locatie, opleidingsniveau van de moeder en moedertaal](#). Leuven: Steunpunt SSL, rapport nr SSL8/2013.05/1.2.0, p.1.

<sup>17</sup> Van Landeghem G. De Fraine B., Gielen S., Van Damme J. (2013). [Vroege schoolverlaters in Vlaanderen in 2010. Indeling volgens locatie, opleidingsniveau van de moeder en moedertaal](#). Leuven: Steunpunt SSL, rapport nr SSL8/2013.05/1.2.0, p ix.

Genk	1241	23%	30%	15%	818	19%	24%	14%
Gent	4506	19%	23%	15%	2539	22%	26%	18%
Hasselt	2094	16%	18%	14%	767	14%	16%	11%
Kortrijk	2357	16%	18%	15%	963	16%	19%	12%
Leuven	2116	14%	17%	11%	802	16%	17%	15%
Mechelen	1831	20%	25%	15%	966	19%	23%	15%
Oostende	1131	17%	22%	13%	687	19%	23%	15%
Roeselare	1459	10%	12%	8%	768	11%	14%	7%
Sint-Niklaas	1922	17%	25%	11%	880	16%	21%	10%
Turnhout	1534	16%	17%	14%	474	18%	20%	16%
Flemish Education as a whole	74598	13,9%	16,6%	11,0%	74598	13,9%	16,6%	11,0%

Sch. = number of school leavers in 2010; Boys + Girls, Boys, Girls = percentage of early school leavers in the indicated category. The city is viewed from two different viewpoints: the place where school leavers go to school and the place where school leavers live.

The scale of the cities and communities (or maybe the bigger agglomerations, this is the subject of further research) determines for an important part the risk on early school leaving. Further analysis shows that the risk is locally unequally divided amongst subgroups defined by the level of educational attainment of the mother of the pupil or by the mother language.

In its administration, the Flemish authorities use two indicators that are related to the extent of early school leaving for pupils with a migrant background: the educational attainment of the mother and whether the home language of the pupil is Dutch or not. Recent research on early school leaving shows that early school leavers are mostly youngsters that don't speak Dutch at home, that have a mother with low educational attainment, and that live in a city. In order to illustrate this, we mention some important findings. 4,5% of the Dutch speaking female school leavers with a mother with high educational attainment<sup>18</sup> in 2010 were early school leavers, and 8% of the Dutch speaking male school leavers with a mother with high educational attainment were early school leavers. For the boys speaking another language and with a mother with low educational attainment, the percentage is 40,6%. For a non-Dutch speaking girl with a mother with low educational attainment, the percentage is 29,6%.<sup>19</sup>

In the Flemish Community, the percentage of early school leavers has decreased from 2008 until 2010. This decrease is the consequence of the financial and economic crisis: more pupils decide to remain in education instead of leaving school early.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Van Landeghem G. De Fraine B., Gielen S., Van Damme J. (2013). [Vroege schoolverlaters in Vlaanderen in 2010. Indeling volgens locatie, opleidingsniveau van de moeder en moedertaal](#). Leuven: Steunpunt SSL, rapport nr SSL8/2013.05/1.2.0, p. viii.

<sup>19</sup> Van Landeghem G. De Fraine B., Gielen S., Van Damme J. (2013). [Vroege schoolverlaters in Vlaanderen in 2010. Indeling volgens locatie, opleidingsniveau van de moeder en moedertaal](#). Leuven: Steunpunt SSL, rapport nr SSL8/2013.05/1.2.0, p 23.

<sup>20</sup> Van Landeghem G. De Fraine B., Gielen S., Van Damme J. (2013). [Vroege schoolverlaters in Vlaanderen in 2010. Indeling volgens locatie, opleidingsniveau van de moeder en moedertaal](#). Leuven: Steunpunt SSL, rapport nr SSL8/2013.05/1.2.0, p 17 en 18.

## 5.2 Challenges

Flanders needs the talents and the capacities of all, as well in the labour market as in the larger societal field. If youngsters leave education without sufficient qualifications, this means a waste of their efforts and of the investments made by society and by their families. Moreover, those youngsters remain vulnerable for the rest of their lives.

The most important challenge is visible in the figures. If the Flemish Community wants to reduce early school leaving, first of all measures have to be taken that enhance the involvement of youngsters in centrum cities, who don't speak Dutch at home and who have a mother with low educational achievement.

