The equal educational opportunities (GOK) policy has been developed particularly for disadvantaged children/young people (both native and from ethnic minorities). In both mainstream and special education, from 2002 to 2012 it ensured extra support and also guaranteed these pupils the right to enrol in the school of their choice. Since 1 September 2012, the GOK and GOK+ teaching periods for mainstream elementary education have been integrated in the new staff allocation system in mainstream elementary education as SES teaching periods (based on socio-economic status); this is as a result of the staff allocation decree of 6 July 2012 [see 2.7-2.1]. The prioritisation scheme for GOK pupils' registration has also been integrated in the new registration system for elementary and secondary education [see 2.2-2]. In special education and secondary education, the GOK scheme has been retained.

To facilitate Dutch language skills and the integration of non-Dutch speaking newly arrived migrants in mainstream education, schools can be granted supplementary teaching periods/extra teacher hours and an extra operational allowance, so that they can organise OKATN/OKAN, reception education for non-Dutch speaking newly arrived migrants.

In view of the varied language skills of many pupils in Dutch-language schools in Brussels, and elementary schools located in the peripheral and language boundary municipalities and those adjoining them, these schools are granted suitable facilities and extra support. Since 1 September 2012, these teaching periods for mainstream elementary education have been integrated in the new staff allocation system in mainstream elementary education (staff allocation decree of 6 July 2012) [see 2.7-2.1].

**Definition of target group(s)**

**The equal educational opportunities policy (GOK)**

On the basis of the equal educational opportunities policy, schools in secondary education and special elementary education can gain additional support (supplementary teaching periods or extra teacher hours) for a period of three consecutive school years (a GOK cycle), on condition that the school:

- caters for a minimum number of pupils who meet at least one of the equal educational opportunities indicators;
- defines its own specific vision on equal educational opportunities;
- has been given a favourable inspection report on the school's activities over the previous period of three school years.

The school must have a minimum number of pupils who satisfy at least one of the equal education opportunities indicators

In mainstream secondary education, in its pupil population, the school needs to exceed a
minimum threshold:

- in the 1st stage of secondary education, minimum 10% of target-group pupils,
- in the 2nd and 3rd stages of secondary education, minimum 25% of target-group pupils.

The target-group pupils meet at least one of the equal education opportunities indicators.

- the parents are members of the migratory population (bargees, fairground or circus operators and artists, members of the travelling community);
- the mother does not have a diploma secundair onderwijs (diploma of secondary education), a studiegetuigschrift van het 2e leerjaar van de 3e graad beroepssecundair onderwijs (certificate of the 2nd grade of the 3rd stage of vocational secondary education) or equivalent proof of study;
- the (homeless) pupil is, either temporarily or permanently, cared for outside his/her own family environment;
- during the school year which precedes the school year of the pupil's registration, the family received at least one school allowance from the Flemish Community;
- the language the pupils speaks at home, i.e. the language he speaks with his father, mother, brothers or sisters is not Dutch. The language spoken at home is not considered to be Dutch if the pupil does not speak Dutch to anyone in a family of three (the pupil excluded) or speaks Dutch with maximum one family member. Several brothers and sisters are always counted as one family member.

Prior to any new GOK cycle, schools request all those details from parents. On the basis of this information, schools are then allocated GOK hours.

In special education, on the count day the school must have at least 40% external and semi-internal regular pupils of type 1 and/or type 3 who satisfy the equal opportunities indicator of the ‘mother’s educational level’: this means that the mother does not have a diploma of upper secondary education, a certificate for the second grade of the third stage of vocational secondary education or an equivalent certificate. The school must also generate at least six teaching periods.

The supplementary teaching periods are calculated on the basis of the number of pupils who meet the indicator ‘mother's level of education’ and (only in combination with the latter) the indicator ‘the language the pupil speaks at home is not Dutch’. The language spoken at home is not considered to be Dutch if the pupil does not speak Dutch to anyone in a family of three (the pupil excluded) or speaks Dutch with maximum one family member. Several brothers and sisters are always counted as one family member.

The school must develop a school-specific vision on equal opportunities

On the basis of an analysis of the initial situation, the school determines which concrete objectives it wishes to pursue with these extra resources, how it wants to achieve these objectives and how it will conduct a self-evaluation.

