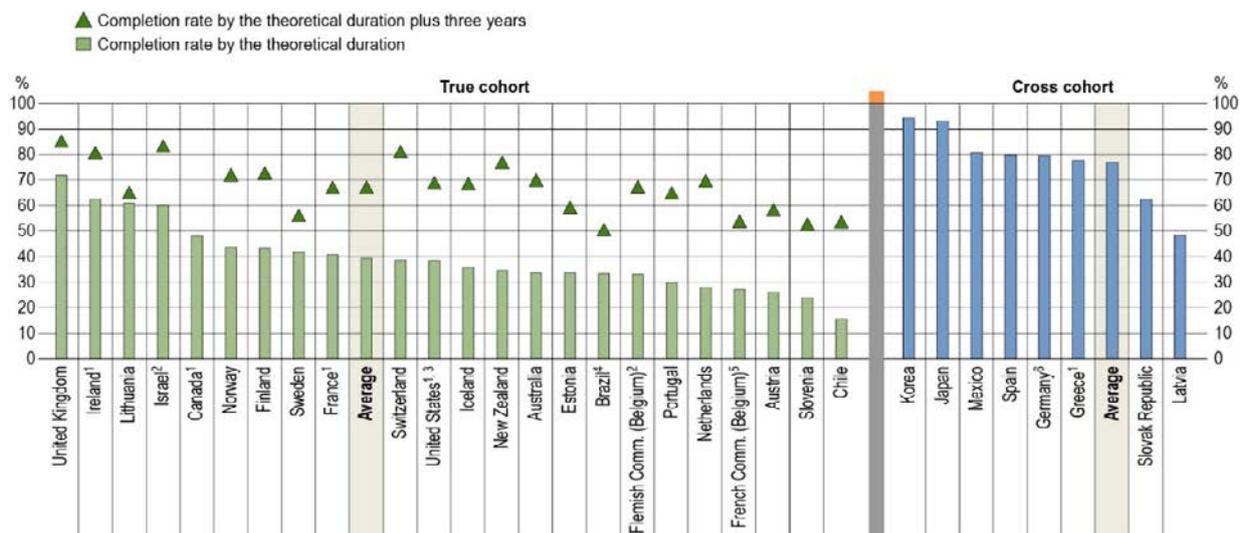


*Education at a Glance: OECD Indicators* (OECD, 2019<sup>[1]</sup>) is the authoritative source for information on the state of education around the world. It provides data on the structure, finances and performance of education systems in OECD and partner countries.

## Belgium

- Belgium has an open tertiary education admission system and the highest first-time entry rates to tertiary education. However, **completion rates at bachelor's level (within the theoretical duration) are below the average across countries**. The difference in tertiary completion rates between entrants with a general and with a vocational upper secondary qualification is one of the largest among countries.
- **Only 0.8% of 25-64 year-olds have a doctorate in Belgium, below the OECD average**. Around one-quarter of students graduating from doctoral programmes in 2017 were international, in line with the OECD average.
- **5.8% of Belgium's gross domestic product (GDP) is invested in education from primary to tertiary levels, one of the highest shares among OECD countries**. Staff compensation accounts for the large majority of this expenditure.
- Pre-primary education in Belgium is universal and in principle free of charge. **Almost all children are enrolled by the age of 3**, and only 3% of the cost of pre-primary education comes from private sources.

Figure 1. Completion rate of full-time students who entered a bachelor's or equivalent programme (2017)



**Note:** For countries with true cohort data, the completion includes students who transferred and graduated from another tertiary level.

1. Year of reference differs from 2017. Refer to the source table for details.
2. Completion rate of students who entered a bachelor's programme does not include students who transferred to and graduated from short-cycle programmes.
3. The theoretical duration plus 3 years refers to the theoretical duration plus 2 years.
4. Data do not include entrants to 6-year bachelor's programmes, which correspond to about 2% of total entrants at this level.
5. Data refer only to the *hautes écoles* (HE) and the *écoles des arts* (ESA), representing about 60% of entrants to bachelor's or equivalent programmes.
6. Data refer to estimated completion rates based on a modelled relationship between future graduates and students still enrolled.

