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Case study report: Belgium (Flanders)

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Introduction

In this case study we summarize important literature and interesting sources on ECEC in Flanders. These sources were discussed with different experts and practitioners during focus groups. *The results of these focus groups are presented in italic.*

The first introductory part of this case study presents brief context information on the socio-economic structure of Belgium and Flanders and the key features of the Flemish educational system (see table below).

Belgium is a federal state with 3 communities (Flemish, French, German Community) and 3 regions (Flemish, Walloon, Brussels capital) next to the federal level. Policy areas such as family services, childcare services, education, youth work and welfare are regulated at the community level. In this case study we focus on the Flemish community.

There is a split system for ECEC: Childcare facilities for 0-3 are under the responsibility of the Department of Welfare with Kind en Gezin (Child and Family) as a governmental organisation that is responsible for the quality policy. Pre-primary education (kleuterschool 2,5-6) is under the responsibility of the Department of Education and is integrated in the system of elementary education (2,5-12).

Country background information	Data on Belgium
Population: Number of inhabitants Fertility rate Number of children population (preschool children < 6) Number of young people under 18 Share of immigrants	11,161,642 (Belgium demo_pjan, Eurostat 2013) 1,84 (Belgium) 784,378 (demo_pjan, Eurostat 2013) ²⁹ 2,275,009 (demo_pjan, Eurostat 2013) ³⁰ 15.31% (tps00178, Eurostat 2012)
Labour force participation of women (15 years and over) with young children (at least one children younger than 6 years)	66.8% (lfst_hheredch, Eurostat 2012) Unemployment rate Belgium 2007 male 6.7% - female 8.5% 2012 male 7.7% - female 7.4% http://eurogender.eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/pe493037_en.pdf
Length and payment of maternity and parental leave	Maternity leave is 15 weeks in total. It can start as soon as 6 weeks before the expected delivery date (with one obligatory week to be taken before the expected birth date) and continues for a minimum of 9 weeks up to 14 weeks afterwards, depending how much has been taken before the birth. Employees in the private sector are entitled to 82% of their previous earnings during the first 4 weeks and 75% after that (at most 86 EUR per day). Statutory public sector employees continue to receive full wages. Fathers are entitled to 10 days paternity leave during the month after the child's birth; 3 days must be taken directly following birth and for these 3 days they also receive full compensation.

²⁹ Counted by PPMI team based on Eurostat data.

³⁰ Counted by PPMI team based on Eurostat data.

Country background information	Data on Belgium
	<p>For the remaining 7 days they are granted 82% of earnings (at most 103.72 EUR per day). Up to the child's sixth birthday, each parent is entitled to 3 months <u>parental leave</u> with a payment of 756.19 EUR before tax monthly (2012). The leave period can be taken full-time (three months), part-time (6 months) or for one day per week over a period of 15 months. Parents in the Flemish Community receive an additional payment of 160 EUR per month. In 2007, 20% of fathers made use of the parental leave opportunities. All women employees are entitled to leave with earnings-related benefit (Merla & Deven, 2012).</p> <p>Additionally, a comparatively generous <u>child benefit</u> per month of 90.28 EUR for the first child, 167.05 EUR for the second child and 249.41 EUR for the third child and for each of the following children is granted to all parents, even those who have not paid social insurance contributions (MISSOC, 2013). This support for parents with children may explain why the poverty rate and the risk of poverty for children are below OECD/EU average (Cantillion, Marx, 2008):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Child poverty rate: 11.3% for Belgium and 12.6% on average for OECD countries; ▪ Risk of poverty rate: 21% for Belgium and 24.3% on average for EU countries <p>http://eurogender.eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/pe493037_en.pdf.</p>
Social expenditure as % of GDP Child poverty rate: Total (under 18 years old) For children less than 6 years old	30.1% of GDP (spr_exp_sum, Eurostat 2010)30.4.2011 Child poverty rate 11.3% (Belgium) Risk of poverty rate 21% (Belgium) http://eurogender.eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/pe493037_en.pdf
Education expenditure as % of GDP: Total ISCED 0 ISCED 1 ISCED 2-4	6.57% of GDP (educ_figdp, Eurostat 2010) 0.78% of GDP (educ_figdp, Eurostat 2010) 1.54% of GDP (educ_figdp, Eurostat 2010) 2.74% of GDP (educ_figdp, Eurostat 2010)
Employment rate of people with low qualifications Early leavers from education and training by sex and employment status (employed early school leavers, age range 18-24)	ISCED 0-2: 11.6% (lfsa_ergaed, Eurostat 2012) 5.3% (edat_lfse_14, Eurostat 2012)

Education system design	Data
Access to formal education regardless of legal status	<p>Pupils from 2.5 can enrol in pre-primary education on 7 different dates. For pupils who are 3 years old, enrolment is possible throughout the year. There are no restrictions in access to education regarding the legal status: children and teenagers without a legal address in Belgium are also subject to compulsory education.</p> <p>All formal education is <u>free of charge</u> - also pre-primary education (2.5-6) even though it is not compulsory. However, schools are allowed to charge for learning materials such as books and for extra-curricular activities such as excursions. In elementary education (2.5-12), there is a strict legal ceiling, the so-called maximum bill of what schools are allowed to charge (see below). In secondary schools (12-18), there is no maximum bill, but schools should communicate to parents and students the amount expected from families. Families who have difficulties in bearing the additional costs can apply for financial support (student grants) that is offered to citizens of the European Economic Area or permanent residence permit holders (asylum seekers should have an admissible status).³¹ This student grant (schooltoelage) can be asked by parents starting from pre-primary education.</p>
Catchment area requirement	<p>There is <u>no catchment area</u> requirement: the Constitution guarantees the parents' freedom to choose a school (the so called '<u>freedom of education</u>'). However, in some schools places are limited, especially in the bigger cities, so some parents have to send their children to a school of their second or third choice.</p> <p>In elementary education (2.5-12) there are no specific schools or classes for NAMS (newly arrived asylum children). In secondary schools (12-18), there are specific schools for NAMS. Currently there are 52 secondary schools providing NAM-education.³² So, in secondary education NAMS receive one year of 'onthaalonderwijs - OKAN' mostly focusing on learning the Dutch language. After 1 year they go to 'regular' secondary education. Whereas in primary education, NAMS do not go to separate schools or classes, they directly go to the 'regular' primary schools.</p>
Age of first ability tracking	<p>Compulsory education starts at September 1st in the year the pupil becomes 6 years old. But primary education can start at the age of 5, 6 or 7 upon the decision of the parents that receive a non-binding recommendation from the school and the Centre for Pupil Guidance (CLB – Centrum voor Leerlingenbegeleiding). From the school year 2009–2010 onwards, children entering primary education at the usual age of 6 are required to have effectively attended pre-primary education in the Dutch language system during at least 220 half days in the previous school year; for pupils of 5 years it is 185 half days. Children who do not fulfil this requirement, are (with specific exceptions) subject to a Dutch language test. Pupils from 7 years or older can attend primary school without proving their attendance.</p> <p>Compulsory education ends at the 18th birthday or on June 30 of the calendar year in which the youngster reaches the age of 18 or</p>

³¹ http://ec.europa.eu/education/more-information/doc/migrants/belgium_en.pdf.

³² [http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/onderwijsaanbod/lijst.asp?studie=1081&hs=311&vorm=.](http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/onderwijsaanbod/lijst.asp?studie=1081&hs=311&vorm=)

Education system design	Data
	<p>when younger pupils obtain a diploma of secondary education before the age of 18. From the age of 15 or 16 some pupils can choose to combine learning and working (cfr. part-time compulsory education; but they are still obliged to attend secondary education).</p> <p>The <u>first stage of secondary education</u> (starting at the age of 12) follows a common core curriculum, but the options on offer already reflect the differentiation into tracks that happens in the second stage of secondary education. Students who did not obtain a certificate of primary education within a time span of 7 years (either because they failed more than one year, or because they were referred to special (primary) schools), are referred to the so-called B track, which actually transfers into vocational options from the second year onwards (40 to 50% of all immigrant children are in this situation).</p> <p>In the <u>second and third stage of secondary education</u> there are 4 tracks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ general secondary education (ASO; potentially leading to higher / university education); ▪ technical secondary education (TSO); ▪ vocational secondary education (BSO); ▪ artistic secondary education (KSO). <p>Around 60% of migrant students end up in the vocational track (compared to 25% of the native students). A disproportionate number of immigrant children are also put into special education.³³</p> <p>Currently, the Ministry of education is rethinking / reforming the structure of secondary education.</p>
(De-) centralisation of the education system	<p>De-centralised system.</p> <p>In Belgium, the communities (Flemish, French and German speaking) are in charge of education policy. Except for 3 aspects: the federal authorities remain in charge of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the start and the end of compulsory education; ▪ establishing the minimum conditions for obtaining a diploma; ▪ determining education staff pensions. <p>In the Flemish community, schools enjoy a high degree of <u>autonomy</u>, which is part of the Belgian Constitution, "Freedom of education". This "Freedom of education" gives the right to any natural or legal person to start a school. This "freedom of organisation" also allows each school to develop its own educational policies, including its own pedagogical plan, teaching methods, curriculum and timetables, as well as to appoint its own staff. Although, schools receiving public funding are required to operate within a regulatory framework, they still enjoy "considerable autonomy".³⁴</p> <p>In Flanders, there are 1 500 <u>governing bodies or school boards</u> (inrichtende machten) providing recognised education in the Flemish Community. They can be responsible for one or more</p>

³³ http://ec.europa.eu/education/more-information/doc/migrants/belgium_en.pdf.

³⁴ Ministry of Education and Training and the University of Antwerp, 2010 in <http://www.oecd.org/edu/school/49177679.pdf>.

Education system design	Data
	<p>schools. These school boards are distributed over 3 “<u>educational networks</u>” and may belong to an “<u>umbrella organisation</u>”, that is, a representative association of school boards that acts as a partner for schools in policy discussions with the Flemish government (Vlaamse overheid, 2008). The umbrella organisations often take over some of the responsibilities of governing bodies. For example, they draw up their own curriculum and timetables. This means that the governing bodies concerned surrender some of their autonomy to the networks.³⁵</p> <p>The 3 educational networks are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ GO! education of the Flemish Community is publicly run education organised by the public body called ‘het GO! onderwijs van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap’ acting under the authority of the Flemish Community. Under the constitution, this GO! education is required to be neutral. The religious, philosophical or ideological convictions of parents and pupils must be respected. The Flemish Community Education network includes 16% of students in primary and secondary education; ▪ Publicly funded, publicly run education (OGO) comprises municipal education (organised by local authorities) as well as provincial education (organised by provincial authorities). The governing bodies of this education network are united in two umbrella organisations: the ‘Onderwijssecretariaat van de Steden en gemeenten van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap’ (OVSG - Educational Secretariat of the Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities), and the ‘Provinciaal Onderwijs Vlaanderen’ (POV – Flemish Provincial Education). The Publicly funded, publicly managed education network (OGO), includes 22% of students in primary education and 8% in secondary education; ▪ The publicly funded, privately run schools (VGO) deliver education organised by a private person or private organisation. The governing body is often a non-profit-making organisation (vzw). The Publicly funded, privately managed education network (VGO), includes 60% of students in primary education and 75% in secondary education. Privately run education mainly consists of catholic schools. They are associated in the umbrella body called ‘Vlaams Secretariaat van het Katholiek Onderwijs’ (VSKO - Flemish Secretariat for Catholic Education). Furthermore, there are also protestant, Jewish, orthodox, Islamic, ... schools. In addition to these denominational schools, there are also schools, which have no affiliation with a particular religion. Examples of such schools are Freinet schools, Montessori schools or Steiner schools, which adopt particular educational methods and are also known as ‘method schools’. <p>Each umbrella organisation has its own Pedagogical Advisory Service (PBD, Pedagogische begeleidingsdienst). These offer</p>

³⁵ <http://www.flanders.be/en/publications/detail/education-in-flanders-a-broad-view-of-the-flemish-educational-landscape2008>; <http://www.oecd.org/edu/school/49177679.pdf>.

Education system design	Data
	<p>educational and methodological support to schools.</p> <p>Next to the educational networks, schools can also join a <u>school community</u> (scholengemeenschap) on a voluntary basis. These school communities consist of a group of schools in a similar geographical area, which could mean that schools from different educational networks could belong to the same school community. The Ministry of Education and Training provides incentives for schools to join a school community by offering extra resources to the school community (i.e. extra teaching time for primary and secondary schools).³⁶</p>