Alternative opportunities are needed for the big group of early school leavers: they have to have the opportunity to obtain a qualification, also in a context that is not related to school.

## 5.3 Policy

In its recommendation on an active qualification policy<sup>21</sup>, the Flemish Education Council asks the Flemish Government for a much more active policy in order to reduce early school leaving. The government and the social partners recognized this, amongst other things, in Pact 2020.

At this point, Flanders is very ambitious. The EU asks the Member States to reduce early school leaving to less than 10%, but in Pact 2020 and in 'Vlaanderen in actie', the Flemish Government advanced the ambitious target to reduce the number of school leavers to one half by 2020.

Early school leaving already receives a lot of policy attention, but according to the Flemish Education Council, this happens without coordination. In a lot of policy measures, early school leaving is present, but only implicitly. The Flemish Education Council pleads for a more active policy and for a concrete action plan with a global and overarching vision. This action plan has to map the push- and pull factors and foresee action at an early stage.

In its recommendation, the Flemish Education Council formulates some proposals for action. The emphasis has to be on prevention: prevent that youngsters leave school without qualification. Youngsters have to have the opportunities, especially during adolescence, to make mistakes and to restart immediately. School teams have to recognize early warnings and elaborate diverse care and guidance models. The second degree of secondary education is crucial.

If prevention fails, remediation and intervention have to be possible. Remediation offers chances to help early school leavers to go back to education. The distinction between classical pupils at risk and those who leave education just before obtaining a qualification is important. The Flemish Education Council states that the latter have the right to a kind of qualification that demonstrates the competences they achieved, so that they can validate them later on under the form of earlier acquired competences. For the difficult category of pupils at risk, the Flemish

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<sup>21</sup> Vlaamse Onderwijsraad, Algemene Raad. [Advies over een actief kwalificerend beleid](#), 26 januari 2012.

Education Council asks for the anchoring of the 'time out' projects, that support difficult pupils temporarily and guide them to move towards a regular educational pathway.

In the mean time, the Flemish Government has agreed on such an action plan, together with all the stakeholders in education (see point 6.1).

## **6 List of good practices in education to pupils with a migrant background**

This is a list of some good practices in Flemish education. This list is not exhaustive.

### **6.1 Policy: the action plan on early school leaving**

In 2013, the Flemish Government has elaborated, together with all the stakeholders, an action plan on early school leaving. This action plan supports the ambitious objective to reduce the number of early school leavers of 8,6% in 2008 <sup>22</sup> to 4,3% in 2020. The action plan foresees a preventive approach aimed at the organization of quality education, interventions that start at the moment when a youngster is at risk of leaving compulsory education, compensatory actions for youngsters that leave education without qualifications and measures in the field of monitoring, identification and coordination of policy.

In order to prevent early school leaving, the government will, amongst other things, provide the schools with the information they need in order to identify themselves the pupils at risk of early school leaving. A dynamic website by and for schools will be used, amongst other things, to spread good practices that can inspire schools to start themselves the struggle against early school leaving, and to make them reflect on their educational processes. The pedagogical guidance services of the overarching organizations of education providers, the Flemish Employment Service and other local organizations and governments will support the schools.

The action plan early school leaving also foresees interventions at the moment where a pupil is at risk of leaving compulsory education early. The government will collect good practices and spread (peer) coaching.

The plan also contains compensatory actions for youngsters who have left education early. Adult education, Syntra, companies and other enterprises will further elaborate and facilitate their cooperation in the field of qualifying professional trajectories.

In order to be able to monitor, analyze, identify and coordinate the measures in the action plan, the knowledge center of the department Education and Training will take up early school leaving as an indicator in its data warehouse of relevant policy indicators. Monitoring early school leaving at school level will be integrated in a package with other relevant data, which will be offered to the schools by the department of Education and Training.

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<sup>22</sup> volgens de EAK-indicator: [Enquête naar arbeidskrachten van de FOD economie](#).

## 6.2 Concept: community schools ('Brede school')

A community school is a cooperation between different sectors, working together towards a broad learning and living environment, with the objective to ensure maximum development opportunities for all children and youngsters. A community school has an eye for diversity, for cooperation and for participation. Concrete functioning depends on the local context.<sup>23</sup>

A community school offers, in cooperation with other partners, a broad range of experiences in different domains. Children don't only learn in a formal setting at school, but also in an informal setting: in the sports club, in cultural initiatives, in youth work, in the neighbourhood, from friends and family. Community schools stimulate these learning experiences for all their pupils. They link these experiences and the gained competences by enhancing the interaction between different domains.