Countries and economies are ranked in descending order of completion rate by theoretical duration (true cohort) or cross cohort.

**Source:** OECD (2019), Table B5.1. See Source section for more information and Annex 3 for notes (<https://doi.org/10.1787/f8d7880d-en>).

## High entry rates to tertiary education are combined with relatively low completion

- Based on current patterns, 72% of young adults in Belgium will enter a bachelor's or equivalent programme before the age of 25, the highest rate across OECD countries (excluding international students). The overall first-time tertiary entry rate (for all levels of higher education, all ages and including both national and international students) stands at 76%, 11 percentage points above the OECD average.
- The proportion of full-time students who entered a bachelor's programme in 2011 and graduated within the theoretical duration of the programme was 33% in the Flemish Community and 27% in the French Community. On average across countries and economies with true cohort data (longitudinal data following individual students through their careers), the rate was 39%. The average completion rate after three additional years is 67% in the Flemish Community and 54% in the French Community, compared to the average of 67% (Figure 1).
- Tertiary completion among those coming from a vocational upper secondary education programme is particularly low. The completion rate (within the theoretical duration plus three years) for bachelor's or equivalent programmes is only 38% in the French Community and 52% in the Flemish Community, compared to 58% across countries with true cohort data. In contrast, 83% of entrants with a general upper secondary qualification complete within three years after the theoretical duration in the Flemish Community, well above the cross-country average (70%) and the French Community (64%).
- Among countries with at least partly selective tertiary education admission systems, between 5% and 67% of applicants are rejected and do not enter tertiary education. Both Belgian communities have an open admission system, meaning that all applicants who meet the minimum qualification level are admitted. The design of admission systems can serve on different policy goals. Open admission systems can help widen access to tertiary education, but make it difficult to exclude applicants with inadequate skills (OECD, 2019<sup>[2]</sup>).

## The doctoral attainment rate is relatively low in Belgium

- Doctorate holders play an important role in developing the capacity for innovation and advanced training, helping the economy and society to advance knowledge and explore new research areas. However, in Belgium only 0.8% of the 25-64 year-old population had attained a doctoral degree in 2018, compared to 1.1% on average across OECD countries.
- Nearly a quarter of those graduating from doctoral programmes in 2017 were international students, confirming the attractiveness of the country's doctoral programmes.
- Health and welfare and information and communication technologies (ICT) are critical fields of study in an ageing and technologically advancing society, and several OECD governments have put in place policies aimed at increasing tertiary enrolment in these fields (OECD, 2019<sup>[2]</sup>). In 2017, one-quarter of doctoral graduates in Belgium had completed a programme in the broad field of health and welfare, compared to 17% on average across OECD countries. In contrast, less than 1% graduated from an ICT programme, 3 percentage points below the average.

## Belgium spends a large share of its educational investment on staff compensation

- Belgium spent USD 13 446<sup>1</sup> per full-time student on educational institutions from the primary to tertiary level (including research and development (R&D) in 2016, an amount equivalent to 5.8% of its GDP. Both values are relatively high compared to other OECD countries. Public expenditure on education relative to total government expenditure is similar to the OECD average, at 10.8%.
- Expenditure per student is higher in the Flemish Community (USD 13 960) than in the French Community (USD 12 801), but both communities spend more than the OECD average (USD 10 502). The difference between the two communities is particularly large for tertiary education. The Flemish Community spends

