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THEMATIC REVIEW OF THE FIRST YEARS OF TERTIARY EDUCATION

COUNTRY NOTE: BELGIUM (FLEMISH COMMUNITY)

This Country Note was prepared by a Secretariat-led review team as input to the first stage of the OECD Education Committee's Thematic Review of the First Years of Tertiary Education. The views expressed are those of the review team. They do not commit the OECD or the countries concerned.

A comparative report for the first stage of the thematic review will be published by the OECD in the last quarter of 1997. Inquiries may be directed to OECD Publications.

Introduction

The visit to and review of first years of tertiary education in Belgium (Flanders) came mid-way in the OECD thematic review activity and was informed by experience gained in earlier country visits. It drew also on the many contributions from Belgium and, more specifically, the Flemish Community, in the course of a wide range of OECD activities over recent years. Attention is drawn to the *Reviews of National Policies for Education: Belgium*, carried out for the country as a whole in 1990-91, but also more recent and relevant contributions to Education Committee work in vocational education and training and mass tertiary education (the latter, became a constituent part of this thematic review late in 1995).

Notwithstanding the broad and rich contributions provided in these other activities, the enthusiasm, seriousness and substance of the effort undertaken by the Flemish Ministry of Education in preparing for this thematic review was impressive, and, from the point of view of the review team, extremely helpful and supportive of their work. The background report, Higher Education in Flanders (Belgium), prepared by a research team in consultation with the Ministry, stands out as an important contribution in its own right. It is a very informative and critical analysis of the issues in the first years of tertiary education. A separate set of seven prepared case studies made available to the review team provide useful detail on selected experiences in the key areas of quality assurance, student academic support and internationalisation. All in all, this is an impressive and useful set of documents. They testify to the readiness of the authorities and members of the tertiary education community to engage in a critical process of self-reflection and analysis.

We extend our congratulations and express our thanks to Messrs. Georges Monard, Jan Adé and Gaby Hostens and Mrs. Micheline Scheys in the Ministry, to Mr. Jef Verhoeven and Mrs. Ilse Beuselinck who prepared the background report, and to other colleagues within and outside the Ministry who took part in the preparations for the review and participated with energy and openness in the meetings organised for us.

It will be helpful, in situating the views and comments of the review team, to restate here the purposes and terms of reference for the OECD thematic review. As expressed in the Guidelines, the thematic review of first years of tertiary education aims (i) to examine the extent to which the structure of provision, programmes, teaching and learning at the tertiary level are evolving to meet the expectations and capabilities of students and the needs of the economy and society, and (ii) to undertake an analysis of how policies might best promote needed change. The experience in the Flemish Community provides good examples of policy and practice in this field and highlights a number of issues.

For the purposes of the thematic review, the term 'tertiary education' has been adopted to convey an interest in a level and type of studies rather than in particular institutional sectors. In Flanders, 'tertiary education' is provided mostly through institutions defined as higher education, principally universities and hogescholen. The latter constitute the 'non-university sector'. The range and level of the institutions are not adequately conveyed by the conventional English translation: 'higher schools'. This is not really appropriate. Nor does the commonly-used 'higher non-university education' term adequately reflect what in the legislation is termed 'academic level' for the two-cycle basic courses offered in these institutions. We would prefer the terms 'colleges of higher education', 'tertiary college', 'tertiary institute' or 'college' and use the first of these terms in this report.

'First years' refer to the three, four, five (or more) years of study leading to an initial award or qualification which is recognised on the labour market. In Flanders, 'first years' would correspond to the

full, two-cycle programmes. The one-cycle programmes of study in colleges of higher education technically meet some of the terms of the definition. However, participation in just the first cycle in two-cycle programmes at universities and in the colleges of higher education does not lead to a recognised qualification on the labour market. Moreover, completion of the first cycle signals little in the way of marked change in teaching, learning or of apparent scope for student transfer and mobility to other institutions -- especially universities -- or fields). The flows of students within, among and between cycles, programmes and institutions (mostly, between sectors) must be taken into account in assessing the student experience in acquiring (or not) the initial award or qualification in tertiary education.

In Flanders, as in other parts of the OECD, individuals may undertake study at the tertiary level apart from the 'regular' diploma and degree courses in tertiary education institutions. Enterprise-based training programmes (organised by firms, or provided by private training firms or higher education institutions in the form of 'contract teaching'), courses offered by other types and levels of education institutions, community organisations, programmes of other Ministries (employment, social affairs) or municipal agencies and distance learning across international borders are the main alternatives. Participation in a number of these kinds of study activities are detailed in *Towards Mass Tertiary Education in Flanders (Belgium)*, a report submitted to the OECD by the Flemish Ministry of Education in January 1995.

In accordance with the emphasis agreed for the review, the team has directed its attention to 'first years' study in formal tertiary education, although some reference will be made to other forms of study and learning at this level.

Context

The constitutional structure and political framework in Belgium have undergone quite profound changes in recent years. The trend toward greater devolution and a stronger federal structure has introduced a new dynamic for tertiary education in Flanders. Directly, the national trend has meant an even greater lodging of decision-making, legal control, financing and administrative arrangements at the level of the Flemish government. Indirectly, the future development of the economy and well-being of the society will increasingly be the interest of Flemish government policy, including policy addressed toward tertiary education. Devolution of responsibilities from the level of government to that of institutions is proceeding concurrently. Thus both concentration and deconcentration of decision-making are taking place simultaneously.

There will be much to build on. The economy in Flanders is highly developed, productive, largely successful and competitive (although there is cause for some concern, with respect to decreased business confidence, increases in long-term unemployed and overall debt burden, according to the report of *Quarterly Economic Indicators for Flanders*, January 1996). The Flemish Community, as is characteristic for Belgium as a whole, has long, rich and active international relationships and well-developed international expertise both culturally and commercially. Even more important, the experience gained in undertaking detailed, practical co-operation in a country with a range of cultural, linguistic and religious backgrounds has provided a deeper understanding of how to develop a successful and mutually-satisfactory exchange with individuals, groups and enterprises in the international environment.

Among the principles which are agreed and accepted as the basis for the Flemish society, two have particular relevance for this review since they have a strong bearing on how 'first years' of tertiary education are perceived and on the scope and means of government policy.

The first one is freedom of education, which in tertiary education means open access and, further, virtually guaranteed access to the type of programme and religious or philosophical orientation of institution. While institutions are defined as 'public' or 'private' according to orientation, the principle of freedom of education means that a student may enrol in any institution, public or private, on the same terms. Each institution, whether public or private, is subject to the same programme and degree regulations and levels and modalities of public financing. The differences between public and private institutions, in most aspects concerning the actual provision of teaching, are modest. There are some limits on choice (we will come back to this), but the principle of open access is asserted as strongly in Flanders as in any other OECD country.

