

# THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND



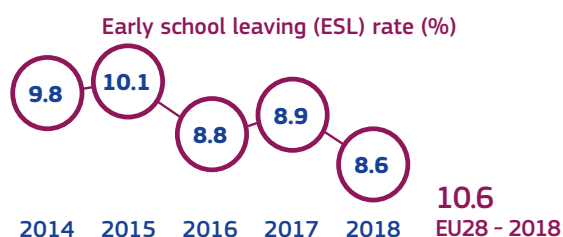
## Support to Education and Training: 2014-2018

**BELGIUM**

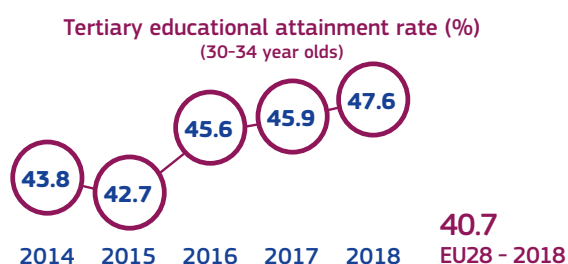
### SUMMARY

ESF Thematic Objective 10 funding is used to support education, training and vocational training for skills and lifelong learning. Over 640 million euro has been allocated to such operations in Belgium, with 320 115 participations having taken place by the end of 2018. This factsheet summarises the main actions, outputs, results and lessons learned so far in the use of this funding in Belgium.

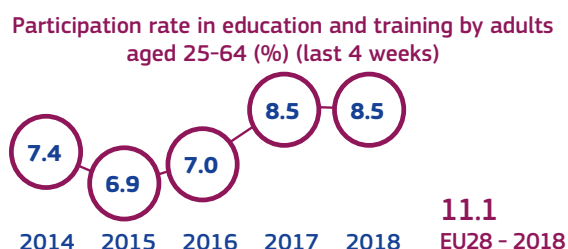
### SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTEXT AND CHALLENGES



► Belgium has a low rate of **early school leaving (ESL)**, achieving the EU target rate of 10% or lower. Men (10.6%) are slightly more likely to drop out than women (9.0%). There are also regional differences across the country, with ESL rates being higher in Wallonia (9.9%) than in Flanders (7%).



► The **tertiary educational attainment rate** is high overall (47.6% in 2018 compared to the EU average of 40.7%), with women having a higher attainment rate than men (54.5% compared to 40.6% in 2018). Attainment rates are also higher in Flanders (48.2%) than in Wallonia (42.5%), but there is an important skills mismatch, especially in Flanders, between graduate skills and labour market needs.



► Although there has been some improvement, only a small proportion of the **adult population participates in education and training**. In 2018, 8.7% of adults in Flanders and 7.2% in Wallonia engaged in lifelong learning.

► Improving access to education for **learners from disadvantaged backgrounds** remains an important challenge for Belgium, and so does **reducing regional disparities**. In addition to regional differences in ESL and tertiary attainment rates, in 2018 the unemployment rate in Wallonia (22.5%) was more than twice as high than in Flanders (10.9%). There are also important regional differences within Flanders and Wallonia, with provinces located closer to the Brussels Capital region performing significantly better than 'peripheral' regions

#### EXPLANATORY NOTES

**ESF** European Social Fund

**TO10** Thematic Objective 10

**OP** Operational Programme

**IP** Investment Priority

\* Figures present the situation for ESF operations under Thematic Objective 10 and its four Investment Priorities (IPs) for the programming period 2014-2020 implemented up to the end of 2018, as reported on 1 October 2019. In many instances, operations are not yet complete at this stage, or have only recently started.

\* As one person could participate more than once in ESF operations over time, the number of participations is reported. These figures exclude Technical Assistance.

\* Where the breakdown of participants according to employment status, age, and level of education does not add up to 100%, it means that it was not possible to include characteristics of a number of participants in some OPs.

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## ESF PRIORITIES AND ACTIONS IN BELGIUM