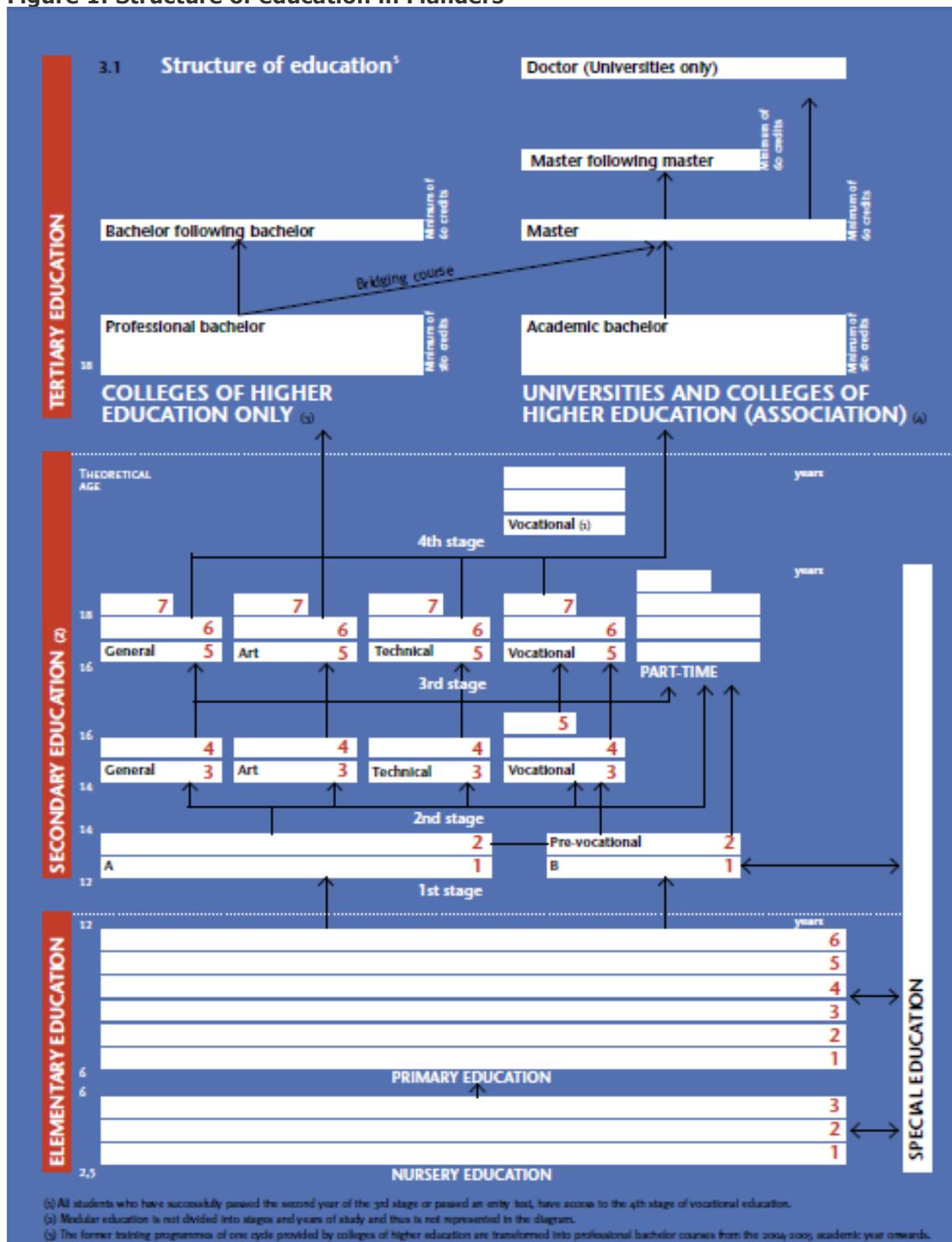
Table 1.1 Promoting collaboration among schools

	Schools belonging to a school community		Schools not associated with a school community	
Primary mainstream education	2290	98.7%	30	1.3%
Primary special education	175	88.8%	22	11.1%
Secondary mainstream education	950	98.0%	19	2.0%
Secondary special education	64	57.7%	47	42.3%
Total schools	3479	96.7%	118	3.3%

Note: Data for primary schools are from 2009; data for secondary schools are from 2010.

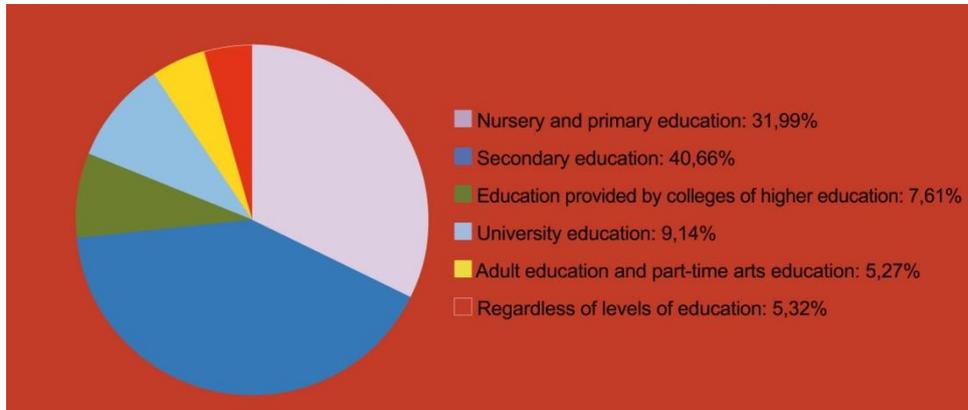
³⁶ <http://www.oecd.org/edu/school/49177679.pdf>.

Figure 1: Structure of education in Flanders ³⁷



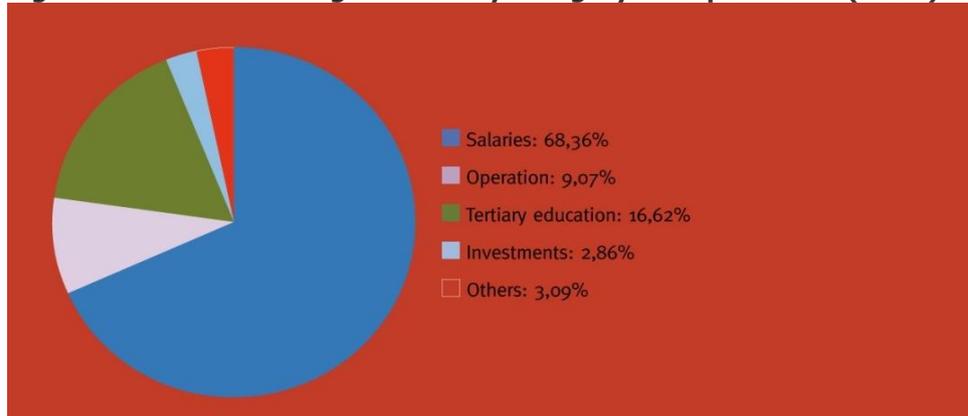
³⁷ www.ond.vlaanderen.be/english/ed-in_Flanders-EN.ppt.

Figure 2: Education budget per level of education (2007)



Source: www.ond.vlaanderen.be/english/ed-in_Flanders-EN.ppt.

Figure 3: Education budget for every category of expenditure (2007)



Source: www.ond.vlaanderen.be/english/ed-in_Flanders-EN.ppt.

Inputs and Process

This chapter presents the ECEC arrangements in Flanders in relation to four quality elements (i.e. governance, structural, access and process quality) and provides the assessment of their quality. When analysing ECEC in Flanders the research team uses two terms (due to the split system): child care and pre-primary education. Child care refers to ECEC services in institutional settings for children aged 0-3 years. Pre-primary education refers to ECEC services for children aged 2.5-6 years.

Quality of governance

This sub-section analyses the quality of ECEC governance in Flanders. The box below presents the main characteristics of ECEC governance system.

ECEC governance quality:

Law: ECEC is covered by general legal acts regulating related policy areas (social welfare sector, education, health);

Responsible ministry: Competence for education in Belgium has been transferred to the communities (i.e., Flemish, French, and the small German Community).

- 0-3: In the case of provision for younger children (0 to 3) and out-of-school provision for school children (2.5 to 12), the Ministry for Welfare, Family and Equal Opportunities delegates responsibility to a government agency called Kind en Gezin (Child and Family).
- 2.5-6: In Flanders pre-primary education (kleuterschool) for children from 2.5 years up to school-entry comes under the general auspices of the Ministry of Education.

Type of ECEC system: Split

Autonomy of ECEC institutions:

- 0-3: The Flemish government is currently developing a curriculum framework. ECEC institutions have autonomy in recruitment of ECEC educators/carers;
- 2.5-6: In pre-primary education the government defined broad developmental objectives, which have to be aimed at. Schools are free in organizing and implementing the objectives. The Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport is responsible for ECEC administration.

Monitoring of ECEC quality:

- 0-3: Childcare is monitored by The Flemish Care Inspectorate (Zorginspectie).
- 2.5-6: There are formal monitoring systems/procedures of primary schools (pre-primary education and primary education). The Flemish inspectorate monitors and evaluates schools in Flanders; collects and publishes statistical information on all education services.

Monitoring of ECEC Quality

Childcare 0-3

Since 1919, a national organization was responsible for monitoring and assessing quality in the childcare sector for children from 0-3 in Belgium. After the State reform of 1984, 3 governmental organisations have taken over this responsibility: 'the Office de la Naissance et de l' Enfance' for the Federation Wallonia-Brussels, 'Kind en Gezin' (Child and Family) for the Flemish Community of Belgium and 'Kind und Familie' for

the small German Community of Belgium. Until the eighties, the control was mainly on the medical-hygienic aspects of care. Since 2006, in Flanders, the quality is no longer controlled by Kind en Gezin; the quality of all childcare centres are controlled on a regular basis by the Agentschap Zorginspectie (Agency for Care Inspectorate), which is responsible for the whole welfare sector (Peeters, 2013). The Flemish Agency for Care Inspectorate (Zorginspectie) aims to promote the quality of care provided by the Flemish welfare and health sectors. For this reason the Flemish Care Inspectorate monitors compliance with regulations and ensures that public resources are used both rightfully and transparently. To that end, it carries out inspections and draws up reports. The Flemish Care Inspectorate exercises supervision in all licensed, recognised and subsidised care facilities and in care facilities that are subject to regulations imposed by the Welfare, Public Health and Family policy area.³⁸ Each care facility is inspected³⁹, and often inspections take place at the request of the governmental organization Kind en Gezin (Child and Family) (e.g., application for a renewal of an attest, a complaint by a parent, an application for financial support). So often, the amount of inspections is related to the risk of underperforming services. In 2012, 2426 child care initiatives were inspected.

In contrast to education (2.5-18) the inspections in childcare services (0-3) are mostly unannounced. During the inspections, the inspectorate communicates with team members, observes activities, visits the location, analyses documents. The inspectorate defines deficiencies and reports them to Child and Family (Kind en Gezin), which is responsible for programming, admission and subsidization. The latter decides about the consequences of the deficiencies. Hence, there is a clear distinction between inspecting – reporting (Inspectorate) and making decisions licenses, recognition and subsidies (Kind en Gezin).⁴⁰ Next to the Flemish Care Inspectorate, an independent organisation (Dimarso) examines client satisfaction. The results of this anonymous examination are available online (www.zorginspectie.be).

In 2004, a new participatory approach on quality assessment (Kwaliteitsbeleid) was introduced, defining quality as a negotiable construct, jointly determined by parents, childcare workers, children, and the management board of centres (Peeters, 2009). A need for more concrete guidelines for the pedagogical quality was also expressed. Child and Family (Kind en Gezin) therefore introduced assessment scales on 'well-being' and 'involvement' developed by Ferre Laevers and his team at the University of Leuven (CEGO). In 2006 a large-scale study was executed on the quality of childcare by using these scales (Laevers et al., 2006).

Today, subsidised services have to meet minimum quality standards (pedagogical approach, adult/ child ratio, safety, hygiene, space) and have to develop a quality handbook in which they describe the procedures of how they evaluate quality, how they engage parents, how child carers are trained. Independent services require registration only, but most of them choose to work under the supervision of Kind en Gezin. This means that they have to meet certain quality standards. There is a gap in monitoring the quality of childcare between the subsidized and the independent sector. In April 2014 a new decree on childcare for the 0 to 3 will be implemented (Decreet Opvang van baby's en peuters) and as a part of this new decree the quality

³⁸ <http://www4wvg.vlaanderen.be/wvg/zorginspectie/publicaties/Documents/kinderopvang%20folder.pdf>.

³⁹ Until April 2014 there are different inspection criteria for the subsidized centres and for the independent (mostly private) centres (who receive less subsidy). With the new law the quality criteria (pedagogical approach, adult/ child ratio, safety, hygiene, space...) will be the same for all childcare centres.

⁴⁰ <http://www4wvg.vlaanderen.be/wvg/zorginspectie/inspecties/Pages/erkKDV.aspx>.

monitoring system will basically be the same for all childcare services. For these reasons, the governmental organization Child and Family (Kind en Gezin) is currently commissioning a study (MeMoQ) to develop a scientifically based tool that allows measuring the educational quality of the entire childcare sector. Based on a recommendation of OECD Starting Strong, the researchers are developing a monitoring process that will engage and support staff, parents, and children (OECD, 2006: 126; Kind en Gezin, CEGO and Ghent University, 2012).

Furthermore, the governmental organization Child and Family (Kind en Gezin) annually collects general information on young children and child care (called in Kind in Vlaanderen – Child in Flanders). This publication gives a broad view on the number of children living in Flanders, the family context of children in Flanders (working conditions, diversity, ...), and the number of children of different SES background in child care.

Monitoring education – pre-primary education 2.5-6

In Flanders, there is no national standard testing (comparing schools). However, this does not imply that in primary education, educational data are not collected. However, there are some compulsory tests.

First, there is the language screening. This screening will be compulsory from September 2014. Each child entering the primary school should perform a language screening within 30 days. This screening test is a self evaluation tool, which provides teachers an insight in pupils' language level. Based on the language screening, the school will be obliged to provide extra support for pupils who underperformed on the screening. Some schools decided to set up separate 'language classes – language immersion classes – for pupils who will underperform. *These immersion classes are however criticised during the focus groups.*

Second, there is the compulsory Dutch language tests for children who did not attend Flemish pre-primary school for 220 half days. From the school year 2009–2010 onwards, children entering primary education at the usual age of 6 are required to have effectively attended pre-primary education in the Dutch language system during at least 220 half days in the previous school year. Children who do not fulfil this requirement, are (with specific exceptions) subject to a Dutch language test. This standardized test is organised by the school itself or the pupil guidance centre. Pupils of 7 years old (or older) can directly enter primary education. This implies that the obliged attendance of 220 half days and the Dutch language test are no compulsory conditions for pupils of 7 years old entering primary education. In 2008-2009 96.7%; in 2011-2012 97.6% of the 6 years old pupils did attend pre-primary education for more than 220 half days. In total 1726 children did not attend pre-primary education for 220 half days (most of them score high on SES-variables). In 2012-2013 642 pupils took a Dutch language test; 81% succeeded this test. 79% of the pupils who did not succeed the test are (again) in the 3d grade of pre-primary education. *Currently, there is a lot of commotion going on for this test. During the focus groups the members criticised the tests because: it is only a snapshot at one specific moment; it only focuses on 'language' – it does not take specific context and pupils characteristics into account; also the aims / purposes of the test are not clear – it is a repressive measure which should stimulate pupil attendance?*

Next to these 2 compulsory tests, outcomes are collected for scientific reason (e.g., PISA, SIBO 'studieloopbanen in het basisonderwijs' large-scale longitudinal data of Trajectories through Primary Education – in secondary education LOSO). Currently,

there is a project of the Catholic University Leuven, Ghent University and University of Antwerp in order to stimulate and support schools in using their SIBO-data for self-evaluation.⁴¹

Next, there are poll tests (peilingsproeven)⁴², which is large scale testing of a representative sample of schools examining if the attainment targets⁴³ are reached. In concrete terms, this concerns knowledge, insight, attitudes and skills. There are both subject-related attainment targets and cross curricular attainment targets.) The poll tests are organised by the Catholic University of Leuven commissioned by the Flemish educational government.