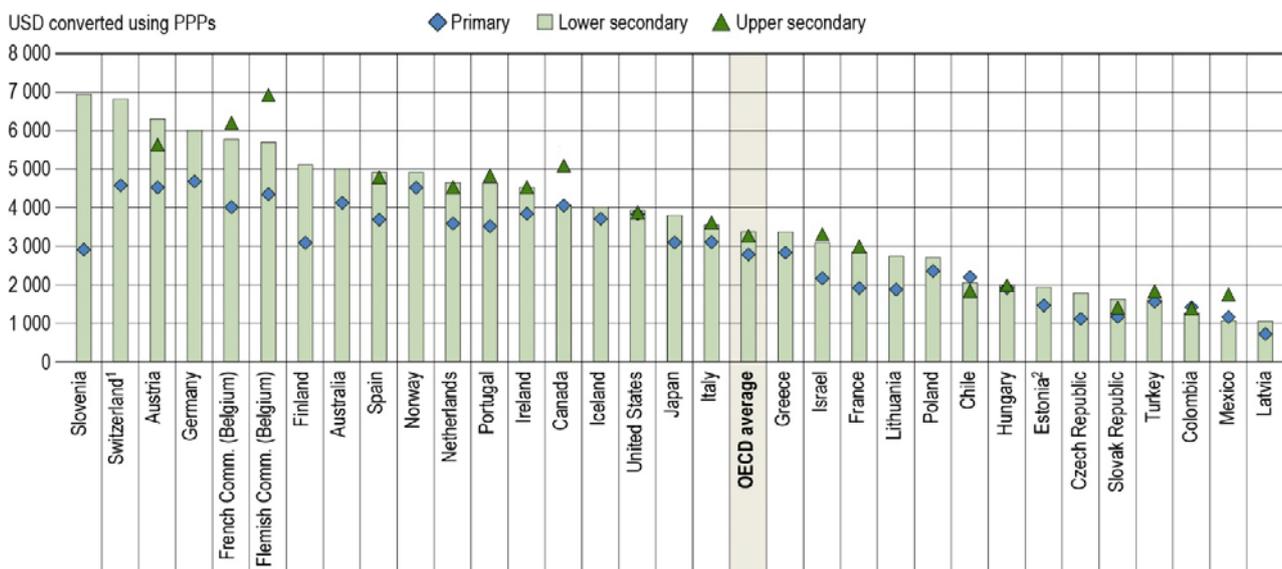
<sup>1</sup> Values reported in equivalent US dollars (USD) have been converted using purchasing power parities (PPPs) for GDP.

USD 3 445 more per student on tertiary educational institutions than the French Community. This difference is mainly due to a larger expenditure for R&D activities (OECD, 2019<sup>[3]</sup>).

- Teachers and other staff account for the large majority of education expenditure in Belgium, with relatively little spent on other current expenditure (e.g. materials and supplies needed for teaching and other activities and contracted services such as building cleaning) or on capital items (e.g. construction and renovation of buildings or expenditure on new equipment). Teacher compensation accounts for 63% of all current expenditure, and that of other staff 22%; the total of 85% is the second largest across OECD countries after Colombia. The share of spending on staff compensation is particularly large for primary and secondary education (89%, compared to the OECD average of 78%), and less so for tertiary education (74%, compared to 69% on average). Capital expenditure accounted for 4% of total expenditure on institutions at the primary to tertiary education levels. This share is half the OECD average and the lowest after Italy, Portugal and the United Kingdom.
- The salary cost of teachers per student in Belgium in 2017 was among the highest across OECD countries in primary, lower secondary and upper secondary general education, with above-average teachers' salaries and below-average estimated class sizes acting as the two main drivers of this difference. In the Flemish Community and the French Community, teachers' salary costs per student in lower secondary education were between USD 2 300 and USD 2 400 higher than the OECD average of USD 3 380 (Figure 2). About half of this difference is accounted for by the relatively small estimated class sizes in Belgium at the lower secondary level (around 13 students per class in both communities, compared to the OECD average of 17). A further 30-40% of this difference is accounted for by the higher annual salaries of lower secondary teachers, which are over USD 50 000 in both communities, compared to USD 43 007 on average across OECD countries. Finally, teaching and instruction time accounted for less than 20% of this difference.

**Figure 2. Annual salary cost of teachers per student in public institutions, by level of education (2017)**

USD converted using PPPs for private consumption



1. Teachers' statutory salaries after 10 years of experience instead of 15 years.

2. Teachers' statutory salaries at the start of their career instead of after 15 years of experience.

Countries and economies are ranked in descending order of the annual salary cost of teachers per student in lower secondary education.

Source: OECD (2019), Table C7.1. See Source section for more information and Annex 3 for notes (<https://doi.org/10.1787/f8d7880d-en>).