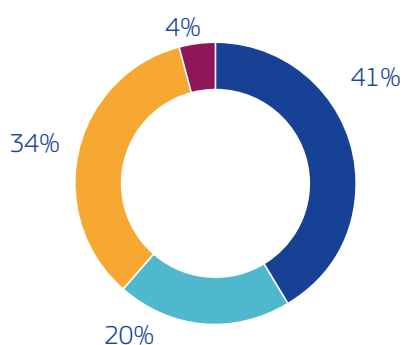
- ▶ There are **four** ESF Operational Programmes (OP) in Belgium, three of which implement actions in the field of T010:
  - ▶ Flemish Community: Operational Programme ESF Flanders 2014-2020;
  - ▶ French-speaking Community: ESF Operational Programme Wallonie-Bruxelles 2020.eu;
  - ▶ German-speaking Community: European Social Fund 2014-2020 German Speaking Community of Belgium.
- ▶ The Flemish OP has the following priorities relevant to Thematic Objective 10 (T010):
  - ▶ T010 funds are used primarily to **improve the lifelong learning and vocational education and training offer** in order to tackle skills mismatches through up- and reskilling. A large number of projects has been funded in particular for the development of dual learning tracks as part of Flanders' major reform on 'Dual Learning';
  - ▶ The funds are also used to **raise the overall quality of the education and training system and tackle ESL**. Two major reforms were adopted in 2016: the reform of secondary education and an Action Plan on ESL.
- ▶ The OP for Brussels and Wallonia has the following priorities relevant to Thematic Objective 10 (T010):
  - ▶ T010 funds are used primarily to **support up- and reskilling of the population** to ensure the relevance of education to labour market needs and tackle the issue of unemployment;
  - ▶ With regards to tackling ESL, the funds are primarily used to **target people with a migrant background**, and to support them to access and complete education.
- ▶ The OP for the German-speaking Community has the following priorities relevant to Thematic Objective 10 (T010):
  - ▶ T010 funds are used primarily to **improve the quality and relevance of education and training** to tackle skills shortages;
  - ▶ In addition to this, ESF is used to **reduce early school leaving** and support young people in making the transition from school to working life.

29% of total ESF funding<sup>1</sup>...

€640 412 290

...is allocated to the following T010 investment priorities: **early school leaving (41%)**, **access to quality tertiary and equivalent education (20%)**, **enhancing access to lifelong learning (34%)**, and **improving the labour market relevance of education and training (4%)**.<sup>2</sup>

Allocation of ESF T010 funds



- Reducing and preventing early school leaving - IP10.i
- Improving quality and access to tertiary education - IP10.ii
- Enhancing access to lifelong learning - IP10.iii
- Improving the labour market relevance of education and training - IP10.iv

## STATE OF PLAY

81% of planned resources under T010 had been allocated in 2018, with 18% spent.

Number of overall participations in T010 operations by the end of 2018:

320 115

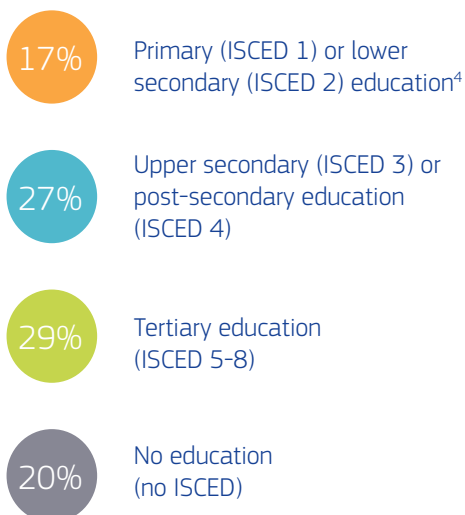
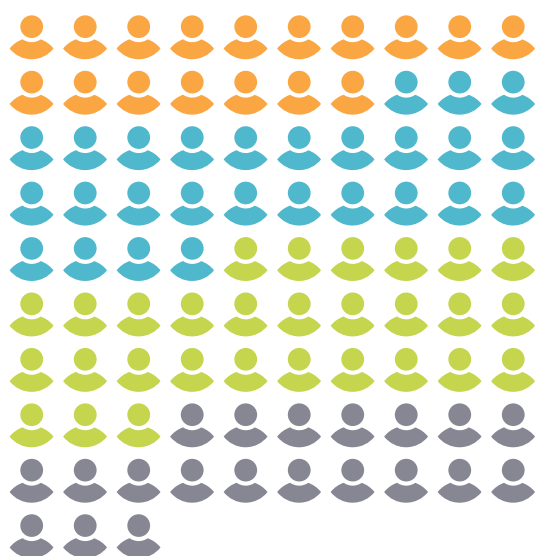
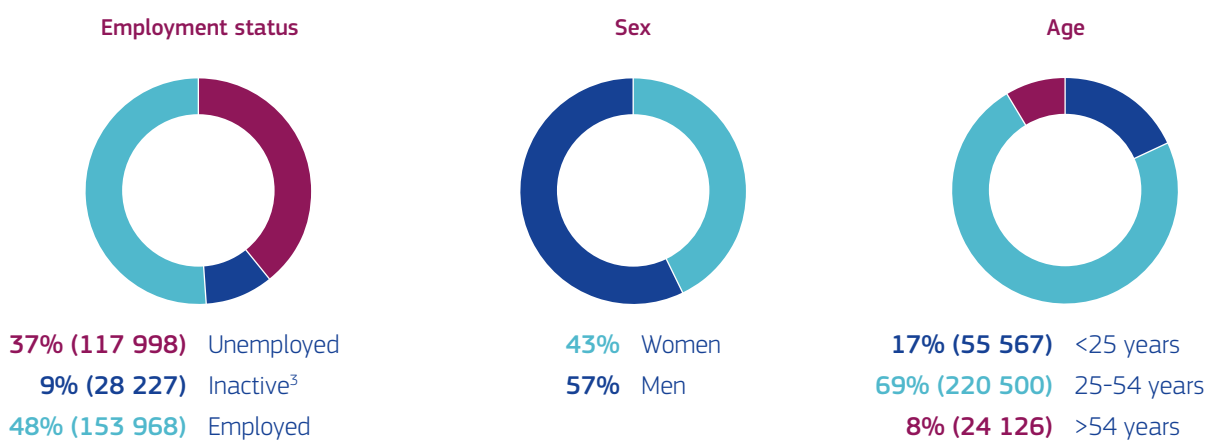
- ▶ **6 907** participations in operations to reduce and prevent early school leaving
- ▶ **313 208** participations in operations to enhance access to lifelong learning