Furthermore, often pupil guidance centres (CLB) test children in the 3d grade of pre-primary education (5-6years) with school readiness tests. However, schools decide themselves if they want to use the school readiness test and these test are not binding for starting compulsory education (6 years). Most used school readiness test is the TOETERS (in February) and the KONTRABAS (in May), focusing on 11 subtests, such as mathematical, visual, auditive, motorical aspects. Other used tests are the CITO-tests. *As discussed in the focus groups: the school readiness test only gives an impression, but should be added with other sources (such as teachers' advice, meeting with colleagues, meeting with parents, ...).*⁴⁴

Evaluating schools – pre-primary education 2.5-6

Responsibilities for school evaluation in the Flemish Community of Belgium are conceived as a "triangle of quality" which sets distinct responsibilities for schools, the Flemish Inspectorate and the Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Training (AKOV), and Pedagogical Advisory Services (Pedagogische begeleidingsdienst, PBD) attached to the different "educational networks". This implies that there is a clear distinction between evaluating (i.e., Flemish inspectorate) and supporting schools (i.e., Pedagogical Advisory Services from the educational networks).

External evaluation⁴⁵

Elementary schools are inspected as a whole (pre-primary 2.5-6 and primary education 6-12).

Since the 2009 decree on Educational Quality, the Inspectorate changed both in methodology as in the internal organization. The Inspectorate transferred from an integrated to a differentiated inspection.

The Inspection Process contains 3 phases.

1. Preliminary Enquiry

When an inspection team investigates a school the team will first make an estimation on the institution's quality. This estimation takes place during the Preliminary Enquiry which contains:

⁴¹ <http://www.schoolfeedback.be/>.

⁴² <http://ppw.kuleuven.be/home/onderzoek/peilingsonderzoek;>
[http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/curriculum/peilingen/;](http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/curriculum/peilingen/)
<http://www.oecd.org/edu/school/49177679.pdf>.

⁴³ Attainment targets are minimum goals which the government considers necessary and achievable for a particular group of pupils in primary and secondary education - not for pre-primary education.

⁴⁴ Klasse 1 maart 2011 <http://www.klasse.be/archief/toetertest-uitgetoeterd/> .

⁴⁵ <http://www.oecd.org/edu/school/49177679.pdf>;
<http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/inspectie/english/default.htm>;
<http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/inspectie/Opdrachten/Doorlichten/default.htm>.

- An analysis of (1) the data from the government's operational data bases. These are the data that institutions send in to the administration in Brussels. (2) the data which the Inspectorate gathers by means of the Information File. This Information File is a short, written questionnaire filled in by the institutions. (3) the information from previous inspections: inspection reports, succession reports, GOK-reports (Equal Opportunities in Education), etc.
- A Local Visit for refinement by means of observations, interviews and document analysis. A team of two inspectors visits the school during 1 day. By interpretation and deliberation the inspectors will finally come to an audit focus: which area of learning, subjects or other aspects will be examined more thoroughly during the Audit phase? When determining the audit focus, the inspectors make a stable, representative selection of strengths and weaknesses of the school's operational aspects.

2. The Actual Audit

During this phase the inspectors visit the school for a couple of days. Interviews, document analyses and observations are held during the audit. This phase takes 3 to 6 days, depending on: the school size, the scope of the audit focus, the composition of the inspection team.

3. The Inspection Report

The final conclusion of the inspection team together with the advice will be written in the Inspection Report. This Inspection Report is discussed with the school board during a verification discussion. As soon as the school board, the organizing authority and the inspector-reporter have signed the definitive report, the Inspection Report will be placed online on [the website of the inspection](#).

The unique audit focus (instead of a broad assessment of the school) was criticised during the focus groups: one specific aspect in the school operation is inquired in depth (which is positive). But, the focus of the inspection is defined after a preliminary enquiry of only one day. Due to the specific focus, some positive aspects of the school are sometimes underexposed and schools can't elucidate their school as a whole.

The Flemish Inspectorate uses the CIPO-reference frame, which is based on 4 components:

- Context;
- Input;
- Process (subdivided in 4 domains: general policy; staff policy; resource policy; educational policy);
- Output (the results the institution attains with her processes with her pupils or students).

CONTEXT				
Identification	Situational location	History	Regulatory framework	
INPUT				
Personnel characteristics		Student characteristics		
PROCESS			OUTPUT	
GENERAL	PERSONNEL	EDUCATIONAL POLICY	STUDENT PERFORMANCE	OUTCOMES
Leadership	Staff management	Curriculum	Developmental objectives	Subsequent education
Development of school vision	Professional development	Coaching and counselling	Attainment targets	Job market
Decision making	LOGISTICS	Evaluation	SCHOOL CAREERS	SATISFACTION
Processes and procedures	Infrastructure and equipment		Progress	Staff
Quality assurance	Well-being		Enrolment	Students
				Partners

All inspection reports of schools are available online, so parents can read the reports of all schools at: <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/doorlichtingsverslagen/>

Internal evaluation

Since the new decree on Educational Quality (2009) the school is primarily responsible for the own quality. Hence, internal quality assurance in schools is mandatory. All schools need to be able to account for their efforts to monitor and enhance their quality and are inspected on this. Some form of self-evaluation activity is, therefore, inevitable. But, how this internal quality control takes place, is the autonomy of the school. Further, there are specific self-evaluation requirements for schools receiving funds as part of the Equal Educational Opportunities Policy (GOK). GOK schools must perform a self-evaluation to plan the effective use of the additional funding. The Flemish Educational Ministry does not define criteria on how schools should evaluate themselves. Often schools receive guidance from the Pedagogical Advisory Services of their educational network or from other external guidance services in order to perform this internal quality control.⁴⁶ *However, during the focus groups some members stated that self evaluation and internal quality control are not (yet) part of the daily practices of primary schools. It depends on the policymaking capacity of a school.*⁴⁷

Quality of leadership and administration of ECEC

Pre-primary education 2.5-6

The school boards / governing bodies are largely autonomous in terms of teaching methods and staff, curricula, pupil assessment and schools' pedagogical project.

For pre-primary education the Flemish government defined broad developmental objectives, in terms of knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes. The word 'development' refers to a process of growth, possible 'pathways' to achieve results. Every child goes through this process on his own way, and at his own pace. These developmental objectives do not have to be achieved but are aimed at (note: in primary and secondary education there are also attainment targets, which are minimum goals which have to be achieved). The developmental objectives are defined in 5 domains: Dutch, mathematical initiation, physical education, artistic education, world orientation. Every governing body or school board must include the attainment targets or developmental objectives in their curriculum. But the way in which these developmental goals are translated in a curriculum is decided by the school. Mostly,

⁴⁶ <http://www.oecd.org/edu/school/49177679.pdf>.

⁴⁷ The policy making capacity of a school is seen as a crucial factor in whether the school is able to fully meet its responsibility to assure the quality of the education it delivers.

each umbrella organisation takes over this role and each umbrella organisation defined its own curriculum (leerplannen), which is in line with the objectives of the Flemish government, and is followed by the school boards.

Choice of clients

Free choice of parents is a very important aspect of childcare and of pre-primary education.

Child care 0-3

Parents are free to choose a service provider for child care (0-3). However, there is a shortage of place. Recent studies showed that at least 10% of parents seeking formal child care do not find a place (Oberhuemer, 2010).

Due to the new decree on child care for under 3 (2014) finding a place in child care should be easier, because of a new central online searching tool at the website of Kind en Gezin (Kinderopvangzoeker/ child care searcher). This implies that parents no longer have to subscribe on the different waiting lists of each child care centre. Parents can still classify their preferred child care centres and the local platform child care (lokaal loket Kinderopvang) can support parents in finding a satisfactory place in child care. Parents, who do not speak Dutch or have no access to the internet, can get help in the child care centre or from social services.

Furthermore, in order to reach more vulnerable families in child care the Flemish government decided in 2009 to take structural, legislative measures: all funded child care centres were obliged to reserve 20% of their capacity for single-parent families, families living in poverty and crisis situations. In the new law on child care for under 3's (2014) child care centres can receive more subsidies when they have an income related policy and when they give priority to children from vulnerable families single parents, parents with low income, foster children. Childcare centres with a proactive service to vulnerable families (e.g. occasional or urgent childcare) and where 30% of the children belong to vulnerable families, receive even more subsidies.

Pre-primary education 2.5-6

As part of the Belgian Constitution, "Freedom of education" parents have the right to choose a school for their child(ren). In general, a school can't refuse pupils (when parents and pupils agree with school agreement and pedagogical mission of the school). Only in a strictly limited number of cases, a school can refuse an enrolment. These reasons for refusal are⁴⁸:

- the school is "full" (which is defined by the school): additional enrolment would jeopardise safety;
- a pre-primary school may refuse a child if this child requires facilities that the school is not able to provide (special needs pupils - except for children with learning disabilities).

In Flanders, much attention is given to 'care' and 'equal opportunities' to ensure equal opportunities for all children and specifically support children with extra learning needs. In 2002 a decree on 'Equal Opportunities in Education' (GOK - gelijke onderwijskansen) from the Flemish government is put in place. One of the aims of the policy is to improve the chances of underprivileged pupils in education. The decree

⁴⁸ <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/gok/inschrijvingsrecht/ouders/#13>.

provides for: the right for each child to enrol in the school of choice, with very strict rules on refusal or referral of students; the creation of local consultation platforms (LOP) to ensure co-operation in implementing local equal educational opportunities policies; and extra support for schools providing additional educational support as part of this policy.

The right to register in a school, is part of the equal opportunities policy, but changed in 2011. Since 2011 some pupils receive a 'priority' for enrolment in a pre-primary school:

- brothers and sisters of pupils who are already enrolled;
- children of the school staff;
- in Brussels: children of parents speaking / knowing Dutch;
- in some schools: indicator pupils or not indicator pupils. Indicator pupils are children from families receiving a school fund, children from travelling parents, children placed outside their home, children whose mother has no diploma of secondary education. Each school defines how much places are reserved for indicator and not indicator pupils, with the main aim to reach a social mix in the school.

Furthermore, agreements are made in each local consultation platform (LOP)⁴⁹, concerning the registration and enrolment of pupils.

LOP's are compulsory platforms, with all principals and school boards of schools and pupil guidance centres, there are also representatives of the school staff, parents and pupils, and a broad representation of local organisations working with vulnerable families and local organisations confronted with (un)equality in education (such as socio cultural and economical organisations, organisations of minority groups and vulnerable families, integration services, services for new comers and school development work). The main aim of a LOP is – by collaboration with all involved partners – providing each pupil the equal opportunity to learn and develop; so schools reach the conditions defined in the equal opportunities policy (GOK-decreet). Furthermore, LOP's stimulate social cohesion, tolerance, openness and respect in education and it counters discrimination, and social inequality. LOP's also have to gather data and analyse the data on the local situation of equal opportunities in the region and gives advice to the local policies. Finally, LOP's can have a mediating role in discussions concerning the registration of pupils in schools. In Flanders there 17 regions were a LOP is operating. There are LOP's for primary schools and LOP's for secondary education.

In the focus groups the 'freedom of education' and the right of parents to choose the school of their preference was discussed. Especially in the bigger cities (such as Brussels, Antwerp, Ghent) there is a perceived shortage in pre-primary education; there is occupancy of 100%. Currently in some cities parents have to enregister centrally by an online system. Although parents can define their preferences the system takes into account the distance from home or work to the school. This could imply that children are allocated to the second, third, ... school of their choice, because in some schools all available 'places' are taken by brothers, sisters and children from staff (who have a priority enrolment). In the focus groups the impact of the central registration system on vulnerable groups was discussed. Although many organisations working with vulnerable families are part of the local consultation platform (LOP) and voluntarily help parents with the registration of the pupils, there is

⁴⁹ <http://www.lop.be/LOP/default.asp>.

a possibility that some vulnerable parents do not receive the right help and, hence, do not have the free choice in choosing a school – for example they have to opt for a school which is further away from their home, which is a threshold for pupil participation in school. To conclude, so although there is an awareness in the 'field' and many organisations provide help to vulnerable parents; the central registration system can be a threshold to school participation, especially for vulnerable families.

Setting prices

Childcare 0-3

In most childcare centres (0-3) the parents pay according to their income between 1.54 euro and 27,36 euro a day. But some private child centres get no subsidies and decide on their own price-setting. The average costs for parents for childcare (0 to 3 years) and out-of-school time provision for elementary school: parents contribute 59.7% of costs in subsidised family day care and 26.2% of costs in subsidised centre-based care. The cost of childcare (0 to 3 and out of school care) is tax deductible: all childcare costs are 100% deductible with a maximum of 11.20 euro a day. (Peeters, 2013).

Pre-primary education 2.5-6

According to the Belgian Constitution, access to compulsory education is free of charge. In pre-primary and primary education, parents do not have to pay for school materials and activities which are vital to pursuing developmental objectives and to achieving attainment targets. With regard to activities which are seen as not strictly vital to attain the developmental objectives and attainment targets and which take place wholly or partly in the instruction time, the government imposes a twofold system of maximum fees referred to as the 'double maximum invoice'. The maximum invoice is based on the principle of equal opportunities for all schools, families and pupils including those that are socio-economically disadvantaged. There was a consensus among the experts of the focus group that this maximum invoice was a good policy measure to reduce the gap between children from different SES. There are two types of maximum invoices⁵⁰:

1. A maximum amount that may be asked of parents for activities such as day trips (e.g. theatre visits, sport activities, ...) and materials. Since 2012 the amount (not indexed) changes per age: children of 2-3 years: 20€; 4 year: 30€; 5 year: 35€, primary education: 60€.
2. A maximum amount that may be asked of parents for trips longer than one day, taking place wholly or partly outside school hours. No more than 0 euro for a pre-schooler and 360 euro for a primary school child for the duration of their primary education may be asked.

