

VET'S CLIL IN FLANDERS

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REGIONAL REPORT



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The VET's CLIL project is aimed at widening the opportunities of VET students in a globalised world by implementing the content and language integrated learning (CLIL) methodology in the curricula.



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1. CLIL IN FLANDERS (BELGIUM)

1.1. GENERAL STRUCTURE OF THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

Belgium has a complicated federal structure, which reflects on how education is organized. Therefore, we think that a brief overview will be helpful to fully understand the educational structure.

LEVEL	INSTITUTION			Influence on education
FEDERAL	FEDERAL GOVERNMENT			X
COMMUNITIES	GERMAN-SPEAKING COMMUNITY	FLEMISH COMMUNITY	FRENCH COMMUNITY	X
REGIONS	Brussels Capital region	Flanders	Wallonia	0
PROVINCES		5 Flemish provinces	5 Walloon provinces	X
MUNICIPALITIES	19 Brussels municipalities	308 Flemish municipalities	262 Walloon municipalities	X

In Belgium the **Communities** are responsible for education, except for three competences which remain a **federal** matter:

- 🌿 The determination of the beginning and the end of compulsory education (starting at the age of 6 and ending at the age of 18 / primary school from 6 until 12, secondary school from 12 until 18).
- 🌿 The minimum requirements for the issuing of diplomas.
- 🌿 The regulation of retirement for employees in the educational system.¹

In Belgium, freedom of education is a constitutional right. Every (legal) person may organize education and establish schools to that aim. The government has the duty to organize undenominational education.

Given the fact that the different governments can decide autonomously on the education in their community as long as they comply to the global federal laws, we

¹ Source: https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/belgium-flemish-community_en.

can say that "Belgian education" does not exist. Consequently, there is no such thing as "Belgian CLIL".


As Flanders is a partner in the project on CLIL in VET, from this point on, the focus will be on Flemish education and the situation of CLIL in this community.

Decisions made on the level of communities are formalized in decrees. It was the Ministry of Education who communicated in 2013 **the CLIL-decree** which allowed schools to offer CLIL classes to **the pupils of secondary education** starting on **September 2014**.

In Flanders there are **two mayor providers of education, official organizations and private organizations**, and the schools are united in **different educational networks**. Educational networks are associations that provide assistance and in-service training to the schools that join their network, and that represent the schoolboards in government consultations. POV, partner in this project, is such an organization.

Most schools join the network for support, but this is not obligatory. Training offered by the different networks is primarily organized for the schools belonging to the network, but sometimes it is also open to schools belonging to other networks. The CLIL-Masterclass, offered by POV, is an example of such an open course.

Types of schools in Flanders:

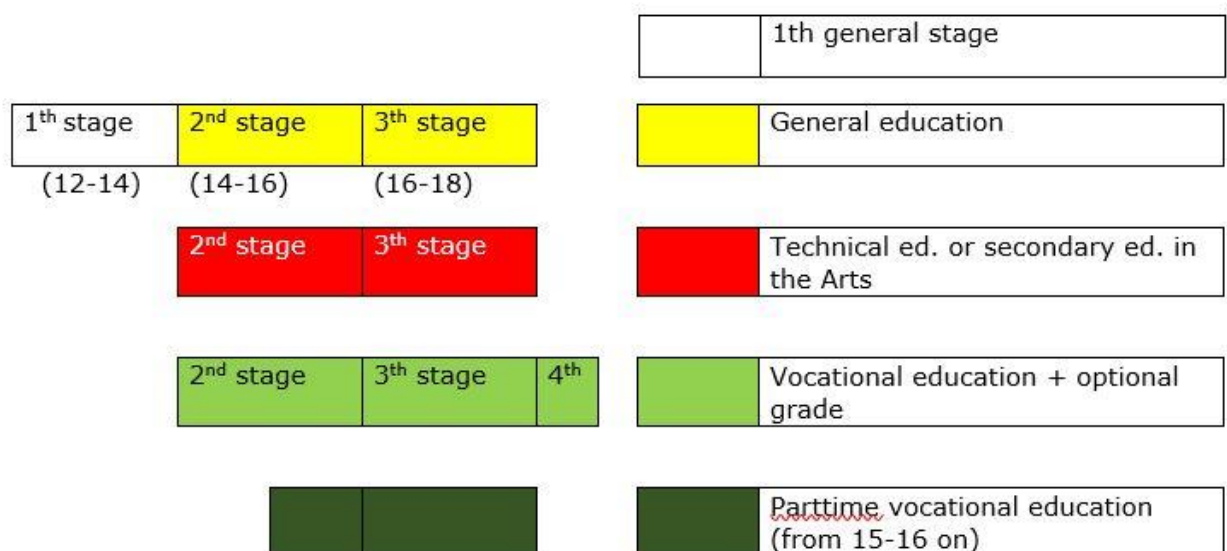
-  **Official schools (2 types)**. Education and training organized by the government is called "officieel onderwijs". This type of education includes:
 - Community Schools: organized by the Flemish Community and united under the GO! Education network.
 - Subsidized official schools that include Provincial Schools, organized by the provinces and united in the POV-network, and Municipality Schools, organized by the municipalities and united under the OVSG-network.