The second principle of interest is consensual decision-making and the high value attached to achieving a compromise which respects choices of individuals and groups in the society.

Tertiary education in the Flemish Community is highly developed and, as we will discuss further, in a quite dynamic state. Participation rates are high, reflecting participation levels in secondary education (legal school leaving age is 18 years) and a distinctive open access policy, as noted above. There is no national, end-of-secondary school examination and only a few subject-specific entry tests for universities. Nor are there queues for entry -- as may be found in some other countries participating in the OECD's thematic review. All of the components of tertiary education provision exist, including part-time study and distance education. Individual and social demand appears to be accommodated, with no apparent indications of mismatch. Medicine could be one such gap now arising due to a government interest, in the light of increasing social security expenses, in dramatically reducing the number of general practitioners. For tertiary education, this may mean a radical reduction in capacity in the existing medical education programmes. In sum, if there are no major apparent needs and, at least as viewed from some quarters, no major funding problems, there would seem to be little incentive for change.

Not all would agree with this assessment, however, and, in spite of obvious strengths in tertiary provision, several issues present themselves. The most prominent of these issues is the high failure/drop-out/repetition rates in the first years of tertiary education. This is an issue of long standing, on different aspects of which views coincide or diverge. That there is a problem, and in secondary as well as tertiary education, is widely agreed. But on what scale, and how best to deal with its various features, are matters of contention. Other prominent issues concern the impact of substantial recent reforms in universities. Even more recently, questions arise in the restructuring of the colleges of the higher education sector which has led through mergers to a reduction in the number of institutions from 160 to 29. This is change of a quite drastic kind and it has, not surprisingly, had varied effects and given rise to some dissension. Experiences with the means for overall strategic development of tertiary education, teaching and learning in a context of mass participation, approaches to quality assurance (particularly as concerns teaching and learning), links to the labour market and to industry, devolved institutional governance and management, and financing also raise new or potentially important issues for policy and practice, which we will touch on below.

In our view, these issues and others can be best addressed through policies which build on existing strengths to optimise the contributions and functioning of tertiary education provision and, in so doing, set in a motion more strategic development of the system as a whole. Thus, the question to be asked should not be limited to: 'how do we compare with other OECD countries?' but rather be extended to: 'what steps can be taken to make needed improvements in teaching, learning and programmes in order to strengthen the contribution of tertiary education to the future development of the economy and society?' This perspective of optimisation runs through much of our commentary. We make direct use of some of the data and analyses provided in the background report and information in the various case studies, but

note here that the analytical work contained in that report and the details in the case studies complement and serve as bases for some of the points developed below.

National Policy Frameworks and Agencies

The Ministry and Ministry officials play key roles. The Flemish Education Council (VLOR), a representative body covering all levels and sectors of education and comprised of the various internal to education, community and economic interests, undertakes analyses and provides policy advice to government.

For tertiary education in particular, the Flemish University Council (VLIR) serves as a forum, information-gathering and co-operative research body, and 'interest-group' for the universities. The VLIR is, in our view, a useful body. Set up by decree but run by the universities, it is in a position to provide policy advice, undertake analytical work including the quality review. It has established good relations with the Minister and the Ministry. Colleges of higher education have traditionally operated within networks, each of which brought together institutions having the same philosophical or religious orientation. The reforms led to mergers of institutions within the same networks. While there has been no sector-wide body comparable to VLIR, a Flemish Higher Education Council (VLHORA) is being formed to bring together all of the colleges of higher education for similar purposes. Organisations spanning the religious and philosophical networks in this sector already exist.

In our view, these sectoral bodies can contribute to, but do not serve as a substitute for, a more widely representative council which brings together the full range of interests -- institutional, student, enterprise and community -- concerned with tertiary education. At present, no such body exists. Thus, to complement and support the Ministry in its work, we recommend the establishment of a Flemish Higher Education Council, with a strong strategic advisory role similar to the Australian and Swedish Higher Education Councils and parallel to the strong and active Flanders Research Council. Such a body, designed to ensure active dialogue across a wide spectrum of interests, could be a useful policy forum and could monitor the structural change, commission research and receive briefs for specific studies from the Minister.

Such a recommendation raises the issue of participation of the tertiary sector in the Flemish Education Council (VLOR), as the existence of that body might be thought to serve the needs of the tertiary sector. While there should be cross representation by each body on the other council, our argument for a separate tertiary education council is twofold. First, on the evidence presented to us, the universities in particular do not see much of value in their present participation in the VLOR. Second, the dramatic restructuring of tertiary education that has occurred, the need for close working relationships across sectors at that level, and the kinds of direct relationships between tertiary education, the employment sector and the economy more generally, all point to the need for concentrated attention to the further development of tertiary education. Cross representation and cross referencing on matters of joint concern should also result in a better dialogue between secondary and tertiary education than exists at present.

The tradition in Flanders, as we have observed, is policy by decree, legislation and regulation. The intent is to provide a policy framework within which freedom of education can be exercised -- 'liberté encadré', as expressed in the course of the OECD's earlier review of education policy in Belgium. The policy framework nonetheless sometimes places a heavy hand on development, limits flexibility and can lead to the relative neglect of the policy roles and responsibilities of the partners and institutions. They can be comfortable recipients of decisions rather than active in forging them. On the other hand, the

quality assurance initiative (as applied to the universities) is a good demonstration of joint effort (described in greater detail below), and the reforms have worked to build up initiative by the institutions.

In short, there is a very active, vigorous policy environment. In a dynamic situation, leadership is being shown and the size of the Community is such that communication and interchange on key policy and management matters are easy, in the contexts of important constitutional and political changes affecting relations between the federal/national level and the Flemish Community. The establishment of a body covering the breadth of tertiary education, in our view, would contribute to the work of the Ministry in its formulation of policy aimed at the strategic development of the system and could encourage productive joint efforts with the Ministry and among sectors and partners outside the system.

System Structure and Diversity

As already described, the system of tertiary education in Flanders is binary, comprising universities and colleges of higher education (hogescholen). We benefited from interesting discussions of comparisons and contrasts to bring out the distinctive approaches and orientations in the respective sectors, e.g. in civil vs. industrial engineering; upper secondary vs. lower secondary and primary teachers; 'pure' vs. 'applied' research.