<sup>1</sup> This includes EU-only funding and co-financing from the Member State.

<sup>2</sup> The figures do not add up to 100% due to rounding

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## PARTICIPANT PROFILES WHEN RECEIVING SUPPORT

54 595  
Migrants12 939  
Other disadvantaged2,943  
Participants with  
disabilities0  
HomelessKey achievements to date of ESF T010 operations in Belgium include<sup>5</sup>:

- ▶ **133 731** successful results have been achieved to date following participation in an activity funded by ESF T010, of which:
  - ▶ **381** inactive participants went on to engage in job searching
  - ▶ **27 419** participants went into education or training
  - ▶ **91 400** participants gained a qualification
  - ▶ **14 534** participants moved into employment upon leaving

<sup>3</sup> The inactive population can include pre-school children, school children, students, pensioners and housewives or -men, for example, provided that they are not working and not available or looking for work.

<sup>4</sup> ISCED is the UN reference classification for organising education programmes and related qualifications by education levels and fields.

<sup>5</sup> Participants' data are collected when starting an operation. Data on results are collected at the end of an operation or even later. Because of this time lag the two sets of data (participations and results) should not be directly compared.

## LESSONS LEARNED SO FAR

### ► Coherence with country specific recommendations (CSRs)

The OPs of both Flanders and Wallonia-Brussels focus on the priorities outlined in the European Commission's CSRs. These are to improve the overall quality and relevance of education and training to labour market needs, tackle early school leaving and increase the offer of vocational and lifelong learning.

### ► Flexibility of ESF funding allocation

As a result of its major reform of secondary education in 2016, Flanders significantly increased the focus of ESF funding on developing vocational education and training through the system of dual learning. This illustrates the importance of ensuring that ESF funding can be re-focused in light of contextual changes at country level.

### ► ESF has contributed to lowering ESL and unemployment rates

In both Flanders and Wallonia, ESF-funded operations have made an important contribution to lowering early school leaving (ESL) rates, reaching the EU target of 10%. However, important regional differences persist in Belgium, with unemployment rates twice as high in Wallonia as in Flanders.

### ► Individualised support to increase participation

Supporting the up- and reskilling of NEETs, in particular young people with a migrant background and unemployed people, is a priority for Flanders, Wallonia and Brussels. To involve them in the ESF programme, individualised engagement measures have been successful.

### ► Coherence and synergies with other ESF funding streams

Many of the operations in Belgium to tackle early school leaving receive funding from other strands of ESF funding, most notably from ESF Thematic Objective 9 to promote social inclusion and to tackle poverty and discrimination.

## PROJECT EXAMPLES

### ► Dual learning tracks

In 2018, the Flemish Government published a call of 1.5 billion EUR (40% ESF-funded) to support VET schools and companies to develop dual learning tracks (*Duaal leren*).

### ► Educational guidance for inmates

Inmates of three prisons in West Flanders are offered high quality educational guidance and support, aiming to facilitate their reintegration process. Participants can gain formal qualifications and find further training, but also socialise and develop personal skills. During the two-year implementation (2017-2019), 150 people participated in coaching programmes and career counselling sessions.

### ► Campus Technologique Formation Hainaut-Namur

This project brings together higher education institutions and businesses in the regions of Hainaut and Namur to develop innovative technology to respond to labour market needs.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

European Commission, Study supporting the evaluation of ESF support to education and training (Thematic Objective 10)

The ESF in Belgium: <https://ec.europa.eu/esf/main.jsp?catId=371&langId=en>

Website of the ESF in Belgium: <http://www.fse.be/> and <https://www.esf-vlaanderen.be/>