Private schools. Education and training organized by a private person or organization is known as “vrij onderwijs” (free education) and their network is “het vrije net” (free network). Once recognized by the government, these schools are funded. They are called “Government-aided private education” and consist primarily of catholic schools. Next to denominational schools, there are also schools not linked to a religion, e.g. alternative schools (based on the ideas of Freinet, Montessori or Steiner) which apply specific teaching methods.² The private schools outnumber all other school providers, not only in the number of schools but most of all in the number of pupils.

2. SECONDARY EDUCATION

Schematic structure of regular secondary education in Belgium³:



Full-time secondary education contains three stages, and each **stage** consists of two grades. In the third stage of vocational secondary education the successful completion of a third grade is necessary in order to obtain the certificate of secondary education.

In the **first stage of secondary education**, a common curriculum is offered. Theoretically, pupils make a choice of study only at the start of the second stage,



² https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/belgium-flemish-community_en

³ Adapted schematic structure from https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/belgium-flemish-community_en

although there is some guidance when they leave primary school: pupils are assigned to 1st grade A or B, depending on whether they achieved the goals of primary education or not.

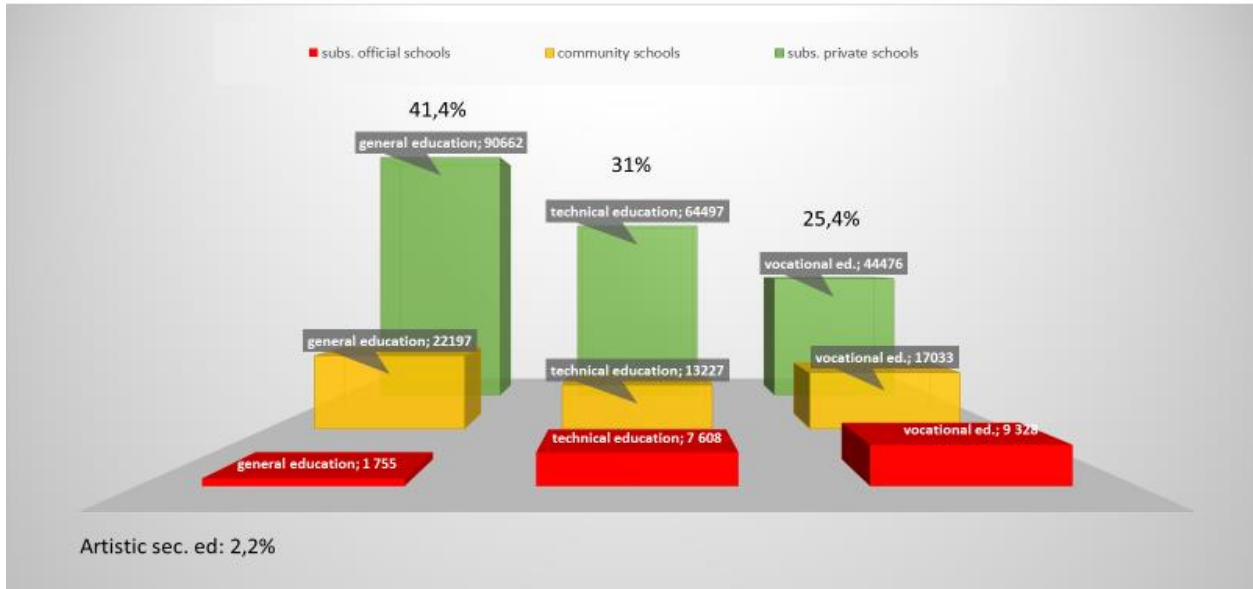
Given the fact that there are technical and vocational schools and schools for general education offering education from the first stage on, choosing a specific school often results in children being guided to a specific type of education at the age of 12. Nevertheless, switching from one type of educational setting to another is possible. The constitution also guarantees a **freedom of school choice** for the parents. Consequently, parents can decide to send their children to a school for general education, while the child would perform better in technical education.