There are strong features of convergence in the system, and they are growing -- so much so that we question whether a sharp binary distinction either can or should be sustained in practice. We believe that the pressures are such that the enrolment caps will not hold. As we have observed, the re-structuring underway in a number of countries participating in the OECD thematic review is leading to more convergence between sectors. In some, the prior binary divide has been eliminated as a matter of policy (Australia, United Kingdom). In others, through new policy frameworks or the decisions of autonomous institutions, previous sectoral distinctions are, in various ways, blurring (New Zealand, Japan, Denmark). Tertiary education in Flanders, in our view, shows tendencies similar to those found in the latter group. Both tertiary education sectors teach the 'same' degree (two-cycle programmes). Institutions in the two sectors are becoming more similar in terms of scale of enrolment, overall and within programmes; partnership with industry; and recognition of the common quality of studies and research (e.g. several two-cycle college programmes which have established joint-study programmes with foreign universities or which have been reviewed favourably in relation to comparable programmes at universities).

A key argument often advanced in favour of a sharp distinction is the association of research with the university sector. This is indeed the tradition. It is an internationally (but not universally) recognised hallmark of university-level institutions and provides a criterion for defining specific institutional roles in spheres of growing diversity. However, to acknowledge that some institutions or some parts of institutions will be defined by the distinction of their research is not to accept that the basis for a categorical separation of 'research'/'non-research' any longer exists. The international trend in research is in the opposite direction. In many fields, larger and often transdisciplinary teams of co-operating researchers, from universities and non-university institutions, industry, the professions and designated research agencies, are replacing the tight-knit, single-institution team of specialists. Moreover, in many OECD countries, the strong links non-university institutions are developing with industry frequently include R&D projects. Instead of sharp sectoral dividing lines, the way of the future is to think of different kinds of research and R&D enterprises with different kinds of institutional concentrations. There will be, of course, major centres, often based in single universities, but that does not invalidate the cross-sectoral argument.

If our analysis is correct, sectoral development will increasingly be seen in terms of greater complementarity of institutional programmes as opposed to a separation roles, provision and activities. There is value in diversity, but it can be optimised with more co-operation and greater articulation. Key issues arise concerning diversity and differentiation within institutions and programmes as well as between institutions regardless of sector, including issues of collaboration and co-operation to ensure educational and efficiency benefits. There is much more to be said on this point, but to take the matter farther would be to stray unduly from the focal concerns of this review. We add but one further point, which is that all students in tertiary education, regardless of the sector or institution, should have the benefit of research-informed study programmes and access to current research findings.

With regard to the issue of co-operation, the Centre of Technological Research (CTR) at Vlaamse Autonome Hogeschool Gent provides an excellent illustration of what can be done. The CTR, a research arm of this college of higher education, is engaged in a wide-ranging research programme in areas such as electro-mechanics, chemistry, biochemistry and biotechnology, textiles, plastics, agriculture, horticulture, agro- and food industries, landscape development. Its high-level, applied research programme is seen by institutional administrators to 'contribute to an up-to-date academic profile' and it has, at the same time, established partnerships with Flemish and foreign academic institutions, companies and various national and international research programmes in these fields. Through co-operative arrangements, the CTR provides opportunities for university and well as college of higher education students to work in its well-equipped laboratories.

Articulation possibilities also exist for students who wish to pursue the second-cycle of a two-cycle programme in the same or related field in another institution. The credit transfer is in place, but as yet provides little by way of 'upward' mobility to those following the one-cycle programmes (a point we return to, under 'Failure, Drop-Out and Repetition', below).

The opportunity and challenge to develop further in these directions are now present as the college of higher education sector continues to sort itself out following the 1995 reforms. Within that sector, there is an evident process of institution-building and re-building with very interesting innovations emerging as previously separate subjects, staff and students are being brought together. Although the issue of the most efficient use of resources for research is critical, we encourage the Flemish authorities in their continuing efforts to reduce sharp lines of distinction between sectors.

There seems to be no immediate press for merger on the same scale in the university sector as in the college of higher education sector, but universities are to a greater or lesser degree affected by the same underlying developments. Within budget constraints and taking into account quality issues raised by small enrolments in some fields, it may become necessary to explore ways to develop distinctive and differing profiles for institutions (as is done through different means in France, Finland and Australia) or co-operative arrangements in which the responsibilities for teaching, research and the associated resources for small, specialised programmes are shared among two, three or four universities. The super-structure approach to link up separate institutions in the University of Antwerp is one indication of a response that seeks to go beyond the 'arms' length' co-operation which has existed in that city for a number of years. Further linkages seem to be worth considering, particularly given the imbalance within the sector owing to the number of small institutions.

In sum, much has already been achieved from the reforms and mergers, resulting in large measure from the vision, courage and hard work of the Ministry, institutional managers and academic and administrative staff. Nor should one overlook the co-operation of students and the roles played by community members. The initiatives and the achievements are widely spread. There is more to be gained from further attention to mergers in the college of higher education sector, concentration and co-operative

arrangements in the university sector and better cross-sectoral co-operation as part of this process. We are persuaded that, on balance, the realisation of educational benefits of scale is particularly important in the college sector and that, where multi-site institutions have been established, there is an obvious case for the use of distance education technologies and methods. As the mergers in the college of higher education sector become settled, it would be appropriate to concentrate attention on ensuring that the quality gains envisaged by scale are fully realised.

Failure/Drop-out/Repetition

At least in broad terms, the extent of drop-out and repetition in the first years is well-documented. This is not to say, however, that there is adequate information on the paths followed by "drop-out" students, some of whom pursue successful careers or other forms of study. Behind the figures there are many different stories to tell.

Available statistics provide a basis for setting out those stories. The figures provided in the background report indicate that about half of all first-year students do not successfully complete course requirements (through the exam at the end of the year). This share is not the same as drop-out:

- with the flexible open access system in Flanders, some may apply but not undertake coursework (never attend classes, submit papers or sit for exams);
- an unknown number of students who do not succeed in their first year at university find their way into programmes in colleges of higher education. Although the data are weak, the pattern seems to be an example of a 'waterfall' with flows going from universities to the colleges, rather than an 'auto route' where the flows go both ways.
- Such 'two-way' flows can be found in other OECD countries, such as Australia and the United States, where articulation agreements and credit transfer arrangements serve to permit and promote student mobility from non-university higher education institutions to enter universities. We understand that, while such possibilities exist in Flanders, there has not been great demand on the part of students (perhaps owing to the wide variety of arrangements established by individual institutions and faculties).
- others, on re-taking all or part of the first year, eventually succeed, and so reduce the 'failure' rate to 30 per cent, according to statistics provided in the background report;

Moreover, apart from the 'different stories' revealed by statistics and student experiences are different perceptions of the purposes and meaning of the process leading to recorded 'failure'. These, too, convey 'different stories':

- some within higher education see the examinations at the end of the first year as a formal selection mechanism, coming in Flanders later in a student's educational career because of the open access system and the principle of freedom of education. Similar ideas have prevailed among parts of the university system in the United States. There is acknowledgement here of the high costs involved (about which, more below), but also recognition of the fundamental agreement in Flanders on the principle which gives rise to the use of such a selection process.
- many with whom we spoke, including students, went further. In Flanders, it was said, recorded 'failure' in the first year is not seen as a failure in the sense that it signals less ability

or potential for achievement either in higher education or on the job. From this perspective, the phenomenon of 'failure' in Flanders would be better termed 'course change' or 'trial and error' or 'exploration'. While this view was expressed by far more than an isolated few, it is not clear to us why an employer, choosing among two candidates with similar qualifications, would not give some attention to a first-year failure if only to ascertain the reasons for it.

