

EDUCATION SYSTEM

The International schools



The Brussels-Capital Region counts some 32 so-called international secondary and primary schools that are not recognized and thus not controlled by one of the national educational systems. They give education to somewhat 22.500 pupils. These private schools offer an international or foreign curriculum and generally provide excellent education.

The four European Schools count the greatest number of pupils, teach in every European language and are located in different parts of the Region. Other major international schools are the Lycée français, the International School of Brussels, the British school of Brussels, l'Ecole Internationale le Verseau-ELCE, St. John's International School or The International Deutsche Schule Brüssel.

These private schools charge an important tuition fee. Civil servants of international institutions and children of diplomatic personnel have priority while enrolling in some of these international schools.

The Belgian schools



The Brussels Capital-Region offers you a choice of hundreds of Belgian primary and secondary schools, as well as higher education. These will either have Dutch or French as their major teaching language, since the schools are organized or at least regulated by every language community and not by the federal bilingual State. Furthermore these schools can be subdivided following the organizing authority, whether they are private or public and whether they receive subsidies or not.

The tuition fee or other costs for these schools are in most cases limited, but getting your child enrolled in the school of your choice might be a hassle and involve some queuing. That procedure differs from the educational network or even school of your choice. Make sure to inform well, sometimes years, beforehand and prepare well to maximize your freedom of choice.

There are four different networks of schools in Belgium operating according to different principles.

- **Community education.** This is *organized* by the two language communities (Dutch-speaking and French-speaking) and is the equivalent of state education in other countries. It is a neutral system in which the schools respect the religious, philosophical and ideological beliefs of the parents and children.
- **Official subsidized education.** This is organized by the municipal and provincial authorities.
- **Free subsidized education.** This is organized by private people or organizations. It consists mainly of religious schools, the majority being Catholic, though there are also Protestant, Jewish, Orthodox and Islamic schools. This category also includes free non-religious schools and schools based on a particular educational method, such as Rudolf Steiner Schools and Freinet Schools.
- **Private schools.** A small number of schools are not recognized by the government and receive no financial support from the state. One could also include European and international schools in this category. In some cases, private schools allow themselves to be inspected by the Belgian authorities, and issue students with certificates that are equivalent to official Belgian diplomas.

Need to know more?



Need to know more about French-language education?

The website Enseignement.be provides extensive information on primary, secondary and higher education in the French-speaking sector. The site Ecoles.cfwb provides links to educational websites, including most French-speaking schools in Belgium. For information on municipal schools in your neighbourhood, contact the education service in your town hall.

Need to know more about Dutch-language education?

For general information, visit Ond.Vlaanderen or call this number: +32 (0)2 553 50 70 from abroad and this number: 1700 (free of charge) from Belgium. For more information on Dutch-language education in Brussels, visit OnderwijsinBrussel or call +32 (0)2 563 04 80. For information about municipal schools in your neighbourhood, contact the education service in your town hall.

Need to know more about international education?

- For information on European schools, visit www.eursec.eu.
- General information on international education, visit <http://www.ecis.org/>

Other useful websites :

Service d'Information des Etudes et Professions

Centre de Documentation et d'Information sur les Etudes et les Professions

InforJeunes

Going to school in Belgium



How can one imagine a day at school in Belgian schools? And what different levels exist?

A day in a Belgian school

Nearly all schools are mixed. The school day begins between 8.00 and 8.30, and ends between 15.30 and 16.00. Most children stay at school for lunch (although this is not compulsory) and all schools provide cooked meals. Most schools offer after-school supervision between 16.00 and 18.00, which is a combination of play (for primary schools) and help with homework (a small fee is required for these services). Schools in the French-language community often work together with an "Ecole de devoir", where children receive help with their homework. Compulsory schooling in Belgium starts at 6 years old and lasts until a child reaches 18 years.

Four levels of education

The education system is divided into four levels:

- **2,5 to 6 years > nursery school**

Education in Belgium begins at the age of 2½ (or 3 years) with three years of nursery school education. Although the first two years are not compulsory, your child must nevertheless be enrolled from the third year of nursery school (at the age of 5). The system is designed to prepare young children for primary education rather than to provide a childminding service.

- **6 to 12 years > primary school**

Primary school is **compulsory**. It involves a six-year cycle from 6 to 12 years. Children are admitted into primary education on 1 September of the calendar year in which they turn six. The main subjects are reading, writing and elementary mathematics. Starting third year, the study of the country's second official language (either Dutch or French) is obligatory.

- **12 to 18 years > secondary school**

Secondary school is also **compulsory** and the choice offered at this level is very wide. It is impossible to list all the possibilities, but the four main options are as follows:

General secondary education: it is intended for young people planning to continue their education beyond the age of 18, whether at a university or at a non-university higher education institute. It does not prepare directly for a profession.

Technical secondary education: the orientation here is more practical and enables students to practice a profession at the end of their cycle. However, they can choose to continue studying with links to the university or non-university higher education, as general subjects are sufficiently developed.

Art studies: this is geared towards the plastic arts, theatre and music. It prepares students for higher education in institutions such as the Conservatoire (music academy).

Secondary professional education: it is intended for young people who do not wish to continue their education beyond the age of 18 but wishing to take up a particular trade or learn a craft. There is less emphasis on general culture and more focus on practical training in firms.

- **18 years or more > higher education**

This level of education is not compulsory and is open to young people who have successfully completed the full general or technical secondary education course. Belgian colleges and universities offer students a wide range of options. Following the Bologna Declaration Belgium makes a distinction between a Bachelor's degree (a general education lasting three years and rated 180 ECTS) and Master's or MA degree (a specialized course lasting one or two years rated between 60 and 120 ECTS). ECTS is the European Credit Transfer system to express the workload for a course.

Although the first two years are not compulsory, your child must nevertheless be enrolled from the third year of nursery school (at the age of 5)

USEFUL LINKS



Xpatris comparative platform

International schools

Enseignement.be

Cybercommunauté FR

FWB

Education in Flanders

Onderwijsinbrussel

European Schools

ECIS

SIEP

Service d'Information sur les Etudes et les Professions

CEDIEP

Centre de Documentation et d'Information sur les Etudes et les professions.

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