From the second stage onwards four different **types of education** are offered. In Flanders a pupil chooses a course of study within one of the following types of education:

-  **General Secondary Education (GSE, in Dutch: ASO)**, which focuses on **broad general education**. It does not prepare pupils for a specific profession, but rather lays a firm foundation for higher education.
-  **In Technical Secondary Education** (TSE, in Dutch: TSO) attention goes in particular to **general and technical-theoretical subjects**. After TSE a student may practice a profession or transfer to higher education. This type of education also contains practical training.
-  **Secondary Education in the Arts** (in Dutch: KSO) combines a **broad general education** with an active **practice of art**. After secondary education in the arts, a student may practice a profession or transfer to higher education.
-  **Vocational Secondary Education (VET, in Dutch: BSO)** is a practically-oriented type of education in which the student receives **general education**, but the **focus** primarily lies on learning a **specific profession**.



Distribution of the pupils across the educational networks (stage 2 and 3)



As the figures show, subsidized private schools have the largest number of students and general education is their most important type of education. However, subsidized official schools are not very important when it comes to general education; their core business is training pupils in technical and vocational education.

The graph indicates that a majority of Flemish students in 2nd and 3rd stage choose general education (41,7%), 30,7% of the students are in technical education and 25,4% are in vocational education.

In the mindset of the population, general education is the best guarantee for a good future, and it is highly valued, while vocational education has a rather negative connotation. Due to the lack of good technicians and to the efforts of the government, technical education is slowly starting to be revalued by the public.

However, to be able to compare the situation in Flanders to other countries where pupils choose for general education or vocational education at the age of 16, we should split up 2nd and 3rd stage and we should consider technical and vocational education as one group.

The distribution of pupils in 2nd stage in 2017-2018:

General education: 62 780	= 46,8%	} 51,1%
Technical education: 39 627	= 29,5%	

Vocational education: 29 011	= 21,6%	
Secondary education in the arts: 2772	= 2,1%	
The distribution of pupils in 3 rd stage in 2017-2018:		
General education: 52 066	= 35,9%	
Technical education: 47 218	= 32,6%	} 61,8%
Vocational education: 42415	= 29,2%	
Secondary education in the arts: 3352	= 2,3%	

Splitting up the number of students leads to a whole new picture of the situation: in 3rd stage, the difference between the number of students in general education, technical and vocational education diminishes and if we consider vocational and technical education as one group, they outnumber general education by far.

IMPORTANT FOR THE VET'S CLIL PROJECT: IS THE DISTRIBUTION OF CLIL IN FLEMISH SCHOOLS PROPORTIONAL TO THE DISTRIBUTION OF PUPILS OVER THE TYPES OF EDUCATION?