In mainstream secondary education, the objectives can be selected:

- from amongst the following themes:
  - preventing and remedying developmental and learning delays,
  - linguistic-skills education,
  - intercultural education,
  - progression and orientation,
  - socio-emotional development,
pupil and parent participation.
• or within a cluster of which the objectives have been specified beforehand:
  ○ cluster 1: remedying developmental and learning delays and achieving learning gains,
  ○ cluster 2: enhancing pupils' linguistic skills,
  ○ cluster 3: boosting pupils' positive self-image and social skills.

In special education objectives may be chosen from amongst the following themes:

• developing a specific linguistic-skills education provision whereby pupils' linguistic skills such as listening, speaking, writing and comprehension within a functional context is boosted;
• offering education-oriented parenting support to parents;
• incorporating the (low-threshold) social functions in a network which also includes partners from other sectors.

The school must have a favourable inspection report on the school's activities over the previous period of three school years

During the third year of every three-year period, the inspectorate checks whether the GOK schools are implementing their objectives, and, while examining how the supplementary teaching periods have been used, it investigates whether and to what extent equal opportunity tools have been developed and the objectives were attained, this in light of the school context and the characteristics of the pupil population. In addition, the inspectorate also monitors the implementation of the chosen objectives and the school's self-evaluation.

If the outcome of the inspectorate's inspection is a negative one, the school will lose its supplementary teaching periods within the framework of the equal educational opportunities policy for the next period of three school years unless the school agrees to avail of guidance from its network-related pedagogical counselling service and draws up a counselling path.

Reception education for non-Dutch speaking newly arrived immigrants in mainstream education (OKATN/OKAN)

The target group of this form of reception education in mainstream elementary and secondary education is non-Dutch speaking, newly arrived immigrants, i.e. pupils who simultaneously meet the following conditions:

• Age requirements:
  ○ Be at least five years old or attain that age at latest on 31 December of the current school year (primary education);
  ○ Be at least 12 years old and not yet 18 on 31 December following upon the start of the school year (full-time secondary education);
  ○ Be not yet 18 years on 31 December following upon the start of the school year (part-time vocational secondary education). Pupils must comply with the age requirements of part-time vocational secondary education (either be 16 years old or be 15 and having completed at least two years of secondary education).
• Not have Dutch as a mother tongue or language spoken at home;
• Insufficiently master the language of instruction to successfully follow classes;
• Be registered in a school with Dutch as language of instruction for nine months at the most (the holiday months July and August are not counted);
• Be a newly arrived immigrant, i.e. reside uninterruptedly in Belgium for at most one year.

In addition to this first group as described above, the term non-Dutch speaking newly arrived
immigrant also refers to children officially residing in an open refugee centre. For these children, only the age requirement must be met. The other requirements are disregarded if the pupil can present a certificate of the refugee centre where he or she resides. This implies that all pupils who meet the age requirements are eligible for reception education as long as they reside in the refugee centre. In primary education, the school year following upon their departure from the refugee centre, they are eligible to take part in a follow-up year, organised after reception education.

In full-time mainstream secondary education, the class committee holds the authority to diverge from the requirements regarding age, duration of residence and school career. This is also possible in part-time vocational secondary education. For part-time vocational secondary education this procedure is currently still managed by the Flemish Agency for Education Services (AgODi).

Figures about pupils and schools can be found on the website of AgODi [1] [11].

**Dutch-language schools in Brussels and in municipalities bordering the Dutch language area**

The number of pupils in Flemish schools is continuing to rise, but increasing numbers of these pupils have a non-Dutch-speaking background. No fewer than 68% of pupils in Dutch-language elementary education in Brussels do not speak Dutch at home. For secondary education, the figure is 51%. Various measures have therefore been taken, and schools there receive extra facilities and support.

**Specific support measures**

**The equal educational opportunities policy (GOK)**

The aim of the equal educational opportunities policy (GOK [2]) launched in 2002 is to combat exclusion, social exclusion and discrimination, and special attention is therefore paid to children from disadvantaged backgrounds. The policy applies to secondary education and special elementary education. It includes:

- the pupil’s right to enrol at the school/site of choice and the limitation of the reasons for refusing a pupil or referring him/her to another school - integrated in the new set of registration rules from 1 September 2012 [see 2.1-2.2.];
- the formation of local consultation platforms and a Committee on Pupils’ Rights to implement the policy at local level and ensure pupils and parents legal certainty (see below);
- the provision of integrated support that has joined together various projects existing at that time and enables schools to develop comprehensive care activities focusing on disadvantaged children.