Receiving and using revenue at their discretion

Child care 0-3

The new decree on childcare for the 0 to 3 (Decreet Opvang van baby's en peuters, 2014) introduces a new way of subsidizing day care and child care centres, a more coherent and gradual system depending on the social extra's performed by the centre. So, the higher the social function, the higher the received subsidies. There are 3 grades (trappen).

Grade 1: basic subsidies for each certified centre

⁵⁰ <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/schoolkosten/basis/faq/maximumfactuur.htm#maximumfactuur>.

Grade 2: extra subsidies for a centre with parent income related price.

Grade 3: extra subsidies for centres which reach more than 30% children from vulnerable families.

Next to these 3 grades there are 2 specific modules: a module for inclusive child care and a module for flexible child care.

Pre-primary education 2.5-6

Schools receive an envelope from the government. Since 2008 there aren't any differences between the 3 educational networks. Currently the financial resources depend partly on the amount of indicator pupils.

Structural quality

This sub-section analyses the main structural characteristics of ECEC in Flanders.

ECEC structural quality:

Staff qualification requirement: The level of qualification required in childcare sector (0-3) is low. Education staff working with 0-3 year olds mostly have an upper secondary diploma and staff working with 2.5-6 are required to have Bachelor's diploma.

In-service staff training: In Flemish community it is not mandatory but provided regularly and encouraged.

Wages: Childcare workers earn less than pre-primary teachers.

- 0-3: child-carers in subsidized services earn around 1689.4-2137.86€ brutto. The average child care worker earns starting salary of 1876€ monthly.
- 2.5-6: A teacher in pre-primary education earns around 1537.34€ (netto, 0 years), after 20 years they earn approximately 2107.84€ (netto). A pre-primary teacher earns the same salary as primary teachers.

Staff turnover rate:

- 2.5-6: in 2012, 12% of 'novice' teachers' younger than 30 quit pre primary education after 5 years.

Staff gender balance: 2.56% ECEC carers/teachers are males (educ_pers1d, 2011).

- 0-3: 3.4% of the carers in child care and out of school care are men.
- 2.5-6: In Flemish education most teachers are female: for elementary education (2.5-12) 7613 male teachers – 43509 female teachers

Child-staff ratios and group size:

- 0-3:
 - Until March 2014 the ratios are:
 - a) Family day care: 4:1 in full-time care (up to 8 children part time);
 - b) Centre-based day care: 6.5:1;
 - The new decree (2014) will increase the number of children per adult:
 - Maximum group size may not exceed the following number (also not in peak time)
 - a) Family day care: 8 children maximum;
 - b) Centre-based day care: maximum 18 children for 2 adults, max 27 children for 3 adults, max 36 children for 4 adults.
- 2.5-6: The organizing body is free to decide on the number of pupils per class. In pre-primary education, pupils are usually grouped by age (3 to 4 classes): 2.5 to 3 years; 3 to 4 years; 4 to 5 years; 5 to 6 years. But some schools choose to bring children of different age in one (2,5-6) or 2 heterogonous groups (2,5-4, 4-6).
- 94% of the pre-primary schools have classes with approximately 24 pupils (or less) (Agodi, 2011).

ECEC staff qualifications

In general, the focus groups revealed that working in childcare and in pre-primary schools demands a lot of competences from the staff!

Childcare 0-3

In several international reports (OECD, 2001, 2006, UNICEF, 2008) was mentioned that in Childcare in the Flemish Community the qualification requirements were very low (only for 20% of the jobs in childcare a diploma is needed). The quality requirements and the quality control system for the subsidized centres were different then for the private independent centres. There was also no curriculum for the 0 to 3. In April 2014 a new decree on childcare for the 0 to 3 will be implemented (Decreet Opvang van baby's en peuters). In this decree is stipulated that everyone working in childcare has to be qualified before 2024. The quality monitoring system will be the same for all childcare services. And a consortium from the University of Ghent and Leuven (MEMOQ) will write a curriculum in collaboration with the stakeholders. The same consortium will set up a region wide research on the quality of childcare services.

To work in a subsidised child care centres (0-3) a one year training on post-secondary level as 'kindbegeleiders' (child care worker) is mandatory.

Research confirmed the hypothesis that the childcare sector was undergoing a process of deprofessionalization: diploma requirements were now only being set for a small part of the sector (17%) whereas 30 years ago a certificate was necessary for every job within the sector (Peeters 2008).

It is well known that the workforce in Flanders is getting behind, according to European or OECD standards (OECD, 2006; UNICEF, 2008). Two major problems regarding professionalization are common: the low qualifications for child care staff, and the fact that training for the management of child care centres is hardly preparing them for this field. In addition, a third and growing concern is the increasing number of unskilled workforce in child care.

Child care workers in Flanders receive a training on the vocational level after 7 years of secondary vocational school. This initial training is embedded in a long history of hygienic and technical professionalism and is poorly adapted to the considerations on the educational and social functions of child care (OECD, 2006). In addition, Belgium was one of the only European countries where no bachelor in early childhood education exists, preparing the workforce to work with families and children below three years of age.

A study on professionalism in Flemish childcare and some international reports (Peeters, 2008; OECD, 2006, UNICEF, 2008, Seepro 2010) were making the case for a Bachelor's degree to break the cycle of deprofessionalisation. Therefore Kind en Gezin – in collaboration with experts – drafted a profile for a new Bachelor's degree.

Graduates of this 'Pedagogy for the Young Child' course would be able not only to fill staff positions in childcare facilities, but also be responsible, within the teams and institutions, for working with practitioners with secondary qualifications to draft the pedagogical policy of the provision they work in together. The curriculum of this 'Bachelor's degree in Pedagogy for the Young Child' also includes the coaching of

employees with lower qualifications. Another important task for these new Bachelors will be to provide pedagogical support for family day carers and to supervise those who are in the process of getting some qualification. In September 2011, the initial training course 'Bachelor for the pedagogy of the young child', with more than 200 students in the first year, was established in Antwerp, Brussels and Ghent. In 2014 the first Bachelors in Pedagogy of the young Child (Pedagogisch Coach) will graduate. From then on, they will function as pedagogical co-ordinators or advisors that will design the pedagogical policy together with the other practitioners with a secondary qualification and take on the supervision of the assistants who are working towards a qualification. They are also trained to work with children and their parents.

In the Flemish Community, until 2014 no qualification was necessary for working in independent childcare centres (zelfstandig kinderdagverblijf). However, this has been the fastest growing sector since the end of the 1990s (33% of all childcare places compared to 17% for the subsidized childcare centres). The new decree on childcare for the 0 to 3 is stipulating that every childcare worker should be qualified and has the right on pedagogical guidance from a pedagogical coach. This new decree pays defines pedagogical guidance as a tool to increase the competences of the individuals, especially the workers without qualification. According to the new decree every provider of childcare will have to guarantee pedagogical guidance for all the employed childcare workers.

Already, the childcare sector, the training centres and pedagogical research centres have developed instruments that will be useful for the pedagogical counsellors or coaches (e.g. a training module for family day carers (40 hours), developed in 2013 by two resource centres (VBJK and CEGO).

Pre-primary education (2.5-6)

99% of teachers in pre-primary school (kleuterleiders) are trained on a bachelor level (3-year tertiary qualification). The three-year study route for prospective staff in pre-primary education takes place at higher education institutions specializing in teacher education (Hogeschool, Department Onderwijs). Course content in the Flemish Community is based on building basic competences such as decision-making skills; critical thinking; inquisitiveness; organizational skills; cooperative skills; sense of responsibility; flexibility (Eurydice/Eurybase, 2009a).

Since 2007, these teachers receive salaries equivalent to primary and lower secondary teachers (OECD, 2012).

A reform of teacher education programmes has been on the agenda for some years in the Flemish Community and a new programme was finally launched in September 2007 (Eurydice/Eurybase, 2009a). The so-called 'integrated teacher training programmes' combine subject-specific and pedagogical-teaching components throughout the entire three-year study route. The pre-primary route leads to a professional Bachelor's degree in Education. The total course comprises 180 ECTS (60 credits per year), with one credit representing a work load of 25 to 30 hours. The practical component has been extended and now accounts for 45 credits.

An issue that is often mentioned in discussions is the low 'level' of students enrolled in pre-primary teacher education (a high amount of students entering teacher education attended technical or vocational education in secondary education). However, in the

focus groups this was not problematized. The focus groups stated that more personal, flexible paths are necessary in teacher training.

Also, learning by practice and reflecting on this practice is crucial (both for student teachers and novice teachers). This implies that time to reflect with peer student teachers, mentors, docent, colleagues is crucial. In most teacher training programmes, student teachers can learn by practice (by internships), however time to reflect is often lacking.

Supporting teachers in pre-primary education

In general, in service training to teachers in schools is provided by Pedagogical Advisory Service⁵¹ (Pedagogische BegeleidingsDienst - PBD). Each of the umbrella organisations has its own Pedagogical Advisory Service (PBD), which ensures professional internal support to schools and pupil guidance centres. The school advisors offer support to different schools within their network, including in-service training, support for self-evaluation and quality assurance (including student assessment and teacher appraisal). The latter (i.e., teacher appraisal) deserves special attention, because since 2007, teacher appraisal is compulsory in primary schools.

The Pedagogical Advisory Services (PBD) also play a role in external school evaluation. In the case that inspectors give a school a negative recommendation, the inspectors may determine whether or not that school has sufficient policy-making capacity to implement a successful improvement plan. If the inspectors judge that this is not the case, the school will be obliged to accept support from the PBD.⁵²

Supporting novice teachers

Because 1 out of 8 teachers in elementary education (pre-primary and primary education) quits the job after 5 years, supporting novice teachers is crucial. Often novice teachers experience a 'reality shock' when they start teaching. Therefore, in 2006 the Flemish government took measures to support young teachers and introduced the so called 'mentoring hours' (mentoruren). Due to these mentoring hours schools could guide and support student teachers and novice teachers in their new job. However, in 2010 these mentor hours were abolished. Hence, supporting student and novice teachers has become an issue of the individual school policy: it depends on the school making capacity. In 2013 the Flemish inspectorate focussed on this issue, and came to the conclusion that in most schools supporting novice teachers (aanvangsbegeleiding) is elaborated qualitatively in most schools.

As mentioned in the focus groups it is crucial that schools develop a policy on supporting (student and novice) teachers: who performs the mentor role, what is the role of this mentor, teaching free hours provided for the mentor, ...). Furthermore, the focus groups stated that not only supporting student and novice teachers is important; also more experienced teachers should be supported sufficiently, especially teachers with 5-10 years experience.

Supporting pre-primary teachers

In 2007 the Flemish Ministry of Education launched measures in order to stimulate pre-primary education. One of these measures is supporting pre-primary teachers.

⁵¹ Pedagogical Advisory Service or educational guidance service.

⁵² <http://www.oecd.org/edu/school/49177679.pdf>.

Therefore, a project called 'second level support – pre-primary participation' (tweedelijnsondersteuning kleuterparticipatie 2KP) was developed. The project transcends the different educational networks. Each Pedagogical Advisory Service has a team of 2KP'ers supporting schools which are located in a region with a local consultation platform (LOP) and which have at least 25% pupils at risk. This project invests in supporting pre-primary teachers, school principals and school teams which are confronted with non- Dutch speaking children and children from vulnerable families. The support can be focused on 5 aspects: language development, coping diversity and differentiation, parent participation, coaching, school making capacity. Most supported schools focused on the aspect of 'language development'.

The support is demand driven and often the pedagogical advisors (2 KP'ers) support pre-primary teachers in the classes. *In the focus groups this project was applauded. However, there were some remarks. First, schools not located in a LOP-region, do not receive extra support. Second, the amount of provided support (approximately 4 till 7 times a year) is rather limited. In order to support teachers a higher frequency is necessary, and also time to reflect together should be provided (2KPer and individual teacher – 2KPer and school team).*

Presence of other specialist support staff in school

In (pre-) primary education there are different other specialist staff. For example, care coordinators (zorgcoördinatoren), bridging staff stimulating the link with the parents and home culture of pupils (brugfiguren), equal opportunity teachers (GOK-leerkracht), integrating teachers for pupils with a disability (geïntegreerd onderwijs – GON), 2 KP'ers, pupil guidance centre (CLB), pedagogical advisors (PBD), ...

This issue was discussed in the focus groups.

First, some members of the focus groups stated that in smaller schools, the amount of extra specialist staff is rather limited.

Second, the usefulness was discussed. Some members of the focus groups claimed that due to the support of extra specialist staff is positive, because teachers can lean on the expertise of the specialist staff and are supported by these specialists. However, some of these specialists – such as the care coordinators – are not by definition teachers, often they studied orthopedagogics or are logopedy. One of the pitfalls is that they use a deficit framework. Another pitfall is that teachers outsource the 'problems' to the specialist staff, instead of taken care themselves. Finally the multiplicity of specialist staff leads to fragmentation (teachers don't know any more who can help them – and who is responsible for what; not all specialist staff have the same 'rank' for example GON teachers are allowed at class meetings, but they have no 'official role').

Curriculum

Child care 0-3

Up until today, there is no curriculum in Flemish Childcare for the 0 to 3. A new curriculum will be developed in the coming years within the MeMoQ project (University Ghent and Leuven).

Important to note, is that in the new decree (2014), some 'pedagogical issues' are mentioned. For example, respect for integrity and non-discrimination; stimulating the development of children (social-emotional, physical, cognitive, communicative, creative, and moral); improve the wellbeing and involvement of the children; taken

into account the rhythm, the interests, the needs and the individuality of children; ... Also, the decree defines the minimal aspects of a pedagogical policy in child care, such as enure; variation in playing materials; physical and other activities (inside and outside); regularity throughout the day; language policy; ...

Pre-primary education curricula (2.5-6)

For **pre-primary schools** developmental objectives need to be aimed at for all the 2.5 - 6 year olds. These are minimum objectives of knowledge, competences and attitudes that are considered to be desirable for a particular pupil population and that the school must strive to achieve for all pupils by the end of pre-primary education. These developmental objectives form the common core curriculum. The core curriculum defines the child from a holistic point of view. The core curriculum is formulated for 5 areas of learning:

- physical education: motoric competences, healthy and safe lifestyle, self-awareness and social integration;
- art education: visual arts, music, drama, dance, media and attitudes;
- Dutch: listening, speaking, reading, writing, linguistics;
- world studies: nature, technique, humankind, society, time and space;
- mathematical initiation: numbers, measuring and space (geometric initiation).