3. CLIL IN SECONDARY EDUCATION IN FLANDERS

Flanders introduced CLIL in its secondary education in 2014. It took a long time to convince all political partners that CLIL was not a threat to the mastery of the first language, being Dutch. The roots of this fear to introduce foreign languages in subject courses alongside language classes (which are on all timetables of pupils in secondary education) lay in the Belgian history. It took Belgium up till 1963 to finally recognize by law the official school language in the different regions.

French was for a long time valued as an important language, and Dutch was not equally valued. This understandable but unjustified fear of losing the value of the Dutch language again was the main reason for the delay in launching CLIL. To be sure that CLIL would not harm the mastery of the L1, pilot projects were set up in 9 schools. The results were positive, and the CLIL-decree was negotiated and finally approved in 2013.

In September 2014, 21 schools started with CLIL and the number has grown exponentially up to 101 official CLIL schools in September 2018. There are schools



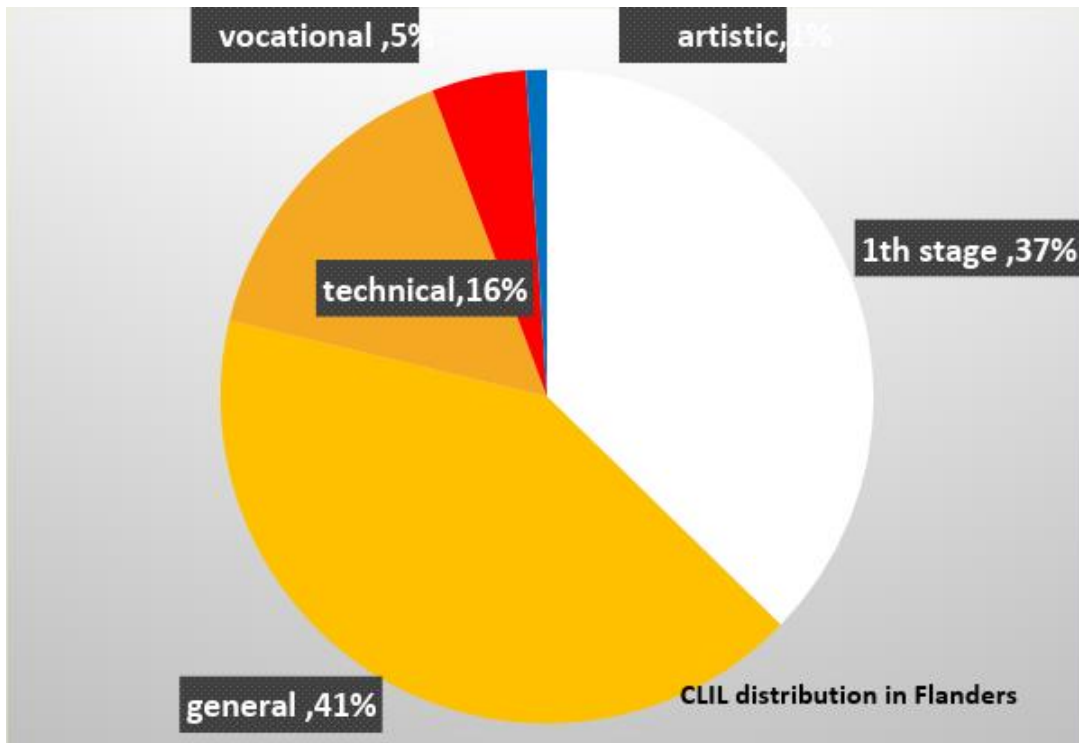
that offer CLIL without permission of the Ministry of Education. We leave them out of the figures.