In the light of these 'different stories', it is evident that in Flanders 'failure' raises questions concerning its extent, nature, and meaning which cannot be answered by reference to a single statistic. It has been argued that attention should be given, rather, to overall graduation rates which, in Flanders, compare well with other OECD countries in the European region. In our view, however, even if the overall level of eventual completion of studies is about average for the OECD as a whole, this should not be regarded as 'good enough'. The open access system is a distinctive strength of Flemish tertiary education, and with such wide support for the underlying principle, Flanders is in a better position than other OECD countries to optimise the reach and performance of its system through increased success rates.

In spite of a general acceptance of the phenomena of failure and repetition, concern on both was expressed by those within the Ministry and within tertiary education institutions. We share this concern and recommend concerted action to address it. If the levels can be reduced or the effects of failure mitigated, significant resources may be made available for re-allocation within tertiary education institutions and the pressures on government budgets (or the tightness of the budget cap for hogescholen) may be eased (for some estimates of the 'social costs' of failure, see W. Nonneman, 'Review inzake de overgang van Secundair naar Hoger Onderwijs', Van Secundair naar Hoger Onderwijs, Cahier 9, Vlaamse Onderwijsraad). Quite apart from the assumptions used in calculations of the short-term financial consequences of failure, it must again be recognised that recorded 'failure' is not uniformly regarded as a complete loss to the society or by the students concerned. What is not clear is whether students who do not successfully complete their first year have sufficient opportunities and support for building on what they have learned during the year (among others, through partial recognition, either immediately or in subsequent years). It would be useful to know whether students' attitudes toward study -- including their readiness for continuing study over the life cycle -- are affected by the experience of failure in examinations. Also, more needs to be known about the way in which standards are defined, the criteria of successful performance determined and the efforts that are made by institutions to foster success in learning (as distinct from student attendance at lectures and participation in tutorials, seminars, practical classes and so on).

The review team took note of a range of initiatives adopted to address the problem and issues raised. These include: (i) an ambitious '10- point programme' put in place by each institution in line with broad requirements set down by the Ministry, with accents on providing information to and orientation of students in their final year of secondary education; improved guidance for first-year students; smoother transition to other courses after (partial) failure; and ongoing research by VLOR; (ii) some scope within the first cycle of two-cycle programmes for students to extend study over three years and (as identified in the 10-point programme) to gain credit for exam passes, so the entire first year need not be repeated; (iii) by decree, universities are required to assign the equivalent of at least five per cent of the academic staff to student guidance for the first candidature.

These initiatives are relatively new and, at present, implementation appears to be weak. Information is not readily available on the steps taken in the institutions (particularly in the colleges of higher education) or their effects. Although the implementation of the 10-point programme is intended to reduce failure in the first year, there has been no observed change (yet) in failure/repetition rates. Indeed, it should be noted that the position of some staff within tertiary education institutions is that an

improvement (reduction) should not be expected because more or less the same proportions of those following courses in the first year will not succeed (reliance on norm-referenced assessment). This makes the overall evaluation of the initiatives problematic; the identification of clear targets would, in our view, help to drive the initiatives forward.

In this regard, we do not underestimate the difficulty of drawing firm conclusions for further action. For a variety of quite valid reasons, not every student can or should be expected to succeed in study or succeed within a specified time period. In mass systems, standards relevant to perhaps a highly selected ten per cent of the age group cannot be imposed unchanged on forty per cent or more. But, what new standards should be set? These, and other issues, need to be debated and studied in the context of the lifespan of students, the conditions in the institutions and social norms and expectations. Our point is simply that close attention to these issues is warranted.

We understand that the commissioners are to report on these matters. We would expect the report to provide an occasion to revitalise debate and to stimulate initiatives in this area.

Further, we would draw attention to two gaps in the present initiatives. First, the review team believes that initiatives will need to be strengthened at the level of secondary education. From a few discussions with both public authorities and teachers, we have the impression that secondary schools present qualitatively different profiles with respect to the academic abilities of completers. This impression refers to individual schools but, more significantly, to different fields and forms of study in secondary education. Even though completion of secondary school is 'officially' sufficient for entry into any tertiary education programme (with some limits), students possess different capabilities -- some, too weak -- for immediate success. Data supplied in the background report and an earlier summary of research in *Education in Belgium: The Diverging Path* (1991) indicate wide differences on 'failure' rates according to the secondary education field of study followed by students, a finding which seems to imply that a part of the problem is differences in preparation provided in the different fields and forms of study at the secondary level. We are not certain of the extent to which students and teachers at the secondary level fully understand the nature and extent of these differences, particularly as they may relate to the likelihood of success in tertiary education. The Ministry's view is that the way forward is to strengthen fields and forms of study in secondary education to better prepare all young people for entry into and success in tertiary education.

Further, we are not sure whether teachers or counsellors in secondary schools have sufficient or updated knowledge of the content and requirements of the range of tertiary education options or of the relevance of the different types of tertiary education programmes to the world of work. One consequence is that advice provided to students may be misleading owing to outdated conceptions of study in and eventual employment for graduates of one-cycle and two-cycle programmes in the colleges of higher education as well the universities. The larger problem here is the discontinuity between teaching and learning in secondary schools and in tertiary education programmes. Here, much more could be done -- on both sides -- to bridge the gap.

The second gap is that, with few exceptions, the broadly-adopted initiatives aim at adapting the first-year or first-cycle student to an often rigid structure of tertiary education study rather than modifying tertiary level teaching methods and structures. There are examples of interesting approaches being used to make teaching and learning requirements more adaptive to students in a context of mass participation, and we draw attention to several of them in the next section. A wider use of entry-level exams for selection, as some suggested to us, would not address this underlying need for adaptation in teaching and learning and has the further disadvantages of both cost and possible distortions of studies. The review team does believe, however, that greater possibilities for diagnostic assessments in secondary as well as tertiary

education (the latter, as envisaged in the '10-point programme' described above) could assist students and their teachers identify weaknesses and strengths so as to enable each individual student to better match interests and capacities to the most appropriate study options and to organise appropriate supplementary studies, where necessary.