## Almost all children are enrolled in pre-primary education by the age of 3

- Enrolment in early childhood education and care is universal by the age of 3 in Belgium and 53% of 2-year-olds are already enrolled in pre-primary education (ISCED 02). In comparison, the OECD average is 49% among 2-year-olds, and 77% among 3-year-olds. Belgian data only cover pre-primary education (ISCED 02).
- Over half of pre-primary students are enrolled in government dependent private institutions, compared to one-third on average across OECD countries. However, only 3% of expenditure on pre-primary education net of public transfers came from private sources, the lowest share after Latvia and Luxembourg.
- The resourcing of pre-primary education is in line with the OECD average. Annual expenditure per child amounted to USD 8 427 in 2016, just above the OECD average; and there were 15 children for every teaching staff member in 2017, compared to 16 on average across OECD countries.

## References

- OECD (2019), *Benchmarking Higher Education System Performance*, Higher Education, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/be5514d7-en>. [2]
- OECD (2019), *Education at a Glance 2019: OECD indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/f8d7880d-en>. [1]
- OECD (2019), *OECD Regional Statistics (database)*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/region-data-en>. [3]

For more information on **Education at a Glance 2019** and to access the full set of Indicators, visit [www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance-19991487.htm](http://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance-19991487.htm).

Updated data can be found on line at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-data-en> and by following the **StatLinks**  under the tables and charts in the publication.

Explore, compare and visualise more data and analysis using:  **Education GPS**  
<http://gpseducation.oecd.org/CountryProfile?primaryCountry=BEL&treshold=10&topic=EO>.

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This document and any map included herein are without prejudice to the status of or sovereignty over any territory, to the delimitation of international frontiers and boundaries and to the name of any territory, city or area.

On 25 May 2018, the OECD Council invited Colombia to become a Member. While Colombia is included in the OECD averages reported in this note, at the time of its preparation, Colombia was in the process of completing its domestic procedures for ratification and the deposit of Colombia's instrument of accession to the OECD Convention was pending.

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Note regarding data from Israel

The statistical data for Israel are supplied by and are under the responsibility of the relevant Israeli authorities. The use of such data by the OECD is without prejudice to the status of the Golan Heights, East Jerusalem and Israeli settlements in the West Bank under the terms of international law.