It is important to know that Flanders has chosen to go for “**hard CLIL**” (focus on the non-language subject in which the foreign language is used as a vehicle to achieve the subject goals)

3.1. DISTRIBUTION OF CLIL IN FLEMISH SECONDARY SCHOOLS







Before analysing the situation of CLIL within Flemish education, it is relevant to point out a few practical problems:

- ✎ There are no statistical data available regarding the number of technical schools, schools for general education, and vocational schools because one school can offer different types of education. In total there are 939 secondary schools in Flanders.
- ✎ According to the data of the Ministry of Education, 101 schools offer CLIL. However, one school can offer CLIL in 1st stage, in general, technical and vocational education. In order to define where CLIL is present, we counted the different types of education where CLIL is offered, and not the schools. Thus, one school can be counted three times in the CLIL overview whenever they offer CLIL in three different types of education.
- ✎ The number of CLIL students is unknown. In the application form, schools mention the presumable number of CLIL students. No official counting of CLIL-students has been made so far. Consequently, it is impossible to determine the percentage of pupils that choose CLIL in the different settings.
- ✎ Schools that offer CLIL in general education very often offer CLIL in more than one subject and in more than one class. This means that a school that offers CLIL in general education is counted as one CLIL school, even if they offer CLIL to hundreds of pupils, while schools in vocational education often work in small groups and often offer CLIL to a limited and very specific group of students and are also counted as one school. This means that some schools that are valued as one CLIL-provider, serve much more children than others that also are valued as one CLIL-provider.



Despite the incomplete data, we tried to visualize the situation of CLIL within the Flemish education.

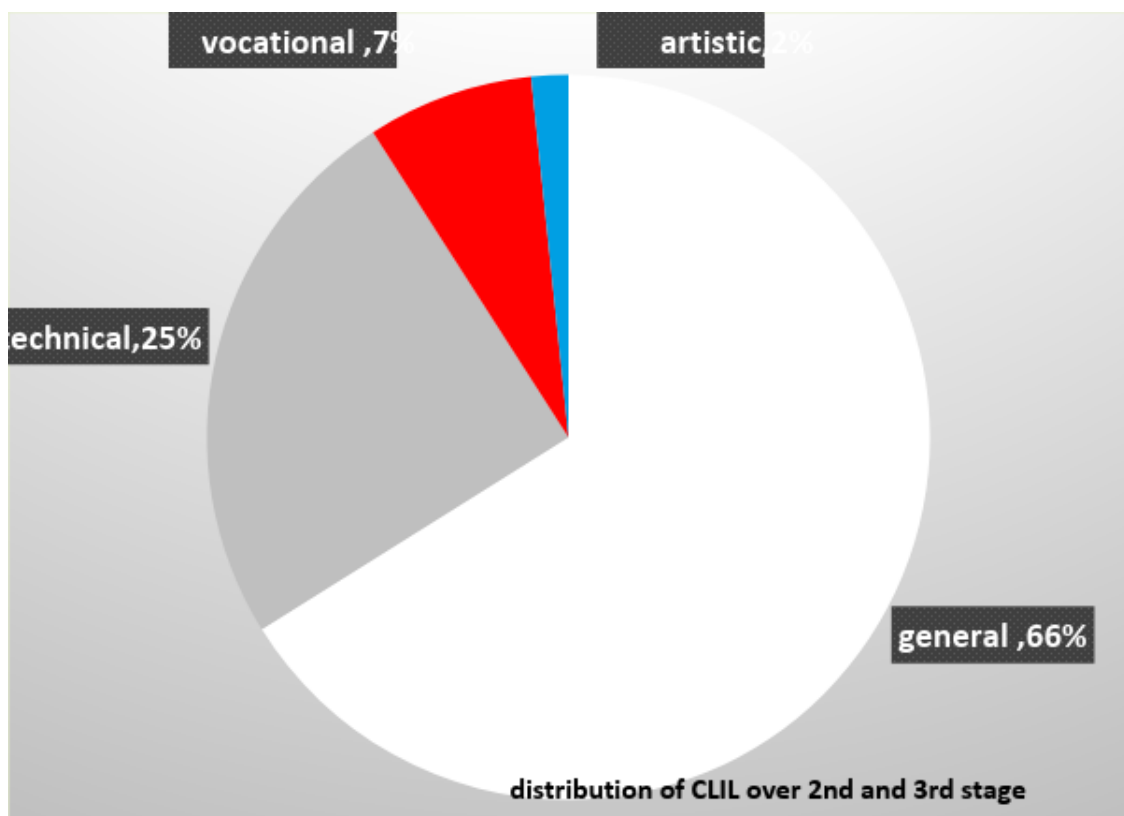
General conclusions:

-  CLIL provision is mainly present at the first stage of secondary education and, from the second stage on, CLIL is offered mostly in general secondary education (stage 2 & 3).
-  32% of all pupils are in first stage and 37% of the CLIL of can be found in the first stage.
-  41,7% of the pupils are in general education (stages 2 & 3) and they receive 41% of the CLIL offered.
-  30,7% of the pupils are in technical education but only receive 16% of the CLIL offered.
-  25,4% of the pupils are in vocational education and receive just 5% of the CLIL offered.
-  CLIL can be introduced in partial vocational education as well, but no CLIL is offered there. The number of students in partial education is quite small.



- Based on this diagram, the unequal distribution of CLIL over the different types of education is obvious.

The **CLIL offer versus the distribution of the students over the different types of education** is even more out of balance when we select only the 2nd and 3rd stage. It is relevant to visualize this situation as well, as pupils in the 1st stage have not chosen any specific type of education yet.



The situation in stages 2 and 3 can be summarized as follows:

- 41,7% of the pupils are in general education and they receive 66% of the CLIL offer.
- 30,7% of the pupils are in technical education vs 25% of the CLIL offer.
- 25,4% of the pupils are in vocational education but only 7% of the CLIL is offered in VET.**

Grouping students in general education or in technical-vocational education, these figures occur:

- 41,7 % of the pupils have access to 66% of the CLIL offer.
- 56,1% of the pupils have access to 32% of the CLIL offer.

3.2. CLIL OFFER IN VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

Distribution of pupils over the different study areas⁴

School population in full-time regular secondary education by field of study (2nd and 3rd stage and modular programmes)


	M	F	T
FIELD OF STUDY			
General secondary education	48,271	63,603	111,874
Agriculture and Horticulture	3,863	2,124	5,987
Ballet	17	46	63
Body Care	324	6,108	6,432
Car Engineering	3,358	34	3,392
Chemistry	3,282	1,747	5,029
Commerce	17,889	14,128	32,017
Construction	3,339	292	3,631
Decorative Techniques	864	1,056	1,920
Dental Techniques	48	45	93
Fashion	95	1,559	1,654
Graphic Communication and Media	1,891	449	2,340
Heating and Cooling	1,242	3	1,245
Jewelry	70	35	105
Maritime training programmes	188	5	193
Mechanics and Electricity	27,810	486	28,296
Musical Instruments	29	5	34
Nutrition	3,572	2,108	5,680
Optics	12	16	28
Orthopedic Techniques	24	18	42
People Care	8,278	35,314	43,592
Performing Arts	500	1,008	1,508
Photography	96	188	284
Public Security	958	187	1,145
Sports	6,538	2,314	8,852
Textile	54	13	67
Tourism	890	1,597	2,487
Visual Arts	1,636	2,917	4,553
Woodwork	7,393	170	7,563
Not assigned to a field of study (1)	28	33	61
Total	142,559	137,608	280,167

Do schools offer CLIL in those areas?

⁴ https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/belgium-flemish-community_en



An analysis of the current, but non-verifiable information leads to this overview:

 Subjects offered in CLIL in **technical education**

SUBJECT & STUDY AREAS in technical education	No. of schools for T.E. offering CLIL
APPLIED ECONOMICS	1
RELIGION	3
HISTORY (sometimes only if the whole class chooses to do CLIL)	4
AESTHETICS	1
GEOGRAPHY	2
NATURAL SCIENCES	1
PHYSICAL EDUCATION	2
APPLIED CHEMISTRY	1
OFFICE MANAGEMENT /ADMINISTRATION	4
ACCOUNTANCY & TRADE ECONOMICS / TRADE/ ENTREPRENEURSHIP & IT	7
COMPUTER APPLICATIONS	1
SALES & RETAIL	3
COMMUNICATION SKILLS IN TOURISM	1
SOCIAL AND TECHNICAL SCIENCES (STW)	2
PRACTICAL COURSES: hairdressing, waiter, chef, restaurant & kitchen, personal care (also in co-teaching)	2
BEAUTY CARE	2
PROJECTS	2




It is clear that very few practical classes are offered in CLIL. Most of the CLIL classes are provided in the more general part of the timetables. Only the subjects or study areas indicate with the blue arrow, refer to practical classes or classes directly related to the study field chosen by the pupils.