All schools must offer their pupils activities in all these areas of learning. But how schools offer the activities is the autonomy of the school. The core curriculum only defines the minimum goals which should be aimed at (for pre-primary education and special education) or reached (attainment goals for primary education and secondary education). For pre-primary education the inspectorate checks whether the developmental objectives are pursued.⁵³

The school boards should 'translate' the core curriculum in more concrete learning curricula (leerplannen). However, in reality these concrete curricula are designed by the umbrella organisations. This implies that there are different curricula for catholic schools, GO! Schools, schools of OGO. The concrete curricula need to be approved by the Flemish inspection. When approved, the inspectorate will subsequently also check whether the curriculum is also followed in daily practice. Objectives and activities are set for all age groups in a continuous learning curve towards primary education.

According to the focus groups the core curriculum is rather vague and does not provide clear guidelines for teachers. The openness and broadness of the core curriculum, implicates that teachers have a lot of autonomy in working with the core curriculum. However, due to the translation in concrete learning curricula, which are integrated in text books, implicates that some teachers rigidly use these curricula as predefined didactic prescriptions, restricting teachers' didactic freedom and autonomy. Also, the concrete learning curricula are often perceived as an evaluation tool, a checklist evaluating the capacity of a pupil, whereas it should be perceived as a guideline for teachers in developing children.

⁵³ <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/curriculum/basisonderwijs/>.

Learning and teaching methods

The learning and teaching methods are part of the autonomy of the school. But in general a child centred approach with a focus on play is common in child care and in pre-primary. In the last year before compulsory education some pre reading and pre mathematic exercises are introduced. *In the focus groups different issues were discussed.*

- In childcare and pre-primary education it is important to start from the interests of the child. Wellbeing and involvement are crucial concepts in Flemish ECEC.
- Distinction between edu – and –care.

The focus groups criticised the distinction between edu and care. In childcare and in pre-primary education, education and care are both important. Especially in pre-primary education it was discussed that not only the 'education time' in class is important, but also the other moments (such as before and after school, play time, lunch break). In some schools the quality during these moments is, however, very low (due to low qualified staff).

- Age-groups

In pre-primary education pupils are usually grouped by age (3 to 4 classes): 2.5 to 3 years; 3 to 4 years; 4 to 5 years; 5 to 6 years. But some schools choose to bring children of different age in one (2.5 - 6) or 2 groups (2.5-4, 4-6). In general, around 30% of the classes in the last year of pre-primary education in 2002-2003 are heterogeneous age groups, which are often in not-traditional schools.⁵⁴ In the focus groups it was discussed that heterogonous groups can have a positive impact for 'new' pupils of 2.5 because they receive support from the older peers and the teachers has fewer 'new' young children, and the children can develop more on their own pace. However, research revealed that this effect is not straightforward. Heterogonous group only have positive effects when it was a pedagogical option of the school team (and not a structural option due to a limited amount of pupils).

- Team teaching

Teaching is often an individual job: teachers teach alone in the class, there is limited time to meet with colleagues.

Currently, team teaching is growing, for example:

- Child carer and pre-primary teacher in one class;
- Working together with the 2KPer in the class;
- Extra equal opportunity (GOK) resources – often used to split classes, but when the infrastructure is not sufficient two teachers often work in team.

Team teaching can have a positive impact IF the teachers collaborate (prepare the lessons together, reflect together afterwards, no hierarchy between the two teachers, ...). In order to reach these positive aspects, there should be a clear policy at the level of the school and again the policy making capacity of the school is crucial.

⁵⁴ http://informatieportaalssl.be/archiefloopbanen/rapporten/LOA-rapport_24.pdf).

Access quality

This sub-section analyses different aspects of access quality in Flanders.

ECEC access quality:

Compulsory nature of ECEC: ECEC attendance is not compulsory; Compulsory education starts after ECEC from the age of 6 and lasts till the age of 18.

ECEC choice: Parents are free to choose ECEC provider.

In the future in Flanders the new decree will introduce priority criteria for childcare (0-3): parents' employment status (both or just one); low SES; belonging to a vulnerable group;

Participation rate: 38% for children aged 0-3; 98.1% of children 2.5-6;

Funding of pre-school services: 0.78% of GDP was allocated on ECEC (educ_figdp, Eurostat 2010);

Cost to parents:

- For most services for 0-3 olds parents pay according to their income; for 0-3 olds ECEC parents on average have to pay 4% of family net income.
- For 3-6 olds there is no tuition fee, but usually parents have to pay other accompanying costs (e.g. meals, extra-activities, building maintenance, etc. – but with a maximum bill).

Child care 0-3

In Belgium, both the Federal Government and the Communities have undertaken serious efforts to make childcare affordable for all parents. In the subsidized childcare centres (approximately 80% of all childcare places), the parents pay a fee according to their income. In the Flemish Community, the parents in the subsidized centres pay between 1,54 euro and 27,36 euro a day. The private child centres which receive no subsidies can freely set their price. The cost of childcare (0 to 3 and out of school care) is tax deductible: all childcare costs are 100% deductible with a maximum of 11,20 euro a day (Peeters, 2013).

As far as the number of places is concerned, Flanders meets the standard of the European Barcelona Targets (38% Belgium; Flanders 40%; Peeters, 2014), with a childcare place for 34.47% of all the under 3's, and thus belongs to the select club of five countries meeting these targets (SILC 2006). The number of places in childcare has more than tripled since 1990. However, we should point out that this increase has happened mostly in those sectors with hardly any training requirements, and where the employment conditions are extremely precarious: family day carers, out of school care and independent day care centres (mostly for profit). Independent day care centres have shown the strongest growth over the past few years with a five-fold increase in the number of locations. At the same time, these independent day care centres face the biggest challenges: no training requirements, many of the staff members are quasi-independent or do underpaid work. One of the results is a high level of staff turnover (Misplon, et al. 2004). It is the aim of the new decree (2014) to meet these challenges by having more qualified staff in the future.

Although Flanders meets the Barcelona targets, different studies showed that places in child care are far too scarce, and that accessibility is unequal. Figures of the governmental agency Kind en Gezin (Child and Family) (Van Keer, Bettens, & Buysse, 2004) reveal that while 49.4% of families regularly make use of child care provisions, this is only the case for 24% of ethnic minority families and for 22% of poor families.

A more detailed study in Brussels argued that these unequal figures cannot only be interpreted as a result of parental choice but rather need to be viewed as a result of other environmental factors such as the unequal distribution of places (more places in more affluent neighbourhoods) and the priority criteria set by the management of individual provisions, favouring double-income, majority families (Vandenbroeck, De Visscher, Van Nuffel, & Ferla, 2008). Finally, a large-scale study in 16 Flemish cities showed that some 10% of families did not succeed in finding a child care place at all, that another 10% settled for a place that did not meet their demands, and that single-parent families, ethnic minority families and low-income families are overrepresented in these groups that cannot find a suitable place (MAS, 2007). They also confirmed the results of the previous study that this social gap is indeed to a large extent linked with the priorities set by the management of the child care centre.

This issue was also discussed in the focus groups: there are still perceived formal and informal thresholds to child care. Although the policy defined 'priority indicators' and stimulated the social function of child care, often vulnerable families do not use child care because the economical function is still believed to be very important.

A first attempt to close this early educational gap consisted of funding small and flexible child care centres in impoverished neighbourhoods, focusing on enrolling children who used to be excluded from mainstream provisions. In 2006, 18 of these centres were established (Depoorter, 2006) and they succeeded in reaching the targeted population (Seaux, 2006). However, they did not succeed in influencing the overall access policies of mainstream provisions, as policy makers expected, and in some cases even contributed to widening that educational gap, by legitimating the mainstream provision not to alter their policies. In 2007 an experiment started in 16 pilot regions of the Brussels community commission. In each of these regions different child care provisions worked together to develop a common social policy, with a more transparent and explicit access policy, in order to better serve the needs of diverse populations. This was similar to (and partially inspired by) the French child care decree of 2000 (Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité - CNAF, 2000). However, in contrast to the French approach, the Flemish pilot projects were based on voluntary participation and also lacked investments in a central leadership needed to enhance the integration of services. After two years of experimenting, the structural effects on accessibility for vulnerable families still remained very weak. Finally, early 2009, the Flemish government decided to take structural, legislative measures. Since then, all funded child care centres are obliged to reserve 20% of their capacity for single-parent families, families living in poverty and crisis situations. In the new decree child care centres will receive more subsidies when they reach 30% children from vulnerable families. Also important to note is that in the new decree the ambition is to have a place for at least half of the children younger than 3 by 2016; by 2020 there should be a place for all children who needs child care. So, the new decree sets a goal for every family that needs child care should be offered it (by 2020).

Pre-primary education 2.5-6

There is a quasi universal access for pre-primary education.

Table 1: Share of young children, registered in pre-primary education, 2012-2013

Age	% registered pupils in pre-primary schools
2	97.8%
3	98.5%
4	98.8%
5	98.8%
Total	98.7%

The table shows that a high degree of young children are registered in pre-primary education, even though it is not compulsory. Furthermore, there is also a high attendance in pre-primary education. In 2010-2011, 97.4% of the 5 years old attended more than 220 half days in school; 95.9% of the 3 years old attended school for more than 150 half days. So, there is high school participation (both in registration and in attendance). However, the children who do not participate in pre-primary education come mostly from 'target' groups (vulnerable families). In 2009-2010, 51.8% the home language is not have Dutch; 48.9% mother does not have a secondary education diploma; 7.6% parents belonging to a travelling population group; 0.4 is homeless; 2.4% receive a school funding.⁵⁵

This issue was also discussed in the focus groups: while there is a high participation degree in pre primary education, the participation rate of vulnerable families is much lower compared to non vulnerable families. Young children from vulnerable families start later in pre-primary education and they attend it fewer. Due to this lower participation there is a higher chance to retardation in the last year of pre-primary education. One of the explanations defined by the focus groups is that often parents do not know what they should expect from pre-primary education and that there is a gap in school culture and home culture.

Based on the idea that inequality in the education of the children already starts in early years, the Department of Education has, since 2007 (the year of the pre-primary pupil 2.5-6), taken several measures to increase the participation of young children in pre-primary education. These measures focus on 7 aspects⁵⁶:

- Efficient data collection;
- Supporting pre-primary schools. For example, by supporting pre-primary teachers and school teams (2KP) (see before);
- Diminish financial thresholds.

In order to diminish financial thresholds there are 3 supportive measures:

First, pre-primary education is fee free.

Second, there is the maximum invoice (see before).

Third, from September 2008 families with low income can apply for a school fund of approximately 80€ for pre-primary education. In 2011-2012 there were 50.507 school funds dedicated to parents. This school fund is related to children's' participation in pre-primary education (e.g., less the 3 years old 100 half days at school; 3 years old 150 half days at school, 4 years old 185 half days at school; 5 years old 220 half days

⁵⁵ http://www.vlor.be/sites/www.vlor.be/files/rapport_kleuterparticipatie.pdf.

⁵⁶ <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/edulex/database/document/document.asp?docid=13874>.

at school; 6 years old and older max 29 half days of absence). So the absence of pupils may lead to withdrawing the money.

- Mission for the pupil guidance centre (CLB).

A follow up and data gathering on pupils attendance is first of all a core task of the school itself. However, schools receive support from the pupil guidance centre (CLB). The CLB stimulates parents' awareness and can follow children who do not attend school regularly.

- Mission for the local consultation platforms (LOP).

In local consultation platforms relevant stakeholders gather in order to guarantee and raise equal opportunities in education. In this case some LOP's set up concrete actions in order to stimulate parents' and schools' awareness of pre-primary education attendance; gathering data on school enrolment and attendance; developing inspiring tools; making appointments with Child and Family and school development work. The focus can differ between the LOP's, taken into account the local context. For example, the LOP team in Ghent mainly focuses on the registration of new pupils (due to the shortage of places in pre-primary education).

- Seamless transition from childcare to education;
- Motivating sensibilisation campaign.

Some examples of the sensibilisation campaign are repeated every year.

- The 'starters kit: to the pre-primary school' (Starterspakket: naar de kleuterklas) which is distributed by the school when children are enrolled in pre-primary education. Young children who are not registered in a school receive this starters kit by a 'walk in team' (inloopteam)⁵⁷ of the governmental organization Child and Family (Kind en Gezin);
- The communication campaign 'Look what I can do already' (Kijk wat ik al kan) for children in the last year of pre-primary education. Children who are not registered in a school receive a letter and a brochure concerning the compulsory attendance in the last year of pre-primary school (for 220 half days) and the Dutch language test;
- Social organisations (OCMW – public centre for social welfare, CAW – centre for general welfare work, centres for asylum seekers, ...) also received the brochure 'Kijk wat ik al kan' with affiches, folders, a calculation scheme and conversation tips in order to motivate parents to send their children to school.

Also important to note is the agreement of 2010 between education (Agentschap voor Onderwijsdiensten AgODi) and Child and Family (Kind en Gezin) in order to stimulate pupil participation in pre-primary education. In this agreement the exchange of data is regulated and specific actions are defined. For example, there are home visits from Kind en Gezin (Child and Family) to families where children are not enrolled in a

⁵⁷ Walk in teams or inloopteams – preventive family support organisation subsidized by Child and Family - the Flemish acronym "inloop" stands for integrated accessible parenting support. Walk-in teams organize activities focusing on care and education for parents with young children (0-3) in underprivileged neighbourhoods. In Flanders there are 15 inloopteams.

school. In 2009-2010, there were 1 119 (not enrolled) children which were contacted by Child and Family (by phone or home visit).

In the focus groups it was discussed that mostly pre-primary attendance is positively stimulated by Flemish government. However, there are also more repressive measures. For example, low-income parents receive a small fee to cope with school expenses. But, if the child did not attend pre-primary education for at least 220 half days, this money can be withdrawn, mostly after 2 years. This measure mainly affects negatively the most vulnerable parents.