Community schools deal with inequality by broadening the scope of all children and youngsters. Everyone contributes to a rich exchange and helps to build bridges en close gaps.

The development of community schools in Flanders is quite recent. Between 2006 and 2009, the Flemish Minister of Education and Training has subsidized 17 pilot projects in Flanders and in Brussels. These projects have demonstrated that local authorities can play an important role. They know best the needs of the children and of the youngsters in their community. Today, local authorities work in different ways on the support of community schools. Most of the time, they start with financial support, training and coordination; their work is facilitated by the means for accompanying education policy that they receive from the Flemish Authorities.

## 6.3 Concept: tutoring

Even if a school works very well, there remains a gap between the school and the home. It is difficult to bridge this gap, in spite of all the efforts. In order to try to bridge this gap, some schools choose to reinforce their actions in the framework of the equal education policy by initiating or participating at a tutoring initiative by a university or a high school. In these tutoring initiatives, students from universities or high schools act as tutors of pupils in primary or secondary education. They support the pupils in a structured way during their learning process. Some students choose to engage in a tutoring initiative, not directly related to the study they are doing. For other students, such as those in teacher education or in social work, participating in a tutoring initiative is part of their study programme. Tutoring can take place at home or in the school.

The tutoring process provides extra support to pupils during their learning process.

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<sup>23</sup> Joos, A., Ernalsteen, V. en Engels, M. (2010). [\*Wat is en brede school? Of: Referentiekader Brede School, Steunpunt Diversiteit en Leren\*](#), p. 2.

## **6.4 Concept: time out**

In order to avoid drop out and to support pupils that cause important difficulties at schools or who are completely demotivated, the Flemish Community subsidizes time out projects. These projects support pupils for a shorter or longer period out of the school and guide them to go back to the regular learning pathway later on.

During the time out, the youngsters as well as the school are given a period of rest. The focus is on the motivation to go to school. The school is given the space to take a break and to work with the pupil afterwards.

After the time out, the pupil is followed. This follow up is discussed with the youngster, his/her parents, the school and the guidance services during a closing round table.

This methodology has been implemented by schools and organizations in Flanders for some years now, at first as a pilot project by four organizations. From the school year 2006-2007, 15 organizations in Flanders offer short and/or long term time out for schools and receive subsidies by the department of Education and Training of the Flemish Community. Long term projects are co-financed by the department of Well-being, Health and Families.

The guidance services or, for short term projects, the school, registers the youngster at the organization as an applicant for a time out. The project organizes a round table with all parties involved (pupil, parents, teachers, guidance services,...) in order to discuss whether time out can be useful. During the project, the organization can rely on different methodologies. Sometimes, they include individual activities or methodologies to explore the personality. Sometimes there are group activities, such as workshops or adventure activities.

## **6.5 Policy: Project innovation and excellence in primary education**

The Project Innovation and Excellence in Primary Education (PIEO) is a multi-annual project commissioned by the Flemish minister of Education. During 5 years, 8 coaches guide intensively 13 primary schools with a very big amount of pupils with a migrant background in Antwerp, Brussels, Ghent and the Limburg mining region. The objective of this project is to maximize the learning performances, the learning gains and the wellbeing of the pupils in those schools. The school has to be the center and the owner of the innovation process; that's why the school shapes its own innovation project. The schools are intensively guided by the coaches during this process.

A second objective of this project is the transfer of the expertise and insights to other schools and to the whole educational field. This is realized, amongst other things, by involving as much as possible the guidance services of the umbrella organizations of education providers in Flanders.

In the school year 2013 – 2014, the emphasis is on the elaboration of a learning team in every school. In order to innovate the learning process in a sustainable way, the school leaders and the middle management offer structural possibilities for the school team to learn from each other. Every school will elaborate, based on its starting analysis made the year before, an action plan explaining the choices made. The realization of those action plans is regularly evaluated. In a later stage the PIOE-team, that follows closely all the schools at project level, will implement what works in other schools.



A scientific team from the university of Ghent is following the project. They analyze which are the effects of the innovation trajectories on the output variabels at the level of the pupil, the teacher, the school. They evaluate and monitor the evolution of the performances of the pupils and of the specific innovations.

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