Schools may use their supplementary teaching periods/extra teacher hours allocated under the **equal educational opportunities policy (GOK)** in various different ways to promote equal opportunities, and use them to appoint equal opportunities policy teachers who can be given **permanent employment**.

Since 1 September 2007, schools with more than 40% disadvantaged pupils have been able to rely on **extra GOK+ teaching periods** to employ extra childcare workers. Since 1 September 2008, the number of GOK teaching periods has risen dramatically.

As a new staff allocation mechanism in mainstream elementary education started on 1 September 2012, a new GOK cycle was not started in the meantime. For mainstream secondary education and special elementary and secondary education, a new GOK cycle of three successive school years starts
on 1 September 2012.

To coordinate and monitor the implementation and legal protection of pupils, local consultation platforms (LOPs) and a Committee on Pupils’ rights were established [see 2.1-2.2].

Temporary projects on art initiation were also launched.

**Temporary projects on art initiation**

Within the framework of the Equal Educational Opportunities-I Decree, the Flemish Government began to initiate projects on art initiation for disadvantaged and/or children from ethnic minorities in elementary and secondary education during the 2002-2003 school year. These have since been extended for successive three-year periods, up to 2013 (Decree 10/7/2008). The goals are:

- boosting the self-image of pupils who are at risk of falling behind at school;
- promoting cultural competence within these target groups;
- increasing the involvement of the neighbourhood and parents in the school.

The project is run by a cooperative which must be composed of:

- the instigating school;
- one or more academies for part-time artistic education;
- a cultural organisation (e.g. a cultural centre, or an art-education organisation);
- a neighbourhood-oriented organisation (e.g. neighbourhood committee, community centre, local ethnic-minority community...).

The Equal Educational Opportunities Decree itself provides three possible methods to accomplish the three-fold project objective:

- artistic coaching of the minors in question by artists;
- the professionalization of teachers teaching at a school offering Elementary education or secondary education on the subject of integrating art education into an intercultural school environment;
- organising art initiation which dovetails with the social environment of the minors concerned.

Support is provided in the form of an allocation based on points which increases gradually as more elementary or secondary schools participate in the project. Schools are free to decide how they spend these funds:

- extra hours for teaching staff, policy and support staff, administrative staff or pedagogical support staff;
- additional resources for operational expenses or lecturers.

The institutions in question, together with the institutions for part-time artistic education involved in the organisation of temporary art-education projects, are taking part in a working group which is examining how both projects can form a structural network by working in a complementary fashion (Circular BaO/2006/01).

In 2010, two final reports on the initiatives were produced, and the VLOR formulated a policy recommendation [3] on the subject.
GOK support

The Centre for Equal Educational Opportunities used to provide support to Flemish GOK schools and the GOK policy: http://www.steunpuntgok.be/ [4]. On account of the cutbacks, it ceased operating on 31 December 2009. However, the centres that used to work with the GOK centre have now taken over its role.

- The CTO, Centre for Language and Education (previously the Centre for Dutch-as-a-second-language), connected to the K.U.Leuven: http://www.cteno.be [5]
- The Centre Diversity and Learning (previously the ICO Centre, Intercultural Education), connected to the Ghent University: [ http://www.steunpuntico.be [6]

Nursery-school teachers working in schools located in one of the LCP municipalities which cater for a minimum of 25% GOK pupils can avail of second-line support, consisting of intensive guidance which focuses on their own pedagogical and didactical approach.

Reception education for non-Dutch speaking newly arrived immigrants in mainstream education (OKATN/OKAN)

General principles

Reception education for non-Dutch speaking, newly arrived immigrants in mainstream primary and secondary education is a specific and temporary education offer that aims to receive foreign mother tongue newcomers, who have recently arrived in Belgium. The goal is to teach these pupils the Dutch language as soon as possible and to stimulate their social integration.

In part-time vocational secondary education (VET) reception education for non-Dutch speaking newly arrived immigrants prepares pupils for a better transition to the labour market and is therefore oriented towards language proficiency, integration and self-reliance.

In primary education reception education lasts at least until the end of the school year in which the non-Dutch speaking newcomer entered school. Foreign mother tongue immigrants who enrol later in the school year generate financial means for a second year of reception education. After reception education a follow-up year can be organised in primary education.