## Key Facts for Belgium in Education at a Glance 2019

Source	Main topics in <i>Education at a Glance</i>	Belgium		OECD average		EU23 average	
<b>Tertiary education</b>							
<b>Educational attainment of 25-64 year-olds</b>							
<b>2018</b>							
Table A1.1	Short-cycle tertiary	1%		7%		5%	
	Bachelor's or equivalent	23%		17%		14%	
	Master's or equivalent	17%		13%		15%	
	Doctoral or equivalent	1%		1%		1%	
<b>Tertiary attainment of 25-34 year-olds, by gender</b>							
<b>2008</b>							
Table A1.2	Men	36%	41%	31%	38%	28%	36%
	Women	48%	54%	40%	51%	38%	50%
	Total	42%	47%	35%	44%	33%	43%
<b>2018</b>							
<b>Distribution of first-time tertiary entrants by education level</b>							
<b>2017</b>							
Table B4.1	Short-cycle tertiary	1%		17%		12%	
	Bachelor's or equivalent	99%		76%		80%	
	Master's or equivalent	**		7%		8%	
<b>Share of international or foreign students, by education level<sup>1</sup></b>							
<b>2017</b>							
Table B6.1	Bachelor's or equivalent	6%		4%		7%	
	Master's or equivalent	16%		13%		13%	
	Doctoral or equivalent	**		22%		22%	
	All tertiary levels of education	9%		6%		9%	
<b>Employment rate of 25-64 year-olds, by educational attainment</b>							
<b>2018</b>							
Table A3.1	Short-cycle tertiary	84%		82%		82%	
	Bachelor's or equivalent	85%		84%		84%	
	Master's or equivalent	87%		88%		88%	
	Doctoral or equivalent	90%		92%		93%	
	All tertiary levels of education	86%		85%		86%	
<b>Employment rate of tertiary-educated 25-64 year-olds, by field of study</b>							
<b>2018</b>							
Table A3.4	Education	85%		84%		85%	
	Business and administration and law	86%		86%		87%	
	Engineering, manufacturing and construction	90%		89%		89%	
	Health and welfare	88%		87%		88%	
<b>Relative earnings of full-time full-year 25-64 year-old workers, by educational attainment (upper secondary education = 100)</b>							
<b>2017</b>							
Table A4.1	Short-cycle tertiary	109		120		121	
	Bachelor's or equivalent	117		144		138	
	Master's, doctoral or equivalent	150		191		174	
	All tertiary levels of education	130		157		152	
<b>Upper secondary and vocational education and training (VET)</b>							
<b>Upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary attainment rate</b>							
<b>2018</b>							
Table A1.2	Share of 25-34 year-olds with upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary as their highest attainment	38%		41%		44%	
<b>Percentage of first-time upper secondary graduates with a vocational qualification</b>							
<b>2017</b>							
Table B3.1	Vocational programmes	**		40%		46%	
<b>Age at graduation from upper secondary education, by programme orientation</b>							
<b>2017</b>							
Figure B3.1	General programmes	**		18		19	
	Vocational programmes	20		21		21	
<b>Share of women among upper secondary graduates, by programme orientation</b>							
<b>2017</b>							
Figure B3.2	General programmes	57%		55%		56%	
	Vocational programmes	48%		46%		46%	
<b>Employment, unemployment and inactivity rates of 25-34 year-olds, with upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary education</b>							
<b>2018</b>							
Table A3.3	Employment rate	78%		78%		79%	
	Unemployment rate	8%		7%		8%	
	Inactivity rate	15%		16%		14%	
<b>Total expenditure on upper secondary educational institutions, in USD<sup>2</sup> per full-time equivalent student, by programme orientation</b>							
<b>2016</b>							
Table C1.1	General programmes	USD 13 451		USD 9 397		USD 9 671	
	Vocational programmes	USD 13 881		USD 10 922		USD 11 320	
<b>Early childhood education and care (ECEC)</b>							
<b>Enrolment rate of 3-5 year-olds in education</b>							
<b>2017</b>							
Table B2.2	ECEC and primary education	98%		87%		90%	
<b>Share of children enrolled in private institutions</b>							
<b>2017</b>							
Table B2.3	Pre-primary level (ISCED 02)	53%		34%		27%	
<b>Ratio of children to teaching staff</b>							
<b>2017</b>							
Table B2.3	Pre-primary level (ISCED 02)	15		16		15	
<b>Expenditure on children aged 3-5 enrolled in education</b>							
<b>2016</b>							
Table B2.4	Annual expenditure per child, in USD <sup>2</sup> per child	USD 8 433		USD 8 141		USD 8 926	