However, we conclude here by restating a general point: a big part of the failures/drop-out/repetition problem is to know, first, which kind of a problem it is. The open access system presents arguments for the first year of study as a 'trial' year, a process whereby students find out what they can or cannot do or what suits them. But, rates of failures and drop-out vary between courses and institutions, for reasons that are not always clear. Many students who fail repeat and succeed. And so on. There are costs -- both individual and social -- to be taken into account. We did not encounter any institution which claimed to have wholeheartedly addressed and solved the problems, variously defined, associated with failure/drop-out/repetition. We think that further research and well-informed discussion of issues would help to clarify matters and to suggest lines for future policy.

We recommend particular attention to three areas: (i) clarity in the problem to be addressed and, more specifically objectives to be realised, in policies aimed at failure/drop-out/repetition; (ii) strengthened advisory and counselling services (including by teachers) at the level of secondary education, with particular attention to the full range of tertiary education study options and associated employment and career paths; and (iii) wider implementation of adaptations in teaching and learning requirements and in assessment practices in the first two years, going beyond student academic support, advisory and counselling activities (as described in the next section).

Teaching and Learning in a Context of Mass Participation

The view, both in the Ministry and in the institutions, appears to be that the participation rate has reached its peak and that, in any event, a decline in the size of young age cohorts means that the numbers enrolled in tertiary education will hold steady or even decrease in the coming years. We are not so sure. As in other countries, conditions exist which will give rise to an increase in the participation rate from young age cohorts (perhaps as one consequence of reforms in secondary education) and in the interest of older adults (whatever their prior studies) to participate in the first years of tertiary education.

Under any scenario, it is likely that the profile of first years students will become more heterogeneous, raising again the question of whether programmes, teaching and learning and assessment requirements at this level are sufficiently flexible or attuned to student motivation, capabilities and interests to permit those enrolled to learn and succeed.

Regardless of student interests or origins, those in universities strongly argued the importance of the links between teaching and research, a view that was shared by some administrators and staff in two-cycle college programmes. The nature of the link between teaching and research was not, however, clearly articulated (a point already raised in 'System Structure and Diversity', above). This is a matter to which we shall be giving attention in the comparative report of the OECD Thematic review.

There is no evidence of widespread adoption of varied, innovative forms of teaching in tertiary education institutions. Elements of innovation and flexibility do indeed exist within the system and there are some outstanding examples. Nevertheless, these have been developed only in a few institutions and faculties. The challenge is to extend more widely the use of more varied and responsive forms of teaching and assessment. In this regard, the review team is of the view that some existing innovative approaches

could be considered as examples of growth points for future development. We describe five of these in some detail, as they are of particular comparative interest in the overall thematic review exercise.

At the University of Leuven, a special unit, LINOV, has the aim of developing and assisting in the implementation within the university of new education approaches. This includes audio-visual materials and their uses; operating sites for Flemish students following Dutch Open University courses; and participating in EUROPACE, a European-wide distance education system via satellite. There is evidence that more staff are using multi-media in the delivery of instruction (particularly younger staff, some introduced to the possibilities through new requirements for staff training in teaching methods). The range of initiatives of LINOV is impressive and the outreach effort commendable. The challenge will be to bring the more innovative, free-standing applications of information technology (including the Internet, for uses other than e-mail) into 'regular' class teaching and learning.

Less innovative in some respects, but also significant, is the use of the Dutch Open University (OUN) courses. In this case, the Ministry has supported a common initiative to establish an institute aimed at promoting innovation in teaching and learning practices in the OUN. The Ministry also provides local support for Higher Open Education students at six university sites. We were told that existing Open University courseware is not fully compatible with the contents, levels and organisation of study programmes in Flemish universities, and the fees for students are relatively high. For the most part, students follow these courses independently from 'regular' (resident) courses offered in Flemish universities. Nonetheless, possible growth points are to encourage greater use of the Open University courseware in teaching 'regular' courses and to promote the recognition of 'credit' (success in end-of-year examinations) from 'regular' courses toward degrees in the Open University.

A third example is the organisation of small-group teaching at Limburg University Center, in the Southeast corner of Flanders and at some distance from major cities and concentrations of tertiary education institutions in Brussels, Leuven, Antwerp and Gent. This is by design, as the institution was established with aim of improving access to tertiary education in a region which had relatively lower rates of participation in tertiary education than elsewhere in Flanders. At this university, an academic year is broken down into three terms of ten weeks each and provides for a more structured, systematic and scheduled provision of teaching. The number of subjects followed by students in each term is typically three, giving the opportunity for intensive study in a few subjects each term. This modular type of curriculum seems to be well-arranged; students find it demanding to sit for exams every ten weeks, but appear to benefit from the closer monitoring of progress that this permits. First-year students are broken down into classes of 24, on average. Students thus have close contact with teachers in each course.

The university centre and its facilities were purpose-built for such a form of teaching; indeed, students from other parts of Flanders are attracted to Limburg for the teaching model it uses. University leadership is committed to this approach, and it takes steps to leverage available resources in such a way as to maintain the structure of the study programmes. This includes the use of discipline-based as well as faculty-based staff groups which permit a certain amount of informal and formal pooling of expertise for teaching and research and the relatively heavy use of junior-level staff on temporary employment. Rates of success are comparable to other Flemish universities. As to whether this has been achieved at the expense of lower standards, university officials point out that those who pursue the second-cycle of study in their field in other universities (which is necessary in some fields of study for which Limburg provides only first-cycle courses) tend to perform at or above the level of their peers in those institutions. Further, external evaluations have been favourable.

Fourth, the VUB Learning Centre of the Science and Medical School is an excellent example of a student-centred approach in the first years of tertiary education. This is one of two counselling and

student support centres organised broadly in support of students in the related faculties. The materials and services of the Centre are available as and when requested by the student, and apply to the period of entry through to the end of the first candidature. Students can sit diagnostic tests of knowledge in basic subjects and of learning styles, the results of which are discussed individually with students and used to develop means for working out the gaps identified. Students have access to a wide range of specific course and reference materials, kits and models, computer-aided self-administered lessons and assessments. The Centre is permanently staffed by specialists who are not involved in regular teaching, but can consult and draw upon departmental staff for supplemental support. Study packages and work group activities are available for students who need and want such support. The VUB Learning Centre puts individual students in control of their own learning, an important adaptation which recognises the widening diversity of backgrounds and capabilities of entering students and the lack of individualised instructional support in large first-year classes. (see 'Transition for Secondary Education to University: Guidance and Support Services for First-Year Students at the VUB', by R. Van Esbroeck, Case 5 submitted to OECD review team.