Financing / subsidizing

To organise reception education for foreign mother tongue immigrants [7], primary schools can receive supplementary teaching periods and an additional operating grants for every non-Dutch speaking immigrant. A temporary measure was adopted for non-Dutch speaking pre-primary pupils in 2015: pre-primary schools receive an allowance of €950 for every non-Dutch speaking immigrant under the age of 5. Secondary schools receive additional teacher hours and school communities are granted additional teacher hours for the provision of support and guidance to pupils who move on from reception education to regular secondary education (follow-up school coaches).

Conditions

- In primary education and depending on the type of school a minimum of four to six non-Dutch speaking immigrants must be registered as regular pupils in a particular school or, alternatively, 12 pupils per school community (or an increase of four with regard to the previous count). No mandatory minimum has been set for the follow-up year.
- In mainstream secondary education no mandatory minimum number of foreign mother tongue
immigrants is required. Subsidies are allocated for every non-Dutch speaking immigrant. The allocation of extra teacher hours can be recalculated for every four additional migrant pupils.

- Schools must commit to make teachers partake in continuous professional development on the topic of reception education.

**Guidance of pupils**

**Primary education**

- For every non-Dutch speaking immigrant an individual work plan and curriculum must be drawn up.
- Schools can use the supplementary teaching periods to organise a fulltime reception class (15 non-Dutch speaking newcomers generate teaching periods for one full-time equivalent). In general however the foreign mother tongue newcomers join their peers in regular classes and the supplementary teaching periods are used to organise a couple of hours of support within the class or a reception class on a part-time basis.

**Secondary education**

- For each non-Dutch speaking immigrant an individual curriculum must be drawn up, that meets the developmental objectives of reception education and whose level is adjusted throughout the year for each pupil individually on the basis of his/her abilities and interim results.
- The curriculum must also clearly set out the support and guidance offered to the Non-Dutch speaking newcomer. This is done in conjunction with the relevant Centre for Pupil Guidance.
- The weekly curriculum in the reception year consists of between 28 and 32 teacher hours (including religion/non-confessional ethics/own culture and religion/cultural philosophy). Up to four teacher hours per week may be used by the school for purposes other than teaching Dutch. For example, the use of these hours may be based on an analysis of the individual competences, interests and prior knowledge of the immigrant pupil.
- All available information must be passed on when the pupil transitions to regular secondary education. Once the pupil has progressed to regular education, guidance and support must be maintained. Guidance may be provided within a school community or in consultation with one or several schools of another school community. Enhancing the understanding and expertise of regular teachers in and outside of reception schools by means of coaching organised by teachers from reception education, the presence of a follow-up school coach, a good transfer of pupil information and by maintaining regular contact with former reception education pupils can have a significant impact on the school results of former reception education pupils.

**Developmental objectives**

From school year 2010-2011 onwards the developmental objectives in Dutch apply to newly arrived non-Dutch speaking immigrants. [See 6.2.1.6].

**Certification**

After completing the entire effective period which the foreign mother tongue newcomer has taken reception education as a regular student in fulltime mainstream secondary education, (s)he is granted a certificate of regular class attendance. The class committee of the reception education also formulates an advise with regard to the transfer of the pupil to follow-up education.

In secondary education, after the completion of the reception year, the pupil is integrated into fulltime mainstream education taking account of the admission requirements defined in the regulations. In
practice, this will primarily imply that enrolment takes place either on the basis of a decision by the class admissions committee or on the basis of age. The admissions committee must take into account the advice from the class committee of the reception education. Every decision that diverges from this advice must be motivated.

**Support**


**Annual report**

The Agency for Educational Services (AgODi) publishes on an annual basis a report on the reception education of foreign mother tongue newcomers (OKAN [10]).

Circular Letters BaO/2006/03 and SO 75.

**Dutch-language schools in the Brussels-Capital Region & under the sphere of influence of the other language areas**

First we shall discuss the measures that have been introduced for Dutch-speaking education within the Brussels-Capital Region and subsequently those for the Dutch-speaking elementary schools located within the peripheral and language-boundary municipalities and the elementary schools located in municipalities bordering the peripheral municipalities and/or the municipalities of the Brussels-Capital Region.