Source	Main topics in <i>Education at a Glance</i>	Belgium		OECD average		EU23 average	
<b>Social outcomes and adult learning</b>							
<b>Participation in formal and/or non-formal education, by educational attainment<sup>3</sup></b>							
<b>2016</b>							
Table A7.1	Below upper secondary	20%		n.a.		26%	
	Upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary	40%		n.a.		44%	
	Tertiary	65%		n.a.		66%	
<b>Participation in cultural or sporting activities in the last 12 months, by educational attainment<sup>4</sup></b>							
<b>2015</b>							
Table A6.1	Below upper secondary	49%		n.a.		56%	
	Upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary	72%		n.a.		77%	
	Tertiary	90%		n.a.		92%	
<b>Financial resources invested in education</b>							
<b>Total expenditure on educational institutions, by level of education<sup>2</sup></b>							
<b>2016</b>							
Table C1.1 and C2.1		<b>USD/student</b>	<b>% GDP</b>	<b>USD/student</b>	<b>% GDP</b>	<b>USD/student</b>	<b>% GDP</b>
	Primary	USD 10 646	1.6%	USD 8 470	1.5%	USD 8 548	1.3%
	Lower secondary	USD 13 409	0.9%	USD 9 884	0.9%	USD 10 302	0.9%
	Upper secondary	USD 13 704	1.8%	USD 10 368	1.1%	USD 10 308	1%
	Tertiary (including R&D)	USD 18 169	1.5%	USD 15 556	1.5%	USD 15 863	1.2%
<b>Share of expenditure on educational institutions, by final source of funds</b>							
<b>2016</b>							
Table C3.1		<b>Public</b>	<b>Private</b>	<b>Public</b>	<b>Private</b>	<b>Public</b>	<b>Private</b>
	Primary, secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary	96%	3%	90%	10%	92%	8%
	Tertiary (including R&D)	82%	15%	66%	32%	73%	24%
<b>Total public expenditure on primary to tertiary education</b>							
<b>2016</b>							
Table C4.1	As a percentage of total government expenditure	10.8%		10.8%		9.6%	
<b>Teachers, the learning environment and the organisation of schools</b>							
<b>Actual salaries of teachers and school heads in public institutions relative to earnings of full-time, full-year workers with tertiary education</b>							
<b>2017</b>							
Table D3.2a		<b>Teachers</b>	<b>School heads</b>	<b>Teachers</b>	<b>School heads</b>	<b>Teachers</b>	<b>School heads</b>
	Pre-primary	**	**	0.78	**	0.78	1.16
	Primary	**	**	0.84	1.25	0.85	1.24
	Lower secondary (general programmes)	**	**	0.88	1.34	0.89	1.34
	Upper secondary (general programmes)	**	**	0.93	1.43	0.95	1.43
<b>Annual statutory salaries of teachers in public institutions, based on most prevalent qualifications, at different points in teachers' careers<sup>2</sup></b>							
<b>2018</b>							
Table D3.1a		<b>Starting salary</b>	<b>Salary after 15 years of experience</b>	<b>Starting salary</b>	<b>Salary after 15 years of experience</b>	<b>Starting salary</b>	<b>Salary after 15 years of experience</b>
	Pre-primary	**	**	USD 31 276	USD 42 078	USD 30 615	USD 41 354
	Primary	**	**	USD 33 058	USD 45 947	USD 32 987	USD 45 748
	Lower secondary (general programmes)	**	**	USD 34 230	USD 47 675	USD 34 261	USD 47 772
	Upper secondary (general programmes)	**	**	USD 35 859	USD 49 804	USD 35 104	USD 49 875
<b>Organisation of teachers' working time in public institutions over the school year</b>							
<b>2018</b>							
Tables D4.1a and D4.1b		<b>Net teaching time</b>	<b>Total statutory working time</b>	<b>Net teaching time</b>	<b>Total statutory working time</b>	<b>Net teaching time</b>	<b>Total statutory working time</b>
	Pre-primary	**	**	1 024 hours	1 613 hours	1 062 hours	1 550 hours
	Primary	**	**	783 hours	1 612 hours	754 hours	1 539 hours
	Lower secondary (general programmes)	**	**	709 hours	1 634 hours	673 hours	1 572 hours
	Upper secondary (general programmes)	**	**	667 hours	1 629 hours	643 hours	1 558 hours
<b>Percentage of teachers who are 50 years old or over</b>							
<b>2017</b>							
Table D5.1	Primary to upper secondary	28%		36%		39%	
<b>Share of female teachers, in public and private institutions</b>							
<b>2017</b>							
Table D5.2	Primary	82%		83%		87%	
	Lower secondary	64%		69%		72%	
<b>Total number of compulsory instruction time, by level of education</b>							
<b>2019</b>							
Table D1.1	Primary	**		4 568 hours		4 258 hours	
	Lower secondary	**		3 022 hours		3 002 hours	
	Upper secondary	**		**		**	
<b>Average class size by level of education</b>							
<b>2017</b>							
Table D2.1	Primary	**		21		20	
	Lower secondary	**		23		21	

The reference year is the year cited or the latest year for which data are available.

1. For some countries, data on foreign students are provided instead of international students.

2. Values reported in equivalent US dollars (USD) have been converted using purchasing power parities (PPPs) for GDP

3. EU23 average refers to the average of OECD countries that participated in the Adult Education Survey (AES).

4. EU23 average refers to the average of OECD countries that participated in the European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions 2015.

\*\* Please refer to the source table for details on these data.

Cut-off date for the data: 19 July 2019. Any updates on data can be found on line at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-data-en>.