Furthermore, in the focus groups there was a discussion about 'the in distinction of lowering the age of compulsory education' because a child cannot enrol in the first year of compulsory school, unless the child has been in pre-primary education for at least 220 half days and unless she/he succeeded in a language test. Although all focus group members applauded participation of children in pre-primary education, the members mainly stressed the positive stimuli and the support of teachers and schools in coping with diversity (instead of lowering the age of compulsory education and withdrawing school funds).

Process quality

This sub-section analyses different aspects of ECEC process quality in Flanders. The main focus of analysis is put on quality of interactions and parental involvement in children's early educational process.

ECEC process quality:

Parental engagement:

- 0-3: In the new decree on child care for under 3's (April 1st 2014) parent participation is an important aspect.
- 2.5-6: There is no legal requirement for parental involvement into governance of ECEC. In Flemish education, parents can participate in a parent-council at school, which is obliged when 10% of the parents in a school ask for it. Furthermore, parents have to sign an engagement act since 2010-2011 with the school. By signing this act, parents are informed by the school rules (and the regular meetings with teachers).

Cooperation between stakeholders:

There are no provisions or practices of interactions/information exchange between ECEC teachers/carers and pre-primary teachers and primary teachers.

There is a tendency to work more in collaboration. For example, there is a new decree on preventive family support (starting 2014) which stimulates collaboration between all preventive services, such as child health centers, support shops, but also child care and schools.

Quality of interactions between ECEC educators and children

Both in child care and in pre-primary education 'involvement and wellbeing' are important concepts, which are well-integrated. As mentioned before, both carers and teachers start from a holistic view of the child and lots of attention is given to 'interactions'.

The 3 functions of childcare (0-3) were discussed in the focus groups: the economic function; the educational function (because childcare is an important socializing milieu where essential competences can be acquired) and the social function.

Next, the focus groups discussed that the amount of interaction between children and between children and educators depends on group size. When the group size is too small it will be mainly the educator who takes the lead in interactions; when the group size is too large the interaction between an educator and a pupil will be minimal. Each school, each teacher should search for the perfect group size in a specific context (which refers to the policymaking capacity of a school).

Furthermore, the focus groups discussed the importance of 'playing with the children' in child care and education. Especially in education teachers pay a lot of attention to 'teaching' children and sometimes forget to play with the children.

Parental involvement

Child care 0-3

Currently, the involvement of the parents is part of the quality policy of a childcare centre and the way the parents are involved must be elaborated in the Quality Handbook of each institution.

Also, in the new decree on child care for under 3's, parent involvement and participation is an important issue. Parent involvement and participation should be reached by evaluating parents' perception on the child care and parents' satisfaction. Also, there should be regular meetings with parents minimal on the pedagogical approach and the care of the children, and when there are problems with the child. Also, decision on the licences should be revealed to parents. There very few child care centres where parents are involved in the board of the organisation. Attempts to increase the number of parental day care centres where parents are governing the centre were not successful.

Pre-primary education 2.5-6

In 2004 the participation decree was defined. In this decree the formal participation of teachers, pupils and parents were described. The participation decree stated that parents can participate in a parent-council at school. This council is obliged when 10% of the parents in a school ask for it. Furthermore, since 2010-2011 parents have to sign an engagement act with the school. By signing this act, parents are informed about the school rules (and the regular meetings with teachers).

However, parent involvement is more than formal structures. In general, parent participation can be subdivided in:

- The participation of parents to formal contact- and participation moments in school (such as the parent council, regular meetings with teachers);
- Parents' directness toward the school: all initiatives of parents to the 'education' of their child (formal and informal).

Each school decides how they cope with parents' participation. But also in some local consultation platforms (LOP) this issue was discussed. And, some schools receiving extra support (2KP) for pre- primary school attendance can focus on parent participation (see before).

In the focus groups it was stressed that there is a major difference between parent participation (formal) and parent involvement (informal). Often there is a focus on the formal participation structures. Although this is indeed important, also the informal involvement of parents is essential in a school. In order to achieve the latter schools should be able to cope with diversity and relate to the home-culture of the children. Parents should be seen as partners in the educational process of their children, especially at transition moments. But this is not self evident. Reaching and involving all parents (also the most vulnerable) should receive specific attention in a school. And some schools need extra support in parent involvement. In the 2KP-traject this is one of the key issues (see supporting pre-primary teachers). The focus groups stated that also in teacher training, coping with diversity and parents should receive constant attention. In most teacher trainings 'diversity' is seen as something special and is a special topic in the third (last) year of the training (sometimes 'taught' during the 'week of the diversity'). Mostly, a respectful attitude towards pupils and parents is not an integrated part throughout the whole teacher training.

Transition from ECEC to primary education

In the new decree on child care for under 3's transition between home to the child care services is mentioned (enure). But, transitions from child care (0-3) to pre-primary education (2.5-6), from pre-primary education to primary education (6-12), and from home to primary education are not structurally defined. It depends on the individual child care centre – on the individual school – on the individual teacher. Often there are main gaps between the different educational 'stages'. But some individual schools try to take care of a fluent transition, by organising open school days, enure moments, parents can stay in the classes, ...

In some educational networks there is special attention to this transition. For example in the GO! Child care and primary education are often on the same campus. This 'proximity' can (but not by definition) stimulate more collaboration between child care workers and teachers, and hence smoothen the transition from child care to school. Also, in schools with alternative pedagogical methods (such as Freinet) transitions are smoothened for example by the group composition of the class: they group the children not by age, but mix age-groups (e.g. mix all children from 2.5 – 6 in 1 group; or 2 groups 2.5-4 and 4-6). *As discussed in the focus groups, these mixed heterogeneous groups can have a positive influence on the 'newest/ youngest pupils': there are fewer 'new pupils' in one class, the 'new pupils' feel supported by older peers, the 'new pupils' can develop on their own pace. But also for the teachers these heterogeneous groups have advantages because the group of 'new pupils' entering the class is smaller. However, heterogeneous classes are not a mainstream class composition in Flemish education.*

Also, there examples of school communities (brede school) in which child care centers collaborate with (pre-) primary schools.

Children's assessment in ECEC before the entry to primary school

As mentioned before, there are two compulsory tests.⁵⁸

First, from September 2014 each child entering the primary school should perform a language screening within 30 days. This screening test is seen as a self evaluation

⁵⁸ <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/toetsenvoorscholen/default.asp?uid=&pwd.>

tool, which provides teachers an insight in pupils' development level. Each school can decide which tool they will use; the only condition is that the screening instrument is reliable and valid. For example, the catholic umbrella organisation stimulates schools to use the SALTO-test. Based on the language screening, teachers should provide extra support for pupils who underperformed on the screening. Schools can decide to set up separate 'language classes – language immersion classes. *These immersion classes were criticised during the focus groups.*

Second, 6 years old pupils who didn't attend pre-primary education for at least 220 half days should perform a Dutch language test. This test is identical for all pupils (so, schools can't decide which tool they use). If pupils don't pass this test, they can't enter primary education. Pupils, who are 7 years old and enter primary education, don't have to perform this test. *As mentioned before, there is a lot of commotion on this Dutch language test.*

Furthermore, often pupil guidance centres (CLB) test children in the 3d grade of pre-primary education (5-6years) with school readiness tests. However, schools decide themselves if they want to use the school readiness test and these test are not binding for starting compulsory education (6 years).

Overall assessment of ECEC quality

Having discussed various aspects related with quality ECEC several factors strengthening and limiting the overall quality of ECEC in Flanders can be exerted. The table below summarize the main strengths and weaknesses of ECEC system in Flanders.

Table 2: Strengths and weaknesses of ECEC system in Flanders

	Strengths	Weaknesses
Governance quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0-3: new decree child care for 0-3 2.5-6: autonomy of the school in terms of teaching methods and staff, curricula, pupil assessment and schools' pedagogical project; No national testing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Split system 2.5-6: strong influence of educational networks (e.g., in defining curricula)
Structural quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Holistic view on the child (in the new decree on child care and in the developmental objectives) 0-3: in the new decree a focus on qualification of staff; currently developing a pedagogical framework Diversity in the childcare workforce 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High staff turn over 0-3: Level of qualification is for the moment very low Maximum defined child –staff ratio in the new decree is high (but this is a maximum) The teacher / child ratio in most schools is way too high for these young children, sometimes up to 25 children per teacher. Lack of diversity in the pre-primary workforce
Access quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0-3: Number of places increased (also focus in the new decree); income related 2.5-6: high participation rate; fee free; free school choice (freedom of education); equal opportunities decree 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2.5-6: in bigger cities shortage of places - negative impact on free school choice? Most of the pre-primary schools are not well adapted to disadvantaged children and ethnic minority children.
Process quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Holistic view on the child; focus on wellbeing and involvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transitions between childcare and school and between home and school for the youngest children are not smooth Lack of skills of teachers to deal with ethnic minority and disadvantaged parents.

Short-term and Long-term impact of ECEC

This section presents evidence on the short term impact of ECEC on children's development in Flanders. As there is no solid statistical evidence on the short-term impact of ECEC on children's development, insights provided in this section are mostly based on the focus groups and interviews.

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ECEC impact on children's development and readiness for school

In the focus groups it was discussed that ECEC can have a positive impact if the child care and pre-primary education is characterised by high quality (cfr. Quality indicators discussed before). For example: when carers / teachers work in team and have time to reflect in team; when the policy making capacity of the school is sufficient; when the carers / teachers are well-prepared and can focus on the diversity of children and parents; when group size and 'flexible' grouping of children take into account the context of the children and the school. If the ECEC is of high quality, young children grow up in a stimulating environment, which positively influences children's development in a broad sense (not only cognitive, but also social; not only knowledge, but also skills and attitudes; the holistic view). It can also have a positive influence on the parents, with whom the carers/ teachers can build up a trust-relationship; the parents and the ECEC service are together responsible for raising children.

Furthermore, in the focus groups we discussed that ECEC does not only need to prepare for 'later in life'; ECEC has also aims for the 'here and now' of the child. Focusing too much on preparation for primary school will diminish the value of ECEC. Focusing too much on preparation for primary school can lead to 'over-educating' in ECEC. Every stage in education has a value on its own; it should not be made completely subservient to the next stage in education.

ECEC impact on pupils' learning outcomes

The SIBO-research⁵⁹ indicated that the entry level of children at the start of primary school affects their achievement throughout primary school and also their school trajectories.

In the SIBO-analyses early language and numeracy awareness are predictors of the achievement level throughout primary school. Other studies show that children, who attend fewer years of pre-primary education, have on average a less favourable school trajectory.

As for the most common reasons for delayed enrolment in primary education, the SIBO-research results can be summarized as follows.

⁵⁹ The large-scale longitudinal research project (SiBO) was designed to investigate children's educational careers throughout primary education in Flanders. 6,138 pupils nested in 196 schools were followed throughout primary education until the first year of secondary education. Data-collection of the SIBO-project started in the school-year 2002-2003 when the pupils were in the last year of pre-primary education (K3).

- A delayed start of primary school was clearly linked to a weak cognitive and psychosocial functioning in the last year of pre-primary education.

However, cognitive and psychosocial functioning in the last year of pre-primary education is not the only factor in delay of enrolment. There are other important factors, such as (fixed) pupil and family characteristics. A delayed start in primary education was also linked to:

- a low educational level of the mother;
- the month of birth of the child (due to the age group system in most of the Flemish schools): children who are younger in their age group are more at risk of being retained in pre-primary education.

In connection with two variables, gender and language at home, we need to mention the option of special education. The ratio of the number of children (of 6 years old) being retained in pre-primary education to the number sent to special education is higher for girls than for boys. Similarly, this ratio is higher for children with a home language different from Dutch (as compared to the ratio for Dutch speaking children). The SIBO-research revealed that pupils who were for the first time in 3rd grade of pre-primary education in 2003-2004, 3.8% repeated the 3rd grade, 2% went to special education and 0.3% went to a 'bridging class' between pre-primary education and primary education.

Concerning the long-term impact of ECEC, SIBO research showed that children who attend fewer years of pre-primary education have on average a worse school trajectory. Early language and numeracy awareness, which is stimulated in ECEC, is a predictor of the achievement level throughout primary school.

Next, in a recent analysis on a database with data from pre-primary education till the age of 35 of a group of people ($n = 500$), knowledge of numbers ('getalbegrip') at the end of pre-primary education was a significant predictor of dropout from secondary school (next to several other predictors). As for the effect of repeating 3rd grade of pre-primary education, mixed effects were observed on achievement during primary school: not positive in general, but positive for the initially lowest-performing children. The effects of repeating pre-primary education on non-cognitive outcomes (psychosocial functioning) during primary school appeared to be rather positive. In the long run a negative effect of repeating pre-primary education is observed. Research shows that in secondary school older children (former repeaters), when confronted with a failure, more often choose to go to part-time education or leave the school without a certificate than children who did not repeat beforehand.

Also, the interviews with experts on early school leaving revealed that pupils with a problematic school trajectory (such as truancy) often did not attend pre-primary education and did not regularly attend the first years of primary school (although this is compulsory). This correlation does not – of course – imply a direct causal relationship. It only shows that early school attendance can be a proxy for family background, which is related to school attendance in later stages of education.

Grade retention

In Flemish education there is a high rate of grade retention. More than 5% of the children aged 6 were still in the third 'grade' of pre-primary education in 2010-2011. In mainstream primary education, 2.71% of the pupils were repeating a grade in 2011-2012. This indicator excludes special primary education and a number of schools in ordinary primary education with non-mainstream methodology (Freinet, Steiner, Montessori,). In mainstream secondary education, 5.32% of the pupils were repeating a grade in 2011-2012. This indicator refers to secondary education up to (but not beyond) the twelfth grade and excludes part-time vocational education, modular vocational education, most of special secondary education and reception classes for immigrants of secondary education age.⁶⁰

In primary education, grade retention peaks in the first grade, where more than 7% of the children are repeaters.

Figure 4: Amount of grade retention in primary education (6-12years old pupils)



Source: <http://www.klasse.be/leraren/23466/zittenblijven-de-pijn-rendeert-niet-2/>.