Quality

As in all other countries taking part in the OECD thematic review, there is growing interest in quality assurance through highly structured activities both internal and external to institutions. The basic structure for quality assurance is a good example of shared responsibility: the universities are obliged (the role of the central authority is strong) to carry out internal and external procedures (the role of the institution is strong). Both internal and external measures are enjoined, and the latter involves co-operation between universities and includes provision for discipline reviews. The process is public (published reports) and international (co-operation with the Dutch; involvement of external experts).

Much depends on the readiness and ability of the institutions to follow through, since the cycle (up to 8 years) is very long, perhaps too long. Questions arise as to the length of time between reviews and as to the balance between 'effectiveness' and 'weight' (the system could become heavy and formalistic). One possibility is to link external reviews more closely to the Dutch effort, which could lead to a five-year cycle. Another would be to strengthen the monitoring procedures for internal reviews. Of greatest importance, however, is recognition by the institutions themselves of the benefits to be gained through regular self-evaluation and communication of results to the 'stakeholders'. Staff development programmes would be a necessary part of such an approach.

The external discipline reviews are of long standing. The recent increase in quality assurance activities received impetus in the decree on university education (in 1991, amended in 1994), which charged all universities with the responsibility to undertake initiatives. Two-cycle, college of higher education programmes were given a similar charge in 1994. We have the impression of activity on a wide front and in every corner of the tertiary education system.

At the Universities of Gent and Leuven, all courses are being systematically evaluated. At Leuven, this assessment is on a five-year cycle. A local evaluation committee is established, supported by a representative of the University Education Service who provides advice on the evaluation process. The evaluation covers curriculum, students' progress, teaching facilities and infrastructure at the programme level; content, teaching, materials, testing and study and teaching time at the course component level. Teaching is evaluated on the basis of curriculum materials, appraisals by students and a self-evaluation. Two features of the overall process are of interest: (i) the quality assessment aims at improvement, not sanctions, so only a global report goes to the Academic Council at university level; (ii) follow-up to monitor the actions taken in view of the recommendations is built in to the process. Evaluations of

individual teaching do figure into promotion decisions; we were told that 5 professors were assigned other duties on the basis of such evaluations. (see, also, 'Developing a Permanent Internal Quality Assurance System for University Education. A Case Study on Internal Quality Assurance at K.U Leven', by Katrien Staessens, Case 1 submitted to the OECD review team).

Another example comes of the college of higher education sector. EHSAL, a leading two-cycle economics hogeschool in Brussels, established EKON 2000 as its framework for quality assurance. EKON 2000 adopts an approach for developing a quality system based on the ISO 9001 standard. In practice, this has meant the definition of clear objectives in every facet of the work of the college, identification of the means and sticking points in realising constant quality improvement, and implementation of procedures for constant monitoring of performance. Several aspects of teaching are monitored: recruitment, programme development and content and methods of teaching. The comprehensive approach to quality assurance at EHSAL is intended to enlist all staff; it should lead to the identification, on a continuous basis, of the means to improve teaching, learning and other activities of the institution. Both features are of wider interest and applicability. Attention is drawn to the costs of such a quality monitoring and improvement process (see, also, 'Ekon 2000 - The EHSAL Strategic Quality Project, by Paul Garré, Case 3 submitted to the OECD review team).

Monitoring of one-cycle programmes in the college of higher education sector is carried out by the Inspectorate through extensive data-collection and analysis, based on surveys of staff, students and former students, and a complementary process of site visits and discussions with programme managers and staff. The reports for individual programmes are not made public, but highly quantitative comprehensive reports covering a field of study are published by the inspectorate and receive coverage in the press.

While impressed by the range of activity, we note that it is costly both financially and -- if thoroughly done -- in terms of staff time. Also, we remain concerned about the position of teaching in such quality assessments. Administrators in these and other institutions argued that teaching figured in the quality review process, but as noted above there appears to be limited evidence of widespread innovation in teaching. We were not persuaded that rigorous and supplementary procedures for monitoring and acknowledging the value of teaching are widely in place. In the tertiary sector, many academics have received little if any systematic preparation as teachers other than their academic studies. Research retains its pre-eminence as the principal criterion both for selection and for promotion. This is so in universities but not so to the same extent in the colleges of higher education. We think that the issue of evaluating and reviewing teaching performances, and the means to ensure the widest extension of services within institutions to improve the quality of teaching, are worthy of closer attention than they appear to be getting.

Relations with the Labour Market

The data provided in the background report were confirmed in many discussions over the course of the visit: graduate unemployment is relatively low, and not a matter for great concern on the part of institutional staff or students. Certainly, in comparison with other OECD countries in Europe, the position of Belgian tertiary education graduates is among the most favourable when compared to that of those completing secondary school. At 2.2 per cent, their unemployment rate in 1992 was less than half of the 4.7 per cent rate for those with upper secondary schooling. For most countries with data, the unemployment rate for tertiary education graduates was more than half of the unemployment rate of those with upper secondary schooling (see Table 1).

The environment in Flanders is, as in other parts of the OECD area, a dynamic one in which past patterns are an insufficient guide to future development. In this respect, our principal concern is the extent

to which there are effective and widely-used means of feedback from the labour market and of responses on the part of institutions and programmes. The key question is: are the students being prepared for a rapidly changing world of work whose final bearings are likely to be global as much as regional and for which highly competent, energetic and creative individuals will be needed in increasing numbers?

Institutions and programmes already make good use of advisory groups in the development and refinement of the content of courses. This input appears to be used to ensure the 'level' and state-of-the-art content of courses, but does not extend to the adaptation of course contents/methods/contexts to prepare graduates for actual work and career paths they will or may confront. In our exchange with a few selected, private-sector employers, university graduates were characterised as hard-working and very knowledgeable in their fields -- but lacking broader 'generic' skills and dispositions, needing to be more creative, adaptive and flexible. Another employer suggested that graduates of two-cycle college programmes may be 'too directed', by which he appeared to mean too specialised. Similar points were listed in the summary of employer views provided in *Towards Mass Tertiary Education in Flanders (Belgium)*, submitted to the OECD in January 1995. To what extent are these views being taken on board in the review and refinement of study programmes? We don't know, but this aspect was very little discussed in the institutions. We have the impression that the present view is that students require all of the time now available in degree programmes to acquire knowledge and to learn how to apply this knowledge. Our questions: is this the only profile universities or, in their own ways, colleges of higher education can or should produce? If it is assumed that there is a trade-off, could one imagine giving up a bit of 'the discipline' for more 'creativity' and 'people-orientation'? We don't seek to answer these questions or to elaborate the assumptions underlying them, but they seem to us to be worthy of further attention as the reform process proceeds.