 Subjects offered in **Vocational Education**

SUBJECT & STUDY AREAS vocational education	No. of schools for VET offering CLIL
RELIGION	2
PHYSICAL EDUCATION PHYSICAL EDUCATION 1B	2 1
RETAIL OFFICE MANAGEMENT AESTHETICS	1 1 1
PAV	2
PRACTICAL COURSES (hairdressing, waiter, chef, restaurant & kitchen, personal care only in duo teaching)	1
PROJECTS	1

The same conclusions can be drawn as when analysing the subjects in CLIL in technical education: most of the CLIL classes are offered in the general part of the timetable, only very few in the practical classes.

Despite the incomplete figures, a trend is obvious. In Flanders, CLIL is:

-  **overrepresented in general education,**
-  **medium represented in technical education, and**
-  **under-represented in vocational education.**

The offer of CLIL in practical classes is minimal.

3.3. CLIL DECREE: A GLOBAL OVERVIEW⁵

Describing the decree in detail can never be the purpose of this overview. The elements that play an important role in the development of CLIL will be retrieved from the official text and explained:

⁵ Text adapted from "CLIL in Flanders", at <https://www.slovakedu.com/en/conferences/conferences-2016/>, author: Freddy Cloet.








- ✿ To ensure quality CLIL and to be sure that the school team is prepared for this innovative challenge, all schools that are CLIL-ambitious need to fill out **an extensive application form** which must be handed in about ten months before the start in September. A secondary school can offer CLIL **only when their application for CLIL has been approved** by the CLIL committee and the Ministry of Education. The approval or rejection of the application is done by the CLIL committee, which consist of representatives of the 4 educational networks, CLIL experts at universities and members of the Ministry of Education's administration to guaranty impartiality.
- ✿ In the application form, the school must define **beforehand** in which **subjects** CLIL will be used, which **specific teacher** will give the CLIL lessons, in which **stage** and **grade**, and **the expected number of pupils** that presumably attend the CLIL classes.
- ✿ It should be noted that **the curriculum** of the subject taught through L1 or L2⁶ (or L3) remains the same.
- ✿ The foreign languages that can be used in CLIL classes are **French, English** and **German**.

Schools can introduce CLIL for **one, two or three** languages, even combining two languages in one group. Academic freedom and the school's policy (and possibilities) will define the shape, content and size of the project.

- ✿ CLIL can be offered to pupils in general education, vocational education, and technical education, and to those who decide to go into part-time education.
- ✿ A maximum of 20% of non-language lessons (max. 5 periods/week) can be taught in CLIL. There is no minimum quantity for any CLIL curriculum, neither is there a requirement for continuity in ensuing grades or stages.
- ✿ The school must formally approve every individual pupil starting a CLIL project and pupils must commit themselves to remain a full year in CLIL. **The admission criterium for pupil is enough mastery of language of instruction** (further on, called L1).

⁶ L1: official language of instruction, in Flanders being Dutch / L2: the target language of CLIL.

-  The school should develop an explicit policy to improve the level of Dutch for all pupils and have a coherent general vision and strategy for language development. Furthermore, the school must have planned a method of quality control, monitoring pupils' progress in the non-language subject, the CLIL language and Dutch.
-  The school must clearly communicate all conditions of the CLIL project to parents, especially regarding commitment, assessment and the existence of a parallel group.
-  Pupils who do not take up CLIL must be able to choose a parallel group, where the non-language subject is taught in Dutch.
-  Teachers need to certify their CEFR - C1 level for all skills in the target language or have a bachelor's or master's degree in that language. This certificate should be presented to the Ministry of Education before starting to teach the subject in the target language. Possessing the C1 certificate is the only requirement to be able to start giving CLIL classes.
-  Apart from the stringent language C1 prerequisite for teachers, little is stated regarding didactic CLIL skills and training. Schools must explain in the application form how the teachers can become proficient in the CLIL methodology, but they do not have to present any certificate of mastery of the CLIL didactics. This can result in teachers starting to give CLIL classes without knowledge of the method. Actually, teachers are free to choose if and how they acquire the CLIL didactics.