**Dutch-language schools in the Brussels-Capital Region**

**Monitoring compulsory education**

In Brussels, control on truancy has been debilitated because Flemish and French-speaking education operate separate registration lists. Up and until 2007, no one knew exactly how many youngsters aged between 6 and 18 living within the Brussels-Capital Region were actually complying with compulsory education. At the start of 2007, the Flemish and French-speaking Ministers for Education agreed to come to a common list and to jointly monitor compulsory education as of school year 2007-2008. Furthermore, time-out projects (see 12.4.2) are in place to counter truancy.

**Equal educational opportunities policy**

For the Brussels-Capital Region, special priority rules on the registration of pupils apply (see 2.1.2.).

**Language education**

The statutory obligation to teach a pre-set number of teaching periods French in elementary schools is of little benefit to pupils from a French-speaking background. As of 1 September 2009, schools are therefore free to decide, in function of their pupils' intake characteristics, how many teaching periods will be dedicated to the teaching of French.

To further ameliorate the progression from elementary to secondary education of pupils who are not proficient in Dutch, pupils will be differentiated more strictly in the 3rd stage of elementary education on the basis of their linguistic skills and will be able to avail of language learning support in secondary education.
Part-time artistic education (PAE)

In the Brussels-Capital Region, institutions offering part-time artistic education can bank on 30% extra teaching periods when they are affiliated to a cross-network Collaboration Forum.

Teacher exchanges

During 2007, the Ministers for Education of the Flemish and French-speaking Communities concluded an agreement on the exchange of teachers between schools in Brussels. During the 2008-2009 school year, 19 Dutch-speaking elementary schools have started a teacher-exchange programme with neighbouring French-speaking schools (see 13.1.2.).

Language-Act exams

The Teaching Language Act exams will be given a modular structure and the EVC principles will prevail. Moreover, the levels of expected language skills will be brought into line with existing European standards.

Support policy

**The VBB, Priority Policy Brussels** supports cross-network elementary schools in the areas of linguistic-skills education, dealing with diversity and differentiation in an effective manner, cooperation with parents and other partners within the field of education. Its main objective is to boost professionalism amongst teachers so that learning and developmental delays in children can be reduced. Boards are supported in their role as school leaders and school-innovation instigators. This support is provided by a team of external counsellors. The emphasis of the VBB support lies on intensive substantive and thematic support to individual teachers, school teams and school boards. On average, a VBB counsellor provides guidance to about one-hundred teachers, either individually or in group. Currently, VBB is gradually switching over to more demand-oriented guidance. Reception of new teachers and school boards, as well as the exchange of equipment and experiences between schools will feature higher on the agenda.

The **Brussels Education Centre** has been acting as an umbrella organisation for the various organisations (such as the Learning Tools Centre and the Centre for School Development, the Further Training Centre) which support Dutch-speaking education in Brussels since 1 September 2008. As of 2010, it will also include the Priority Policy Brussels. [http://bop.vgc.be/onderwijs/taalvaart/index.html](http://bop.vgc.be/onderwijs/taalvaart/index.html)

For the support structures for Dutch-speaking education in Brussels, including the Flemish Community Commission (VGC), see also 2.7.1.10.

Extra investments

In view of demographic growth and the popularity of Dutch-speaking education, the VGC has been working since 2010 on a targeted and carefully devised capacity expansion of Dutch-speaking elementary education.

Support for Dutch-speaking elementary schools under the sphere of influence of other language areas

One major issue for the Flemish Government is reinforcing Dutch-speaking education and integrating the many non-native Dutch speaking children into the Dutch-speaking Elementary education schools located in the peripheral and language-boundary municipalities and the elementary schools located in
municipalities bordering the peripheral municipalities and/or the municipalities of the Brussels-Capital Region.

In the new staff allocation system for elementary education [see 2.7.2.1], the Brussels weighting is applied, i.e. pupil numbers are multiplied by a factor of 1.1.

The 'Association of network-related pedagogical counselling services' (see 11.1.4.1)provides tailor-made language-education support to the elementary schools operating within the Flemish Periphery. Following an analysis of the school situation, the school team is given intensive guidance on how to best instil language skills in their pupils. It also provides second-line support in matters of infant participation. The evaluation of these activities should be completed by 2010.

As is the case in Brussels the Teaching Language Act exams are reformed. These will adopt the modular structure and will be governed by the EVC principles.

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