Employer input into course development in the one-cycle college programmes is secured in several ways, including through the Inspectorate-led quality assurance process. However, it is not clear whether this input is sufficient or effective: it has proven difficult to secure participation from employers on the review teams, which as a result tend to rely on expert input from the university department or faculty in the relevant field. Moreover, the approach adopted in the quality review process has been constrained by the lack of a set of agreed, detailed 'profiles' of the needed skills against which the study programmes should be evaluated. The Flemish Education Council (VLOR) apparently has the responsibility for developing such 'profiles', but it has proved difficult to produce them through this structure. The delays also may mean that such 'profiles', once developed, may be outdated by the time they are agreed for transmission to the colleges.

Means to secure the active engagement of the social partners should be given a high priority. In this connection, we raise a larger question: The trend in the OECD area has been toward a smaller number of groups of occupational qualifications of the type envisaged in the 'profiles', and it would be useful to ascertain whether Flemish employers of graduates of one-cycle college programmes seek more or less specific sets of skills. We recognise, of course, that there is no single 'employer view' on these matters.

In one sense, the purest feedback mechanism is student choice. The evolution of enrolments in economics programmes from the mid-1980s serves as powerful evidence of the responsiveness of students to a range of influences, including changing employment prospects. Sustained enrolments in languages and teacher training also reflect, in part, a recognition of the options -- at graduation and in a lifelong perspective -- which graduates from these fields will have. But, the scope for the exercise of choice may be limited because opportunities for credit transfer and cross-programme course selection remain limited. Put another way, existing pathways are rigid and narrow, constraining choice. It would be useful to know the extent to which students acquire second or third qualifications and, more importantly, the interest on the part of older adults in acquiring new as well as updating their original qualification.

Institutional Management in a Context of Devolution

The university reforms of the early 1990s and the later reforms concerning colleges of higher education had among their key elements greater autonomy for institutional management and governance. There is not a one-way process here, but two parallel and intersecting movements: devolution of a range of responsibilities and decisions e.g. over resource utilisation, combined with more embracing frameworks of direction and strategic control. In Flanders, as in other countries participating in the thematic review, terms like 'decentralisation', 'devolution' or 'steering' fail to capture the nuances of these movements.

At the institution level, our view is that the existing scope for institution-level decision-making needs to be used to the full. In both sectors, conditions work against this. In universities, for example, the inertia of prior practices, the high relative age and time in post of staff, and present governance structures make it difficult to put in place new management and administrative arrangements. Such measures as the use of salary premiums and inducements for cross-faculty collaboration remain little used at present. The election, as opposed to the appointment, of the rector introduces further uncertainties in the scope for the full exercise of managerial decision-making. Senior staff in the universities appear to be aware of the limitations. In our view, any institution-wide approach to management should seek to develop greater optimisation in the use of expertise, capabilities and resources through stronger, more effective partnerships at the institution level -- between teaching and research and teaching and industry (both by bringing students closer to the world of work and by integrating better first years teaching and 'contract teaching').

The situation in the college of higher education sector is less clear, but the press of mergers has required a rapid 'on the job' learning by institutional managers. Contacts with public and private sector employers appear to be more broadly developed in these institutions, so the basis for developing more extensive, institution-wide partnerships with commerce and industry -- domestic and international -- exists. Such partnerships are likely to be a decisive factor in the adjustment of study programmes, particularly where students choose to take part of their studies in another country.

Finance and Costs

Public expenditure on tertiary education in Flanders relative to Gross Geographic Product (the latter, a measure of the output of the Flemish economy) is an estimated .9 per cent. It is not easy to compare the level of spending in Flanders with that of other parts of the OECD area, given the different structures and modalities of funding. The generous direct and indirect support for students, for example, is not included in this figure. What can be said, however, is that there is no indication of overly-generous spending at the tertiary level and that there may be good reason to find ways to increase the level of resources from all partners -- private sector as well as public budget -- in support of tertiary education. In our view, the resources being put to this level of studies represent an important and forward-looking investment which will continue to accrue benefits to all citizens of Flanders as well as the large proportion of its population who undertake study as a result of public support.

That said, there are steps which might be taken to optimise the use of the resources now available. Our position does not favour a narrow view of efficiency: tertiary education institutions are complex organisations which serve a wide variety of purposes. Countries and societies should establish for themselves what they are willing to pay for, and in this respect the Flemish Community seems prepared to support parallel institutions, differing by religious or philosophical orientation, which accommodate open access and freedom of education. There are costs associated with this arrangement and, in future,

conditions may lead the Community to find different ways to support this principle which improve the overall efficiency of the system. In this regard, the rationalisation promoted by the new funding mechanisms does not work against parallel institutions so much as toward the elimination of, or greater co-operation among, parallel streams and programmes which, in the face of limited resources and unbalanced enrolments, fail to provide uniformly high quality of provision. This, in our view, is desirable. What is not acceptable is inefficiency arising from non-responsiveness to student capabilities and broader labour market developments and inappropriate repetition (e.g. an excessive share of those who repeat first-year exams succeed on the second try). Some steps, in financing, regulation and programming, are being taken to address these concerns.

Institutional Funding

We are generally in support of the criteria-based institutional funding introduced in the reforms. Institutions applaud the transparency and simplicity of the formula, which provides funding for any eligible enrolment at the stipulated amount. Some of the criteria have helped to stimulate development in the desired direction, such as the minimum size which institutions must maintain to be eligible for funding and minimum enrolments by programme at different sites within the same institution for the colleges of higher education. These criteria have forced mergers and will bring about further rationalisation in this sector. A similar criterion applied in the funding of universities, namely minimum enrolment in specific faculties or study streams, has had less effect because the thresholds are low -- but we were told of cases in which study streams have been combined, perhaps as result of the potential application of the criterion. It should be noted that institutions are not forced to close or merge programmes; the consequence of not achieving the threshold is a loss of funding for those programmes affected. Decisions could be taken within the institution to maintain separate 'unfunded' programmes through cross-subsidy and private sources. We heard of no instance where this step had been taken, whether because of the high costs of doing so, of the view that one of the consequences of the lack of student demand is the non-viability of the programmes in question, and of the lack of scope or control at institution-level to re-allocate resources to sustain such programmes.

