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BE German-speaking Community

General Education

In the German-speaking Community of Belgium (Deutschsprachige Gemeinschaft Belgiens), education is compulsory from age 5, but most children begin attending kindergarten (Kindergarten) between the age of 2,5 and 3. It has its own network of school system, including *Kindergärten* (pre-primary education), *Primarschulen* (primary schools), *Sekundarschulen* (secondary schools).

Primary education starts at age 6 and lasts for six years, covering grades 1 to 6. The curriculum includes German language, mathematics, natural and social sciences, music, physical education, and French as a compulsory first foreign language. Instruction is conducted in German, with strong emphasis on multilingualism and cross-border cultural awareness. However, in some schools French is the language of instruction and German is the first foreign language. After successfully completing primary education, pupils receive a certificate *Abschlusszeugnis der Grundschule* that allows them to transition into general secondary education.

Secondary education is divided into the first stage (years 1–2), which is a common core, and the second stage (years 3–6), which is divided into four streams: general, technical, and vocational. General education prepares students for higher education, while technical programs combine academic and practical subjects. The vocational stream is focused on direct entry to the job market, though it can also lead to higher education. At the end of upper secondary, students receive a *Abschlusszeugnis der Oberstufe der Sekundarschule*, which grants access to higher education.

Vocational Education and Training

Vocational education offers practical and career-oriented pathways, beginning in the second cycle of secondary school. It includes both full-time and part-time systems, the latter combining school-based instruction with on-the-job training (*duale Ausbildung*). Vocational programs are available in fields such as carpentry, mechanics, and retail. Students acquire both general education and vocational qualifications, and may receive a vocational diploma as well as the certificate of upper secondary education, granting acces to higher education. Close cooperation with local businesses ensures strong alignment with regional labor market needs.

Higher Education

The German-speaking Community does not operate a full university system. Its only higher education institution, the *Autonome Hochschule Ostbelgien*, offers professional bachelor's degrees in fields such as education (pre-primary and primary school teacher), nursing, social work, accounting, and Public and business administration. Students seeking academic bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degrees typically study at universities in Flanders, Wallonia, Germany, or other countries. Higher education is structured according to the Bologna Process, ensuring compatibility and mobility within the European Higher Education Area.

Higher Education Qualifications

- **Bachelor**

First cycle

Level 6

The bachelor programmes offered in the German-speaking Community prepare students for the exercise of a specific profession, most of which are regulated professions: pre-primary or primary school teacher, nurse responsible for general care, social worker, and accountant. In addition, there are two dual programmes leading to qualifications as insurance broker and in Public and business administration.

They all focus on professional practice.

Rights Granted

No master programmes are offered in the German-speaking Community. Academic rights granted depend on the regulations of the higher education institutions outside of the German-speaking Community. In the Flemish and French Community, graduates are most often admitted to master programmes (level 7) if a bridging programme (45-90 ECTS) is completed.

Recognition Status

Accreditation is not mandatory according to the legal framework.
The higher education institution evaluates the quality of its training, research and continuing education activities at least every five years in accordance with European requirements, if possible in co-operation with other Belgian or foreign higher education institutions, universities or third-party institutions. It examines the extent to which the university structure, methods and results of the education, research and training activities are in line with the objectives of the education project, consults with the employers of graduates and makes proposals for the future development of the university.

Other Information

website of AHS Ostbelgien: https://www.ahs-ostbelgien.be/

https://enic-naric.net/page-Belgium-German-Speaking-Community

Useful Links

- Ministry of the German-speaking Community, Department VET and Organisation of Education
- Belgium German Speaking Community profile on ENIC/NARIC portal

For more information, please visit ar-go.online.

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