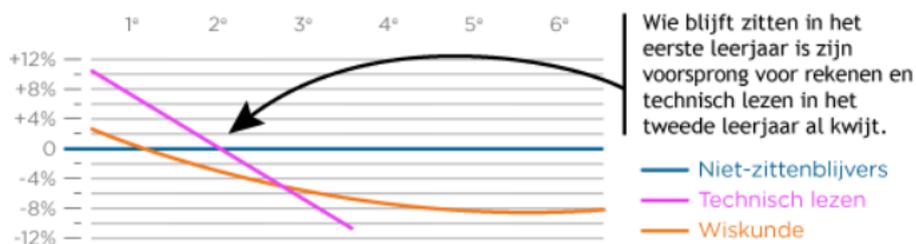
The SIBO-research showed that grade retention has a negative impact on pupils' trajectories.

Pupils who repeat the 1st year of primary education, would perform equally or even better in mathematics, technical reading, and in psycho social aspects if they had gone immediately to the 2^d grade of primary education. However, if a pupil does repeat a year it is better to repeat the 3^d grade of pre-primary education instead of the 1st year of primary education.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Source: Ministerie van Onderwijs en Vorming, Datawarehouse Education and Training; <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be> (17 August 2013).

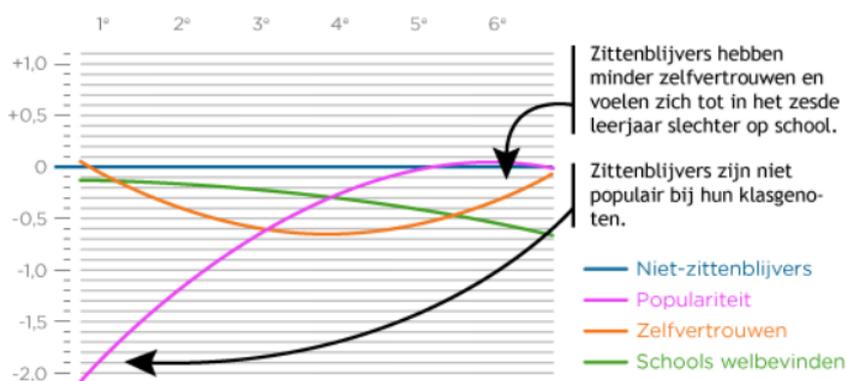
⁶¹ 'Zittenblijven in het eerste leerjaar: zinvol of niet?' van Mieke Goos, Jan Van Damme en collega's (K.U.Leuven). <http://www.klasse.be/leraren/23466/zittenblijven-de-pijn-rendeert-niet-2/>.

Figure 5: performance of pupils repeating 1st year of primary education



Source: <http://www.klasse.be/leraren/23466/zittenblijven-de-pijn-rendeert-niet-2/>.
 Note: Pupils repeating the 1st grade have no advantage of it in the 2nd grade
 Not-repeating 1st year; technical reading, mathematics

Figure 6: How do pupils who have to repeat a grade feel?



Source: <http://www.klasse.be/leraren/23466/zittenblijven-de-pijn-rendeert-niet-2/>.
 Note: Pupils repeating a grade feel less self-confident en feel worse until the last grade (6d grade) of primary education. Pupils repeating a year are not popular.
 Not -repeating, popularity, self-confidence, wellbeing at school

Within educational tracks which are organised as a strictly timed succession of grades—such as ordinary primary education and most tracks of secondary education in Flanders—there is little opportunity of giving a pupil more time to jump the next hurdle, except for repeating a whole grade. We know that in Flemish primary education, the steady growth of the percentage of pupils in the mainly separate tracks of special education during several decades and a marked increase of support systems (both within the school and from external sources) has not diminished the incidence of grade repetition. A reasonable interpretation of these two facts is that Flemish teachers see grade repetition as a well-tried resource that can be used to keep children on the main track; apparently, they see no reason to neglect this traditional tool, regardless of the expansion of their remedial tool box with newer items.

Current academic research casts doubt on the usefulness of grade retention, but this seems to have little impact on daily practice. Research also revealed that teachers who teach multigrade classes (2 or more grades together) question grade retention more than their colleagues in the more common single grade classes. However, we are mostly still in the dark about the concrete arguments, perceptions and modes of deliberation that are used in real-life decision making about grade repetition. Academic research in this domain is (too) often limited to the evaluation of grade

retention as a treatment to enhance achievement in a particular subject (rather than a tactical step to keep the pupil on board in his/her current trajectory).

Often grade retention is decided by individual teachers and a clearly defined policy at the school level is lacking. Most schools do not gather data on the incidence of retention, which is a first step in defining a clear policy.

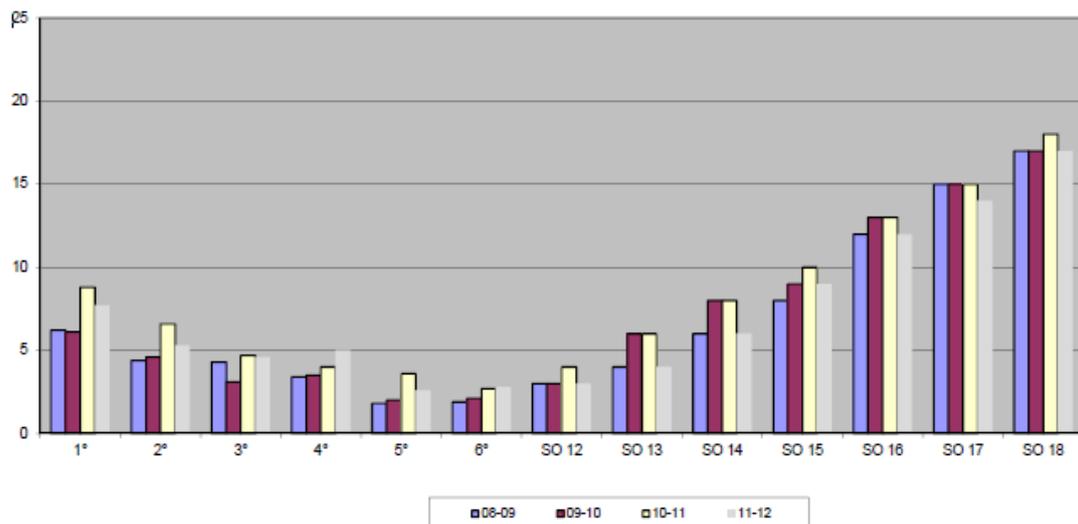
A snapshot of early school leaving (ESL) and problematic school trajectories

Truancy and unwarranted absence

In general, truancy and unwarranted absence is related to the type of education (e.g., vocational education, secondary education for NAMS, part time learning and working – DBSO).

In general, problematic absences occur most frequently in the first years of primary education and in the later years of secondary school. For example in Ghent, 't Steunpunt leerrecht en leerplichtbegeleiding (support service study entitlement and study obligation) (see later) came to the following figure of problematic absences (10 times – 10 B-codes) from 1st grade of primary education until age 18 (in secondary education).

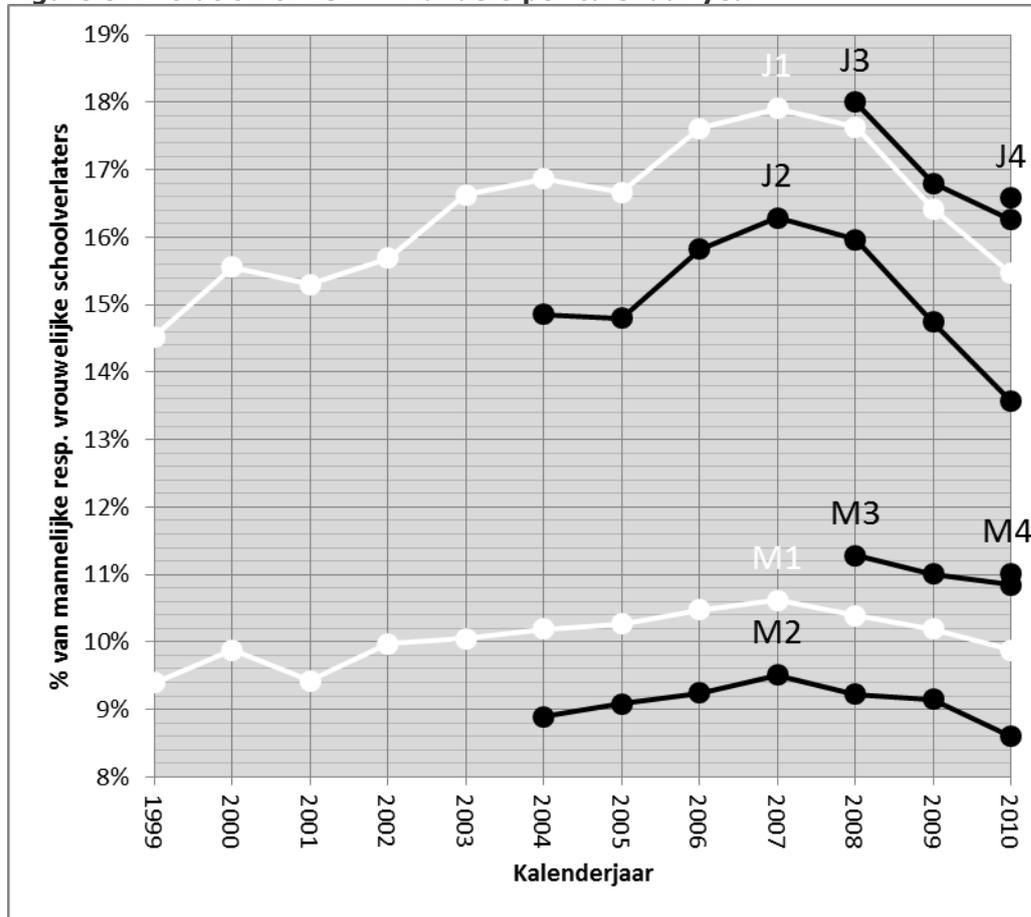
Figure 7: Problematic absences from 1st grade of primary education until age 18



Source: <http://www.tsteunpunt.be/bestanden.php>.

Early school leaving

Figure 8: Evolution of ESL in Flanders per calendar year



Source: 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: KU Leuven, Steunpunt Studie- en Scholloopbanen, rapport nr. SSL/2013.05/1.2.0. <http://www.steunpuntSSL.be>.

Notes: J = jongens (boys); M = meisjes (girls).

1 = indicator based on aggregated administrative data, without special education certificates.

2 = indicator based on aggregated administrative data, including special education certificates.

3 and 4 = indicators based on detailed administrative data (i.e. longitudinal data for every pupil), indicator 4 slightly more accurate.

The figure shows a gradual increase of ESL between 1999 and 2008 and a sharp decline between 2008 and 2010, which can be attributed to the impact of the financial and economic crisis.

Table 3: ESL in 13 Flemish cities with the largest school population and in Flemish education in Brussels (2010)

Locatie	Volgens vestigingsplaats				Volgens woonplaats			
	Sch.	Indicator			Sch.	Indicator		
		J+M	J	M		J+M	J	M
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%
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%

Source: Van Landeghem et al. (2013).

Notes: Sch. = number of school leavers in 2010; J = jongens (boys); M = meisjes (girls).

Columns J, M, J+M: percentage of early school leavers.

Each city has been depicted in two different ways: as the location of school ('vestigingsplaats') and as the location of home ('woonplaats').

The table demonstrates (a part of) the considerable geographical variation of the rate of ESL within Flanders.

Reasons for early school leaving (ESL) and problematic school trajectories

In the focus groups different factors involved in early school leaving and problematic trajectories were discussed, for example (not exhaustive):

(1) Pupil and family characteristics.

- Low SES: children from low-qualified mothers (and other unfavourable SES categories) are referred 10x more to 'special education';
- Gender;
- Limited school engagement (cfr. Lamote, 201362);
- Difficulties with study selection.

(2) Characteristics of education / the school

- School located in central cities;
- Structure of secondary education – many subjects with different teachers for each subject (whereas in primary education there is 1 teacher responsible for most of the subjects);
- Age groups (impact of date of birth, e.g., overrepresentation of pupils born in last months of the year in special education);

⁶² Lamote, C. (2013). *Less successful pathways through secondary education*. Leuven: KU Leuven, Centre for Educational Effectiveness and Evaluation, doctoral dissertation.

- Feminisation of education;
- Insufficient link between child / home culture and school culture;
- Problematic relation between teacher and pupil;
- Lacking school policy on truancy, absence, ...

The determinants of ESL discussed in the focus groups and interviews and demonstrated in scientific research about the Flemish education system are essentially the ones that have been documented extensively in international research and EU policy papers. Recent work by Van Landeghem et al. (2013, cited above, and previous work cited therein), for example, clearly shows, for the Flemish case: ESL as a consequence of problematic careers in education as well as ESL influenced by (short-term) job opportunities in the labour market; extensive geographical variation in ESL rates, with higher rates in large cities and economically deprived areas, but also with as yet unexplained differences; stark contrasts according to gender, home language and socio-economic background. This research reveals a rather startling degree of segregation within the Flemish educational system, in terms of opportunities and risks; but the factors involved are not new, from the perspective of international research.

Undoubtedly, some of the factors listed above are interrelated. For example, it is obvious that in Flanders, as elsewhere, families with limited socio-economic resources tend to concentrate in the larger cities and in economically deprived areas. Large administrative databases which enable a detailed modelling of some of the relationships between the geographical distribution of ESL in Flanders and the distribution of potentially related factors (such as socio-economic variables, labour market characteristics) have become accessible for analysis only recently and await further analysis.

Another pathway into further research is opened by the recent findings by Lamote (2013) with regard to the relationship between unfavourable levels and trajectories of school engagement in secondary education and the risk of ESL. Is a pupil's engagement with school merely a product of the interaction between the pupil and the school, or are perceptions about eventual chances of finding employment and about the state of the (local) labour market important determinants as well?

Tackling early school leaving and problematic school trajectories

The different 'reasons', described above, show that ESL, problematic school trajectories and truancy are multicomplex problems, which imply that an integrated approach to truancy, absence, ESL is needed. In the Flemish educational landscape different levels coping with truancy, absence and ESL can be defined: Flemish policy, local/regional initiatives, and school initiatives.