With respect to teaching, no direct financial incentive for performance is confronted by the institution as a whole. Failure/success, drop-out, repetition or graduation rates do not figure in the institutional funding regime, as is the case in other countries (Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Netherlands, for example). Rather, it is students who have financial incentives to succeed. This may seem inconsistent with the characterisation of a system which, in support of open access and freedom of education, provides almost fully-subsidised tuition, student bursaries and allowances to families of full-time students. However, at least two incentives promote performance. First, students who complete studies earlier can begin to realise the 'pay-off' on their diploma or degree (in the form of earnings and other returns) sooner and over a longer period of time. As noted above, the graduate labour market, relative to other European countries and to those with lower levels of education, is strong in Belgium as a whole. Second, students receive bursaries so long as they maintain progress in their studies (succeed in end-of-year examinations in the previous year). They are not supported when 'repeating' a year; the bursary is reinstated once they successfully complete the year in question and progress to the next year. The sums involved are modest, but the operation of the bursary system introduces a performance element into financing.

Whether for financial or other reasons, the average time to degree for students who receive degrees is short in comparison with other European countries but, as we have noted above, once the calculations are adjusted to take into account those students who start but drop-out or move to another institution, the efficiency of tertiary education in Flanders appears less favourable.

Incentive Funding

A more strategic, incentive-based element could be introduced into financing -- extending what is already there -- in order to influence further the allocation of resources. One new direction could be incentive funding of targets for development. As already mentioned, there is a tension between autonomy and centralisation. Without interfering directly in institutional decisions, development in particular directions could be promoted with relatively small amounts of incentive funding which would be provided to institutions on the basis of actions which move in the desired direction (not plans). Examples of development which could be supported in this way include quality initiatives, cross-sector and cross-institution co-operation and new forms and elements of business/institution partnerships.

Funds from non-government sources already figure in most institution budgets. Such funds provide a hedge against fluctuations in the amounts received through state funding (for whatever reason), but with regard to teaching and learning, such privately-funded activities as 'contract teaching' can nourish and stimulate development of teaching in formal 'first years' teaching. We have mentioned earlier the need to bring about an effective and efficient partnership between teaching and research. Other types of integration could be identified, e.g. harnessing international activities for the enrichment of teaching and learning for all students, not just those engaged in exchange programmes (see e.g. *The University of Ghent and Internationalisation: An Institutional Approach*, by Lieve Van de Bossche - Bracke, Case 7 submitted to the OECD review team) and the use of new information technologies for teaching and learning throughout the institution (including extending the range of uses of the Dutch Open University, as described earlier). In all of these cases, particular forms of incentive funding might be used to encourage institution-wide integration for the improvement of teaching and learning.

We were told that private institutions (neither publicly subsidised nor coming under close government regulation) are seen to have almost no role to play in the provision of tertiary education in Flanders. At present, private tertiary education accounts for a very small part of overall enrolment, and the qualifications it awards are not recognised by public sector employers or in publicly regulated occupations (e.g. law). While limited, the Ministry might wish to consider whether, in future and in ways not now found in any tertiary institution in Flanders, the development of provision through private institutions could serve to respond to demand and to introduce innovative programmes, teaching and learning into tertiary education.

Physical Plant

We were made aware of a short-term, but pressing issue in realising the anticipated efficiencies in teaching and learning. As a consequence of the mergers in the hogeschool sector, newly-formed institutions have an inventory of buildings and classrooms which may be ill-adapted to the size of the new (merged) institution and so constrain the scope for the re-organisation of the delivery of instruction. Classrooms are too small, and buildings are too widely dispersed. In this period when the mergers are settling in, the Ministry should provide incentives and assistance to the institutions concerned to seek innovative ways to address the problems. Solutions need not be found solely in the construction of new classroom buildings with large lecture halls. We support approaches which give evidence of creative, resource-saving and partnership arrangements (e.g. short-term leasing of the local cinema for morning or afternoon lectures). Greater use of distance learning approaches could also be envisaged.

More generally, under the pressures of mass participation and in the light of constraints on available financing, all tertiary education institutions should be encouraged to develop creative approaches

to the organisation of teaching and learning, indeed to contemplate what the 'university/college of the future' might look like-- particularly in a future likely to require a lifelong approach to learning.

Conclusion

The Flemish system of tertiary education is impressive. We were impressed by the capability and thoughtfulness of the people we met who work within its institutions and oversee its work, by the quality found in it and by the policy environment which favours successful adaptations to the forces at work in the society and economy and creative solutions to problems. The conditions are in place to build upon the obvious strengths and growth points.

Our recommendations may be summarised as follows:

- establishment of a Flemish Higher Education Council, representative of interests for all of tertiary education, to advise the Ministry of Education and assist in system-wide implementation of reforms,
- expand co-operation and articulation among institutions, within and between sectors,
- further develop institutional 'profiles', and or shared institutional responsibilities for teaching, research and learning in certain specialised, small fields and disciplines,
- further clarify objectives concerning 'failure' and 'dropout' rates,
- improve counselling and advisory services and information at secondary schools,
- extend innovation and adaptation of teaching and assessment practices in 'first years' of tertiary education, to accommodate diversity in backgrounds and interests in the student population,
- reinforce attention to teaching in quality assurance initiatives, to include staff development and rewards/sanctions,
- explore changes in curriculum to correspond to new or different profiles on the labour market for university and hogeschool graduates,
- increase involvement of social partners in advising on the aims and profiles of graduates as well as on the content of studies,
- strengthen staff development for senior-level management of institutions,
- increase incentive funding for targeted, strategic objectives,
- enhance performance-based elements in funding.

Table 1**Unemployment Rate by Level of Education for Persons 24 to 64 years old, 1992**

	<u>Level of Education</u>		
	Upper Secondary	Tertiary	All Levels
North America			
Canada	9.7	7.6	10.0
United States	7.2	3.2	6.6
Pacific Area			
Australia (1)	8.9	5.0	8.8
New Zealand	7.5	4.2	8.1
Europe			
Belgium	4.7	2.2	7.8
Denmark	9.1	5.1	10.6
Finland	12.1	4.4	11.4
France	7.4	4.5	8.8
Germany	6.4	4.1	6.2
Ireland	9.3	4.5	13.6
Italy	8.2	6.0	7.4
Netherlands	4.4	..	5.0
Norway	4.9	2.3	4.5
Portugal (2)	4.5	1.8	4.9
Spain	14.1	10.5	14.7
Sweden	4.3	2.1	3.8
United Kingdom	8.3	3.5	8.4

Notes:

1. 1993

2. 1991

Source: OECD, *Lifelong Learning for All*, Paris, 1996; Table 1.15.

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