Once CLIL is established, there is no control on the use of the methodology as this belongs to the didactic liberty of the school(board). Consequently, inspection is not allowed to evaluate or give advice in the CLIL methods.

The educational network(s) can provide guidance at the request of the school or the teachers. Since 2013, POV, partner in the VET's CLIL Erasmus+ KA2 project, provides CLIL masterclasses in all provinces of Flanders to train in-service teachers in the CLIL method.



It is not mentioned in the decree, but it is important to know that no financial or extra staffing support is given to schools whose application has been approved. Nor do pedagogic guidance services receive any extra manpower to support the experiment.⁷





CONSEQUENCES OF THE CLIL DECREE

Based on the inquiry performed by the inspection team, ordered by the Ministry of Education and based on the various contacts we had with schools and teachers during 4.5 years of teacher training in CLIL, the following aspects were a hindrance for some schools to start with CLIL:

- ✿ **High level of language requirements for the teachers**, who, in vocational education, are very often craftsmen who have high practical skills but who will never be able to prove the C1 level on all the required language skills. Not all teachers need a C1 in writing for example, as they are teachers of physical education, or woodworkers.
- ✿ Schools for vocational education must **invest more in additional student support** than the other forms of education. They want to use the financial support they receive, to develop a profound system of personal student care. Developing language demands is not a priority.
- ✿ **A lot of teachers** don't **believe** that children in vocational education are eager to study in another language **and/or** they think that the pupils are not capable of learning through another language.
- ✿ **Student's self-esteem** (which is low) **and parent's ideas** (my child must become a craftsman, he doesn't need languages for this / he has to work hard to obtain the goals in Dutch, working in another language is not possible for my child).
- ✿ **Workload:** CLIL is an investment and it only works if the teacher is supported⁸ by the system and by a school team. Unfortunately, CLIL schools don't receive any additional support by the government.

⁷ Cloet, F. (2016), "CLIL in Flanders." Available at <https://www.slovakedu.com/en/conferences/conferences-2016>.

⁸ Video "David Marsh on CLIL." Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Czdq8-6mJA>.

-  **Duo teaching** could be an answer to the problem of the language requirements if the language teacher and the subject teacher could work together, but this is very expensive for the schools.
-  **In vocational education**, a lot of newly arrived citizens enrol. By decree they are already excluded from a CLIL programme, as they should have a high mastery of the instruction language of the region, being Dutch. They often are not proficient enough in Dutch to be selected for a CLIL class.
-  **The extensive application form**: some schools have coordinators who are used to writing applications, but most technical and vocational schools do not. Having the knowledge of how to write this kind of applications is important to receive a green card from the government. To some schools it seems another set of paperwork and they do not apply.
-  Some schools would like to try CLIL out, but this is not permitted, since they need to do all the paperwork beforehand, and sometimes just for one class and for one teacher.

4. OUR DREAM FOR THIS PROJECT

Reaching at least 10 schools who are willing to try out CLIL with their students in vocational education, preferably in practical lessons, is our purpose.

Vocational education hosts the most vulnerable pupils. Their vocabulary is often limited, they are not the talking kind.... However, they will have an important role to play in the future: we lack craftsmen! And they will have to think globally. They will meet more different people than their parents ever did. All countries are looking for craftsmen who have skills, not only in their domain, but who are able to work with digital tools, to work together, to find solutions to practical problems... and they will need languages to express themselves. The timetable at school does not permit more languages — luckily, because this is not what the vocational students are waiting for. Let them work in their professional field and bring the language(s) in their lives alongside. It works.



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