Flemish policy

In 2006 an action plan 'A closing approach to truancy' [Een sluitende aanpak van spijbelen en schoolverzuim], was developed. In 2009 this was continued in the current 'A vigorous Flanders in decisive times. For an innovative, sustainable and caring society' [Een daadkrachtig Vlaanderen in beslissende tijden. Voor een vernieuwde, duurzame, en warme samenleving] and it was decided that the truancy action plan would be intensified. In this action plan there are actions focusing on 6 topics and on

continuum from data collection, informing / sensibilisation, prevention, supporting, sanctioning.⁶³

In the new action plan the focus is on 'transgressing behaviour' (which is broader than only truancy).⁶⁴

In the action plan it is defined that different actors are involved in handling truancy: the school, the pupil guidance centres (CLB), the police, One of the approaches to cope with truancy is withdrawing the school fund parents receive.

Based on the interviews and the focus groups we can state that this action plan is rather vague and broad. Also, questioned were some of the repressive measures, such as the home visits and the official reports of the police and the withdrawing of the school fund.

The Flemish Government recently approved the 'Actieplan vroegtijdig schoolverlaten' [Action plan early school leaving], which is an attempt to coordinate and sustain a comprehensive effort to decrease the number of early school leavers in Flanders. The plan contains a limited number of new elements, namely: the development of a monitoring system in order to regularly provide quantitative data about ESL at all levels (including local authorities and individual schools); the development of an interactive website providing information about potential approaches to tackle ESL (inspired by the Dutch example); the development of scenarios for collaboration between local stakeholders (schools, counselling services, local authorities, job agencies, ...); the inclusion of early school leaving in the scope of the school inspectorates work. In addition, it contains an extensive list of policies which are already in place and which it promises to further sustain and promote.

Another aspect at the Flemish policy level, which has the goal to diminish the unqualified students (around 1 out of 7 pupils leave secondary education unqualified) is the reform of secondary education.⁶⁵

Local initiatives

Since 2007 and changed in 2011, the decree concerning the flanking educational policy (flankerend onderwijsbeleid) stated that the local government should also be involved in coping with truancy, problematic behaviour at school, unqualified school leaving (next to equal opportunities; pre- primary participation; Dutch language stimulation; parental involvement; link with the local community; collaboration between education, welfare, culture, youth and sport; transition from school to work; lifelong learning; literacy). The flanking educational policy is the sum of actions taken by the local government (additional to the Flemish policy) taking into account the specific local context. The Flemish government provides financial resources so that local government – in collaboration with local organisations – can focus on local 'problems'. Currently this is the case in 13 central cities and some other towns.⁶⁶

The 'snapshot of ESL (described above) showed that the local context is important. In Ghent, for example, 't Steunpunt leerrecht en leerplichtbegeleiding (support service

⁶³ The plan can be consulted at:

http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/secundair/Actieplan_Vroegtijdig_Schoolverlaten_def.pdf.

⁶⁴ <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/leerplicht/algemeen/APS2012.htm> Actieplan spijbelen en andere vormen van grensoverschrijdend gedrag (pdf, 25p.).

⁶⁵ <http://www.hervormingsecundair.be/>; https://www.kuleuven.be/metaforum/docs/pdf/wg_16_e1.pdf.

⁶⁶ <http://www.bestuurszaken.be/sites/bz.vlaanderen.be/files/40466%20herwerking%20broch%20planlasten%20LR.pdf>.

study entitlement and study obligation) was set up. This is a service subsidised by the city of Ghent which transcends the educational network; it started in 2008. The mission of the service changed from data gathering (from all schools irrespective of the educational network) to supporting pupil guidance centres and schools in coping with truancy and problematic absence of pupils.

An other local example is the research which was performed by 'Kind en Samenleving' (Child and society) which studied truancy in Oostende (commissioned by LOP Oostende), summarized in a movie.⁶⁷

Initiatives at individual schools

In general, schools can be supported by pupil guidance centres in order to cope with truancy. There are also specific services which offer time-out projects.⁶⁸ There are different 'types' of projects. In some time-out projects, pupils go outside the school and follow a separate trajectory; in other projects there is a coaching trajectory at the school (with the pupil, the whole class group and the teacher); collaboration with the parents; developing a personal development plan (preparing unqualified pupils for life beyond 18), ...

Some schools decide autonomously to prioritize truancy, ESL, and problematic school trajectories. For example HTISA⁶⁹ in Ghent decided to recruit a bridging teacher (paid by the equal opportunities resources), who collaborates with the pupil guiding teacher (leerlingbegeleider) at the school and the pupil guidance centre in order to diminish truancy and problematic absence. In December 2013 (half way the school year) the bridging figure supported already around 10% of the pupils in the school.

Although there are inspiring practices and projects, the interviews and focus groups revealed that a clear school policy (supported by the team) is often lacking.

Conclusions

The Flemish ECEC-system is well-established, has an acceptable overall level of quality, provides good access at the 0-2.5 stage, and is nearly universally attended in the pre-school years.

But in the childcare sector the required level of qualification is until today very problematic. Several experts and international reports are warning that the fact there are no qualification requirements in most of the sector is a risk especially for the disadvantaged children. But a new law of April 2014 stipulates that everyone working in childcare has to have some kind of qualification by 2024 and that every childcare worker has the right to pedagogical guidance from a pedagogical coach. Another positive evolution is that in 2014 the first graduates of the new Bachelor training in Pedagogy of the Young Child (Pedagogisch Coach) will be on the labour market.

The workforce of the pre-primary schools consists of mainly white middle class women. Especially in the large cities this impedes the collaboration with parents, living in disadvantaged circumstances and of ethnic minority parents. Some schools in larger cities have a lot to offer when it comes to working in a context of diversity but in other

⁶⁷ <http://k-s.be/perspectief-van-kinderen/gezin-en-onderwijs/stoppen-met-spijbelen/>
<http://k-s.be/perspectief-van-kinderen/gezin-en-onderwijs/film-stoppen-met-spijbelen/>.

⁶⁸ time out projects such as groep intro <http://www.groepintro.be/>, arktos <http://www.arktos.be/>.

⁶⁹ <http://www.htisa.be/>.

schools, a coherent policy to ethnic minority parents and parents living in poverty is still lacking.

Another problem for the pre-primary schools in Flanders is the care for the youngest children (2½ to 4 years). Although the participation of disadvantaged and ethnic minority children is high, the members of the focus group have their doubts that the most of the pre-primary schools are well adapted to disadvantaged children and ethnic minority children. Therefore collaboration with childcare facilities to create smooth transitions between childcare and school and between home and school for the youngest children should now be a priority, while schools also need to invest more in the care for and the well being of the youngest children. The teacher / child ratio in most schools is way too high for these young children, sometimes up to 25 children per teacher.

This ECEC stage feeds into a compulsory education system which eventually produces a relatively high rate of ESL and, more importantly, surprisingly strong differences in the risk of ESL according to the socio-economic status, home language and geographical location. This is the central issue of this case study.

This finding seems to suggest that—at least in Flanders—a search for systemic determinants of ESL needs to focus more on the structure of compulsory education rather than on the quality of ECEC.

The high rate of grade retention in Flemish primary education, together with the high percentage of pupils in separate schools for special education, can be interpreted as a symptom of a marked contrast between primary and pre-primary education. In primary education, the holistic approach of the child—with the aim of developing all its talents at the child's own pace—seems to be pushed aside by curricula predominantly valuing the academic basics (reading, writing, numeracy). Moreover, these academic skills need to be acquired in a strictly graded system, resembling a hurdle race. This system is well-adapted to the majority, but disenfranchises a minority with less academic talents, which is left behind or side-tracked.

This academic orientation of Flemish education is also exemplified by the existing hierarchy between tracks in secondary education. Student flows between the tracks are mainly unidirectional. Academic subjects (languages, mathematics, science) are on top, part-time vocational education is at the bottom of the hierarchy. The system tends to concentrate students with problematic previous trajectories in its 'lower' tracks.

The marked differences in the risk of ESL according to the socio-economic status and home language might be tentatively interpreted as a consequence of a cultural gap between the educational system and a part of the population it serves. Especially in the larger cities, the population seems to have become more diverse than the culturally rather homogeneous group of teachers, counsellors and policy makers running the Flemish education system.

Finally, it must be noted that—at least in Flanders—ESL is not only determined by the working of the education system. The (local) state of the labour market is a factor as well.

List of sources

List of Interviews

No.	Position	Institution/ Organisation	Mode of interview	Date of interview
1.	Local expert in early school leaving in Ghent	't Steunpunt leerrecht en leerplichtbegeleiding – support centre from the different educational networks in Ghent in educational right http://www.tsteunpunt.be/	Face-to-face	20/12/2013
2.	Coordinator of a Local consultation platform in West-Flanders	LOP - local consultation platforms ensures the right of enrolment and to co-operate in implementing a local policy on equal opportunities in education. http://www.lop.be	Face-to-face	6/01/2014
3.	'Bridging' teacher	Secondary school in Ghent Publicly funded, privately run schools: catholic school Technical and vocational education http://www.htisa.be/aanbod/	Face-to-face	7/01/2014
4.	Professor at catholic University of Leuven	Research focuses on educational effectiveness and evaluation	Face-to-face	

List of Focus group participants

Focus group 1 8/01/2014

Interviewers: Jan Peeters en Hester Hulpia

No.		Position	Institution/ Organisation
1.	Soaraya Fret	Educational guidance	Educational guidance service of publicly funded, privately run schools: catholic schools (previous: caring teacher in a primary school) http://www.vvkbao.be/pedagogisch-didactisch/kleuteronderwijs
2.	Ellen Bauwens	Educational guidance	Educational guidance service of publicly funded, privately run schools: catholic schools coordination of the support of pupils' participation in pre-primary education (2KP) (previous: school principal of a primary school) http://www.vvkbao.be/pedagogisch-didactisch/kleuteronderwijs
3.	Linda van Keilegom	Educational guidance	Educational guidance service of publicly funded, publicly run education coordination of the support of pupils' participation in pre-primary education (2KP) http://www.ovsg.be/
4.	Vera Pollier	Inspectorate	Flemish inspectorate of education – primary education (previous: teacher, school principal, educational guidance)
5.	Veerle Martens	Docent / lector	Catholic university college Ghent (Artevelde Hogeschool) – department teacher training - bachelor preschool education (2.5-6) http://www.arteveldehogeschool.be/bachelor-het-onderwijs-kleuteronderwijs
6.	Armand Demeyer	Educational guidance (retired)	Educational guidance service of publicly funded, publicly run education in Ghent (retired) – projects in primary education (Freinet schools in Ghent) and day care http://www.pbdgent.be/
7.	Helena Sienaert	Docent / lector	Catholic university college Ghent (Artevelde Hogeschool) – department teacher training - bachelor daycare (0-3) (pedagogiek van het Jonge Kind) http://www.arteveldehogeschool.be/bachelor-de-pedagogie-van-het-jonge-kind

Focus group 2 8/01/2014

Interviewers: Jan Peeters en Hester Hulpia

No.		Position	Institution/ Organisation
1.	Lien Werbrouck	Docent / lector	Catholic university college Antwerp (Karel De Grote Hogeschool) – department teacher training – head of the bachelor childcare (0-3) (pedagogiek van het Jonge Kind) http://www.kdg.be/lien-werbrouck
2.	Iris Roose	Researcher	Expertise centre on diversity and learning (Steunpunt diversiteit en leren) Research on competences of preschool teachers in working with diversity and poverty http://www.steunpuntdiversiteitenleren.be/en/home
3.	Barbara Devos	Employee	Vlaams welzijnsverbond – Flemish care alliance – focus on child care (0-3) http://www.vlaamswelzijnsverbond.be/kennismaking/wiewat-en-hoe
4.	Eef Deman	Educational guidance	Educational guidance service of GO! (education of the Flemish Community) - focus on primary schools; coordination of the support of pupils' participation in pre-primary education (2KP) http://www.g-o.be/Net_eMagazineHome/Pages/OverGO.aspx?Id=28
5.	Chris Taverniers	Educational guidance	Educational guidance service of GO! education of the Flemish Community - focus on primary schools in Brussels and poverty http://www.g-o.be/Net_eMagazineHome/Pages/OverGO.aspx?Id=28
6.	Jean Pierre Verhaeghe	Coordinator of a local consultation platform in Ghent & researcher	Coordinator of the local consultation platform (LOP) primary education in Ghent Researcher at the Catholic University Leuven – school feedback project Employee at the Flemish Office of the Children's Rights Commissioner – focus on diversity (refugee children and inclusion)

Focus group 3 10/01/2014

Interviewers: Hester Hulpia & Georges van Landghem

No.		Position	Institution/ Organisation
1.	Bieke Defraïne	Researcher	Catholic University Leuven – Head of the department educational effectiveness and evaluation Research focuses on educational effectiveness and evaluation http://www.kuleuven.be/wieiswie/en/person/00005230
2.	Els Gadeyne	Researcher	Catholic University Leuven – department of special education Currently working on special education Previous research focused on transition ECEC – primary education and grade repetition in the last year of ECEC http://www.kuleuven.be/wieiswie/en/person/00003240
3.	Steven Groenez	Researcher	HIVA - Research Institute for Work and Society (Catholic University Leuven) Research on positive effects of ECEC for children of low income parents http://hiva.kuleuven.be/en/ http://hiva.kuleuven.be/en/overhiva/onsteam_detail.php?id=33
4.	Elien Lemmens	Researcher	HIVA - Research Institute for Work and Society (Catholic University Leuven) http://hiva.kuleuven.be/en/ http://hiva.kuleuven.be/en/overhiva/onsteam_detail.php?id=290
5.	Els Bertrands	Docent / lector	Catholic University College Leuven – department of teacher training – bachelor preschool education (2.5-6)
6.	Greet Decin	Docent / lector	Catholic University College Leuven – department of teacher training – bachelor preschool education (2.5 – 6)
7.	Laurent Thijs	Principal of a pupil guidance centre (retired)	CLB – pupil guidance Centre in Leuven - educational network: publicly funded, privately run schools (catholic schools)
8.	Bart Declercq	Researcher	CEGO (expertise centre on experiential education from the catholic University Leuven – focusing on child care (0-3) – developed a self evaluation instrument on wellbeing and involvement in day care. Also editor of a magazine 'Kleuters en ik' (toddlers en me)
9.	Yves Moolenaers	Project manager	Publicly funded, publicly run education in Antwerp – secondary education – focusing on early school leavers in Antwerp